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WHAT'S HIDDEN IN THE NEW HEADINGS? CHANGES IN THE LDS SCRIPTURES

At the end of February, 2013, the *Deseret News* featured an amazing article: “LDS Church Announces New Scripture Edition.”¹ Utah was buzzing with people trying to determine what had been changed and why. The article noted that the changes included “revisions to study aids, new photos, updated maps,” “making historical and contextual adjustments to the section headings of 76 sections of the *Doctrine and Covenants*,” and “adding introductory headings to both official declarations at the end of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.”

According to the same article the LDS Church began working on this project in 2004. Currently the new edition is only available on the LDS web site, and the print version will be available in August 2013.

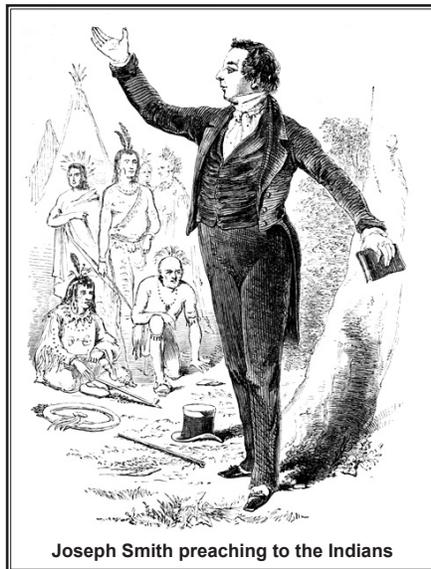
While many of the changes seem to be minor, some are obviously being made to counter historical problems raised by church critics.

In 2011 an online survey of about 3,000 disaffected Mormons, conducted by Open Stories Foundation, revealed:

. . . 81 percent [of disaffected Mormons] cited loss of faith in Mormon founder Joseph Smith as a moderate or strong factor in their no longer believing in the LDS Church. Another 84 percent said they studied LDS history and lost their faith. About 79 percent lost faith in Mormonism’s founding scripture, the Book of Mormon.

The survey . . . found that the two historical issues that most negatively affected belief in the faith were

“the Book of Abraham”—a Mormon text that Smith said was based on Egyptian papyri he obtained—and polygamy, which the church abandoned in 1890.²



Joseph Smith preaching to the Indians

Some of the alterations to the introductory material in the 2013 edition of LDS scriptures seem to be aimed at lessening the tension on these problem areas.

In the following material we will examine some of the major changes in the 2013 edition of LDS scriptures and discuss their significance.

Book of Abraham

In 1835 Joseph Smith arranged for the LDS Church to purchase a collection of ancient Egyptian papyri for \$2,400 (equivalent to about \$65,000 in 2012). Such a large investment was done despite the

severe financial problems of the church, which shows the significance of the papyri in Smith’s mind. He soon announced that one of the papyri contained the actual writings of the biblical Abraham:

. . . I commenced the **translation** of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that **one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham**, . . .³

Smith’s translation of the papyri was published first in the 1842 *Times and Seasons*, in Nauvoo, Illinois, and

² “Why Some Mormons Leave,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Feb. 3, 2012).

³ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 2, (Deseret Book, 1976), p. 236.

¹ Joseph Walker, “LDS Church Announces New Scripture Edition,” *Deseret News* (Feb. 28, 2013).

then in England as part of the 1851 edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*, although not canonized until 1880.⁴ During this time, as scholars in the nineteenth century developed the ability to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics, criticism of Smith's "translation" grew. Then, in December of 1912, the *New York Times* printed an article debunking Smith's translation of the papyri titled "Museum Walls Proclaim Fraud of Mormon Prophet."⁵ From that point on dozens of articles and publications, quoting current Egyptologists, have demonstrated that the Book of Abraham text is not a translation of the papyri.⁶ This seems to have been the motivation for the recent change in the Introduction to the *Pearl of Great Price*. In the 1981 Introduction we read:

The Book of Abraham. A translation from some Egyptian papyri that came into the hands of Joseph Smith in 1835, containing writings of the patriarch Abraham.

The 2013 Introduction to the *Pearl of Great Price* reads:

The Book of Abraham. An inspired translation of the writings of Abraham. Joseph Smith began the translation in 1835 after obtaining some Egyptian papyri.

Notice the subtle shift from a direct translation to "inspired" in an effort to distance Smith's text from the papyri. This seems to be a concession that the Book of Abraham text is not a translation of the papyri, thus alleviating the need to defend Smith's interpretation.

When we examine the Book of Abraham itself we find that the church has removed the heading at the start of the book:

Translated from the Papyrus, by Joseph Smith.

Oddly, they have left unchanged the rest of the heading to the Book of Abraham, which still announces that the text is an actual translation of the papyrus:

A Translation of some ancient Records that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt. The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.

4 Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 3, (Macmillan Pub., 1992), p. 1071.

5 Photo of 1912 *New York Times* article at www.utlm.org/onlinerresources/nytimes1912papyrus.htm. See also *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 113; online at www.utlm.org/newsletters/no113.htm#aa16

6 See "The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 3, no.2, (1968); Tanner, "Fall of the Book of Abraham," *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (1987), chapter 22; Charles Larson, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus*, (1992); Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, (Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2011).

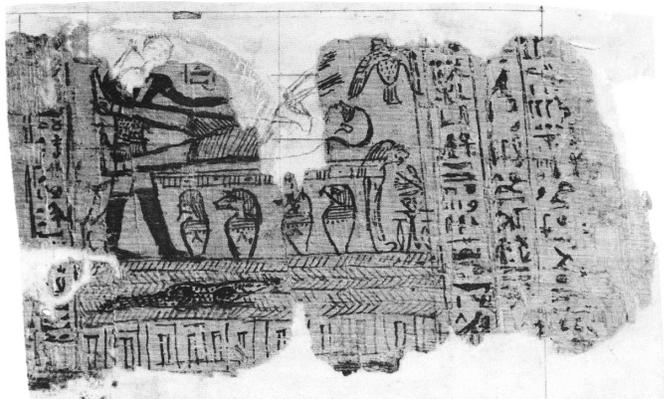
This uneven editing leaves one wondering what they consider to be the connection between the papyrus and the text? Past leaders clearly believed the Book of Abraham was literally a translation of the papyrus.

The Facsimiles

Even if one were to accept their new explanation that the Book of Abraham was an "inspired translation" (i.e. a product of revelation from God, independent of the actual meaning of the papyri), the problem still remains regarding the drawings that accompany the translation. These facsimiles are clearly based on the images found on the Egyptian material. Smith described Facsimile No. 1 (shown below) as "Abraham fastened upon an altar" and the "idoltrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice."



Below is a photo of the original papyrus from which Facsimile No. 1 was drawn.



Contrary to Smith's explanations in the *Pearl of Great Price*, this is a standard Egyptian drawing relating to the embalming of the dead. The standing black figure is actually Anubis, the Egyptian god of the dead.⁷ Smith's Book of Abraham is clearly dependent on Facsimile No. 1. In Abraham 1:12 we read "that you may have a knowledge of this altar, I will refer you to **the representation at the commencement of this record.**" Thus the Book of Abraham claims to be an actual translation with an illustration of Abraham being sacrificed. How can the LDS Church divorce the text of the Book of Abraham from the papyrus yet accept the facsimiles as part of Abraham's record?

Smith's explanation of Facsimiles No. 2 and 3 are likewise in error. Yet at the end of the explanation of Facsimile No. 2 we read: "The above **translation** is given as far as we [meaning Joseph Smith] have any right to give at the present time." However, nothing has been "translated." The text describing the illustrations does not conform to any actual translation of the Egyptian characters and appears to be entirely fabricated from Smith's imagination. Noted Egyptologist James H. Breasted, Ph.D., gave this evaluation of Smith's explanations of the facsimiles:

These three facsimiles of Egyptian documents in the "Pearl of Great Price" depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith's interpretations of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrate that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization.⁸

Even LDS Egyptologist John Gee appears to see the problems with Smith's purported translation and seems to downplay the significance of those issues. Speaking at the 2009 F.A.I.R. Conference he stated: "How the Book of Abraham was translated is unimportant. The Church does not stand or fall on the Book of Abraham."⁹ However, many people leaving Mormonism disagree. If Joseph Smith fails as a translator of the Book of Abraham where his translation can be checked against the papyrus, why would anyone believe his "translation" of the Book of Mormon when there is no evidence that the gold plates ever existed?¹⁰

⁷ Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*.

⁸ Spalding, *Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham*, pp. 26-27.

⁹ www.fairlds.org/fair-conferences/2009-fair-conference/2009-the-larger-issue

¹⁰ "Book of Mormon Plates: Artifact, Vision or Hoax?" *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 105, (November 2005).

Book of Mormon

The Introduction to the Book of Mormon has undergone a few significant changes. In the first sentence of the 1981 edition we read:

The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, **as does the Bible**, the fulness of the everlasting gospel.

The phrase "as does the Bible" has been deleted. It is assumed that it was removed to enhance the importance of the Book of Mormon. After all, if the Bible contains the fulness of the gospel why would we need the Book of Mormon?

Lamanites

The Book of Mormon describes the migration of a group of Israelites from Jerusalem to the New World in about 600 BC. A few years after settling in America these people divided into two groups, the righteous Nephites and the wicked Lamanites. In the past Mormonism has claimed that the American Indians are the descendants of the Lamanites but in recent years this claim has been modified. In the Introduction to the 1981 Book of Mormon we read:

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are **the principal ancestors** of the American Indians.

This has been changed to read:

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are **among the ancestors** of the American Indians.

This change seems to have been made in response to the recent research on Native American DNA,¹¹ which shows that almost all indigenous people of North and South America are Asiatic, not Semitic.

Also in the front part of the Book of Mormon is a section titled "Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith." In this article Smith recounts the message given to him by the angel who told him of the gold plates containing the text of the Book of Mormon:

He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the **former inhabitants of this continent**, and the source from whence they sprang.

¹¹ Simon G. Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*, (Signature Books, 2004).

Again we see the Native Americans associated with the Book of Mormon people. Past LDS Church writings repeatedly referred to Native Americans as Lamanites, descendants of the Book of Mormon people. In fact some of the earliest LDS missionary efforts were to the “Lamanites” in New York, Ohio and Missouri (*D&C* 28:9; 32:2).¹² Now that those people can no longer be claimed as descendants of Israelites, the church has stopped referring to them as “Lamanites.” But this leaves the Mormons with no identifiable group that has descended from the Book of Mormon people. One of Smith’s revelations prophesied:

. . . this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the **Lamanites**, . . . **for this very purpose** are these plates preserved, which contain these records . . . that the **Lamanites** might come to the knowledge of **their fathers**, and that they might know the promises of the Lord . . . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 3:18-20).

This leaves one to wonder how the LDS can take the gospel to the descendants of the Book of Mormon people if they can’t identify anyone as a Lamanite?

Racism

Traditionally LDS Church leaders have explained that the reason Native Americans are dark is that they are descended from the cursed Lamanites.

And he [the Lord] had caused **the cursing** to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing . . . wherefore, as they were **white**, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause **a skin of blackness** to come upon them. (*Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi 5:21)

In 1981, in an attempt to minimize the book’s racial teaching about people being cursed with a dark skin, the LDS Church changed the Book of Mormon promise that in the last days the Lamanites who converted to the gospel would revert to being “white” (2 Nephi 30:6). This verse used to promise the descendants of Lehi that upon conversion they would become “a **white** and a delightsome people.” However, this was changed in 1981 to read “a **pure** and a delightsome people.”

Now they have introduced additional changes to further obscure the Lamanite’s cursed skin color. The heading for 2 Nephi, chapter 5, has been reworded. In the 1981 edition it read:

Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites are cursed, receive a skin of blackness, and become a scourge unto the Nephites. (1981 heading for 2 Nephi 5)

It now reads:

Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites are cut off from the presence of the Lord, are cursed, and become a scourge unto the Nephites. (2013 heading for 2 Nephi 5)

Notice the removal of “skin of blackness.” The heading for Mormon, chapter 5, was also reworked. It used to read:

. . . *The Book of Mormon shall come forth to convince all Israel that Jesus is the Christ—**The Lamanites shall be a dark, filthy, and loathsome people**—They shall receive the gospel from the Gentiles in the latter days.* (*Book of Mormon*, 1981 Introduction, Mormon 5)

The 2013 edition has reworded the introduction to this chapter to eliminate the derogatory description of the Lamanites:

The Book of Mormon will come forth to convince all Israel that Jesus is the Christ—Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites will be scattered, and the Spirit will cease to strive with them—They will receive the gospel from the Gentiles in the latter days. (2013 Introduction, Mormon 5)

However, the chapter itself still retains the original racist teaching:

. . . for this people shall be scattered, and shall become **a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people**, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us, yea, even that which hath been among the Lamanites, and this because of their unbelief and idolatry. (*Mormon* 5:15)

In spite of these changes the Book of Mormon continues to promote racism by portraying “white” people as “fair and delightsome” while “dark” people are referred to as “cursed.”¹³

Plural Marriage

It is interesting to see how the Book of Mormon chapter headings have been reworded in relation to plural wives. In Jacob, chapters 2 and 3, are verses dealing with marriage and polygamy. The old heading for chapter 2 read:

*Men should seek riches to help their fellow men—**Jacob condemns the unauthorized practice of plural marriage**—The Lord delights in the chastity of women.*

By using the word “unauthorized” the Mormon was still free to promote plural marriage as long as it was “authorized.” This has been reworded to avoid mentioning plural marriage altogether:

¹² “Lamanite Mission of 1830-31,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 2, pp. 802-803.

¹³ www.utlm.org/onlinerresources/racialstatements.htm

Men may seek riches to help their fellowmen—The Lord commands that no man among the Nephites may have more than one wife—The Lord delights in the chastity of women.

Regardless of the headings, Jacob 2:24, condemning David and Solomon's plural wives, still contradicts *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:1, 38, 39, where David and Solomon's wives are approved by God.

In response to criticism of polygamy LDS members will often point out that Jacob 2:30 says men are to have only one wife unless the Lord commands otherwise, thus implying that Smith's polygamy was approved since it was commanded by God. This verse would not provide a justification of Joseph Smith's many marriages as the Book of Mormon verse seems to indicate that the reason God might command plural wives would be for purpose of procreation:

For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, **raise up seed unto me**, I will command my people; **otherwise** they shall hearken unto these things. (Jacob 2:30)

However, there is no clear evidence that Smith produced any children from his 33+ plural wives. (Further discussion of plural marriage will be found in the section dealing with the *Doctrine and Covenants*.)

Monetary System

One criticism of the Book of Mormon has been the lack of evidence for coins in the New World. Prior to 2013, Alma 11 contained this chapter heading:

Nephite coinage set forth.

Evidently the LDS leaders recognize the problem of saying the Native Americans used coins. In trying to minimize the problem the heading has been changed to "The Nephite **monetary system** is set forth." However just dropping the word "coinage" does not solve the problem. Alma 11:3 states that a day's wages were "a senine of gold" or "a senum of silver, which is equal to a senine of gold." Verse 4 speaks of the "names of the different **pieces** of their **gold**, and of their **silver**, according to their value." This certainly paints a picture of a system of coins.

However, there is no evidence that Native Americans ever developed a monetary system based on gold and silver, whether one refers to it as coins or weights. Native American economics were based primarily on trade and agriculture. The Mayans traded quetzal feathers, obsidian, jade, cocoa beans, and other agricultural items, but did not use a "monetary system" based on gold and silver. They truly had a barter system.¹⁴ This would have

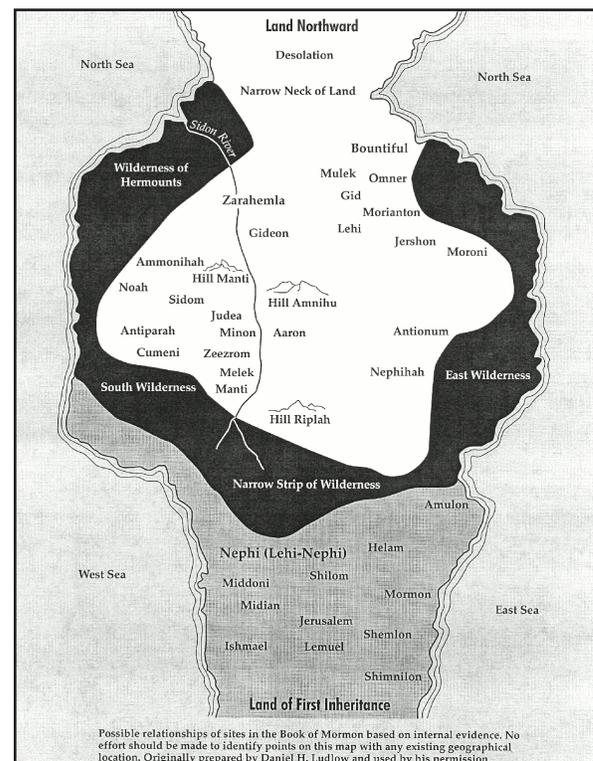
been true of the early inhabitants in the eastern area of the United States as well.

Maps

The LDS church announced that the new 2013 edition of their scriptures would include more maps. There are 14 maps relating to the Bible and 7 maps for the church history section. Yet there is not one map relating to the Book of Mormon. The fact that they cannot identify a single location demonstrates that they have no concrete evidence that these people ever existed. To date there is not one artifact or sample of writing (independent of Joseph Smith) attributed to Book of Mormon people.

The closest thing to a map in official LDS literature is the illustration below that is in the 2008 edition of *Book of Mormon Seminary Student Study Guide* entitled "Possible Book of Mormon Sites (in Relation to Each Other)." However, at the bottom of the illustration is this warning:

Possible relationships of sites in the Book of Mormon based on **internal** evidence. **No effort should be made to identify points on this map with any existing geographical location.**¹⁵



The illustrator was very careful in making his chart so that one could not correlate it with a map of either North or South America.

¹⁵ *Book of Mormon Seminary Student Study Guide*, (LDS Church, 2008), pp. 78, 203.

¹⁴ Michael D. Coe, *The Maya*, (Thames & Hudson, 2005), p. 206.

Doctrine and Covenants

Smith's revelations were first published in book form in 1833 under the title *Book of Commandments*. Then in 1835 a new edition was published under the title *Doctrine and Covenants*. Smith's revelations underwent numerous revisions at that time, but other changes have been made since then.¹⁶

Code Names

After the Mormons left New York and settled in Ohio and Missouri in the early 1830's they developed serious financial problems. Joseph Smith and several other leaders embarked on a number of business ventures. Mormon historians James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard explain:

Administration of these economic affairs was complex, and in April 1832 the Prophet and others attempted to simplify it when they created a new administrative agency known as the Central Council. This council, in turn, immediately created the **United Firm** (sometimes called the United Order), consisting of Joseph Smith and a handful of other Church leaders in Ohio and Missouri. **This was a joint-stewardship in which the members consecrated all their lands and business to the firm.** They were to manage "all things pertaining to the bishopric" (D&C 82:12), supervise the establishment of stores in Ohio and Missouri, and **use their profits not only for their personal living expenses** but also for the economic needs of the Church, including assisting the poor.¹⁷

Fearing possible lawsuits, Smith masked their business plans by using code names for various men and locations (i.e. Zion refers to Independence, Missouri) in several of the revelations printed in 1835. These pseudonyms were used in *Doctrine and Covenants*, sections 78, 82, 92, 96, 103, 104, and 105.¹⁸ While the new heading for section 78 gives some background on the "United Firm," it does not discuss the code names used in the original printing of the revelation:

*Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, March 1, 1832. On that day, the Prophet and other leaders had assembled to **discuss Church business.** This revelation originally instructed the Prophet, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney to travel to Missouri and **organize the Church's***

*mercantile and publishing endeavors by creating a "firm" that would oversee these efforts, generating funds for the establishment of Zion and for the benefit of the poor. This firm, known as the **United Firm**, was organized in April 1832 and **disbanded** in 1834 (see section 82). Sometime after its dissolution, under the direction of Joseph Smith, the phrase "the affairs of the storehouse for the poor" **replaced** "mercantile and publishing establishments" in the revelation, and the word "order" replaced the word "firm." (2013 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Introduction to Section 78)*

Below is an example of the code names used in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*:

The Lord spake unto **Enoch**, saying: Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God, who are ordained unto the high priesthood of my church, who have assembled yourselves together . . . in other words, let my servant **Ahashdah** and my servant **Gazelam or Enoch**, and my servant **Pelagoram** sit in council with the saints which are in Zion. (1835 D&C 75:1-2)

However, the 2013 edition of the same passage reads:

The Lord spake unto **Joseph Smith, Jun.**, saying: Hearken unto me, saith the Lord your God, who are ordained unto the high priesthood of my church, who have assembled yourselves together. . . . in other words, let my servant **Newel K. Whitney** and my servant **Joseph Smith, Jun.**, and my servant **Sidney Rigdon** sit in council with the saints which are in Zion. (D&C 78:1, 9)

The code names were obviously an attempt to keep the public from knowing the leaders' financial plans.¹⁹ However, even though established by revelation, Smith's United Firm failed and the church went further into debt.

Civil War Prophecy

Section 87 of the D&C has often been put forward as a proof of Joseph Smith's prophetic ability, predicting the civil war twenty-nine years before the event.

Revelation and prophecy on war, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at or near Kirtland, Ohio, December 25, 1832. This section was received at a time when the brethren were reflecting and reasoning upon African slavery on the American continent and the slavery of the children of men throughout the world. (Sec. 87)

However, research has demonstrated that newspapers of the day had already announced the pending secession of South Carolina, making civil war a likely outcome. Smith was just putting into words the current fears of

¹⁶ See H. Michael Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations: Text & Commentary*, (Signature Books, 1999).

¹⁷ James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, second ed., (Deseret Book, 1992), p. 87.

¹⁸ For an example of code names compare 1835 D&C sec. XCVIII with the current D&C sec. 104.

¹⁹ For another example of code names, compare sec. 86:4 of the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* with the 2013 edition, sec. 82:11.

the nation.²⁰ The new heading for this revelation seems to concede the point:

Revelation and prophecy on war, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at or near Kirtland, Ohio, December 25, 1832. At this time disputes in the United States over slavery and South Carolina's nullification of federal tariffs were prevalent. (Sec. 87)

When South Carolina backed down from secession the 1832 revelation was evidently tucked away and not published until 1851 in England as part of the *Pearl of Great Price*. It was not placed in the *Doctrine and Covenants* until 1876, years after the Civil War had ended and the Mormons felt comfortable claiming it as a revelation.

Plural Marriage and Section 132

The new introduction to *D&C* section 132 states:

Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, recorded July 12, 1843, relating to the new and everlasting covenant, including the eternity of the marriage covenant and the principle of plural marriage. Although the revelation was recorded in 1843, evidence indicates that some of the principles involved in this revelation were known by the Prophet as early as 1831. See Official Declaration 1.

Thus the LDS Church now concedes that Smith was teaching plural marriage prior to July of 1843 but doesn't explain which "principles" were known as early as 1831. At that time Joseph Smith had given a revelation commanding missionaries be sent to convert and intermarry with the American Indians. However, since the men who were sent on the mission were already married, it is obvious that they would have been practicing plural marriage.

While the revelation was not published at the time, it was mentioned in the *Ohio Star* on December 8, 1831. The purpose of marrying the Native Americans seems to have been aimed at gaining access to the Indian reservations. Ezra Booth wrote:

In addition to this, and to co-operate with it, it has been made known by revelation, that it will be pleasing to the Lord, should they [LDS missionaries] form a matrimonial alliance with the Natives, and by this means the Elders, who comply with the thing so pleasing to the Lord, and for which the Lord has promised to bless those who do it abundantly, gain a residence in the Indian territory, independent of the

[Indian] agent. It has been made known to one, who has left his wife in the state of N.Y. that he is entirely free from his wife, and he is at liberty to take him a wife from among the Lamanites.²¹

The 1831 revelation shows that it relates to marrying Native Americans to fulfill the Book of Mormon promise that in the last days the Indians' skin color would be changed to "white." The revelation states:

Verily, I say unto you, that the wisdom of man, in his fallen state, knoweth not the purposes and the privileges of my holy priesthood, but ye shall know when ye receive a fulness by reason of the anointing. For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you **wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightful** and just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.²²

While it does not directly address the issue of plural marriage the fact that married men were commanded to take Native American wives demonstrates that it would have been the logical outcome. W. W. Phelps, early LDS leader, was present when the revelation was given and later asked Smith about it:

About three years after this was given, I asked brother Joseph [Smith, Jr.] privately, how "we," that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives from the "natives"—as we were all married men? He replied instantly "In the[e] same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Katurah [Keturah]; and Jacob took Rachel Bilhah, and Zilpah: by revelation—the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelation."²³

If the Mormons are going to claim that there was some other 1831 revelation on marriage they should produce it. To date, the Native American revelation is the only one known.

The next hint of Smith knowing some of the "principles" of eternal marriage relates to his association with Fanny Alger, a young woman living with the Smiths in Kirtland, Ohio. Historian Todd Compton lists Fanny Alger as Joseph Smith's first plural wife, giving the time of their marriage as early 1833.²⁴ While there is evidence of an affair between them, proof of an actual marriage ceremony is more sketchy, relying on a late recollection

21 Letter by Ezra Booth, *Ohio Star*, Dec. 8, 1831. See Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 230C; Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, pp. 374-376.

22 Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pp. 230A-230C.

23 As quoted in Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, p. 375.

24 Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, (Signature Books, 1997), pp. 4, 26.

20 See *Painesville Telegraph* (December 21, 1832), online at www.utlm.org/images/changingworld/supplementalphotos/painesvilletelegraphohio_dec211832.jpg; www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech14.htm#424; *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pp. 190-192.

of Levi Hancock.²⁵ If Smith was privately married to Fanny, Oliver Cowdery, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was not aware of it. He wrote to his brother, Warren, in 1838 accusing Smith of having a “dirty, nasty, filthy affair” with Fanny Alger.²⁶

To calm rumors regarding Fanny’s relationship with Joseph, the church quickly added a section on marriage to the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, which declared, “Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife . . .”²⁷

Traditionally scholars have listed Smith’s first plural wife as Louisa Beaman, in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1841. By 1842 rumors were circulating that Smith was secretly taking additional wives. We now know that Smith’s next several wives were already married to other men, which would have provided a cover for his activities.²⁸

In 1842 John C. Bennett, former mayor of Nauvoo and confidant of Joseph Smith, published his expose, *History of the Saints*, charging Smith with secretly practicing polygamy. In answer to Bennett’s book, in August of 1842 the LDS newspaper *Times and Seasons* denounced his charges of plural marriage as “base falsehoods and misrepresentations.”²⁹ However, history confirms Bennett’s charge. Historians now concede that Smith had at least 34 wives by the time of his death in 1844.³⁰

In 1843, after Joseph Smith had secretly married about two dozen women in plural marriage,³¹ and had received strong opposition from his wife Emma, Smith’s brother Hyrum implored Joseph to record his revelation. Hyrum was convinced that he could take it to Emma and convince her that plural marriage was ordained of God. The first verse of section 132 explains that the purpose of the revelation was to answer Smith’s questions about “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching **the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines.**” Verse 4 is very emphatic that those who have had this revelation given to them must obey it or be “damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.” Verse 52 specifically commands Emma to accept the women Smith had already married:

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

26 Linda Newell and Valeen Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, (Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 66.

27 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*, section CI, p. 251.

28 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 4-5.

29 *Times and Seasons*, vol. 3 (August 1, 1842): p. 869.

30 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 4-7.

31 George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, (Signature Books, 2008), pp. 621-623.

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, **receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph**, and who are virtuous and pure before me; . . . And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, . . . But if she will not abide this commandment **she shall be destroyed**, saith the Lord; . . . (*D&C* 132:52)

When Hyrum returned from showing Emma the revelation he told Joseph “he had never received a more severe talking to in his life.”³² Thus we see that the whole reason the revelation was committed to paper was to convince Emma about plural marriage. While Emma Smith probably did not know the extent of Smith’s plural marriages at the time she was shown the revelation, she was well aware of the issue.

Today the church is trying to present section 132 as mainly dealing with their concept of eternal marriage, with polygamy being only a side issue. History shows that it was just the opposite. For instance, Joseph F. Smith, nephew of Joseph Smith, apostle and later president of the LDS Church, preached in 1878 that the practice of plural marriage was necessary to achieve the highest exaltation in heaven. He also emphasized that Joseph Smith only entered into plural marriage after “an angel of God, with a drawn sword, stood before him and commanded that he should enter into the practice of that principle, or he should be utterly destroyed.”³³ Lorenzo Snow, fifth president of the LDS Church, gave the following information in an 1869 affidavit:

In the month of April, 1843, I returned from my European mission. A few days after my arrival at Nauvoo, when at President Joseph Smith’s house, he . . . explained to me the **doctrine of plurality of wives**; he said that the Lord had revealed it unto him, and commanded him to have women sealed to him as wives; that he foresaw the trouble that would follow, and sought to turn away from the commandment; that **an angel from heaven then appeared before him with a drawn sword, threatening him with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment.**³⁴

The early LDS Church leaders understood that section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* commanded plural marriage. It was not just a side issue to eternal marriage, it was the key issue. Emma wasn’t sealed in marriage to Joseph until May 28, 1843, at which time Smith had already been sealed to approximately two

32 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Introduction to vol. 5 pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

33 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 20, pp. 28-29.

34 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origins of Plural Marriage*, (Deseret News Press, 1905), p. 67.

dozen women. In order to receive her eternal sealing to Smith, Emma had to accept Joseph's plural marriages.³⁵

The Manifesto – Declaration 1

In 1890 eighty-three-year-old LDS President Wilford Woodruff issued his famous Manifesto, counseling the Mormons to forsake plural marriage. This is printed in the *Doctrine and Covenants* as Declaration 1. While the Manifesto is presented as the results of a revelation, no actual revelation has been printed. The new heading for Declaration 1 reads:

*The Bible and the Book of Mormon teach that monogamy is God's standard for marriage unless He declares otherwise (see 2 Samuel 12:7-8 and Jacob 2:27, 30). Following a revelation to Joseph Smith, the **practice of plural marriage** was instituted among Church members in the **early 1840s** (see section 132). From the 1860s to the 1880s, the United States Government passed laws to make this **religious practice illegal**. These laws were eventually upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. After receiving revelation, President Wilford Woodruff issued the following Manifesto, which was accepted by the Church as authoritative and binding on October 6, 1890. This led to the end of the **practice of plural marriage in the Church**.³⁶*

This carefully worded statement is misleading in several areas.

1. Not only does the Bible and Book of Mormon teach monogamy, but from 1835 until 1876 the *Doctrine and Covenants* contained a section that taught monogamy and denounced polygamy as a crime.

Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.³⁷

In 1876 this section was dropped from the canon and replaced by section 132.

2. The new heading implies that once plural marriage was made illegal the LDS Church gave up the practice. Ironically, polygamy was against the law in Illinois when the early Mormons began practicing it there.³⁸ This was the reason for its great secrecy and the adamant denials of the doctrine and practice by Joseph Smith. Preaching just one month prior to his murder, Joseph Smith gave this denial of polygamy:

35 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, pp. 178-181; 462;621; Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, 1887, pp. 225, 240.

36 *Doctrine and Covenants*, (2013) Official Declaration-1.

37 *Doctrine and Covenants*, (1835) Section 101, p. 251.

38 www.utlm.org/images/newsletters/no97illinoisbigamylaw.gif

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and **having seven wives**, when I can only find **one**. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.³⁹

However, research shows that he had at least 34 wives at that time.⁴⁰

Historian Richard S. Van Wagoner provides the following information about the Illinois law:

Polygamy, a criminal act under the 1833 Illinois Anti-bigamy Laws, was so unacceptable to monogamous nineteenth-century American society that Smith could introduce it only in **absolute secrecy**. Despite Smith's explicit denials of plural marriage, stories of "spiritual wifery" had continued to spread.⁴¹

3. The heading for the Manifesto refers to polygamy as a "practice," not a doctrine. The early Mormons risked prison for plural marriage because they believed it was a doctrine, and failure to practice it would keep one from exaltation. Preaching in 1866, President Brigham Young declared:

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.⁴²

Joseph Smith told Heber C. Kimball that if he didn't enter into polygamy "he would lose his apostleship and be damned."⁴³

4. The new heading states that the issuing of the Manifesto "**led** to the end of the practice of plural marriage in the Church." Notice that it says *led* to the end, not that polygamy was actually ended in 1890. What most readers will not know is that after 1890 over two hundred LDS apostles and leaders continued to take plural wives.⁴⁴ LDS scholar B. Carmon Hardy observed:

The total of 262 post-Manifesto plural marriages found and described in the list [at the back of his book] makes it clear that a strong commitment to the doctrine continued past the turn of the century.⁴⁵

Also, the statements following Declaration 1 show that the main reason plural marriage was abandoned was simply due to the fear of legal action against the church

39 Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 411.

40 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, pp. 621-623; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 4-6.

41 Richard Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, (Signature Books, 1989), p. 18.

42 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, p. 269.

43 Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, (1888), p. 336, footnote.

44 B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage*, (University of Illinois, 1992), Appendix 2.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 391.

and possible arrest of the church leaders, not that it was no longer considered a doctrine.

5. By stating that “monogamy is God’s standard for marriage” and that the Manifesto “led to the end of the practice of plural marriage in the Church” the church seems to be suggesting that plural marriage is no longer a part of LDS beliefs. However, after the death of a wife a Mormon man is able to be married/sealed again in the temple to a new wife. According to LDS statements this would result in plural marriage in heaven as the man had two women sealed to him while on earth.

This doctrine was affirmed in October of 2007 at the funeral for the second wife of President Howard W. Hunter, the fourteenth President of the LDS Church. The *Deseret News* reported:

President Hinckley affirmed the eternal nature of the marriage between Sister [Inis] Hunter and the former church president, whose first wife, Claire Jeffs, died after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease and is now buried beside him in the Salt Lake Cemetery.

Inis Hunter “will now be laid to rest on the other side,” he said. “**They were sealed under the authority of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood for time and for all eternity**,” he said, recalling the marriage ceremony he performed for them in the Salt Lake Temple in April 1990.⁴⁶

Another example of plural sealings is Apostle Russell M. Nelson’s marriage in 2006 to a BYU professor. The *BYU NewsNet* for April 7, 2006, announced the temple marriage of Apostle Nelson, age 81, to Wendy Watson. His first wife died in February of 2005 and this was the first marriage for his new wife. This would mean, according to LDS beliefs, that Nelson has two wives sealed to him for eternity.

Harold B. Lee, the eleventh president of the church, also remarried after his wife’s death and was sealed to another woman and was looking forward to a polygamous relationship in heaven. He, in fact, wrote a poem in which he reflected that his second wife, Joan, would join his first wife, Fern, as his eternal wives:

*My lovely Joan was sent to me: So Joan joins Fern
That three might be, more fitted for eternity.
“O Heavenly Father, my thanks to thee”
(Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac, p. 17)*

After being widowed, Apostle Dallin Oaks remarried in the temple and believes he will be married eternally to both women. In 2002 he commented on his second sealing:

46 “Sister Hunter’s humor and cheerfulness remembered as she is laid to rest,” *Deseret News*, (Oct. 22, 2007).

When I was 66, my wife June died of cancer. Two years later—a year and a half ago—I married [in the LDS temple] Kristen McMain, **the eternal companion** who now stands at my side. (Dallin Oaks, “Timing,” speech delivered at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, January 29, 2002)

According to LDS doctrine, these men will have their faithful wives and children with them in the resurrection, which would mean they will be living polygamy in the Celestial Kingdom.

Thus we see that the doctrine and practice of plural marriage has not been abandoned, but only delayed until the afterlife.⁴⁷ It seems the LDS Church simply wants to keep it out of the public eye for better public relations and fear of being identified with polygamist splinter groups.

Declaration 2

The new heading for Declaration 2, granting priesthood to blacks, reads:

*The Book of Mormon teaches that “all are alike unto God,” including “black and white, bond and free, male and female” (2 Nephi 26:33). Throughout the history of the Church, people of every race and ethnicity in many countries **have been baptized** and have lived as faithful members of the Church. During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, **a few black male members of the Church were ordained to the priesthood. Early in its history, Church leaders stopped conferring the priesthood on black males of African descent. Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice. Church leaders believed that a revelation from God was needed to alter this practice and prayerfully sought guidance. The revelation came to Church President Spencer W. Kimball and was affirmed to other Church leaders in the Salt Lake Temple on June 1, 1978. The revelation removed all restrictions with regard to race that once applied to the priesthood.***

While the church concedes that a few blacks were ordained to the priesthood during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, they do not explain that this did not grant blacks access to the temple rites in Nauvoo. For example, Elijah Abel, one of the earliest blacks to receive the priesthood, was never granted temple access, even though he advanced to the level of a Seventy and went on a mission for the church.⁴⁸ Jane Manning, a faithful Mormon and maid in the Smith household, begged the church leaders to allow her to be sealed in the temple, but the request was denied.⁴⁹

47 See www.utlm.org/onlineresources/ldsleadersbelievepolygamyinheaven.htm

48 Armand Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, (Univ. of Illinois Press, 2003), pp. 215-216.

49 See Jerald & Sandra Tanner, *Curse of Cain: Racism in the Mormon Church*, (Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2004), pp. 41-42.

Notice also that the church claims “no clear insights” into why priesthood was denied to blacks. This is a blatant dismissal of over 100 years of racial statements by their prophets and apostles. Prior to 1978 the LDS leaders seem to have been quite clear as to the reason. Preaching in 1859, at the October Conference of the LDS Church, Brigham Young declared:

Cain slew his brother . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the **flat nose and black skin**. . . . How long is that race to endure the **dreadful curse** that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and **they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises** and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the **last ones** of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain **cannot** receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the **last** from whom the curse will be removed.⁵⁰

Mormon blogger Joanna Brooks gives the following analysis of the new heading:

Church leaders have long maintained public ambiguity about the history of the ban and its end; they have rarely acknowledged the ordination of early African-American Mormons nor have they cited anti-racist teaching in the Book of Mormon in connection with the Church’s own troubled history on race. The new heading historicizes the ban (suggesting the influence of a robust Church History department) and depicts it as a contradiction to the original impulses of the faith, not corrected until 1978. The heading does, some commentators have noted, offer continuing cover to Brigham Young, whose on-the-record racist statements to the Utah legislature suggest his influence in the evolution of a non-ordination policy. Commentators also note the absence of reference to the fact that black women were not historically admitted to LDS temple worship until the 1978 announcement.⁵¹

History of the Church

Other interesting deletions from the *Doctrine and Covenants* include all the references to the *History of the Church* whose authorship is attributed to Joseph Smith.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, pp. 290-291.

⁵¹ “Significant Changes to LDS Scripture Reflect Shifting Church Views on Racist History,” (March 2, 2013) www.religiondispatches.org/dispatches/joannabrooks/6889/significant_changes_to_lds_scripture_reflect_shifting_church_views_on_racist_history/

⁵² See Tanner, *Falsification of Joseph Smith’s History* and “Falsifying History,” *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 65.

This leaves the reader with no idea where to find further information on the events that led up to the revelations. On the official LDS web site, in a question and answer section relating to the recent adjustments to the LDS scriptures, we read:

While **foundational** for our understanding of early Latter-day Saint history, the *History of the Church* contains historical errors about some sections of the Doctrine and Covenants and is **inaccessible to most Church members**. In addition, the revised section headings rely on other sources, including the Manuscript History of the Church, early manuscript revelation books, and other sources that are reproduced in the Joseph Smith Papers. Quotations from the Manuscript History of the Church and the History of the Church are **collectively** referred to in section headings as **Joseph Smith’s history**.⁵³

First, it should be noted that the reason the *History of the Church* is “inaccessible” is because the church has discontinued printing it. While copies are still available in various libraries, most members do not have these volumes. Second, by simply citing the information as coming from a collection of writings referred to as “Joseph Smith’s history” one is left with no idea as to the specific source. The *Manuscript History of the Church* is comprised of about 2400 pages and the *Documentary History of the Church* spans some 3000 pages. To say that a certain statement or quote can be found somewhere therein is like telling a person that the source can be found in the library.

Conclusion

While some of the new headings in the LDS scriptures provide additional information, there is still an obscuring of troubling historical details.

Writing in 2012 reporter Peggy Fletcher Stack commented on the crisis faced by LDS members when they encounter critical information:

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

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

“Never before have we had this information age, with social networking and bloggers publishing unvetted points of view,” Jensen said in an interview Monday.

⁵³ Adjustments, Additional Questions, www.lds.org/scriptures/adjustments?lang=eng

“The church is concerned about misinformation and distorted information, but we are doing better and trying harder to get our story told in an accurate way.”⁵⁴

Unfortunately, the LDS Church is the main culprit in the spread of “distorted information.” As more and more people seek information on the Internet and from books not published by the LDS Church, the leaders will need to do a better job of candidly addressing its problematic history.

54 Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormons Tackling Tough Questions in Their History,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, (Feb. 3, 2012).



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OFFICE OF LDS CHURCH PATRIARCH?

On April 6, 2013 the *Salt Lake Tribune* announced the death of Eldred G. Smith, at the age of 106, the longest-serving LDS General Authority and last to hold the position of Church Patriarch. He was also the great-great-grandson of Joseph Smith’s brother Hyrum. Originally the office was to be passed down through the Smith lineage, but the LDS Church dropped the position in 1979, when Eldred G. Smith was retired.¹ The article brought attention to the often ignored problem of the demise of a church priesthood office supposedly established by revelation.²

Joseph Smith claimed through revelation to re-establish the ancient order of “Patriarch,” patterned after the father’s blessings given in the Bible (see Gen. 27 and Gen. 49). Unlike the Old Testament blessings given by a father on his deathbed to his sons, today the LDS blessings are given by non-relatives to various members of the church as a sort of road map for their lives and declares their lineage through one of the tribes of Israel.

Mormonism claims that the designation “Patriarch” is the same as “Evangelist.” LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

Having **lost** the true knowledge of the priesthood and its offices, and **knowing nothing of patriarch blessings as a necessary part of church administration**, the **false** traditions of the sectarian world have applied the designation **evangelist** to **traveling preachers**, missionaries, and revivalists. The sectarian theory is that evangelists travel to spread the gospel.³

1 “Longest-serving Mormon general authority dies at 106,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, (April 6, 2013).

2 <http://saintsand saints.wordpress.com/2013/04/06/eldred-g-smith-the-presiding-patriarch/>

3 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, second ed. (Bookcraft, 1979), p. 242.

However, there is absolutely nothing in the New Testament about the need of Patriarchs in the church. Also, there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that an evangelist was ever known as a Patriarch. The word “evangelist” comes from the Greek word “evangel” which means “the good news.” Thus an evangelist is one who proclaims “the good news.” Paul wrote to Timothy “Preach the word; . . . do the work of an evangelist.” (2 Timothy 4:2, 5)

Smith originally ordained his father to the office of Church Patriarch, who was later succeeded by Hyrum Smith, Joseph’s older brother. The *Doctrine and Covenants*, sec. 124:91-92, states: “let my servant William be appointed, ordained, and anointed, as counselor unto my servant Joseph, in the room of my servant Hyrum, that **my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch**, which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also **by right**; That from henceforth he shall hold the **keys of the patriarchal blessings** upon the heads of all my people, . . .”

Prior to 1979 this office was part of the LDS Church General Authorities and held by direct descendants of Smith. The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 3, under **PATRIARCH**, explains:

Before 1979, Patriarch to the Church was a Church officer whose chief duty was to confer patriarchal blessings on Church members who generally did not have the service of stake Patriarchs readily available to them. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that an “evangelist” (as in Ephesians 4:11) is a “**patriarch**” (TPJS, p. 151); that is, he confers the blessings of a patriarch upon members of the Church. Patriarchs are currently ordained in individual stakes of the Church, **but for many years there was a patriarch to the entire Church**. He was considered **one of the General Authorities**.

Today the LDS Church no longer has the office of Patriarch as part of the General Authorities. Currently one man in each stake, or diocese, of the church is set apart as the local Patriarch. But this is a complete reversal of the original office. Since this top leadership position was claimed to be established by revelation one is left to wonder why it was removed. Evidently the LDS Church leaders were concerned about continuing an office that required one to be a Smith descendant. Again Mormons are faced with the problem of current policy overriding past revelation. If it required a revelation to end the ban on blacks holding the LDS priesthood, why wouldn’t it require a revelation to nullify the office of Church Patriarch which was established by revelation? (For more information on this, read *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch*, by Irene Bates and E. Gary Smith, University of Illinois Press.)



Lorenzo Snow's Couplet:
 "As man now is, God once was;
 As God now is, man may be":

"No Functioning Place in Present-Day Mormon Doctrine?" A Response to Richard Mouw

By Ronald V. Huggins*

*Man may become as God himself!
 Let those who disagree howl as they may!*
 Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie¹

Reprinted with permission of the author from *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49/3 (Sept. 2006) pages 549–68).

I. RICHARD MOUW'S TABERNACLE APOLOGY

During his appearance with Ravi Zacharias in the Mormon Tabernacle on November 14, 2004, Fuller Seminary President Richard Mouw apologized on behalf of evangelicals for "bearing false witness" against Mormons. When challenged about his remarks, Mouw sent out an e-mail identifying places where he felt evangelicals had misrepresented Mormon teaching. Among these was the claim that "Mormonism teaches that God was once a human being like us, and we can become gods just like God is now,"² a belief, Mouw goes on to assure us, that has "no functioning place in present-day Mormon doctrine." As anyone familiar with Mormonism will immediately recognize, Mouw's words allude to the famous couplet coined by the fifth LDS Church President Lorenzo Snow:

As man now is, God once was;
 As God now is, man may be.³

Is Mouw correct in saying that the teaching contained in this couplet no longer has any functioning place in present-day Mormonism? In trying to answer this question, we must begin by looking at where Snow's couplet came from and why it caught on as an important summary of the Mormon doctrinal system.

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¹ Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Life Beyond* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1986) 152. The comment is made immediately after a poem by Lorenzo Snow that includes the famous couplet discussed in the present article.

² Soon after the Tabernacle event, the Internet was flooded with copies of Mouw's response to criticisms. The version I use is one sent to me upon request by Fred Messick, Associate Vice President of Public Affairs at Fuller Seminary.

³ Often incorrectly quoted: "As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may become."

II. THE ORIGINS OF SNOW'S COUPLET

In May 1836 Lorenzo Snow visited Kirtland, Ohio, where his sister Eliza R. Snow had moved the previous year after converting to Mormonism. At a blessing meeting in the Kirtland Temple, Snow met Joseph Smith Sr. (the father of the Mormon Prophet) who predicted that he would soon be converted to the LDS faith. Smith Sr. went on to make the astonishing prediction that afterward Snow would "become as great as you can possibly wish—EVEN AS GREAT AS GOD."⁴ Snow was baptized two weeks later.

Snow was unable to make anything of this remarkable prediction until shortly before embarking on a mission to England in the spring of 1840. He reports that one day as he sat listening to Elder H. G. Sherwood's explanation of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–16),

the Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man. I formed the following couplet which expresses the revelation, as it was shown me, and explains Father Smith's dark saying to me at a blessing meeting in the Kirtland Temple, prior to my baptism, as previously mentioned in my first interview with the Patriarch.

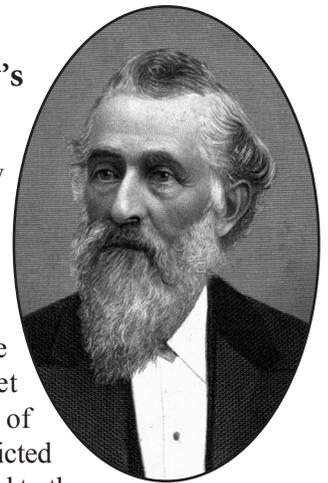
As man now is, God once was;
 As God now is, man may be.⁵

At first Snow did not share his couplet with anyone besides his sister Eliza, and Brigham Young, with whom he served in England. But in January of 1843, after returning from his mission, Snow mentioned it to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who said to him: "Brother Snow, that is true gospel doctrine, and it is a revelation from God to you."⁶

⁴ Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News, 1884) 10.

⁵ *Ibid.* 46. This text provides a curious setting since the parable teaches almost the exact opposite of what was revealed to Snow.

⁶ LeRoi C. Snow, "Devotion to Divine Inspiration," *Improvement Era* (June 1919) 656.



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III. THE COUPLET AND THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

1. *The King Follett Discourse.* On 7 April 1844 Joseph Smith provided public confirmation to the theology of Snow's couplet in the famous King Follett Discourse. This is clearly seen in the following excerpts:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea. . . . It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself . . . you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.⁷

The relation between the Prophet's teaching here and his own revelation did not escape Lorenzo Snow's notice. According to LeRoi C. Snow, Lorenzo Snow, in his own copy of the *Times and Seasons*, "which I now have . . . drew more particular attention, with his own indelible pencil, to this part of the Prophet's King Follett sermon than to any other reference in all the six volumes."⁸

As the King Follett Discourse unfolds, it becomes clear that the Prophet Joseph Smith expected his followers to treat what he was saying there with utmost seriousness. Earlier, he had identified as the object of the sermon "to find out the character of the only wise and true God, and what kind of a being he is." "But if I fail to do it," he went on to say, "it becomes my duty to renounce all further pretensions to revelations and inspirations, or to be a prophet; and I should be like the rest of the world—a false teacher."⁹ Yet after this he goes on to sound a note of confidence, even applying language used of Jesus to himself: "I will prove that the world is wrong, by showing what God is . . . for I speak as one having authority" (see Matt 7:29).¹⁰

⁷ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (comp. Joseph Fielding Smith; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1976) 345–47.

⁸ The reference to "this part" refers to the context in which the first of the above three quotations appeared.

⁹ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 344.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 345.

He thus imposes on his listeners the conclusion they must draw if he turns out to be wrong about what he says about God in the King Follett Discourse. They are to consider him a "false teacher," and approve of his renouncing "all further pretensions to revelations and inspirations, or to be a prophet." Another way of saying this is that if by any defensible standard, Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, then the King Follett Discourse is the product of prophetic inspiration. The comfortable option of continuing to consider Smith a true prophet and the King Follett Discourse mere speculation is not an option Smith himself was willing to leave open.

2. *Joseph Smith's last public discourse.* In his last public sermon, given on 16 June 1844, Joseph Smith again turns to the subject of the history of God. This time he offers what he felt sure was biblical support for the idea that God the Father had a father. He found it in the language of the King James Version's translation of Rev 1:6: "And hath made us kings and priests *unto God and his Father* . . . [italics added]," in accordance with which, he says, there clearly exists "a God above the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹¹

Smith was incorrect in seeing this as the true implication of the passage, a better translation being "unto his [Jesus'] God and Father" (see, e.g., NIV). This he seemed to have recognized more than a decade earlier when he had, under the guidance of inspiration, corrected this same passage in his Inspired Version of the Bible. This version was produced in the early 1830s and rendered the phrase "unto God, his Father." In the present sermon, however, he declares the KJV rendering "altogether correct in the translation."¹² Thus we find the teaching of Lorenzo Snow's couplet being confirmed in final discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

¹¹ *Millennial Star* 24:108.

¹² Some editions of the sermon punctuate in such a way as to avoid Joseph's having meant that God the Father had a Father by placing a comma after *above* so that it has Joseph saying instead: ". . . there being a God above[,] the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (e.g. JS-H 6:474). There is no indication in the original manuscript of the sermon suggesting the inclusion of a comma (see *The Words of Joseph Smith* [2d rev. ed./1st computer ed.; comp. and ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1996] 379 [GospelLink CD-Rom]), nor is the sense it gives borne out in the rest of the sermon. Quite the contrary, the idea that God the Father had a father is explicitly endorsed at other places in the sermon:

If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered that God, the Father of Jesus Christ, had a Father, you may suppose that *he* had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son? Whenever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor? . . . Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not also believe that *he* had a Father also? (*Millennial Star* 24:109–10)

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IV. THE ONGOING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COUPLET IN SNOW'S CAREER

Throughout his life Snow continued to stress the centrality of the teaching of the couplet. In a discourse published in 1894 he described it “as a star continually before me.”¹³ There was never any question for Snow of it having arisen from the realm of speculation on his part. It came to him as a “vision, which was just as clear as the sun ever shone.”¹⁴ In 1892 he included it in a poem, part of which reads as follows:

This royal path has long been trod
By righteous men, each now a God:

As Abra'm, Isaac, Jacob, too,
First babes, then men—to gods they grew.
As man now is, our God once was;
As now God is, so man may be,—
Which doth unfold man's destiny.¹⁵

Nor did the couplet cease to represent a central element in Snow's teaching after he was set apart as the fifth president of the LDS Church on September 13, 1898. Indeed, he re-emphasized it in the strongest possible terms in a sermon preached only five days later, when, speaking on “the highest glory to which it is possible for man to attain,” Snow said:

That exalted position was made manifest to me at a very early day. I had a direct revelation of this. It was most perfect and complete. If there ever was a thing revealed to man perfectly, clearly, so that there could be no doubt or dubiety, this was revealed to me, and it came in these words: “As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be.”¹⁶

About three months before his death, which occurred on 10 October 1901, Snow again affirmed the truth of the couplet in the following words:

13 *Millennial Star* 54:770 (Dec. 3, 1894). This sermon, which was originally preached on 5 October 1894, is reprinted in *Collected Discourses* (5 vols.; comp. and ed. Brian H. Stuy; Woodland Hills, UT: B. H. S. Publishers, 1987–92) 4:159–63. The statement quoted here is on p. 160.

14 *Ibid.* 772, and *Collected Discourses* 4:162.

15 LeRoi C. Snow, “Devotion to Divine Inspiration” 660.

16 “Unchangeable Love of God” (Sept. 18, 1898) in *Collected Discourses* 5:453.

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That fulfilled Father Smith's declaration. Nothing was ever revealed more distinctly than that was to me. Of course, now that it is so well known it may not appear such a wonderful manifestation, but when I received it, the knowledge was marvelous to me.¹⁷

V. THE COUPLET IN RECENT TIMES

Mouw's assertion concerning the teaching of Lorenzo's Snow's couplet is remarkable given the fact that (for most of this writer's lifetime, at least) it has fallen into the category of things Mormons know even if they know nothing else about their faith. The Osmond Brothers even included a song that alluded to this teaching called *Before the Beginning* on their 1973 album *The Plan*.¹⁸

If by “no functioning place” Mouw means that the couplet is no longer taught or mentioned in official and semi-official Mormon publications, then he is again incorrect. On that level all one needs to do is flip through the pages of the LDS Church's official weekly newspaper, the *LDS Church News*, in order to find examples of the couplet being taught. The September 13, 1997 issue, for example, included this quotation from Eldred G. Smith: “Temple Marriage is not just another form of church wedding; it is a divine covenant with the Lord that if we are faithful to the end, we may become as God now is.”¹⁹ This passage not only quotes the couplet, it also clearly explains its continuing functioning place as a lynch-pin doctrine of the LDS Church relating to Temple Marriage. That LDS children continue to be taught the couplet can be seen in the nifty “President Lorenzo Snow Crossword,” included in the March 2002 “Funstuff” section of the LDS Church's official Children's magazine *Friend*, where we read as the clue for 10 across:

He wrote as a couplet (two lines of verse) a revelation that he had and that the Prophet Joseph Smith said was true: *As man _____ is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.*²⁰

17 The clipping “The Grand Destiny of Man,” is a sermon by Lorenzo Snow delivered on July 14, 1901 (*Journal History* [July 20, 1901] 4). See also LeRoi C. Snow, “Devotion to Divine Inspiration” 661 and *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow* (comp. Clyde J. Williams; Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1984) 2. For further examples where Snow refers to the couplet during his tenure as fifth president of the LDS Church see the entry for Wednesday, June 12, 1901, in *A Ministry of Meetings: The Apostolic Diaries of Rudger Clawson* (Significant Mormon Diaries Series 6; ed. Stan Larson; Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books & Smith Research Associates, 1993) 281–82, and “Notable Reunion of Weber Stake,” *Deseret News* (June 15, 1901) 1, reproduced in *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow* 1.

18 In the beginning/We'd be living as we would be/He once was/To look at him, to look at me/ And think someday like him I'll be/What more?/Ever since we came to be/ With the plan, we learned to see/We control infinity/What more?/What more?

19 “Quote from the Past,” in the “This Week in Church History,” section of *Church News* (Sept. 13, 1997) 2. The quote comes from a 1948 general conference address. For other examples from the 1990s see *Church News* (May 22, 1993) 9 and *Church News* (April 23, 1994) 16. [Errata Note: *Deseret News* incorrectly attributed quote to Albert E. Bowen. We've corrected the reference to Eldred G. Smith. See *The Improvement Era*, Nov. 1948 p. 752.]

20 Hilary Hendricks, “President Lorenzo Snow Crossword,” *Friend* (March 2002) 23.

The correct answer filling in the blank is “now.” Notice in this case that the couplet is presented to Mormon children not merely as a “revelation” from God, but also as one that Joseph Smith himself had declared to be true. So again, how can Mouw be correct when he accuses Christians of bearing false witness when they say Mormons teach the couplet?

In defense of his remark Mouw appeals to a number of specific sources, including BYU professors Robert L. Millet and Stephen E. Robinson, as well as the 1997 book *Mormon America* by Richard N. and Joan K. Ostling. Mouw further states that “a number of LDS writers have been formulating the ‘becoming God’ theme in terms that are common in Eastern Orthodoxy.” We must now examine these sources.

1. *Robert L. Millet.* Robert L. Millet is a popular LDS writer and scholar toward whom many evangelicals in Utah and elsewhere look as the voice of a new Mormonism. This voice stands at the front of a concerted effort to drag the LDS Church, kicking and screaming if necessary, to a place much closer to traditional Christianity, though Millet himself firmly denies having any such intentions.²¹ Millet, it will be recalled, is one of the authors whose startling affirmation of the teaching of the couplet is at the head of this article.

Mouw credits Millet directly as a source for his claim that the teaching of the couplet is something current Mormon leaders “don’t understand” and that it “has no functioning place in present day Mormon doctrine.”²² Following up on Mouw’s remarks I wrote to Millet asking him whether he really said the things Mouw credited him with saying. His answer was as follows:

What I explained to Richard Mouw is that the related doctrines of “God was once a man,” and “Man may become as God,” though a part of our doctrinal literature and certainly accepted as truth by Latter-day Saints, are not a part of what might be called central, saving doctrine. President Hinckley, more than once, stated that he did not know much about the doctrine and didn’t know anyone that did. They are not discussed liberally at general conference, nor do we know much beyond the fact that Joseph Smith and Lorenzo Snow taught them.²³

21 As he did, for example, in response to a question of mine. I wrote: “I often hear from Evangelicals who look upon you as the voice of a new kind of Mormonism that is in the process of turning its back on the old teachings and aiming to become more mainstream traditional Christian” (e-mail to Millet, Nov. 25, 2004). Millet responded that, “Notwithstanding the repeated suggestion that Latter-day Saints are seeking to move into the mainstream of traditional Christianity, we are not!” (e-mail from Bob Millet, Nov. 30, 2004).

22 “Bob Millet has made the same point to many of us.”

23 E-mail from Bob Millet, Nov. 30, 2004.

Millet does not go as far as Mouw, who asserts that Mormons do not teach the couplet. Millet says that Mormons regard the teaching of the couplet as true but not central. He does so on the basis of a general reference to public statements by current LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley.

2. *Gordon B. Hinckley’s public expressions of agnosticism concerning Snow’s Couplet.* The statements Millet alludes to both took place in 1997 and have since become well known to critics of the LDS Church. Richard Ostling in his *TIME Magazine*, *PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* interview, asked President Hinckley whether “God the Father was once a man as we are.” Hinckley’s answer was: “I don’t know that we teach it . . . I haven’t heard it discussed for a long time in public discourse.”²⁴ Again in an interview with Don Lattin appearing in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in April 1997, Lattin asked Hinckley: “[D]on’t Mormons believe that God was once a man?” Hinckley replied: “I wouldn’t say that. There was a little couplet coined, ‘As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.’ Now that’s more of a couplet than anything else. That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.”²⁵

Richard and Joan Ostling noted how shortly after his public remarks, before an “in-house, all-Mormon audience . . . at General Conference, Hinckley talked about media depictions of the church and, in an apparently pointed reference to those interviews, assured his listeners, ‘None of you need worry because you read something that was incompletely reported. You need not worry that I do not understand some matters of doctrine.’ He added, ‘I think I understand them thoroughly.’”²⁶

Millet seems to speak of these public statements as if they were official statements of current LDS thinking on the subject. There are three reasons we should not go along with him on this. First, when Luke Wilson, director of the Institute for Religious Research, questioned the First Presidency²⁷ about the accuracy of the quotation of Hinckley in *TIME Magazine*, F. Michael Watson, Secretary to the First Presidency, responded: “The quotation you reference was taken out of context.”²⁸ By the First Presidency’s own account, therefore, Hinckley’s

24 Richard N. and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1999) 422.

25 Don Lattin, “Gordon B. Hinckley, ‘President, Prophet, Seer and Revelator’ of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Sits at the Top of One of the World’s Fastest-Growing Religions,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (Sunday, April 13, 1997). See <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/SUNDAY-INTERVIEW-Musings-of-the-Main-Mormon-2846138.php>

26 Ostling and Ostling, *Mormon America* 296.

27 The current [2006] First Presidency consists of the Mormon prophet Gordon B. Hinckley, his first counselor, Thomas S. Monson, and his second counselor, James E. Faust.

28 *Ibid.* 421.

public remarks in the TIME Magazine, PBS *NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer interview, at least, should not be taken as representative of Hinckley's true position, much less the official teaching of the LDS Church on the matter.²⁹

Second, there is evidence that Hinckley, who is regularly referred to as the PR Prophet, was being intentionally vague before non-Mormon audiences, perhaps hoping to make Mormonism appear more mainstream Christian. Thus in an interview on Australian television with David Ransom that was aired on 9 November 1997, Hinckley similarly hedged on another foundational Mormon teaching, only to back down when challenged:

RB: And God has a wife?

GBH: I don't know, but I suppose so. As we have a Father I assume we have a mother.

RB: I understood your teachings said that God has a wife?

GBH: Yes. Well we . . . Yes we have a mother in heaven. We believe so. We're sons and daughters of God.³⁰

The doctrine that God has a wife is very frequently and openly taught in official LDS Church publications. It is declared in the widely publicized "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," issued by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church in September 1995, that:

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual pre-mortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.³¹

We see this teaching fleshed out in the model dialogue between a father and his ten-year-old son Dean, in the *Parent's Guide* published and currently used by the LDS Church:

"Who made our bodies first of all?"

"Heavenly Father" was the prompt answer.

"That's right, son. Heavenly Father made Adam and Eve. Who do they look like?"

29 This despite the fact that the Ostlings have since proven that Hinckley's remarks were not in fact taken out of context, that Watson's accusation was in fact false (see Ostling and Ostling, *Mormon America* 421–22).

30 David Ransom, "Compass, Interview with President Gordon B. Hinckley," ABC TV (ABC=Australian Broadcasting Corporation). Accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/intervs/hinckley.htm>.

31 "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," first published in the November 1995 issue of *Ensign* and often since. Quoted here from *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part A* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000) x. See further the chapter "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" in *Eternal Marriage Student Manual: Religion 234 and 235* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001) 83–110.

"Heavenly Father and Jesus, and I guess our heavenly mother too," said the now attentive boy.

"Well, we really don't know much about our heavenly mother, but we can expect that Eve looked like her and Adam looked like Heavenly Father."³²

Hymn number 292 in the current LDS hymnal, *O My Father*, emphasizes this doctrine in the words: "When I lay this mortal body by, Father, Mother may I meet you in your royal courts on high?" In the context the author, Eliza R. Snow, was not speaking of her earthly parents, but of the heavenly Father and Mother. This same hymn is included in the selection of hymns in the standard LDS Church published introductory book on Mormonism, *Gospel Principles*.³³ Gordon B. Hinckley knows it and refers to it in a discussion on whether the practice of some Mormons of praying to the Mother in heaven is acceptable: "It has been said that the Prophet Joseph Smith made no correction to what Sister Snow had written. Therefore, we have a Mother in heaven."³⁴ So when Hinckley began his answer to the question about the wife of God with, "I don't know, but I assume . . ." he was interjecting a note of doubt that we do not find when he speaks of the doctrine before believing Mormons.

Third, we should not look to the context of interviews with outsiders to find Hinckley's most authoritative explanations of Mormon doctrine. Such settings are not always entirely friendly, so we should not be surprised to find Hinckley somewhat more guarded than when he is before more accepting audiences.

Hinckley himself has remarked that interviews with the public media are "always a worrisome undertaking because one never knows what will be asked."³⁵ They seem, he goes on to say, to "know how to ask questions that come at you like a javelin. It is not exactly an enjoyable experience."

Does Hinckley know very much about the teaching of the couplet? The best answer seems to be the one he gave the faithful at the October 1997 general conference: he understands it "thoroughly." But for some reason he wanted to play down its significance before non-Mormon audiences. Consistent with such a conclusion is the fact that Hinckley is familiar with the King Follett Discourse and refers to it as "an important doctrinal document in

32 *The Parent's Guide* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985) 31. It is common in LDS publications to find "Heavenly Father" (caps) but "heavenly mother" (no caps).

33 *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997) 350–51.

34 *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1997) 256–57. The remark originally appeared in the article "Daughters of God," *Ensign* (Nov. 1991) 100.

35 Gordon B. Hinckley, "This Thing was Not Done in a Corner," *Ensign* (Nov. 1996) 48.

the theology of the Church.”³⁶ In addition, the *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, published in the same year as the public statements we have been discussing, contains explicit teaching on the couplet:

The whole design of the gospel is to lead us, onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follett sermon . . . and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is this grand and incomparable concept: *As God now is, man may become!*³⁷

It should be noted, however, that even though Hinckley is discussing Snow’s couplet, he is not focusing on the first part, the part about God having once been a man. This is consistent with what Hinckley said in the *San Francisco Chronicle* interview. After Hinckley had said that the couplet contained “some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about,” Don Lattin came back with: “So you’re saying the church is still struggling to understand this?” Hinckley replied: “Well, as God is, man may become. We believe in eternal progression. Very strongly. We believe that the glory of God is intelligence and whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the Resurrection. Knowledge, learning, is an eternal thing.”³⁸

This raises an interesting question: Is it possible that Hinckley and the present LDS Church are trying to play down the first half of Snow’s couplet while continuing to emphasize the second? Is there a trend toward avoiding discussion of God’s history as a man, while at the same time continuing to affirm our future as Gods? If such a trend is underway, it should not be hard to detect, because the content of official church publications is strictly monitored by the so-called Correlation Committee, which oversees the content of LDS Church publications.

And, indeed, as we look at materials published by the LDS Church itself, as opposed to less official Mormon

36 Gordon B. Hinckley, “Nauvoo’s Holy Temple,” *Ensign* (Sept. 1994) 62. I am indebted to Sandra Tanner and Steve Lee for calling my attention to this reference.

37 *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* 179. This remark was derived from Gordon B. Hinckley, “Don’t Drop the Ball,” *Ensign* (Nov. 1994) 48.

38 Lattin, “Gordon B. Hinckley Interview,” online edition.

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publishers, which regularly publish much less guarded statements,³⁹ we discover that this does appear to be a trend.

3. *Our becoming Gods.* There are regular and repeated references to our becoming Gods, even retaining the capital “G,” but increasingly few explicit statements about how God moved from being as we are now to his current exalted state. So, for example, in the 2001 John Taylor volume of the *Teachings of the Presidents of The Church* series, used in the regular weekly meetings at the Ward,⁴⁰ each human is called “a God in embryo” [capital “G”] who possesses “in an embryonic state, all the faculties and powers of a God. And when he shall be perfected, and have progressed to maturity, he will be like his Father—a God . . . As the horse, the ox, the sheep, and every living creature, including man, propagates its own species and perpetuates its own kind, so does God perpetuate his.”⁴¹

The February 2002 issue of the LDS Church magazine *Ensign* reprinted a 1909 First Presidency statement declaring that “the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage [i.e. the human being] is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God [capital ‘G’].”⁴² And lest there be any doubt about the continuing authority of this First Presidency statement, we find in the “Making the Most of This Issue” section at the end of the same issue a teaser for it that

39 In this we distinguish between materials actually published by the LDS Church and those published by popular Mormon publishers like Bookcraft, Covenant, or Deseret Book Company. In these publications much of what has always been said about traditional Mormon teaching continues unabated. See, for example, chapters 5 (“Do Latter-day Saints Believe that Men and Women Can Become Gods?”) and 6 (“What do Latter-day Saints Mean When They Say that God was Once a Man?”) in *Latter-day Saints: 10 Basic Issues* (ed. Robert L. Millet and Noel B. Reynolds; Provo, UT: Foundations for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998) 25–29, 31–33. See also Robert J. Matthews, “The Doctrine of the Atonement: The Revelation of the Gospel to Adam,” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 2: The Pearl of Great Price* (ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret, 1998) 114–15 (Gospelink CD-ROM).

The plan of salvation is older than the earth and has not been added to or changed since that early time . . . Elder Orson Pratt expressed his understanding of the antiquity and unchangeableness of the plan as follows:

The dealing of God toward his children . . . is a pattern after which all other worlds are dealt with. The creation, fall and redemption of all future worlds with their inhabitants, will be upon the same general plan. The Father of our spirits has only been doing what his progenitors did before him. . . . The same plan of redemption is carried out by which more ancient worlds have been redeemed. The reason Elder Pratt’s statement makes doctrinal sense is because the plan of God is perfect, and perfection is unchanging. If the plan of redemption varied from time to time, from world to world, or person to person, men would be saved by different means, and salvation would have its bargain days. The “sameness” of the plan of salvation does not mean that every world is an exact monotonous and unimaginative copy of every other, or that there are the same number of inhabitants on each. It means that the same eternal principles, the same kind of mortality and the same kind of salvation are in effect wherever there are gods and devils and men.

40 The Mormon version of the local church.

41 *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001) 2–3.

42 First Presidency Statement, “The Origin of Man,” *Ensign* (Feb. 2002) 30. The same passage is reproduced in *The Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998) 337.

asks: “Ever wonder about the Church’s official teaching on the creation of mankind and evolution?”⁴³

The present edition of the widely used introductory manual *Gospel Principles* declares of those who “receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom” that “[t]hey will become gods” and “will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus have—all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge.”⁴⁴

4. *God’s history as a man who worshipped a more ancient deity.* Early editions of *Gospel Principles* (1978–88) said that “[o]ur spirits resemble our heavenly parents although they have resurrected bodies. We have inherited the potential to develop their divine qualities. If we choose to do so, we can become perfect as they are.”⁴⁵ Beginning with the 1992 edition, however, the phrase “although they have resurrected bodies” was dropped.⁴⁶

Among the few explicit discussions of the history of God in recent times in official church publications were (1) the 1985 *Search These Commandments: Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide*; and (2) the LDS Institute (college-level) manual *Achieving a Celestial Marriage* (1992). In the former, we read under the heading “Our Father Advanced and Progressed Until He Became God”:

- President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “Our Father in heaven, according to the Prophet, had a Father, and since there has been a condition of this kind through all eternity, each Father had a Father” (*Doctrines of Salvation* 2:42).
- President Joseph F. Smith taught: “I know that God is a being with body, parts and passions. . . . Man was born of woman; Christ, the Savior, was born of woman; and God, the Father was born of woman” (*Church News* [Sept. 19, 1936] 2).⁴⁷

And the first paragraph of the introduction of the latter:

In the relationships of husband and wife and parent and child we begin to approach the divine calling of godhood. Our Heavenly Father and mother live in an exalted state because they achieved a celestial marriage.

43 “Making the Most of This Issue,” *Ensign* (Feb. 2002) 80.

44 *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997) 302. Interestingly, a statement on the same page, which had read, “We can become Gods like our Heavenly Father” in earlier editions, was changed to, “We can become like our Heavenly Father” in the 1997 edition.

45 *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978) 9.

46 *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992) 11.

47 *Search These Commandments: Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984) 152.

As we achieve a like marriage we shall become as they are and begin the creation of worlds for our own spirit children.⁴⁸

For a long time the writer expected *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, which continued to be used as an institute text for some years after Hinckley’s 1997 interviews, would be revised or replaced, because it stood nearly alone among LDS Church published materials in the blatant link it makes between our heavenly parents’ exaltation and our own. This finally happened in 2001 when it was replaced by a new manual that avoids such explicit descriptions of the mechanism underlying the first half of Snow’s couplet.⁴⁹

All of this is not to say, however, that the teaching of the first half of Snow’s couplet has been abandoned or rejected. One needs only to read the reaffirmation of it in the new institute manual *Presidents of the Church* (2003) to know that the LDS Church still embraces both halves.⁵⁰ It would further seem an overstatement to say that the LDS Church is de-emphasizing the teaching of the first half of the couplet. What really appears to be happening is that the language used to express the teaching is being intentionally toned down: same teaching, different words used to describe it.

5. *Stephen E. Robinson, Mouw, and the “official” question.* Mouw also had said that “Stephen Robinson insisted, in the book he co-authored with Craig Blomberg, that this [i.e. the teaching of the couplet] is not an official Mormon teaching.” Robinson’s actual words in relation to Snow’s Couple and the King Follett Discourse are as follows:

Neither statement is scriptural or canonized in the technical sense, and neither has been explained or elucidated to the church in any official manner, but they are so widely accepted by Latter-day Saints that this technical point has become moot.⁵¹

Robinson actually admits that the teaching of the couplet is “so widely accepted by Latter-day Saints” that the technical question of its canonicity “has become moot.” This is not the point one would have naturally gathered from Mouw’s depiction of what Robinson had said.

48 *Achieving a Celestial Marriage: Student Manual* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Educational System, Department of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 1992) 1.

49 *Eternal Marriage Student Manual* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001).

50 *Presidents of the Church Student Manual* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003). See especially under the heading “He Received a Revelation about Man’s Divine Potential” in the chapter on Lorenzo Snow (pp. 88–89).

51 Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997) 85.

Robinson's statement that it has not been "explained or elucidated to the church in any official manner," however, is simply false. The reality is that throughout the history of the LDS Church it has been almost continually "explained or elucidated" in every possible official manner, short of giving it its own page in LDS Scripture. In the February 1982 *Ensign*, the issue was raised in the "I Have a Question" column whether Snow's couplet was "accepted as official doctrine of the church." Gerald N. Lund responded by saying that "there has been no 'official' pronouncement by the First Presidency declaring that President Snow's couplet is to be accepted as doctrine"—"[b]ut that is not a valid criteria for determining whether or not it *is* doctrine."⁵² The bottom line is that "it is clear that the teaching of President Snow is both acceptable and accepted doctrine in the Church today."⁵³ Lund also quotes Joseph Fielding Smith's 1971 remark that Snow's couplet expressed a doctrine that "has of course been known to the prophets of all the ages."

Here as well is an appropriate point for bringing up Mouw's comment that the couplet is not "an official Mormon teaching." The problem is that the LDS Church has never clearly defined a process by which its doctrines become "official." For the rank-and-file Mormon the teaching set forth by the prophetic leadership at the semi-annual general conference is as official as it gets. In a way, everything the LDS Church teaches *now* is official *now*, but that may all change later, as it has in the past. Therefore everything the Church teaches is also at least potentially unofficial. The main thing the individual Mormon must do is to find out what is being taught now and believe it as God's word for them. To the evangelical this process seems both dubious and strange, but the Mormon finds it easy to explain under the umbrella of progressive revelation. In the meantime, Mormon scholars quite appropriately speculate about how teachings become "official." But at this stage their speculations cannot in any way be said to be official, and therefore it is quite inappropriate for them to try to insist that non-Mormon scholars must prove well-known Mormon doctrines to be official before they are allowed to speak of them. Rather, non-Mormon scholars must evaluate the various theories of "official" in order to see which, if any, correspond to the actual way in which authority functions in the Mormon Church. Unfortunately, Robinson himself has set forth a very inadequate theory. According to him,

⁵² *Ensign* (Feb. 1982) 40. The reason Lund gives is this: "Generally, the First Presidency issues official doctrinal declarations when there is a general misunderstanding of the doctrine on the part of many people. Therefore, the Church teaches many principles which are accepted as doctrines but which the First Presidency has seen no need to declare in an official pronouncement."

⁵³ *Ibid.*

there are three things that make a Mormon teaching official: (1) it is taught in the "standard works, the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price";⁵⁴ (2) it appears in an "official statements of the First Presidency and/or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles";⁵⁵ and (3) it is "sustained" by being voted on in general conference.⁵⁶

Of the three criteria, only the second carries any real weight. Functionally, the reality approaches a situation in which the voice of the present leadership trumps all three. The LDS canon does not function for Mormons in the same way that the biblical canon functions for Christians. One of the reasons for this is that Joseph Smith's theology changed rapidly and radically during the course of his career. As a result, the Book of Mormon contains teachings that are radically at odds with both current Mormon doctrine and the doctrine of the other books in the Mormon canon. For example, Book of Mormon Christology falls to the right of traditional trinitarianism in that it does not distinguish clearly between the divine persons, yet the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price falls to the left of traditional trinitarianism in that it abandons the unity of the Godhead in favor of a doctrine of plurality of Gods.⁵⁷ Because of this tension current Mormonism can only derive things from the Book of Mormon where it agrees with current LDS teaching. Where it does not agree, it must be artificially harmonized, as when new meanings are given to theological words Joseph Smith used in the Book of Mormon where he originally meant something quite different from current LDS understanding. For example, because the Book of Mormon speaks of God as "omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:5) and "knowing all things" (2 Nephi 9:20), Mormons are forced to own these words. Yet in doing so they must also radically redefine them, so that God's omnipotence and omniscience do not interfere with the same attributes in all the Gods that went before (e.g. God the Father's father) and that will come after (e.g. all the Gods in embryo that now dwell upon the earth).

So, for example, since the meaning of traditional theological terms has been redefined in Mormonism, Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie can

⁵⁴ Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide* 73–74.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 208 n. 32.

⁵⁶ Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1991) 17: "No new doctrine is binding as the official doctrine of the Church unless it has been received by the President of the Church and until it has been sustained by the Church in general conference." This is interesting also in light of Millet's apparent willingness to accept as somehow authoritative the off-hand comments the President of the LDS Church makes in public interviews.

⁵⁷ See my online article "Joseph Smith's Modalism: Sabellian Sequentialism or Swedenborgian Expansionism?" (2004) at <http://mit.irr.org/joseph-smiths-modalism-sabellian-sequentialism-or-swedenborgian-expansionism>

write things such as the following, which are absurd from a historic Christian perspective:

Our Father’s development and progression over an infinitely long period of time has brought him to a point at which he now presides as God Almighty, He is omnipotent, omniscient, and, by means of his Holy Spirit, omnipresent: he has all power, all knowledge, and is, through the Light of Christ, in and through all things.⁵⁸

Does Mouw think that the LDS Church has adopted the traditional meanings of the uses of the “omnis” or other traditional terms in relation to God? If so, he is mistaken.⁵⁹

Robinson’s third criterion that a teaching has been “sustained” or voted upon in general conference also fails to describe accurately how teachings become official in the LDS Church. In the first place, votes taken at general conference sessions are invariably unanimous. Since *Ensign* began tracking this in the early 1970s there has never been a report of a non-unanimous vote at general conference. It is true that the reports for the October 1975 general conference and the general conferences from 1981 to 1983 do not mention whether the vote was unanimous and that therefore it may be that some “troublemaker” had voted against the crowd; all the others (October 1974 and April 1975 and every conference between April 1976 and October 1980 and between April 1984 and the present) have been unanimous.

Robinson’s presentation makes things sound more democratic than they really are. As Clark L. and Kathryn H. Kidd write,

Voting against sustaining is such a rare occurrence that many Church members never see it happen. The reason for this is that most members realize that they are not casting a vote when they raise their hands . . . they are being asked to ratify or sustain a decision that has been made by those in authority.⁶⁰

58 Millet and McConkie, *The Life Beyond* 148–49.

59 Such a mistake is certainly understandable in view of the way Robinson writes on these things, as for example when he says: “Latter-day Saints do not, or at least should not, believe that they will ever be independent in all eternity from their Father in heaven or from their Savior Jesus Christ or from the Holy Spirit. Those who are exalted by his grace will always be ‘gods’ (always with a small g, even in the Doctrine and Covenants) by grace, by an extension of his power, and will always be subordinate to the Godhead” (Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide* 86). This statement of Robinson’s is of course not official, nor is it consistent with the Church manuals he reads and discusses at his local Mormon ward, which, as we have already seen, freely use the capital “G” in describing what we shall be, as do First Presidency statements (*Ensign* [Feb. 2002] 30). Nevertheless, Robinson’s view need not contradict what might be called the continuous teaching of the Mormon Church, as long as he is willing to say that the present God the Father is also eternally dependent on his Father, Savior, and Holy Spirit, and therefore is also ultimately only a god with a small “g” just like we will be). However, much as the LDS Church has become reserved in teaching the traditional Mormon plan of salvation as expressed in the couplet, it has never repudiated it. Therefore Robinson must be asked whether he wants to say that the current God is more ultimate in some sense than the Gods that went before. And then, if the answer is yes, why?

60 Clark L. Kidd and Kathryn H. Kidd, *A Convert’s Guide to Mormon Life* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1998) 74.

Since the results of the sustaining vote are always the same, they are a mere formality, a rubber stamp. Because this is the case, there is really no reason for the leadership to delay action until general conference once they have set their minds on doing something. A case in point is President Spencer W. Kimball’s revelation granting the priesthood to blacks announced on June 9, 1978, which marked one of the greatest turning points in LDS history. Robinson cites it as an example of how doctrine becomes official:

When Spencer W. Kimball declared in 1978, by revelation from the Lord, that the priesthood was henceforward to be given to all worthy male members, this pronouncement became Official Declaration—2 by the sustaining vote of a general conference on 30 September 1978.⁶¹

Robinson only gives part of the story. The LDS Church leadership did not wait until it had been sustained in general conference to put the new revelation into practice. Rather, it began immediately. Probably the first African American to be ordained to the LDS priesthood in the United States was Joseph Freeman Jr. of Granger, Utah, only two days after the June 9 announcement.⁶² By the time the next general conference was convened the floodgates had already long since been opened and the ordination of blacks become an irreversible reality. The only thing that remained was for the gathered faithful to cast their obligatory unanimous vote in favor of its inclusion in the *Doctrine & Covenants*, which they did at the Saturday afternoon session on September 30, 1978.

VI. THE COUPLET AND THE DOCTRINE OF DEIFICATION

Mouw comments that “[a] number of LDS writers have been formulating the ‘becoming God’ theme in terms that are common in Eastern Orthodoxy: that ‘we shall be like Him’ in the sense of I John, but that we will never *be* Him.” As far as I know, no Mormon ever taught that we are going to be God the Father. A better way of expressing this from the perspective of the Mormon system is to say that we will never *catch up* with God. We may well reach a point at which we will be equal in attributes and exaltation to God as he is now. But by the time we do, God will have become more exalted. Indeed, the very fact that we as his children come to be exalted actually adds to his greater exaltation, and by extension, to the greater exaltation of the current God’s God, and

61 Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* 14.

62 See David John Buerger, “What Constitutes Official Doctrine?” *Sunstone* 10/2 (Feb. 1985) 39 (New Mormon Studies CD-ROM). Also, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City, UT: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2004) 82.

indeed of all the Gods above him. Exaltation, in other words, functions as a sort of cosmic pyramid scheme. This is the teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follett Discourse: “God is . . . glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children.”⁶³

What Mouw is referring to also has to do with the current interest among Mormon apologists in the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of deification. Although we find occasional earlier references to the alleged similarity between the Mormon and Orthodox teaching on deification,⁶⁴ the current interest among Mormons in this doctrine arose in the 1970s and 1980s after two Mormon scholars, Philip L. Barlow and Keith E. Norman, became interested in the subject independently while studying at Harvard.⁶⁵

But it is Stephen E. Robinson who has done most to give the apparent similarity an apologetic slant. In his *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* subentry “LDS Doctrine Compared With Other Christian Doctrines,”⁶⁶ Robinson quotes what he says is the second-century writer Irenaeus of Lyons as saying, “If the word became a man, it was so men may become gods.” In reality, it is not Irenaeus he is quoting (Irenaeus never said this)⁶⁷ but the generalized couplet used by Eastern Orthodox theologians, beginning with Athanasius, to express the doctrine. In the context Robinson claims that the Eastern Orthodox couplet says “essentially the same thing” as Lorenzo Snow’s couplet.⁶⁸

More recently, even Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks spoke of the alleged similarity between Eastern Orthodox and LDS teaching at general conference when he said that the Mormon understanding of the future life “should be familiar to all who have studied the ancient Christian doctrine of deification or apotheosis.”⁶⁹

This development would seem to function very nicely in the LDS/Evangelical apologetic exchange, because by appealing to the ancient doctrine LDS writers can present

themselves as closer to the roots of Christianity than Western Christians, who use the language of deification only infrequently.⁷⁰ But the emphasis must rest on the words “*seem* to function.”

In reality, there is nothing in the Eastern Orthodox or early Christian doctrine of deification to which any Western Christian should object. Indeed, there is much to be gained by reading the mature Eastern Orthodox reflection on the subject.⁷¹ The only problem from an exegetical point of view is that the standard formulation of the doctrine relies on a misinterpretation of a particular passage in the Gospel of John. Early Christians did not have trouble describing their future hope in terms of “becoming gods,” because they took Jesus’ quote of Ps 82:6, “I said you are gods,” in John 10:34 to be a reference to “those . . . who have received the grace of the ‘adoption,’ by which we cry, ‘Abba Father’” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.6.1; cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 124).⁷² But there is no reason to suppose that that is what the author of John had in mind.

The real appeal of the Eastern Orthodox doctrine to Mormon apologists is that it is regularly stated in a way that *sounds* similar to Snow’s couplet. But this has to do more with the fact that a couplet is used in both cases than that the two couplets have anything really in common. It is in fact when one lays the two couplets side by side to reflect upon Robinson’s claim that they say “essentially the same thing” that their real differences appear.

70 We still occasionally encounter it, as, for example, in the eighth-century Celtic theologian John Scotus Eriugena (d. c. 877) who declares: “He [Jesus] came down alone but ascends with many. He who made of God a human being makes gods of men and women” (*Prologue to the Gospel of John* 21; ET: *Celtic Spirituality* [The Classics of Western Spirituality; trans. and intro. Oliver Davies with the collaboration of Thomas O’Loughlin; New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1999] 430). The great western Father Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) also uses the language of deification: “For God wishes to make thee a god; not by nature, as He is whom He has begotten, but by his gift and adoption” (*Sermon* 166:4; quoted in Norman, *Deification: The Content of Athanasian Soteriology* 104). Deification language has even been preserved as part of the Roman Catholic Mass, where it currently appears as part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist: “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” On the evangelical side we find it, for example, in the lyrics of the great Methodist hymnologist Charles Wesley (d. 1788): “He deigns in flesh to appear, Widest extremes to join; To bring our vileness near, And make us all divine” (*Hymns Let Heaven and Earth Combine*). Or again, speaking more broadly of trinitarians as such, Ralph Waldo Emerson writes in his journal entry for Feb. 14, 1827: “The Trinitarian urges a natural & sublime deduction from his creed when he says of the Saviour that as he became a partaker in our humanity so we also shall become partakers in his divinity” (*Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson* [ed. William H. Gilman and Alfred R. Ferguson; Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1963] 3.74).

71 A good place to start is Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001); Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person* (trans. Norman Russell; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997); and Christoforos Stavropoulos, “Partakers of Divine Nature,” in *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader* (ed. Daniel B. Clendenin; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 183–92. For a discussion from an evangelical perspective see Robert V. Rakestraw, “Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis,” *JETS* 40 (1997) 257–69; and my entry on deification in the forthcoming *Dictionary of North American Sects and Religious Movements* (ed. Wayne House; Grand Rapids: Baker). For more on what Mormons have been doing with the doctrine see Jordan Vajda OP, “Partakers of the Divine Nature”: *A Comparative Analysis of Patristic and Mormon Doctrines of Divinization* (F.A.R.M.S. Occasional Papers 3; Provo, UT: Foundation for the Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002).

72 ET: *ANF* 1.419.

63 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 348. See on this concept the discussion on Lorenzo Snow’s couplet in Millet and McConkie, *The Life Beyond* 143–53. The passage quoted from Joseph Smith appears on p. 150.

64 Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages* (Salt Lake City, UT: Stevens and Wallis, 1945) 108–9.

65 See Philip L. Barlow, “Unorthodox Orthodoxy: The Idea of Deification in Christian History,” *Sunstone* 8 (Sept.-Oct. 1983) 13–18; Keith E. Norman, *Deification: The Content of Athanasian Soteriology* (F.A.R.M.S. Occasional Papers 1; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies and Brigham Young University, 2000); and “Deification, Early Christian,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 1.369. The details about when these two scholars became interested in deification were gathered from personal communication with Norman and Barlow.

66 See under “Doctrine,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.

67 For a full account of this see my online publication: “Tracing the Source of Stephen E. Robinson’s Misquote of Irenaeus,” at <http://bib.irr.org/tracing-source-of-stephen-e-robinsons-misquote-of-irenaeus>.

68 The same point is made by Robinson in *Are Mormons Christians?* (p. 60) and probably also in the booklet *Latter-day Saints: 10 Basic Issues* (Provo, UT: Foundations for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998) 26. I say “probably,” because although Robinson is one of the contributors to this booklet, it does not explicitly credit him with this section.

69 Dallin Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign* (May 1995) 84–86.

First Half:

Snow's Couplet: "As man now is God once was . . ."

Athanasius's Couplet: "the Word of God Himself . . . assumed humanity . . ."

(*On the Incarnation of the Divine Word* 54)⁷³

Here Snow is talking about the Father's having become God, even though he was previously a man. Athanasius was talking about the Son's having become a man, even though he was previously God.⁷⁴ Who can fail to see that, although similar words are used, the underlying concepts are completely different?

Second Half:

Snow's Couplet: "As God now is man may be."

Athanasius's Couplet: ". . . that we might become God."

The Orthodox teaching refers to our *becoming*, as 2 Pet 1:4 says, "partakers of the divine nature," through union with Jesus Christ. John's Gospel presents Jesus as praying that believers will be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:21; cf. 10:30), yet it is without in any way losing sight of Jesus' unique relationship with God as both the pre-existent Word and only begotten of the Father (John 1:1, 18). The Son has divine life in himself (John 5:26). We have it only through the Son (John 3:36; 6:53–54, 68; 10:28), only as we abide in him (John 15:1–7). The same point is made by Athanasius: we partake of Christ's divine life only because Jesus first partook of our mortal flesh:

But if death was within the body, woven into its very substance . . . the need was for Life to be woven into it instead . . . the Saviour assumed a body for Himself, in order that the body [i.e. our bodies], being interwoven as it were with life, should no longer remain a mortal thing, in thrall to death, but as endued with immortality and risen from death, should therefore remain immortal. For once having put on corruption, it could not rise, unless it put on life instead." (*On the Incarnation of the Divine Word* 44)

Mormons, however, cannot really appeal to 2 Pet 1:4 in defense of their doctrine at all, because their notion of exaltation does not involve becoming partakers of the divine nature.⁷⁵ They believe that they have the divine nature already, as "literally the sons and daughters of Deity . . . undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage,"⁷⁶

"gods in embryo,"⁷⁷ and, to use Robinson's own words, as the "same species of being as God."⁷⁸ They only have to grow up into it through a process toward perfection that includes a period of testing during the mortal experience.

VII. CONCLUSION:

MOUW, THE COUPLET, AND THE FUTURE

Richard Mouw has served very faithfully as a kind of evangelical statesman, and I believe he has much to contribute to the evangelical/Mormon dialogue in the future. In relation to the continuing currency of Lorenzo Snow's Couplet, however, Mouw is simply incorrect when he says that it has "no functioning place in present-day Mormon doctrine." Mouw's recent apology also places him in a somewhat ambiguous position given the fact that he contributed an enthusiastic preface to a book published in 2002 containing two articles presenting Snow's couplet as representative of Mormon teaching.⁷⁹ In that preface, Mouw offered an apology similar to the one rendered in the Mormon Tabernacle. He stressed how "ashamed" he was "of our record in relating to the Mormon community"⁸⁰ and spoke of how "we evangelicals" had been "bearing false witness against our LDS neighbors." Against this he set the essays contained in the book, which he represented as "a laudable attempt to set the record straight." The question raised by Mouw's more recent apology in the Tabernacle is whether he has changed his mind in the past two years and come to believe that the book he previously praised is guilty of bearing false witness as well, and that he now wishes to distance himself from it.

However that may be, it has been the writer's purpose in the present article to show that Snow's couplet is not irrelevant to current Mormon teaching. Unlike relics of old Mormonism such as Brigham Young's Adam-God doctrine⁸¹ or plural marriage,⁸² Lorenzo Snow's couplet summarizes a truth that still lives at the heart and logical center of the whole Mormon religious system. Evangelicals are not therefore "bearing false witness" when they regard it as representative of Mormon belief and critically discuss it as such.

⁷³ Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1969) 286.

⁷⁴ Stephen E. Robinson, "God the Father," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 1992.

⁷⁵ Stephen Parrish (with Carl Mosser), "A Tale of Two Theisms: The Philosophical Usefulness of the Classical Christian and Mormon Concepts of God," and Francis Beckwith, "Moral Law, The Mormon Universe, and the Nature of the Right We Ought to Choose," in *The New Mormon Challenge* 204 and 223.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁷ See Chris A. Vlachos, "Brigham Young's False Teaching: Adam is God," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 3/2 (1979) 93–119, which has frequently appeared in pamphlet form and remains one of the best materials available on the subject; and Gary James Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books: A Smith-Pettit Foundation Book, 2002).

⁷⁸ See Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1989).

⁷³ ET: A Religious of C. S. M. V. (New York: Macmillan, 1964) 93.

⁷⁴ Craig L. Blomberg has already underscored this important distinction: "Most of Stephen Robinson's references to early Christian belief in the corporeality of God are talking about the Incarnation—the Son taking upon himself human flesh, not the Father having a body as in the uniquely Mormon claim" ("Is Mormonism Christian," in *The New Mormon Challenge* [ed. Francis Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002] 320).

⁷⁵ That is not to say they do not appeal to it; see Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide* 80.

⁷⁶ 1909 First Presidency statement "The Origin of Man," *Ensign* (Feb. 2002) 26–30.



Current Status of the Lorenzo Snow Couplet

By Sandra Tanner

During the seven years since the original publication of the previous article by Ron Huggins, Dr. Richard J. Mouw has continued to maintain that the Lorenzo Snow couplet is no longer promoted as LDS theology and refers to it as “folk Mormonism.”¹ However, the official LDS priesthood manuals published in 2011 and 2012 have quoted it.

In 2011 the LDS Church issued the manual *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith*. In it we read:

Eternal life is to us the sum of pre-existence, present existence, and the continuation of life in immortality, holding out to us the power of endless progression and increase. With that feeling and that assurance, we believe that **“As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become.”** . . . we believe that it is not improper, that it is not unrighteous, for us to hope that we may be permitted to partake of the attributes of deity and, if we are faithful, **to become like unto God;** . . .

This year the study manual for both the LDS Priesthood and Relief Society is *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*. In chapter 5, “The Grand Destiny of the Faithful,” we read about Snow’s formulating of the couplet:

In the spring of 1840, Lorenzo Snow was in Nauvoo, Illinois, . . . President Snow later recalled, “the Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man. I formed the following couplet which expresses **the revelation**, as it was shown me. . .

**“As man now is, God once was:
“As God now is, man may be.”**

Feeling that he had received “a sacred communication” that he should guard carefully, Lorenzo Snow did not teach the **doctrine** publicly **until he knew that the Prophet Joseph Smith had taught it**. Once he knew the **doctrine** was public knowledge, he testified of it frequently. . . . His son LeRoi, said, “This **revealed truth** impressed Lorenzo Snow more than perhaps all else . . .”²

Further on the manual quotes Lorenzo Snow regarding God’s progression:

¹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Iw7EGzTPe0 (January 9, 2013 - see comment at 41 minute mark)

² *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*, LDS Church, 2012, p. 83.

Through a **continual course of progression** our Heavenly Father has **received exaltation** and glory and he points us out the same path and, inasmuch as he is clothed with power, authority and glory, he says, “walk ye up and come in possession of **the same glory** and happiness that I possess.”³

However, the LDS view of a God who hasn’t always been God, and that man’s goal is to achieve the same level of godhood, would strike Christians as a great blasphemy. When God spoke to Isaiah, one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, He declared:

I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . is there a God beside me; yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44:6, 8)
. . . *from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.* (Psalm 90:2)
I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee. (Hosea 11:9)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.



EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

Oct. 2012: Hi this is very interesting journey. by the way i just have to send a comment about your site wow it is a wealth of information. thank you for putting the time and effort in creating a website and thanks again for spending the time helping me and other Mormons . . .

Oct. 2012: I wrote to you a few weeks ago when my brother was killed in an accident and his funeral was [conducted by Mormons] . . . thank YOU personally for, unknowingly, giving a stranger great comfort during this awful and deeply painful time. . . . YOUR VIDEOS, your kind face, your words, your comforting voice, when discussing this odd religion helped me stay strong and got me through those awful days . . . PS, your videos also helped another sister . . .

Oct. 2012: Leaving Mormonism is so difficult to do. You get so brainwashed into not thinking for yourself. I thank God every day that I saw the light. I thank him for Sandra’s part in my conversion.

Oct. 2012: It all started to come apart for me when I read *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality* . . . especially where it talks about Isaiah 29:4 being prophecy of the BoM. The first time I used a Strong’s Concordance, I looked up all bible passages about familiar spirits and realized Isa 29:4 couldn’t be a prophecy.

Oct. 2012: I’m a 20 year old from Buenos Aires, Argentina. I met the mormon church almost 4 years ago . . . Fortunately I discovered many FACTS that made me KNOW that that church (like any other I guess) is a corporation full of secrets and lies and its real “mission” is to concentrate power and money. Missionaries keep coming to my house and I try to be nice to them (it’s not their fault that they don’t even know their own church, because they are brainwashed since they are little), and I try to tell them why I think the way I think, with FACTS.

Oct. 2012: Today is the 1-year anniversary of the removal of my name from church records. I want to thank you for the help your website & resources have given me. I believe you are called by God to help people like me find the true path to Jesus & God,...

Nov. 2012: I stumbled across your website while surfing the internet, . . . It seems to me that your little group is based on hate and intolerance to another religion, much like the Christian persecution of the Jews and with all of the hate in the world, why create and operate some offensive and hateful in today's world? . . . I can honestly say that for you bigoted fools to hold onto such hate is pathetic b***s***. . . . Look up the definition of Christian and I guarantee you douche bags fall well outside those parameters and it's time to grow up or shut up or don't and reap what you sew.

Nov. 2012: Years ago I had read that you were thinking of retiring . . . I sent you an email and told you how important your ministry is, and asked you not to . . . I am so glad that you reconsidered that thought . . . you are perhaps more needed now than ever . . . praise God for your ministry.

Nov. 2012: Thank you for everything that you and Jerry have done to help break me free and clear my head. You and Jerry's hard work brought me to a place to where I can think clearly and rationally. . . . I would not be who I am today without you. Thank you.

Nov. 2012: While I feel empathy for the Tanner family at the loss of Jerald, I would have loved to have seen the look on the face of Jerald when he crossed the veil and saw the Prophet Joseph Smith welcoming him. As a convert to the LDS Church, the efforts of people like the Tanner's has only reinforced my testimony because greater is He that is within me [the Spirit] than he that is in the world.

Nov. 2012: You were very instrumental in my conversion from LDS. . . . I have some people in our church who are interested in trying to reach Mormons. Love you and your work.

Nov. 2012: Id like to extend my thanks to you for all your work. It's been vital to my search for the truths I was denied for 34 years. Im sharing my LDS membership resignation with you, as I did with Shawn and Alatheia, because of how important you've all been to me and my final decision.

Nov. 2012: If you dear people would put all the money you spend on the Salt Lake Messenger into doing good for others, taking care of your own, we would all be better off. We are all entitled to believe as we want to. Give it up! . . . Joseph Smith was & is a Prophet.

Nov. 2012: Good morning. . . . thank you for the work you do. We are Christians who moved to Utah last year, unaware of what we were really coming to. It has been an unpleasant shock to learn what a God-less, spirit-less place this really is.

Dec. 2012: . . . I suppose I'm sticking with the Mormons because I find them to be very pleasant and agreeable people. . . . Anyway Madam, . . . you seem very polite and ladylike. I've watched some videos of your speeches and can't help but be impressed by your skill in stating your case. Like I say, though, I still feel the presence of the Lord in Mormonism. These people have been good to me and I want to show them loyalty.

Dec. 2012: I wanted to tell you that UTLM has been such a valuable resource for me. I am an ex-mormon (BIC), and my husband and I left the church together after we married. I am teaching a 6 month series of classes to evangelical teens and adults on how to witness to the LDS, . . . Your website provided me with one-stop shopping for these valuable materials, and I was especially delighted to see all the digital content now available.

Dec. 2012: Loved the latest issue of the SLC Messenger [November 2012]. You all did a wonderful job exposing the wackiness of Mormonism. This issue will for sure go into my library of false beliefs. Thank you for your hard work in bringing the true Jesus to the lost.

Jan. 2013: I know you must receive a wide variety of opinions, I want to encourage you to keep spreading the truth of God's love. Speaking the truth in love can be difficult but you have done it well.

Jan. 2013: I'm writing to you because I have a deep appreciation for the work you and Jerald have done over the years. I'm amazed at the dedication you've shown in trying to help Mormons find truth. . . .

For 36 years now, I've been married to a wonderful, faithful, Mormon . . . She wasn't active in the church when we met in 1976, and we talked about her faith before getting married, resulting in her assuring me she wouldn't go back to Mormonism. Well, as so often happens, when children come into our lives, we reach for our roots and that is what she did. . . . She insisted our kids be raised in the church as well. . . . This has been the only real problem (as a couple) that we've had in our marriage. The church has been between us since 1980 and we have (at times) struggled greatly with the division it has caused.

In 2009, I decided to give it my all to try and prove (once and for all) that the church was true so we could unite our family in Faith. . . . What I found in my study of church history, and through daily Bible study, has born out what my gut was telling me all along, that Joseph Smith was a fraud. . . .

Sandra, as a member of the body of Christ, I want you to know that I love you. You, your family, and Utah Lighthouse Ministry, are in my prayers always. Please pray for _____ as well. I'm hopeful, in time, she will come to see truth. I continue to encourage her to read the New Testament, but, she almost seems to be afraid to actually do it. I don't want you to worry, I don't push her hard. I've learned I can drop a seed here and there, and not make her miserable.

Again, my main reason for writing is to say thanks! Ministries like yours are making a difference! Knowing the ONE TRUE GOD, is all that matters!

Jan. 2013: After listening to you on a couple of TV programs, I can see that your understanding of Mormonism is limited. . . . Also, you told Jason Wallace and John Ankerberg that the Bible says that God has always been God. The Bible doesn't say that. It says that ". . . from eternity to eternity, thou art God." The LDS consider each of us as having existed ". . . from eternity to eternity." So my son can say of me, "Dad, from eternity to eternity, thou art my father." Note, that I haven't been his father forever; but I HAVE existed from eternity, and will continue to exist for all eternity. . . . I believe your declaration that God is unchanging does not apply to ways He adapts to increased horizons.

Jan. 2013: I'm a Brazilian member of the Mormon church, my baptism was in 1980. I have various doubts about Mormon's doctrine, principal about Joseph Smith. I want to know documents copies for discussion about Mormon history. Here in Brazil the members know only official church history.

Jan. 2013: The in-law side of my family are largely polygamist Mormons and I really love witnessing to them using information I receive from you.

Feb. 2013: God has said that the book of Mormon is the most correct book and that by reading and living by it. (being the gospel and an additional witness of Christ) we could become closer to God. Realize that he didn't say the perfect book, but the most correct. Information can only bring us to the desire to read or not to read to pray or not to pray about it. It is truly our choice, but we see that no evidence or archeology has ever sanctified the heart in knowing the truth and being converted to the Gospel of Christ, but by the Spirit of God.

Feb. 2013: On the previous testimony Sunday on the 3rd of this month I bore my testimony saying "I know this church is false and I know Joseph Smith was not a prophet". . . . the only thing I remember was a SIGH in the public in front of me, but I DID IT! I didn't expect it to be such a relief after saying loud what I KNOW. After testifying I gave to my bishop the resignation letter . . .

Feb. 2013: I accidentally came across your website. I and my husband left the church, 18 months ago. I joined the church in my twenties. . . . And eventually, went to the Temple. My experience there was very mixed. I was shocked in the endowment session, with the slitting of the throat, etc. . . [prior to 1990] But each day I went along for a week and I rationalized it to be alright. Then I meet my husband _____ [who] grew up in the church. . . . He loved reading FARMS and he subscribed to Dialogue. . . . But with his learning of hieroglyphics he realized that the book of Abraham was false. . . . So we are now members of the Anglican Church, and my husband now smiles when he goes to church, we attend a bible study group. . . . I can only pray that one day they [the rest of the family] will know The Lord.

Feb. 2013: You guys crack me up. . . . why are you making it your life message to "debunk" Mormonism? . . . God has always led his people through prophets, so by what authority are you disseminating "information" in regards to His will? . . . If you think you know better than divine revelation, well, by all means carry on. Sad, sad little people. So sorry to have chanced upon your website.

Feb. 2013: . . . By the way, your book *41 unique teachings* has been a top-notch help to me. . . . I witnessed to a lady this morning. . . . THANK YOU THANK YOU

Mar. 2013: Years ago your website was instrumental in freeing our family from Mormonism. You are doing a good work and helping a lot of people. Thank you so much for helping us.

Mar. 2013: THANK YOU for being a force for Christ in the world. The research that you and your husband provide makes a key difference in lives worldwide. In the limited times that I've had to talk and witness to Mormons, I know that information gotten from your newsletters really helped.

Mar. 2013: I am a Fancher descendant. Last weekend I visited the Mountain Meadows Massacre site with my two children. The experience was very moving for me and of course has resulted in many discussions among my family (some of whom are now Mormon), . . . I just wanted to say thank you for your work and commitment to truth.

Mar. 2013: I have to tell you, Sandra, that you have inspired me in many ways. When I was still a devout Mormon, I thought what you were doing was just a lot of negative energy and time that would be better spent on something else. But that was because I didn't want to see the truth of it yet. It would mean having the rug pulled out from under me, and having to make some very difficult decisions. But the time came when I had to acknowledge the truth, and could no longer support the lies of Mormonism. . . . I knew Christ wouldn't have had anything to do with it. And I came to realize the value of the gift of truth. Thank you for that.

Mar. 2013: Tanner(s), I have examined much of your "works" and find your scholarly abilities very much hindered by your personal agenda. I was converted to the Mormon Church and baptized in 2008 after studying "Mormonism" for over 10 years. Your Anti-Mormon literature is good "tabloid" reading (I did enjoy most of what I read), but that is all it is—the "junk" of your cognitive fallacies. . . . The simple truth is you cannot prove the Book of Mormon was not brought forth by the gift and power of God. Please stop trying!

Apr. 2013: Your ministry and message has helped me steer into truth much easier after leaving Mormonism on 12/13/12. My wife is still in it and has been since age 9, she is 51 now. You and Shawn McCraney have been very helpful with arming me with knowledge to defend my abrupt decision after 12 years LDS to leave it. The Sunday school teacher from my wife's ward is trying to rescue me. However it is my hope that his plan will backfire.

Apr. 2013: I am a Christian writing to you from _____ UK. I recently found a second hand copy of your book *'Mormonism: Shadow or reality'* and bought it. I just wanted to write and say 'thank you' for this excellently researched resource. There is a Mormon church not far from where I live and a sizeable Mormon population in the area. Your book has enabled me to answer Mormon questions and better defend my faith. You and Mr Tanner did an amazing job

Apr. 2013: Ms Tanner, . . . many years ago when I was preparing to marry in the Oakland temple, a valued co-worker of mine loaned me a book of yours that had the ceremony word for word in it. I found it frightening at 19 and find it even more so now. My parents convinced me that I had nothing to worry about so I stuffed it down and went through with it. I wish I had believed what you wrote. I did not have the courage to completely disavow the church until I was already 5 years married to someone from whom I am (happily) divorced after 23 years.

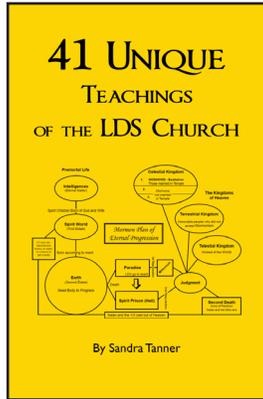
Apr. 2013: Since moving here [Nevada], I have been making friends with the LDS, having them over for meals and attending events with them, such as General Conference and church services (the whole 3 hours!) God had put it in my heart to get involved in a ministry. . . . Anyway, thank you again, Sandra. Your newsletters, videos and website have been invaluable to me.



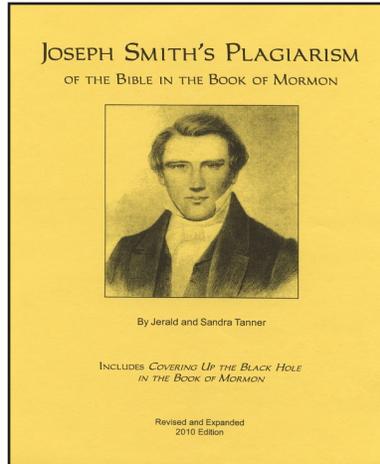
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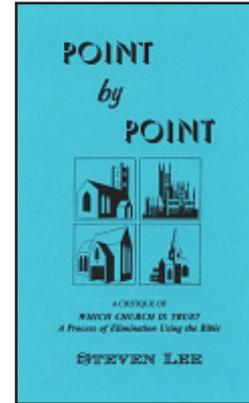
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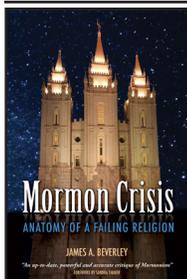


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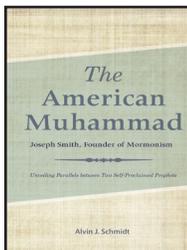


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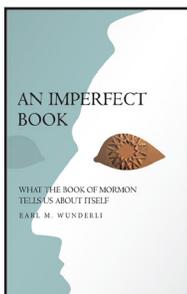
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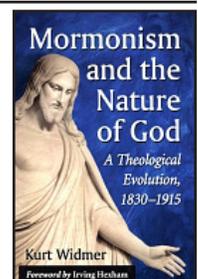
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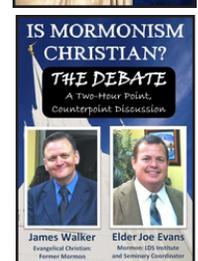
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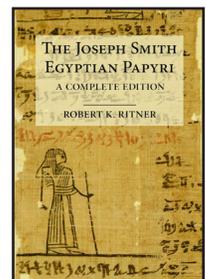


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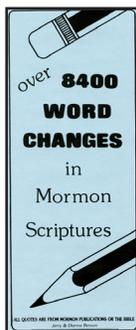
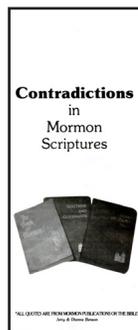
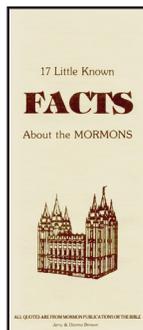
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