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# BLACKS AND PRIESTHOOD: 40 YEARS LATER

“for the seed of Cain were black and had not place among them.”

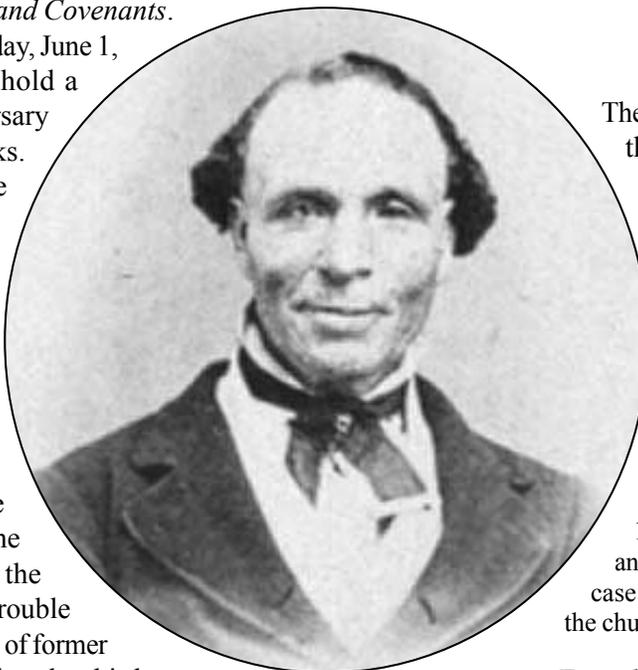
*Pearl of Great Price, Moses 7:22*

“We have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren,” wrote Spencer W. Kimball in the announcement of June 8, 1978, when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lifted the ban on blacks holding their priesthood, now published as Official Declaration 2 in the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

According to KSL.com, on Friday, June 1, 2018, the LDS Church will hold a celebration of the 40th anniversary of granting priesthood to blacks. Along with a message from the First Presidency of the LDS Church, two famous black singers, Gladys Knight and Alex Boyé will be included in the event. Ms. Knight joined Mormonism in 1997 and Mr. Boyé has sung with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.<sup>1</sup>

While the 1978 change was hailed as a great event, the practice and doctrine behind the racial restriction continues to trouble LDS members. In a 2011 survey of former LDS members it was found that the third greatest issue leading to their loss of faith was the doctrine of blacks and priesthood. The top two problems were polygamy/polyandry and Book of Abraham issues.<sup>2</sup>

Even though two or three blacks had been baptized and ordained to the priesthood during the lifetime of Joseph Smith this did not grant them access to the secret LDS temple rituals, thus barring them from the Mormon goal of eternal marriage and advancement to godhood.



Elijah Abel  
Early Black Priesthood Holder

## ELIJAH ABEL

The most well-known black to hold the priesthood during Smith's lifetime was Elijah Abel, a Seventy, who moved to Utah territory with the pioneers. LDS historian Andrew Jenson made note of Abel's ordination:

Abel, Elijah, the only colored man who is known to have been ordained to the priesthood . . . was ordained an elder March 3, 1836, and a seventy April 4, 1841, an exception having been made in his case with regard to the general rule of the church in relation to colored people.<sup>3</sup>

Even though Elijah Abel was allowed to retain his priesthood and go on a mission after the Mormons came to Utah, he was not allowed to participate in the temple endowments. Historian Armand Mauss commented on the priesthood ban:

It was periodically reconsidered after Brigham Young's death in 1877, usually in response to a petition

<sup>1</sup> “LDS Church to welcome Gladys Knight, Alex Boye for celebration of blacks and the priesthood,” KSL.com, May 2, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> “Understanding Mormon Disbelief,” p. 9. [http://www.whymormonsquestion.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Survey-Results\\_Understanding-Mormon-Disbelief-Mar2012-1.pdf](http://www.whymormonsquestion.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Survey-Results_Understanding-Mormon-Disbelief-Mar2012-1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Jenson, *L.D.S. Biographical Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, (1901–1936), p. 577.

from a black member or sympathizer. The first of these reconsiderations occurred as early as 1879, when Young's successor, John Taylor, responded to a petition from Elijah Abel (the sole surviving black member to have received the priesthood) that he be admitted to the sacred temple rites of the church. Taylor's consultations turned up a claim by two prominent local church leaders that in the mid-1830s they had heard Joseph Smith declare that Negroes could not be given the priesthood and that Abel was supposed to have been stripped of it before Smith died.

Taylor himself, though a contemporary of these witnesses and a close associate of Smith, could recall no such instruction. . . .

After that, each hearing and reconsideration by the church leadership simply brought another confirmation of the policy, so that by about 1920 there was an accumulation of precedents from previous leaders, as well as a rapidly receding institutional memory about the historical origins of the policy.<sup>4</sup>

Abel's requests for temple ordinances were repeatedly denied. He died in 1884 and was buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery. In 2002 a new headstone was placed on Elijah Abel's grave.

When it was finally ready, Apostle M. Russell Ballard was asked to "dedicate the new headstone." The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported on the event:

Abel was born a slave in Maryland in 1808. At 23, he fled to Canada and obtained free papers. A year later, he moved to Ohio and met Joseph Smith . . . Abel joined in 1832, and Smith ordained him into the priesthood four years later. . . .

Abel and his family joined the Mormon odyssey to Salt Lake City in 1852, among fewer than 100 black pioneers, and he helped construct the Salt Lake Temple.

That same year, however, new church leader Young prohibited blacks from joining the faith's all-male lay priesthood, a rule that would stand until Church President Spencer Kimball's 1978 revelation. . . . The reason Young and other church leaders cited (and continued to cite for 126 years) was the Bible-based belief that blacks were descendants of the wicked Cain. . . . Young also sent Abel on several missions in his later years. When Abel petitioned Young's successor, John Taylor, for his temple endowment, it was denied.<sup>5</sup>

Curiously, Abel's son Enoch and grandson Elijah were also ordained to the priesthood in Logan, Utah, in the early 1900s.<sup>6</sup>

4 Armand Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), pp. 215-216.

5 *Salt Lake Tribune*, (September 28, 2002): pp. C1 & C8.

6 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2004), p. 39.

While Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith was aware that Elijah Abel had been ordained to the LDS priesthood he maintained that it was invalid. In a letter dated April 10, 1963, he wrote:

According to the doctrine of the church, the Negro, because of some condition of unfaithfulness in the spirit—or pre-existence, was not valiant and hence was not denied the mortal probation, but was denied the blessing of the Priesthood. . . . It is true that elders of the church laid hands on a Negro and blessed him "apparently" with the Priesthood, but they could not give that which the Lord had denied. It is true that Elijah Abel was so "ordained." This was however before the matter had been submitted to the Prophet Joseph Smith.<sup>7</sup>

## SCRIPTURAL RACISM

While Joseph Smith did not officially deny priesthood to blacks, his new scriptures laid the groundwork for the later racial position of the church. His Book of Mormon and *Pearl of Great Price* reflected the common view of race in America at that time: White people were the enlightened ones, bringing the message of salvation to the dark heathens of the land. The main storyline of the Book of Mormon covers approximately 600 BC to 421 AD, with the righteous, white Nephites continually battling the wicked, dark Lamanites. Historian Newell G. Bringhurst observed:

Smith's account of these ancient Americans incorporated racist concepts of nonwhite racial inferiority as contrasted with white racial superiority. Mormon racism was particularly evident in those Book of Mormon passages outlining the conflicts and divisions plaguing the Nephite nation.<sup>8</sup>

Bringhurst continues,

Moreover, Laman, Lemuel, and their followers were cursed with a "skin of blackness" by "the Lord God" (2 Ne. 5:21-24). Thereafter they were known as Lamanites, "a dark, and loathsome, and filthy people full of idleness and all manner of abomination" (1 Ne. 12:23).

Yet the Book of Mormon held out the promise that when those Lamanites embraced the gospel "their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites" (3 Nephi 2:15).

Apostle Harold B. Lee explained:

Their dark skin was a curse put upon them because of their transgression, which in a day to come in their descendants

7 Letter from Joseph Fielding Smith to Joseph H. Henderson, April 10, 1963; photo of letter in *Curse of Cain?* Appendix C.

8 Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2018), p. 2.

will be lifted and they will become white and delightsome as they accept the Gospel and turn to the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

Joseph Smith's racial views also appear in the Book of Moses and Book of Abraham, part of the *Pearl of Great Price*.<sup>10</sup> The Book of Moses relates that "the seed of Cain were black and had not place among them" (Moses 7:22), and the Book of Abraham refers to "Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood" (Abraham 1:27).

This teaching was soon embraced by the leaders of the LDS Church. Apostle John Taylor, who went on to become the third president of the church, wrote in 1845:

The descendants of Ham, besides a **black skin** which has ever been a **curse** that has followed an apostate of **the holy priesthood**, as well as a black heart, have been servants to both Shem and Japheth, and the abolitionists are trying to **make void the curse of God**, but it will require more power than man possesses to counteract the **decrees of eternal wisdom**.<sup>11</sup>

After the Mormons migrated to what became Utah territory, on February 5, 1852, Brigham Young made denial of priesthood to blacks a rule of the church:

If there never was a prophet or apostle of Jesus Christ spoke it before, I tell you, this people that are commonly called Negroes are the children of old Cain. I know they are. I know that **they cannot bear rule in the priesthood**, for the curse on them was to remain upon them, until the residue of the posterity of Michael and his wife receive the blessings, . . .<sup>12</sup>

This same teaching was repeated by Brigham Young in 1859:

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 [blacks] 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.<sup>13</sup>

9 Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living*, (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1973), p. 167.

10 For a fuller list of LDS scriptures relating to race, see <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/racialstatements.htm>.

11 John Taylor, editor, *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, p. 857.

12 Brigham Young Address to Legislature—Feb. 5, 1852. <https://bit.ly/2JiCcGx>

13 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, pp. 290-291.

## SEALED AS A SERVANT TO JOSEPH SMITH

Jane Manning James, a black convert, is an example of how firm the church leaders were about denying temple ordinances to blacks.

She claimed that while living with the Joseph Smith family in the 1843 time frame the Smiths had offered to have her sealed to them as part of their family,<sup>14</sup> but not understanding what that meant, she declined. Years later, living in Utah as a faithful LDS member, she longed for an eternal family and repeatedly requested to be sealed to her husband and children but the leaders refused.



Jane Manning James

Jane then approached the leaders about being sealed to Joseph Smith, as Emma had suggested. The leaders finally offered to seal her "as a Servitor for eternity to the Prophet Joseph Smith."<sup>15</sup> According to the journal of Joseph Christenson, recorder in the Salt Lake temple, the ceremony was done on May 18, 1894:

"Aunt Jane," a negress, was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith as a servitor for all eternity.<sup>16</sup>

However, Jane was not allowed to attend the ceremony. Historian Max Mueller noted:

The Salt Lake Temple records indicate that **James herself was not permitted to participate in her own circumscribed sealing**. Instead, famed suffragist and Relief Society leader Bathsheba W. Smith served as James's proxy during the ceremony, an unusual occurrence because proxies were employed almost exclusively for dead participants. President Joseph F. Smith stood in for his uncle. He also officiated the ceremony, declaring the "Negro Woman" Jane Elizabeth Manning James would be a "**Servitor to Joseph Smith** . . . and to his household for all eternity."<sup>17</sup>

Scholar Jessie L. Embry explained that a special ceremony was created for the occasion:

14 "The Autobiography of Jane Manning James," <https://history.lds.org/article/jane-manning-james-life-sketch?lang=eng>

15 D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), p. 795.

16 Journal of Joseph Christenson, microfilm in LDS Church Historical Library.

17 Max Perry Mueller, *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2017), p. 151. See also *The Development of LDS Temple Worship: 1846-2000*, edited by Devery S. Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), p. 97.

... the First Presidency “decided she might be **adopted into the family of Joseph Smith as a servant, which was done, a special ceremony having been prepared for the purpose.**” The minutes of the Council of Twelve Apostles continued, “But Aunt Jane was not satisfied with this, and as a mark of dissatisfaction she applied again after this for sealing blessings, but of course in vain.”<sup>18</sup>

However, Jane continued to request sealing to her husband and children. Wilford Woodruff, fourth president of the LDS Church, mentioned Jane in his journal for October 16, 1894:

We had Meeting with several individuals among the rest **Black Jane wanted to know if I would not let her have her Endowments in the Temple.** This I Could not do as it was **against the Law of God.** As Cain killed Abel **All the seed of Cain would have to wait for Redemption untill all the seed that Abel would have had that may Come through other men Can be redeemed.**<sup>19</sup>

Jane died in 1908 without ever being sealed to any of her family. One wonders how the LDS leaders can argue that the ban on black participation in priesthood and temple rites was not considered doctrine, or ordained of God? The continual denial of temple sealing to Jane, yet offering her a special temple sealing of servitude, came directly from the LDS leadership, whose decisions are assumed to represent God’s will.

There is a certain irony to the fact that a painting of Jane Manning James, who pleaded for years to be sealed to her family, now hangs in both the Payson, Utah, temple and Johannesburg, South Africa temple. It is titled “Thou Didst Hear Me,” painted by Elspeth Young. Dana Dodini reported:

Young’s other painting in the temple, “Thou Didst Hear Me,” is a reproduction giclée. The original oil painting of “Thou Didst Hear Me” was acquired by the LDS Church and currently hangs in the Johannesburg, South Africa temple.

The model is a young woman native to Ghana, Africa, and is the granddaughter of the first member of the church in that area. Elspeth used the same model for a painting of early church pioneer Jane Elizabeth Manning, a faithful friend of Joseph Smith, entitled “Till We Meet Again” which currently hangs in the LDS Conference Center in Salt Lake City.<sup>20</sup>

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The ban on blacks continued into the next century.

18 Jessie L. Embry, *Black Saints in a White Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), pp. 40-41.

19 *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 1833-1898, vol. 9, typescript, edited by Scott G. Kenney (SLC: Signature Books, 1985), p. 322.

20 *Daily Universe*, “Local artist celebrates pioneers through art in Payson Temple,” by Dana Dodini, June 5, 2015. <https://bit.ly/2si7zqS>. See also <https://bit.ly/2IYcd3E>.

Writing in 1935 Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth president of the LDS Church, gave this explanation of the curse on Cain:

Not only was Cain called upon to suffer [for killing Abel], but because of his wickedness he became the father of an **inferior race**. A curse was placed upon him and **that curse** has been continued through **his lineage** and must do so while time endures. Millions of souls have come into this world **curled with a black skin** and have been **denied the privilege of Priesthood** and the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel. These are **the descendants of Cain**. Moreover, they have been made to feel their **inferiority** and have been separated from the rest of mankind from the beginning. Enoch saw the people of Canaan, descendants of Cain, and he says, “and there was a **blackness** came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were **despised** among all people.” [Moses 7:8]<sup>21</sup>

The LDS First Presidency issued an official statement on the issue of race on August 17, 1949:

The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of **direct commandment from the Lord**, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. . . .

The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the **conduct of spirits in the premortal existence** has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality . . . Under this principle there is no injustice whatsoever involved in this deprivation as to the holding of the priesthood by the Negroes.—The First Presidency<sup>22</sup>

In the wake of the civil rights movement political pressure was mounting for the LDS Church to change its racial restrictions. In 1967 N. Eldon Tanner, a member of the First Presidency of the LDS Church, was very emphatic that blacks could not receive the priesthood. In an interview he stated:

“The church has no intention of changing its doctrine on the Negro,” N. Eldon Tanner, counselor to the First Presidency told SEATTLE during his recent visit here. “Throughout the history of the original Christian church, the Negro never held the priesthood. There’s really nothing we can do to change this. **It’s a law of God.**”<sup>23</sup>

21 Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Genealogical Society of Utah, 1935), pp. 101-102.

22 “LDS Church First Presidency Statement on the Question of Blacks Within the Church,” August 17, 1949, as quoted in *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, p. 226.

23 *Seattle Magazine*, (December 1967): p. 60.

Such statements identifying blacks with the curse of Cain, or denying blacks the priesthood because it was the law of God, were typical in Mormonism prior to 1978.<sup>24</sup>

## NO MISSIONARIES TO BLACKS

While there was no restriction on blacks joining the LDS Church, there was no direct effort to evangelize them either. Apostle Bruce McConkie, writing in 1958, declared:

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. **The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . .** Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned . . .<sup>25</sup>

Just prior to the change on ordaining blacks, William E. Berrett, Vice Administrator of the Brigham Young University, wrote: “. . . no direct efforts have been made to proselyte among them.”<sup>26</sup>

However, the Bible tells Christians to offer salvation and baptism to all mankind, regardless of race. Jesus said “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). In the book of Acts, Philip was commanded to preach the gospel to an Ethiopian (a black) who was then baptized (Acts 8:26-39). Nothing is said about the Ethiopian being restricted in his service to God.

## NO INTERMARRIAGE

Since the Mormons viewed black skin as evidence of God’s curse, they were opposed to racial intermarriage. In 1845 Joseph Smith declared, “Had I anything to do with the negro, I would confine them by strict law to their own species, and put them on a national equalization.”<sup>27</sup>

In 1863 Brigham Young declared that those who engaged in intermarriage were worthy of death:

Shall I tell you **the law of God in regard to the African race**? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, **is death on the spot**. This will always be so.<sup>28</sup>

Intermarriage with a black person was seen as bringing the priesthood curse on their posterity. In 1954 Apostle Mark E. Peterson instructed:

The reason that one would lose his blessings by marrying a Negro is due to the restriction placed upon them. “No person having the least particle of Negro blood can hold the Priesthood” (Brigham Young). It does not matter if they are one-sixth Negro or one-hundred and sixth, the curse of no Priesthood is the same. If an individual who is entitled to the Priesthood marries a Negro, the Lord has decreed that only spirits who are not eligible for the Priesthood will come to that marriage as children. To intermarry with a Negro is to forfeit a “Nation of Priesthood holders” . . .<sup>29</sup>

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie advised against intermarriage in the 1979 edition of his book, *Mormon Doctrine*:

However, in a broad general sense, caste systems have their root and origin in the gospel itself, and when they operate according to the divine decree, the resultant restrictions and segregation are right and proper and have the approval of the Lord. To illustrate: Cain, Ham, and the whole negro race have been cursed with a black skin, the mark of Cain, so they can be identified as a caste apart, a people with whom the other descendants of Adam should not intermarry.<sup>30</sup>

## SEGREGATED BLOOD?

The LDS fear of having even one drop of black blood led to the policy of segregating blood in Utah hospitals under the control of the LDS Church. Lester Bush, an LDS historian, quoted an early statement of the LDS First Presidency regarding the problem of “negro blood”:

By 1907 the First Presidency and Quorum had . . . ruled that “no one known to have in his veins **negro blood**, (it matters not how remote a degree) can either have the priesthood in any degree or the blessings of the Temple of God; no matter how otherwise worthy he may be.”<sup>31</sup>

Given the statements of past LDS leaders against having “one drop” of black blood in their veins, it is no surprise that Mormons extended this to segregating the blood supply in their hospitals. While this practice was common in the past, the U.S. military ended its policy

24 Tanner, *Curse of Cain*, pp. 24-36.

25 Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), p. 477; changed in later editions.

26 John J. Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro*, supplement by William E. Berrett (Horizon, 1978), part 2, p. 65.

27 Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, vol. 5, (January 2, 1845), pp. 217-218.

28 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10, p. 110.

29 Mark E. Peterson, “Race Problems—As They Affect the Church,” Address given at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, delivered at BYU, August 27, 1954.

30 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), p. 114.

31 Lester Bush, “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 38.

of segregating blood on the basis of race in 1949. The American Red Cross continued to segregate blood until the 1960s. The hospitals under LDS control segregated blood on the basis of race until the 1970s. Writing in 1978, reporters David Briscoe and George Buck explained:

For all too many Mormons, the figurative role that “blood” plays in Mormon doctrine in denoting ancestry, has been all too literal. Less than two weeks after the Priesthood announcement, Consolidated Blood Services for the intermountain region announced its first agreement ever to handle blood bank services for a group of hospitals with previous LDS connections, including LDS Hospital, Primary Children’s and Cottonwood Hospitals in Salt Lake City; McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden and Utah Valley Hospital in Provo. At one time in the past, hospitals administered by the LDS Church kept separate the blood donated by blacks and whites. Although this has not been the case for several years, some patients who have expressed concern about receiving blood from black donors have been reassured it would not happen—as if the policy were still in effect.<sup>32</sup>

## PRE-EARTH LIFE AND RACE

To better understand the Mormon attitude concerning blacks, a person must first be aware of their doctrine of pre-mortal life. While standard Christianity views man’s origin in the womb, such as Psalm 139:13, Mormonism teaches that we have eternal existence as “intelligences” and were born to Heavenly Father and Mother in a pre-mortal existence. Joseph Smith taught that man is the same species as God and is his direct offspring, raised to maturity prior to being sent to earth as an infant. Preaching at the funeral of an early Mormon, Joseph Smith stated:

First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is **a man like unto one of yourselves**, that is the great secret . . . I am going to tell you **how God came to be God**. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity . . . **God himself; the Father of us all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did . . . The mind of man is as immortal as God himself**. I know that my testimony is true, . . . their spirits existed co-equal with God . . . **God never did have power to create the spirit of man at all.**<sup>33</sup>

The LDS Church teaches that God was once a mortal on some other world. He and his wife were faithful on that earth, died, were resurrected and eventually advanced to godhood. Their spirit children, who were literally born to them in that heavenly realm, were later sent to an

earth to obtain a mortal body and possibly advance as their heavenly parents did before them. However, some of God’s progeny were less faithful during their “first estate” and thus did not merit as favorable a birth into mortality as others.

Alvin R. Dyer, assistant to the Twelve Apostles and later ordained an apostle, spoke on racial issues and man’s pre-earth life to the Norwegian Mission gathering in Oslo, Norway, on March 18, 1961. In this talk he said:

I want to talk to you a little bit now about something that is not missionary work, and **what I say is not to be given to your investigators** by any matter of means. . . . **Why is it that you are white and not colored:** Have you ever asked yourself that question? Who had anything to do with your being born into the Church and **not born a Chinese or a Hindu, or a Negro?** Is God such an unjust person that He would make you white and free and make **a Negro cursed under the cursing of Cain that he could not hold the Priesthood of God?** . . . Those who have been **cursed** in the **pre-existence** were born through this **lineage of Ham**. . . . Why is a Negro a Negro? . . . The reason that spirits are **born into Negro bodies** is because those **spirits** rejected the Priesthood of God in the **pre-existence**. This is the reason why you have Negroes upon the earth.

You will observe that when Cain was influenced by the power of Lucifer to follow him and to fall down and worship him in the beginning, it was then that . . . Cain rejected the counsel of God. He rejected again the Priesthood as his forebearers had done in the **pre-existence**. Therefore, the **curse of the pre-existence** was made institute **through the loins of Cain**. Consequently, you have the beginning of the race of men and women into which would be born those in the **pre-existence** who had rejected the Priesthood of God. . . . **Ham reinstated the curse of the pre-existence when he rejected the Priesthood of Noah**, and in consequence of that he preserved the curse on the earth. Therefore, the Negroes to be born thereafter, or **those who were to become Negroes, were to be born through the loins of Ham.**<sup>34</sup>

In a letter dated April 10, 1963, Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith explained that one is born black due to his “unfaithfulness” in the spirit world:

According to the **doctrine** of the church, the Negro, because of **some condition of unfaithfulness in the spirit-or pre-existence**, was **not valiant** and hence was not denied the mortal probation, but was **denied the blessings of the Priesthood.**<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> David Briscoe and George Buck, “Black Friday,” *Utah Holiday*, (July 1978): pp. 39-40

<sup>33</sup> *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, pp. 613-615; also in *History of the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 302-312.

<sup>34</sup> Alvin R. Dyer, “For What Purpose,” talk in Oslo, Norway, March 18, 1961, typed copy in our files. Part of this talk is quoted in *The Church and the Negro*, by John L. Lund, 1967, p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> Letter to Joseph H. Henderson from Joseph Fielding Smith, April 10, 1963. Photo of letter in *Curse of Cain?* Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Appendix A.

To counter the many past statements of LDS leaders relating to premortal performance determining race, the church posted a *Gospel Topics* essay online, “Race and Priesthood,” which states:

Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; . . .<sup>36</sup>

Yet their leaders continue to speak of those who have been blessed according to their pre-mortal life. As recently as 2008 Terry Ball, then the Dean of Religious Education at BYU, taught that our place on earth was assigned according to our performance in the spirit world:

Have you ever wondered why you were born where and when you were born? **Why were you not born 500 years ago in some primitive aboriginal culture in some isolated corner of the world?** Is the timing and placing of our birth capricious? For Latter-day Saints, the answer is no. Fundamental to our faith is the understanding that before we came to this earth we lived in a premortal existence with a loving Heavenly Father. **We further understand that in that premortal state we had agency and that we grew and developed as we used that agency. Some, as Abraham learned, became noble and great ones (see Abraham 3:22–23).** We believe that when it came time for us to experience mortality, a loving Heavenly Father, who knows each of us well, sent us to earth at the time and in the place and in circumstances that would best help us reach our divine potential . . .<sup>37</sup>

While Terry Ball appealed to Abraham 3:22-23 to support the LDS idea of the “noble and great ones” being chosen for future places of honor on earth, he failed to mention the earlier passages that speak of Pharaoh, being from “the loins of Ham,” which “preserved the curse in the land” and that because of that lineage “he could not have the right of Priesthood” (Abraham 1:21-27). It isn’t enough for the LDS leaders to simply say they reject all forms of racism and yet retain racist doctrines in their scriptures.

## PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS DECLARE LINEAGE

The LDS *Gospel Topics* essay suggests two common explanations as to why blacks were denied priesthood:

The curse of Cain was often put forward as justification for the priesthood and temple restrictions. Around the turn of the century, another explanation gained

<sup>36</sup> “Race and Priesthood,” <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>

<sup>37</sup> Terry Ball, “To Confirm and Inform: A Blessing of Higher Education,” speech given at BYU (March 11, 2008). [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/terry-b-ball\\_confirm-inform-blessing-higher-education/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/terry-b-ball_confirm-inform-blessing-higher-education/)

currency: **blacks were said to have been less than fully valiant in the premortal battle** against Lucifer and, as a consequence, were restricted from priesthood and temple blessings.<sup>38</sup>

While the current *Gospel Topics* statement rejects this concept, it has been the common view in LDS circles for decades. Valiant spirits were born white, non-valiant spirits were born black. Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith wrote in 1954:

There were no neutrals in the war in heaven. All took sides either with Christ or with Satan. Every man had his agency there, and **men receive rewards here based upon their actions there**, just as they will receive rewards hereafter for deeds done in the body. **The Negro, evidently, is receiving the reward he merits.**<sup>39</sup>

In his book, *The Way to Perfection*, Joseph Fielding Smith equated race with pre-earth merit:

Is it not a reasonable belief that the Lord would select the choice spirits to come through the better grades of nations? Moreover, is it not reasonable to believe that less worthy spirits would come through less favored lineage? Does this not account in very large part for the various grades of color and degree of intelligence we find in the earth?<sup>40</sup>

Since the days of Joseph Smith, Mormons have received “Patriarchal Blessings,” a sort of guide for your life and declaration of your lineage. Blessings usually make mention, among other things, of your pre-mortal life, your faithfulness and being valiant, all of which determine your lineage. In my February 10, 1955, blessing I [Sandra Tanner] was told:

You have **royal blood in your veins** for you are a descendant of Father Abraham. You come from the house of Joseph the favorite son of Jacob who was sold into Egypt and from the loins of Ephraim. . . . You were **valiant in your first estate** [pre-mortal life] and the Lord has **rewarded you** for it. You struggled **valiantly** that we might have our free agency and the Lord held you in reserve to come forth at this late time to the home of goodly parents.<sup>41</sup>

Mormons today are still being told they were valiant in the spirit world. In a 2005 Patriarchal blessing a white woman in Utah was told:

<sup>38</sup> “Race and Priesthood,” <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), vol. 1, pp. 65-66.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Way to Perfection*, p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> “LDS Patriarchal Blessings” by Sandra Tanner, <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/patriarchal blessing.htm>

You are one of his faithful, devoted, and **noble spirits**, and He is pleased with the way you are conducting your life. . . . You lived with Him in the pre-mortal world and there you became **a faithful and valiant spirit**.<sup>42</sup>

If one teaches that some are granted a favorable birth due to pre-mortal performance then it stands to reason that some are given unfavorable births due to lack of performance. Mormonism will never be completely free of racism as long as it continues to teach that your pre-earth conduct determines your lineage and quality of your birth.

## FOLKLORE OR DOCTRINE

Today the LDS Church seems to be categorizing the teachings of past prophets on racial issues as “folklore.” In an article commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of lifting the ban on blacks, Sheldon F. Child, of the Council of Seventies, explained to a reporter:

“We have to keep in mind that **it’s folklore and not doctrine**,” Elder Child said. “It’s never been recorded as such. Many opinions, personal opinions, were spoken. I’m just so grateful for this [1978] revelation,” he said, adding he can recall exactly where he was and what he was doing when he heard the news 30 years ago.<sup>43</sup>

If the leaders’ sermons on race were merely “folklore,” why did it require a revelation to change the practice? Why did President Spencer W. Kimball need to plead “long and earnestly” for God to give priesthood to blacks? This certainly makes it look like the brethren believed God was the one withholding priesthood.

Despite the lifting of the priesthood ban in 1978, the LDS church was still left with years of sermons denigrating blacks. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie counseled:

There are statements in our literature by the early Brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things, and people write me letters and say, “You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?” And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. **Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation.** We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.<sup>44</sup>

42 Patriarchal Blessing, H. M. Palmer, February 27, 2005.

43 “LDS Marking 30-Year Milestone,” *Deseret News*, June 7, 2008. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700232679/LDS-marking-30-year-milestone.html>

44 “All are Alike Unto God,” Bruce R. McConkie, Aug. 18, 1978, [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/bruce-r-mcconkie\\_alike-unto-god-2/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/bruce-r-mcconkie_alike-unto-god-2/)

But if the leaders’ earlier sermons relating to the “curse of Cain” and the ban on blacks holding the priesthood were simply due to “limited understanding” how are the LDS faithful to have confidence in their leaders’ sermons today? The leaders were certainly claiming their sermons on race were doctrine and the will of God at the time.

Peggy Stack, reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, observed:

Latter-day Saints everywhere recognized the move [in 1978] as a game-changing milestone. It opened the door for wider proselytizing in Africa and other continents with black populations, and allowed Mormonism to woo potential believers in far-flung regions previously off-limits because of the priesthood prohibition.

Yet dropping the ban did not—indeed could not—eliminate all racism in the church.

LDS leaders offered no apology nor, at the time, any in-depth analysis of the reasons for the exclusionary policy. Justifications, including the notion that blacks were descendants of a biblical bad guy, Cain, or that they were less valiant in a premortal existence, continued to be taught and touted by members. Statements dismissing or denigrating blacks offered by previous Mormon authorities remained in print and often were embraced by believers long after the ban’s demise.

Racial strife—including slurs and denigrating remarks—still “lifts its ugly head . . . even right here among us,” President Gordon B. Hinckley preached in a 2006 LDS General Conference address. “. . . I remind you that no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ.”<sup>45</sup>

Lifting the ban, as Peggy Stack pointed out, has opened the door for LDS missionaries in areas of darker-skinned people. There are now 578,310 members of the LDS Church in Africa and 1,155,764 in Asia.

Matthew Bowman, professor at Henderson State University, reported:

Today about one in 10 converts to Mormonism are black, but surveys report that only about 1 to 3 percent of Mormons in the United States are African-American.<sup>46</sup>

In 2013 the LDS Church attempted to provide answers for the lifting of the priesthood ban with an essay in their *Gospel Topics* series entitled “Race and Priesthood.” But instead of giving a clear explanation of their doctrine on race or a denunciation of Brigham Young and other past prophets’ statements on race, they tried to rationalize

45 Peggy Stack, “39 years later, priesthood ban is history, but racism within Mormon ranks isn’t, black members say,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, (June 9, 2017).

46 Matthew Bowman, “Global Spread of Mormonism,” in *Los Angeles Times*, (May 29, 2018). <http://www.latimes.com/sns-mormons-confront-a-history-of-church-racism-95328-20180529-story.html>

their earlier racism as no worse than that of others in the nation. The essay states:

The Church was established in 1830, during an era of great racial division in the United States. At the time, many people of African descent lived in slavery, and racial distinctions and prejudice were not just common but customary among white Americans. Those realities, though unfamiliar and disturbing today, influenced all aspects of people's lives, including their religion. Many Christian churches of that era, for instance, were segregated along racial lines.<sup>47</sup>

While the above statement is true it fails to explain why Mormonism lagged so far behind the rest of the United States in granting equal status to blacks. Despite the wide-spread acceptance of racism during that time, many Christians were actually preaching against it in the 1800s. By the time the LDS Church opened its priesthood to blacks in 1978 they were embarrassingly behind the times.

If the LDS Church is truly led by prophetic wisdom why wasn't the policy changed before the civil rights movement of the mid-1900s instead of years after? In contrast to this, Joseph Smith's son, as president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, now known as the Community of Christ, opened the door to black ordination during Brigham Young's lifetime. Christian scholar Robert Bowman observed:

It is ironic that during Brigham Young's tenure as president of the LDS Church, his main rival as the true prophetic successor to Joseph Smith went in a completely different direction on the issue of blacks and the priesthood. In 1865 Joseph Smith III (the son of Joseph Smith Jr.), the first president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, issued a revelation calling for the ordination of men "of every race" to the priesthood. Yet according to the Utah-based LDS Church, Joseph Smith III was not a prophet at all. How is it that an uninspired or false prophet could see the wisdom in 1865 of inviting people of all races to share fully in the ministries of the restored Church, but Brigham Young, supposedly the true prophet, could not? Indeed, how is it that it took the Mormon Church *113 years* after Joseph Smith III to come around to the same conclusion?<sup>48</sup>

Author John G. Turner, writing in the *New York Times*, observed:

White Christians of many denominational stripes used repugnant language to justify slavery and the inferiority of black people. . . . Most Protestant denominations, however, gradually apologized for their past racism.

In contrast, while Mormon leaders generically criticize past and present racism, they carefully avoid any specific criticism of past presidents and apostles, careful not to disrupt traditional reverence for the church's prophets.<sup>49</sup>

Joel Groat, of the Institute of Religious Research, compiled the following after comparing the past LDS statements on race with the current *Gospel Topics* essay:

- For about 125 years the Mormon prophets and apostles taught these ideas not as "theories" but as doctrines originating in divine revelation, given in Scripture and reaffirmed by the living prophets from Brigham Young to David O. McKay as commandments from God. All Latter-day Saints were expected to view them as such.
- During that time they simultaneously affirmed: "Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord." This reinforced the fact that their racist policies came directly from God.
- However when faced with the embarrassing and damaging racist implications of views still being taught in the LDS Church over 30 years after the ban was lifted, current LDS leaders provided the following explanation on the official church website in 2013.
  1. None of the prior teachings related to race and the priesthood were doctrines of the church; they were simply theories.
  2. These ideas originated not with God but with Brigham Young, who was influenced by the social and cultural ideas of his time.
  3. They as a church were officially disavowing these theories as racist and wrong.<sup>50</sup>

It seems the Mormons want it both ways, past prophets and apostles were true representatives of God, but at the same time many of their sermons were racist and "folklore."

While we applaud the LDS Church's efforts to remove racism from its teachings, one wonders if it can truly succeed as long as the Book of Mormon and the *Pearl of Great Price*, with their racist teachings, are embraced as the word of God? We are reminded of Paul's instructions to the Galatians:

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* (Galatians 3:28)

47 <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>

48 "Race and the Priesthood: Analysis of the New Mormon Statement," Robert M. Bowman Jr., February 27, 2014. <http://mit.irr.org/race-and-priesthood-analysis-of-new-mormon-statement>

49 John G. Turner, "Why Race is Still a Problem for Mormons," in *New York Times* (Aug. 18, 2012).

50 Joel B. Groat, "Exploring Mormon Racism: The All-Are-Justified-the-Same Approach," <http://www.mrm.org/sharing-with-mormons-priesthood-ban>.

## LDS Priesthood—Invention or Restoration?

One of the major claims of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that it is the only true church, with the only authority to act in God's name. Mormonism has a lay priesthood, its leaders are not trained in theology or biblical languages, but are usually businessmen advanced due to faithful church service. In the fifth and sixth Articles of Faith of the LDS Church we read:

5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.<sup>1</sup>

The LDS Church believes that God removed His priesthood authority from earth shortly after the death of Christ's apostles. In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read:

LDS rejection of much post biblical Christianity is based on belief in an ancient apostasy . . . **Apostolic authority ceased just after the New Testament period**, and without apostolic leadership and authority the Church was soon overwhelmed by alien intellectual and cultural pressures.<sup>2</sup>

But one wonders how the early church could go astray so quickly and priesthood be lost? Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18 that "the gates of hell" would not prevail against his church. Also, according to Joseph Smith, four of Christ's disciples did not die but have been left on earth to do missionary work. These include the Apostle John and three Book of Mormon disciples.

According to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, John, the apostle, was transformed and Jesus left him on earth to do evangelism. Joseph Smith claimed to receive by revelation the following information about John:

And the Lord said unto me: **John my beloved**, what desirest thou? . . . And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me **power over death, that I may live and bring souls**

**unto thee**. And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this **thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shalt prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people**.<sup>3</sup>

Evidently Joseph Smith misinterpreted John 21:20-23. Jesus did not say that John would remain alive, but merely pointed out to Peter that John's future mission was not Peter's concern. The Book of Mormon also teaches that three Nephites, Jesus' disciples in the New World, did not taste of death but were transformed and would remain on earth to do evangelism. (See 3 Nephi, chapter 28.) LDS Apostle Jeffrey Holland explained the role of the three Nephites in our day:

**These three Nephites continue in their translated state today, just as when they went throughout the lands of Nephi**. . . they are yet ministering to Jew, Gentile, and the scattered tribes of Israel, even all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.<sup>4</sup>

How could there have been a total apostasy, as asserted by the LDS Church, if there have been four apostles on the earth since the time of Christ? Why wouldn't they have been able to ordain future apostles and keep the church from falling into a total apostasy?

### NECESSITY OF PRIESTHOOD

In the February 2004 issue of the *Ensign* LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley laid out the four cornerstones of Mormonism. The first is Jesus Christ and his plan of salvation, second is Joseph Smith's first vision, third is the Book of Mormon and fourth is priesthood authority. The LDS Church claims that those holding its priesthood are the only ones recognized by God to perform baptisms, eternal marriages and ordinances of the gospel. Mormonism rejects baptisms done by any other church. The LDS manual *Doctrines of the Gospel* explains:

What is the [LDS] Priesthood? It is nothing more nor less than the power of God delegated to man by

1 Articles of Faith, *Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve Inc., 2013), p. 60.

2 Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), vol. 1, p. 400.

3 *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve Inc., [LDS Church] 2013), 7:1-3.

4 Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), p. 307.

which man can . . . act legitimately; not assuming that authority, nor borrowing it from generations that are dead and gone, . . .<sup>5</sup>

Marvin Cowan explained how the Mormons misuse John 15:16 in their effort to prove their priesthood “ordination” claims:

In support of their priesthood doctrine, LDS often quote *part* of John 15:16, where Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you.” LDS claim that Jesus was speaking about the priesthood, but priesthood is not mentioned in this context or anywhere in any of the four gospels! This verse says “ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, *that* ye should go and bring forth fruit . . .”

Neither John 15:16 nor any other New Testament verse says that Jesus laid His hands on the disciples and ordained them to the priesthood, but LDS claim that is what the word “ordain” means. However, D. & C. 89:14 says, “all grain is *ordained* for the use of man and of beast.” Did someone lay hands on the grain and give it the Priesthood? Obviously that is not the meaning of “ordain.” While it is possible for someone to be ordained by “laying on of hands,” that word really means to “appoint” or “point out.” D. & C. 89 also mentions that herbs and flesh of beasts and fowls are “*ordained* for the use of man.” Thus, even LDS scripture shows that “ordained” means “appointed,” *not* lay hands on to give some priesthood office.

The LDS also use Heb. 5:4 to support their doctrine of an ordained priesthood. It says, “No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron.” Then they claim that Aaron was called by Moses in Ex. 28:1. But, neither Heb. 5:4 nor Ex. 28:1 say anything about “laying on of hands or “ordaining” anything. Heb. 5:4 says, “called of *God*,” not “called by Moses” or “called by laying on of hands” as LDS interpret it. Ex. 4:27 declares, “The Lord said unto Aaron . . .” which shows that Aaron was called by the Lord, not Moses. In Num. 18:7 the Lord said to Aaron, “I have given your priests office unto you . . .” Even in D. & C. 132:59, the Lord says, “Verily if a man be called of my Father as was Aaron, *by my own voice* and *by the voice of Him that sent me* and I have endowed him with the keys of the power of this priesthood . . .”

Notice that LDS scripture says Aaron and those with LDS priesthood were called by the “voice” of God, not by laying on of hands! Neither Aaron nor anyone else was ever *ordained* to the Aaronic priest’s office in the Old Testament. The only “priests” who were ordained in the Old Testament were idolatrous priests (II Kings 23:5; II Chron. 11:15)! Aaron was “anointed” (Ex. 40:13), but so was the tabernacle and everything in it (Ex. 40:9-15). Therefore, this “anointing” was not the “laying on of

hands” to give the priesthood, unless the tabernacle and everything in it were also ordained to the priesthood! A good concordance will show that many other things in the Old Testament were “ordained,” but the priests who served God were not!<sup>6</sup>

### “THE PROPER ORDER”

The LDS Church teaches that priesthood authority must be acquired by the proper means. In *Doctrines of the Gospel* we read that every priesthood act must be done “in the proper way, and after the proper order.”<sup>7</sup>

This raises the question as whether or not Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were baptized and ordained by proper “priesthood authority” in the “proper way”? Joseph Smith’s account of the event is published at the back of the *Pearl of Great Price*. In it Smith relates that while working on the translation of the Book of Mormon in May of 1829, he and Oliver Cowdery became concerned about baptism and went out into the woods to pray:

While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, **he ordained us**, saying:

*Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the **Priesthood of Aaron**, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; . . .*

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to **go and be baptized**, and gave us directions that **I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me**.

Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which **I laid my hands upon his head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood**—for so we were commanded. . . . It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized.<sup>8</sup>

How could the angel, elsewhere identified as John the Baptist, ordain them to the priesthood before they were baptized? According to LDS doctrine today, a man must be baptized by someone holding the LDS priesthood authority before he can be ordained to the priesthood.

6 Marvin Cowan, *Mormon Claims Answered* (Utah Christian Publication, 1997), pp. 68-69.

7 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 68.

8 *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:68-71.

5 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, Student Manual, Religion 430 and 431 (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, Inc. , 2010), p. 67.

If John the Baptist's ordination was valid, why did Joseph and Oliver need to baptize each other and then re-ordain each other to the same priesthood? Why wouldn't the angel baptize them first and then ordain them?

Merrill J. Bateman, one of the top leaders in the LDS Church, emphasized the necessity of restoring proper priesthood authority to Joseph Smith:

One of the remarkable **evidences** of the Restoration is the testimony of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery **regarding the manner in which the priesthood and its directing powers were returned to earth.** . . . John the Baptist brought back the Aaronic Priesthood with the keys of repentance and baptism. Peter, James, and John restored not only the Melchizedek Priesthood but also "the keys of [the] kingdom." . . .

In contrast, 19th-century ministers in the Palmyra environs, not understanding the great Apostasy that had taken place, believed in an entirely different process for priesthood reception. They believed that the power to preach came through an inner calling to a priesthood of believers.<sup>9</sup>

If such keys were needed why didn't Peter, James and John restore both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods? Since Mormonism claims that these men held the authority for both, why would John the Baptist need to come at all?

## WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

If Peter, James and John conferred the priesthood on Joseph and Oliver, when did it happen? In his story printed at the back of the *Pearl of Great Price* Joseph Smith stated that on May 15, 1829, the Aaronic Priesthood was conferred on him and Oliver Cowdery. While Smith is confident on the date for the Aaronic Priesthood, there is no date given for his ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood. The *History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith, shows that there is real confusion as to when Peter, James and John supposedly appeared.

. . . before the 6th of April, 1830, and probably before that very month of June, 1829, had expired Peter, James and John had come and conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, . . .<sup>10</sup>

Today the LDS church maintains that after the spring of 1829 both priesthoods were functioning in the church. However, the earliest LDS historical documents show that the concept of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods

were not taught prior to 1831 but were products of Joseph Smith's evolving theology. Historian D. Michael Quinn explained:

**A closer look at contemporary records indicates that men were first ordained to the higher priesthood over a year after the church's founding.** No mention of angelic ordinations can be found in **original** documents until **1834-35**. Thereafter accounts of the visit of Peter, James, and John by Cowdery and Smith remained vague and contradictory.<sup>11</sup>

Mormonism maintains that when John the Baptist appeared to Smith and Cowdery in 1829 they received the Aaronic Priesthood, which included the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest. When Peter, James and John supposedly appeared a short while later, they conferred on Smith and Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood, which included the offices of elder, seventy, high priest, bishop, patriarch, Apostle and Prophet.

While one can find mention of such offices as elder or teacher in early LDS documents, these were not considered part of a larger priesthood system such as Melchizedek or Aaronic. Smith seems to have initially used the designations of elders and teachers in the same way that other churches of the day would have used such terms.

## TWO PRIESTHOODS ADDED

People reading the current edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* assume that the revelations read the same as they were originally printed. However, there have been important revisions relating to priesthood.

The first printing of Smith's revelations in book form was in 1833, in a work titled *Book of Commandments*. Later, in 1835, a new edition was prepared, changing many of the original revelations and adding new ones. The title was also changed to *Doctrine and Covenants*. Researcher John Farkas observed:

There are seven revelations in the *Doctrine & Covenants* . . . on these priesthoods. Although five of them were allegedly received before October 1832, one as early as 1823, and one as late as September 1832, none of these five were included in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*. Two of them did not show up in the D&C until the 1876 edition, three were first included the 1835 edition.<sup>12</sup>

11 D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), p. 15.

12 John Farkas, "Fabricating the Mormon Priesthood: By God or By Man?" <https://beggarsbread.org/2012/10/06/fabricating-the-mormon-priesthood-by-god-or-by-man/>

9 Merrill J. Bateman, "Priesthood, Keys, and the Power to Bless," *Ensign*, (November 2003): p. 50.

10 Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976) vol. 1, p. 61, note.

Chapter 24 of the 1833 *Book of Commandments* gave instructions about elders, priests, teachers and deacons but made no mention of two priesthoods. When this revelation was reprinted in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* (which is section 20 in a current edition) dozens of words were

added to the text to include such offices as high counselors, high priests and high priesthood. Below is a photo of part of chapter 24 of the 1833 *Book of Commandments* (now section 20 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*) with the revisions noted in the margins.

BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS - Chapter 24  
COMPARE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS - Sec. 20:49-68

W.A. = Words Added  
W.D. = Words Deleted  
T.C. = Textual Change

HE IS TO - W.A.

and take the lead of meetings; ~~but none of these offices is he to do when there is an elder present, but in all cases~~ is to assist the elder.

33 The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with ~~them~~, and strengthen them, and see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying ~~or~~ backbiting, nor evil speaking;

39 And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty;

40 And he is to take the lead of meetings in the absence of the elder or priest, and is to be assisted always, ~~and~~ in all his duties in the church by the deacons;

41 But neither ~~the~~ teachers nor deacons have authority to baptize ~~or~~ administer the sacrament, ~~or~~ to warn, expound, exhort and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ.

42 Every elder, priest, teacher or deacon, is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him, by the power of the Holy Ghost which is in the one who ordains him.

43 The several elders composing this church of Christ, are to meet in conference once in three months, or from time to time as ~~they~~ shall direct or appoint, to do church business ~~whatever~~ is necessary.

44 ~~And~~ each priest ~~or~~ teacher, who is ordained by a priest, ~~is to~~ take a certificate from him at the time, which when presented to an elder, ~~he is to give him~~ a license, which shall authorize him to perform the ~~of~~ duty of his calling.

45 The duty of the members after they are received by baptism.

46 The elders or priests are to have a sufficient

WHEN THERE IS NO ELDER PRESENT; BUT WHEN THERE IS AN ELDER PRESENT, HE IS ONLY TO PREACH, TEACH, EXPOUND, EXHORT, AND BAPTIZE, AND VISIT THE HOUSE OF EACH MEMBER, EXHORTING THEM TO PRAY VOCALLY AND IN SECRET AND ATTEND TO ALL FAMILY DUTIES. IN ALL THESE DUTIES THE PRIEST - T.C.

IF OCCASION REQUIRES - W.A.

W.D.

W.D.

IF OCCASION REQUIRES W.A.

OR LAY ON HANDS; THEY ARE, HOWEVER, T.C.

AND HE IS TO BE ORDAINED - W.A.

AND SAID CONFERENCES ARE - W.A.

W.D.

SAID CONFERENCES T.C.

W.D.

TO BE DONE AT THE TIME. THE ELDERS ARE TO RECEIVE THEIR LICENSES FROM OTHER ELDERS, BY VOTE OF THE CHURCH TO WHICH THEY BELONG, OR FROM THE CONFERENCES W.A.

OR DEACON - W.A.

SHALL ENTITLE T.C.

W.D.

OR HE MAY RECEIVE IT FROM A CONFERENCE. NO PERSON IS TO BE ORDAINED TO ANY OFFICE IN THIS CHURCH, WHERE THERE IS A REGULARLY ORGANIZED BRANCH OF THE SAME, WITHOUT THE VOTE OF THAT CHURCH; BUT THE PRESIDING ELDERS, TRAVELING BISHOPS, HIGH COUNCILORS, HIGH PRIESTS, AND ELDERS, MAY HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF ORDAINING, WHERE THERE IS NO BRANCH OF THE CHURCH THAT A VOTE MAY BE CALLED. EVERY PRESIDENT OF THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD (OR PRESIDING ELDER), BISHOP, HIGH COUNCILOR, AND HIGH PRIEST, IS TO BE ORDAINED BY THE DIRECTION OF A HIGH COUNCIL OR GENERAL CONFERENCE.

W.A.

Another example of changing Smith's revelations to support his later priesthood ideas is seen in a comparison of Chapter 28 in the 1833 *Book of Commandments* and the current *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 27. Joseph

Smith made these additions in 1835 to support his new claim of receiving priesthood from Peter, James and John. The original 1833 printing of the revelation did not contain any mention of priesthood restoration.

BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS - Chapter 28  
COMPARE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS - Sec. 27

W.A. = Words Added  
W.D. = Words Deleted  
T.C. = Textual Change

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1 *A Commandment to the church of Christ, given in Harmony, Pennsylvania, September 4, 1830.*

**L**ISTEN to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God and your Redcemer, whose word is quick and powerful.

2 For behold I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory;

3 Remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins:

4 Wherefore a commandment I give unto you, that you shall not purchase wine, neither strong drink of your enemies:

5 Wherefore you shall partake of none, except it is made new among you, yea, in this my Father's kingdom which shall be built up on the earth.

6 Behold this is wisdom in me, wherefore marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you, on the earth, and with all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world:

7 Wherefore lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins and be faithful until I come:  
~~and so.~~ Amen.

W.D.

AND YE SHALL BE CAUGHT UP, THAT WHERE I AM YE SHALL BE ALSO. -W.A.

AND TAKE UPON YOU MY WHOLE ARMOR, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE EVIL DAY, HAVING DONE ALL, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO STAND. STAND, THEREFORE, HAVING YOUR LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH, HAVING ON THE BREAST-PLATE OF RIGHEOUSNESS, AND YOUR FEET SHOD WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHICH I HAVE SENT MINE ANGELS TO COMMIT UNTO YOU; TAKING THE SHIELD OF FAITH WHEREWITH YE SHALL BE ABLE TO QUENCH ALL THE FIERY DARTS OF THE WICKED; AND TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION, AND THE SWORD OF MY SPIRIT, WHICH I WILL POUR OUT UPON YOU, AND MY WORD WHICH I REVEAL UNTO YOU, AND BE AGREED AS TOUCHING ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE ASK OF ME, -W.A.

MORONI, WHOM I HAVE SENT UNTO YOU TO REVEAL THE BOOK OF MORMON, CONTAINING THE FULNESS OF MY EVER-LASTING GOSPEL, TO WHOM I HAVE COMMITTED THE KEYS OF THE RECORD OF THE STICK OF EPHRAIM; AND ALSO WITH ELIAS, TO WHOM I HAVE COMMITTED THE KEYS OF BRINGING TO PASS THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL THE HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN, CONCERNING THE LAST DAYS; AND ALSO JOHN THE SON OF ZACHARIAS, WHICH ZACHARIAS HE (ELIAS) VISITED AND GAVE PROMISE THAT HE SHOULD HAVE A SON, AND HIS NAME SHOULD BE JOHN, AND HE SHOULD BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF ELIAS; WHICH JOHN I HAVE

SENT UNTO YOU, MY SERVANTS, JOSEPH SMITH, JUN., AND OLIVER COWDERY, TO ORDAIN YOU UNTO THE FIRST PRIESTHOOD WHICH YOU HAVE RECEIVED, THAT YOU MIGHT BE CALLED AND ORDAINED EVEN AS AARON; AND ALSO ELIJAH UNTO WHOM I HAVE COMMITTED THE KEYS OF THE POWER OF TURNING THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS TO THE CHILDREN, AND THE HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN TO THE FATHERS, THAT THE WHOLE EARTH MAY NOT BE SMITTEN WITH A CURSE; AND ALSO WITH JOSEPH AND JACOB, AND ISAAC, AND ABRAHAM, YOUR FATHERS, BY WHOM THE PROMISES REMAIN; AND ALSO WITH MICHAEL, OR ADAM, THE FATHER OF ALL, THE PRINCE OF ALL, THE ANCIENT OF DAYS; AND ALSO WITH PETER, AND JAMES, AND JOHN, WHOM I HAVE SENT UNTO YOU, BY WHOM I HAVE ORDAINED YOU AND CONFIRMED YOU TO BE APOSTLES, AND ESPECIAL WITNESSES OF MY NAME, AND BEAR THE KEYS OF YOUR MINISTRY AND OF THE SAME THINGS WHICH I REVEALED UNTO THEM; UNTO WHOM I HAVE COMMITTED THE KEYS OF MY KINGDOM, AND A DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE LAST TIMES; AND FOR THE FULNESS OF TIMES, IN THE WHICH I WILL GATHER TOGETHER IN ONE ALL THINGS, BOTH WHICH ARE IN HEAVEN, AND WHICH ARE ON EARTH; AND ALSO WITH -W.A.

LDS historian Gregory A. Prince wrote:

Although in the Mormon church today the term “priesthood” refers to this bestowed authority, such a relationship did not develop **until years after the founding of the church**. Initially authority was understood to be inherent in what are now termed “offices.” Three offices—elder, priest, and teacher—were present by August 1829, as were the ordinances of baptism, confirmation, and ordination, but **the word “priesthood” was not used in reference to these for another three years.**<sup>13</sup>

Prince goes on to explain that while the Book of Mormon contains references to “higher authority” they were not understood in terms of “priesthood.” He concluded:

It was not until several months after the June 1831 general conference, when the “high priesthood” was conferred, that the term “priesthood” entered Mormon usage at all.<sup>14</sup>

Thus we see that at the time of the founding of Mormonism in 1830 there was no teaching or awareness of Joseph Smith claiming to have received either the Aaronic Priesthood or the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1829.

Another example of changing revelations to include Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthood information is seen by comparing Smith’s 1831 revelation, which was printed in 1832 in the church newspaper, *The Evening and Morning Star*, with the current version in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 68. (See photo on next page.)

Also, sections 2 and 13 of the current *Doctrine and Covenants*, which mention priesthood, were not printed in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*. They were extracted from Joseph Smith’s history, which wasn’t started until 1838, and were not added to the *Doctrine and Covenants* until 1876.

As Joseph Smith’s church began to grow so did the need for clearer delineation of authority, thus the backdating and insertion of priesthood claims into the revelations. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to

the Book of Mormon, related the following concerning the addition of priesthood concepts:

Authority is the word we used for the first two years in the church . . . This matter of two orders of priesthood in the Church of Christ, and lineal priesthood of the old law being in the church, all originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon. . . . This is the way the High Priests and the “priesthood” as you have it, was introduced into the Church of Christ almost two years after its beginning—and after we had baptized and confirmed about two thousand souls into the church.<sup>15</sup>

Whitmer also condemned the LDS leaders for endorsing the rewriting of Smith’s revelations between their first printing in the *Book of Commandments* in 1833 and the second printing in the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1835. Whitmer wrote:

You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given and as they are to-day . . . to support the error of Brother Joseph in taking upon himself the office of Seer to the church. You have changed the revelations to support the error of high priests. You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood, high counselors, etc.<sup>16</sup>

In recent years the LDS church has been more open about the textual revisions in Smith’s revelations. Yet they continue to insist that the priesthood was restored in 1829. If the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods were a part of the church prior to the printing of the 1833 *Book of Commandments* it certainly seems strange that it contains no such teaching.

Researcher LaMar Petersen concluded:

There seems to be no support for the historicity of the restoration of the priesthood in journals, diaries, letters, nor printed matter prior to October 1834.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> David Whitmer, *An Address To All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri: 1887), p. 64.

<sup>16</sup> *An Address To All Believers in Christ*, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> LaMar Petersen, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry* (Salt Lake City: Freethinker Press, 2000), p. 145.

<sup>13</sup> Gregory A. Prince, *Power From on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Power From on High*, p. 12.

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THE EVENING AND THE MORNING STAR - October 1832  
COMPARE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS - Sec. 68

W.A. = Words Added  
W.D. = Words Deleted  
T.C. = Textual Change

THE EVENING AND THE MORNING STAR.

Vol. I. Independence, Mo. October, 1832. No. 5.

A REVELATION, GIVEN NOVEMBER, 1831.

- HYDE-W.A.
- ORDINATION-T.C.
- JOHNSON-W.A.
- JOHNSON-W.A.
- HYDE-W.A.
- E. M'LELLIN-W.A.
- COVENANTS-T.C.
- W.D.
- THEY-T.C.
- REMAIN-T.C.
- ARE-T.C.
- PRIESTS-T.C.
- W.D.
- THEY-T.C.
- THE PRESIDENCY OF THE CHURCH-T.C.
- THIS PRESIDENCY-T.C.
- COVENANTS AND COMMANDMENTS-T.C.
- OR IN ANY OF HER STAKES WHICH ARE ORGANIZED-W.A.
- HIGH PRIEST WHO T.C.
- AND IF HE REPENT HE SHALL BE-T.C.
- SHALL ALSO-T.C.
- OR IN ANY OF HER STAKES WHICH ARE ORGANIZED-W.A.
- HEADS-T.C.
- COWDERY-W.A.

MY servant, Orson, was called, by his ordinance, to proclaim the everlasting gospel, by the spirit of the living God, from people to people, and from land to land, in the congregations of the wicked, in their synagogues, reasoning with and expounding all scriptures unto them: And behold and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth: And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and whatsoever they shall speak, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, shall be scripture; shall be the will of the Lord; shall be the mind of the Lord; shall be the word of the Lord; shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation; Behold this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants: wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me as in Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God; that I was; that I am; and that I am to come. This is the word of the Lord unto you my servant, Orson; and also unto my servant, Luke, and unto my servant, Lyman, and unto my servant William; and unto all the faithful elders of my church: Go ye into all the world; preach the gospel to every creature; acting in the authority which I have given you; baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned; and he that believeth shall be blessed with signs following, even as it is written: And unto you it shall be given to know the signs of the times, and the signs of the coming of the Son of man; and of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you it shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life: Amen.

And now, concerning the items in addition to the laws and commandments, they are these: There remaineth hereafter in the due time of the Lord, other bishops to be set apart unto the church, to minister even according to the first; wherefore it shall be ~~the~~ high priest who is worthy; and he shall be appointed by a conference of high priests. And again, no bishop or judge, which shall be set apart for this ministry, shall be tried or condemned for any crime, save it be before a conference of high priests; and in as much as he is found guilty before a conference of high priests, by testimony that cannot be impeached, he shall be condemned or forgiven, according to the laws of the church. And again, in as much as parents have children in Zion, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance; faith in Christ the Son of the living God; and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old: the sin be upon the head of the parents, for this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, and their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands: and they also shall teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord. And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the sabbath day to keep it holy. And the inhabitants of Zion, also, shall remember their labors, in as much as they are appointed to labor, in all faithfulness, for the idler shall be had in remembrance before the Lord. Now I the Lord am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness: They also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness. These things ought not to be, and must be done away from among them: wherefore let my servant Oliver carry these sayings unto the land of Zion. And a commandment I give unto them, that he that observeth not his prayers before the Lord in the season thereof, let him,

be had in remembrance before the judge of my people. These sayings are true and faithful: wherefore transgress them not, neither take therefrom. Behold I am Alpha and Omega, and I come quickly: Amen.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, EXCEPT THEY BE LITERAL DESCENDANTS OF AARON. AND IF THEY BE LITERAL DESCENDANTS OF AARON THEY HAVE A LEGAL RIGHT TO THE BISHOPRIC, IF THEY ARE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG THE SONS OF AARON; FOR THE FIRSTBORN HOLDS THE RIGHT OF THE PRESIDENCY OVER THIS PRIESTHOOD, AND THE KEYS OR AUTHORITY OF THE SAME. NO MAN HAS A LEGAL RIGHT TO THIS OFFICE, TO HOLD THE KEYS OF THIS PRIESTHOOD, EXCEPT HE BE A LITERAL DESCENDANT AND THE FIRSTBORN OF AARON. BUT, AS A HIGH PRIEST OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD HAS AUTHORITY TO OFFICIATE IN ALL THE LESSER OFFICES HE MAY OFFICIATE IN THE OFFICE OF BISHOP WHEN NO LITERAL DESCENDANT OF AARON CAN BE FOUND, PROVIDED HE IS CALLED AND SET APART AND ORDAINED UNTO THIS POWER, UNDER THE HANDS OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD. AND A LITERAL DESCENDANT OF AARON, ALSO, MUST BE DESIGNATED BY THIS PRESIDENCY, AND FOUND WORTHY, AND ANOINTED, AND ORDAINED UNDER THE HANDS OF THIS PRESIDENCY, OTHERWISE THEY ARE NOT LEGALLY AUTHORIZED TO OFFICIATE IN THEIR PRIESTHOOD.

BUT, BY VIRTUE OF THE DECREE CONCERNING THEIR RIGHT OF THE PRIESTHOOD DESCENDING FROM FATHER TO SON, THEY MAY CLAIM THEIR ANOINTING IF AT ANY TIME THEY CAN PROVE THEIR LINEAGE, OR DO ASCERTAIN IT BY REVELATION FROM THE LORD UNDER THE HANDS OF THE ABOVE NAMED PRESIDENCY. -T.C.

## LDS PRIESTHOOD OFFICES

The LDS Church priesthood is divided into two groups, Aaronic and Melchizedek. Below is a list of the various offices:

### Melchizedek Priesthood

Prophet [senior apostle]  
 Apostle [12 apostles, plus those in First Presidency]  
 Seventy [General Authorities]  
 Patriarch [one in each stake]  
 High Priest [usually ordained to this when called to such offices as bishop, stake president or to the stake high council]  
 Elder [18 yr old or older]

### Aaronic Priesthood

Bishop [presiding high priest in ward]  
 Priest [16 yr old]  
 Teacher [14 yr old]  
 Deacon [12 yr old]

Since the LDS Church makes the specific claim that their priesthood is the same as in the Bible we need to compare their offices with those mentioned in scripture. First we will look at the Old Testament priesthood and then authority in the New Testament.

## AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

Prior to the law of Moses, men such as Abraham offered sacrifices to God, but not as part of any priesthood. When God set up the priesthood in the days of Moses, he restricted it to Aaron and his adult descendants, who were of the tribe of Levi (Numbers 3:1-10, 8:5-22; Exodus 38:21). This would disqualify most Mormons as they do not claim to be descended from Aaron. Many LDS believe they are from the tribe of Ephraim but this would not make them eligible for the Aaronic priesthood.

Even Jesus could not function in the Aaronic priesthood because he descended from the tribe of Judah. Hebrews 7:14 explains: "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."

There were only two offices in the Aaronic priesthood, priests and one high priest. The priests prepared and offered the daily sacrifices. The high priest was the only one allowed into the most sacred part of the temple, the Holy of Holies, which he did once a year to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people of Israel.

The priesthood of the Old Testament was brought to an end with the death of Christ. According to Hebrews, chapter seven, the Aaronic ("Levitical") priesthood, with its endless system of animal sacrifices to cover sin, never could bring about perfection because even the priests themselves were imperfect people whose sins needed atoning by the same sacrificial system.

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? (Hebrews 7:11)

Thus, there was a need for Christ ("who knew no sin," 2 Corinthians 5:21) to come "after the order of Melchisedec," offering himself as the perfect, one-time sacrifice for all sin and ending the imperfect Aaronic priesthood.

Also, in Matthew 27 we read that the veil of the temple, which closed off the Holy of Holies, was split in two at the time of Christ's death, thus showing that the way into the presence of God no longer required the Jewish priesthood system, with its animal sacrifices, since Christ himself was the lamb of God offered for our sins and he is now our only High Priest. Accordingly, there is no mention in the Bible of Christ's followers ever needing to hold an Aaronic priesthood, let alone a Melchizedek priesthood, because the former was ended in Christ and the latter could be fulfilled only by him.

## DEACONS

In Numbers 8:23-25, God set the minimum age of the Aaronic priesthood at twenty-five, and there were only priests and one high priest. The Old Testament has no mention of deacons. The LDS Church ordains young men deacons, their first office in the Aaronic priesthood, at the age of twelve. However, Paul instructed Timothy that deacons are to be mature men and faithful husbands (1 Timothy 3:8-12).

## TEACHERS

As part of the Aaronic Priesthood in the LDS Church a young man is ordained a teacher at the age of fourteen. (This office is separate from the assignment of teaching a class such as Sunday School.) The New Testament passages about teachers do not make them part of a special priesthood. Teachers should be mature Christians "able to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2), not teenagers.

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## PRIESTS

In the LDS Church a young man is ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood at the age of sixteen and does not need to be a descendant of Aaron. This was never done in the Old Testament. There are Jewish priests mentioned in the New Testament, but an office of priest is never mentioned in the Christian church.

## MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

Melchizedek is mentioned in Genesis 14:17-20 as the King of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of God who blessed Abraham. In Psalm 110:4, a promise was given that his priesthood would be forever. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ as indicated in chapters five through seven of Hebrews, where Melchizedek is identified as a type of Christ.

Hebrews 5:10 tells us that Christ is the only High Priest “after the order of Melchisedec.” Then in Hebrews 7 we read that there were many high priests due to death, but Jesus had a superior priesthood because he continues as High Priest due to his endless life:

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. (Hebrews 7:26-27)

The only Christian priesthood mentioned in the New Testament is the spiritual priesthood of every believer. Peter wrote:

But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Notice that men are not singled out as the only ones holding this priesthood. It is for every Christian.

## ELDERS AND BISHOPS

In Mormonism, a man is ordained an elder upon entering the Melchizedek Priesthood. While the New Testament mentions elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-6; 1 Peter 5:1-3), they are never referred to as part of a priesthood system.

In 1 Timothy 3:1 and Titus 1:7 the word *bishop* appears in the King James Version of the Bible. But the word *bishop* simply means *overseer* or *steward* and is rendered that way in newer translations. Bishop is not a separate office in the books of Timothy and Titus, but a continuation of Paul’s instructions about elders.

When Paul gave instructions to Timothy about leadership he did not mention anything about ordaining men to either the Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthoods. Instead, the emphasis was on choosing mature Christians. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul wrote:

... and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

## SEVENTY

In the LDS Church a seventy is a specific office in their Melchizedek Priesthood. He is a type of missionary and overseer of a given area of the church (*D&C* 107:25). Joseph Smith evidently read about Christ sending out seventy men in Luke 10:1 (some Bibles say seventy-two) and turned this event into an ordination of men into a specific office of the priesthood. The LDS church has now expanded this to different quorums of Seventy.

However, there is no mention in the New Testament of anyone ever being appointed to be a replacement of any of these seventy men. Surely if such an office was to be part of the church it would have been mentioned in Acts or the other letters in the New Testament.

## HIGH PRIEST

While there are thousands of high priests in the LDS Church, there was only one Jewish high priest at a time. The high priest was part of the Aaronic Priesthood. Hebrews 5:1 explains that the duties of the Jewish high priest were to “offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” Mormon high priests do not offer any sacrifices so they are not following the Old Testament pattern. The Jewish high priest served as an “example and shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5).

Christ fulfilled this “when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:22-27). He is the only High Priest in the Christian church. Because Christ lives forever his priesthood can never pass to another. There are no references in the New Testament to any Christian holding the office of high priest.

## PASTORS

Mormons will often use Ephesians 4:11 when trying to prove their system of priesthood. This verse reads:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.

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The LDS Church, however, does not have any pastors. One of their apostles, Joseph Fielding Smith explained:

The term pastor does not refer to an order in the priesthood, like deacon, priest, elder . . . a bishop is a pastor; so is an elder who has charge of a branch . . .<sup>18</sup>

Oddly, the Mormons insist that apostles and teachers are specific offices of the priesthood, but do not believe that pastor or evangelist are priesthood offices.

### EVANGELIST OR PATRIARCH?

Ephesians 4:11 mentions evangelists yet there is no such office in the Mormon Church. Instead, they claim that the original meaning has been lost and that an evangelist is supposed to be a patriarch. However, the simple meaning of evangel is “good news.” Thus an evangelist is one who spreads the “good news,” such as a missionary.

However, LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie claimed:

Having lost the true knowledge of the priesthood and its offices, . . . the false traditions of the sectarian world have applied the designation evangelist to traveling preachers, missionaries, and revivalists.<sup>19</sup>

Joseph Fielding Smith explained: “An evangelist is a patriarch . . . The Patriarch to the Church holds the keys of blessing for the members of the Church.”<sup>20</sup>

There is no evidence that the Greek word *evangelist* ever carried the meaning of *patriarch*. The Greek word translated *evangelist* has always carried the meaning of someone who proclaims the good news, not one who gives prayer blessings to church members. In the LDS Church a patriarch gives a blessing to a member as a sort of spiritual blueprint for his/her life (*D&C* 107:39-56).

### APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

After Judas betrayed Christ there was one man chosen to replace him as part of the twelve apostles (Acts 1:21-23). To qualify for this position the person had to be an eyewitness to the full ministry of Jesus, including his resurrection. There is no evidence in the New Testament that anyone else was chosen to replace one of the original twelve.

In Mormonism the president of the church is considered a prophet and apostle. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated:

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), vol. 3, pp. 108-109.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), p. 242.

<sup>20</sup> *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, pp. 108, 170.

Apostles and prophets are the foundation upon which the organization of the true Church rests.<sup>21</sup>

In trying to establish the need for apostles and prophets in the church Mormons appeal to 1 Corinthians 12:28:

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

However, if one reads the entire section from verse 27 to verse 31 it is obvious that Paul is discussing various ministries or gifts in the early church, not listing specific offices of priesthood.

Notice also that Paul lists apostles first and prophets second. In Mormonism the highest calling is the prophet of the church with the apostles serving under him. Also in Mormonism the office of teacher is bestowed on fourteen-year-old boys, not a man third in rank to the prophet and apostles.

Another problem for the LDS position is the concept of having three apostles in its First Presidency that oversee the Twelve Apostles. This adds up to fifteen apostles and is not the same as Jesus’ twelve apostles.

They also maintain that Peter, James and John were the First Presidency of the early church. But they were part of the twelve, not in addition to the twelve.

If Mormonism is going to insist that the church today must be set up exactly as it was under Christ then they have too many apostles. The Mormons cannot have it both ways. Either they are a “restoration” that is exactly like the New Testament church or they are setting up something different from the early Christian church.

Thus we see that besides the problem that Mormon priesthood concepts are not in accord with the New Testament, the lack of historical references in early LDS documents to priesthood restoration leaves us with no reason to accept the Mormon claim of priesthood authority.

### FALSE PROPHETS?

While Mormons insist that there needs to be a prophet at the head of the church they seem to ignore the New Testament warnings of false prophets.

Matthew 24:24, warns “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

We should test those who claim to be prophets. In 1 John 4:1, we are counselled: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

<sup>21</sup> McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p. 606.

## CONCLUSION

If the LDS people want to truly follow the New Testament model they will need to renounce their claims to Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods and embrace the priesthood of all believers. In 1 Peter 2:4-5 we read:

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Christians everywhere look to Jesus' death and resurrection for the atonement for our sins, trusting Christ alone for Eternal Life, thus becoming part of His holy priesthood.

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For further discussion of LDS priesthood authority, see:

<http://utlm.org/onlinebooks/mclaims6.htm>

<http://mit.irr.org/mormon-priesthood-do-mormons-alone-have-power>

<http://www.4mormon.org/who-has-the-proper-authority-to-administer-gospel-ordinances/>

<https://beggarsbread.org/2012/10/06/fabricating-the-mormon-priesthood-by-god-or-by-man/>

<http://www.mormonthink.com/priesthood.htm>

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## EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

**October 2017:** I just finished listening to your podcast on the Mormon podcast community. I found it so fascinating and couldn't stop listening to your story. I immediately recognized you because I worked at \_\_\_\_\_ bank and used to see your Utah lighthouse checks come in all the time. . . . I remember being curious what it was and looked it up online and was so offended that you were "anti Mormon" that I am afraid I was very judgmental and not as friendly as I should have been. I didn't understand at that time why someone would "attack" the church. It is amazing how much I have evolved since then and the wool has been lifted from my eyes. It's been a long and difficult journey but I now think of you as a heroine and admire the courage it took to expose the Mormon church against so much opposition. Thank you for devoting your life to such a worthy cause. I am sorry for the judgmental person that I was. I no longer work at that bank but I wish I did so that next time I saw you I could get the chance to be a friendlier person to you and get to know you a little better. . . . anyway, God Bless.

**October 2017:** I love being LDS

**November 2017:** You inspired me to find Christ. I have been a Christian for several years. I was living in Florida When the Wilders Son found Christ and brought the rest of his family in. You are a True pioneer . . . thank You for your courage. It gave me courage to make the choice to become a Christian. I love Jesus and I love Sandra and Gerald Tanner.

P.S. I called you 10 years ago at my darkest hour in my faith Crisis. You talked through to a place where I could choose and be happy . . . you have made such a difference.

**November 2017:** Yesterday, I finally came full circle in a story that began over 40 years ago while serving my mission as a young zone leader in the western suburbs of Sydney, Australia. A family that my companion and I were teaching expressed interest in the church but said that they had come across some questions that gave them pause and they hoped that we would be able to resolve these questions for them during our discussions appointments. Being young, fully converted and never doubting that the church was everything that it claimed to be and also unknowingly being very naïve . . . we assured this family that there was not a question that could not be answered to their full and complete satisfaction. The father then handed me a book, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality* by Gerald and Sandra Tanner. We promised to read the book and return with answers.

Despite being raised in an active LDS family, being completely devout and graduating from 4 years of seminary and a missionary preparation class at the local Institute of Religion, nothing had prepared me for this book.

Upon returning to our flat, aka apartment, I began to browse through the book. It didn't take me long to realize that nothing in my previous 20 years of life had prepared me for what I was reading. Joseph's complete disregard for living the word of wisdom such as riding his horse down the streets of Nauvoo while smoking his cigar, multiple changes and additions to the Doctrine and Covenants, Nephi being the name of the angel that appeared to Joseph instead of Moroni were just a few of the earth shattering revelations that rocked what I had thought was a firm unshakable testimony.

Needless to say I didn't get very far in the book before I realized that were I to continue to read further, what testimony I had left would be torn to shreds, so devastating were the seemingly credible claims I was reading.

It's hard to describe the depth of the spiritual pain I fell in, . . . I approached God as a broken, devastated missionary and pleaded with Him to give me answers. I remember pouring out my heart and with tears flowing down my face, sharing my fears in what the consequences of these new revelations would mean. . . . [after an unusual event that he took to mean the church was true, he put our book aside] I went on with my mission becoming even more committed and dedicated than I had been before. I believed that God had personally intervened in my life and answered my prayer in a very real and direct manner.

Following my mission my life followed a very traditional Mormon path, dedication to the church, temple wedding, leadership positions etc. But somewhere buried deep within me, lying dormant, were those seeds of doubt that had been planted from reading the Tanner book. . . . In the many years since my mission, other doubts creped in, with a emergence of DNA, questions on why a people that are claimed to have filled the whole of America could [be] real and yet leave no trace of their existence. Of learning of the anachronisms in the Book of Mormon, discovering that Joseph would make things up and pass his stories off as factual truth . . . such as the Book of Abraham and the story of Zelph and many, many more which I won't go into.

As my many doubts accumulated and as I tried to cling to belief, I would always hold to the experience of my miracle while on my mission to keep me going. But eventually my shelf became too heavy and one day I realized that all of these issues simply disappeared if I accepted the conclusion that the church simply wasn't what it claimed to be.

Yes making this conclusion caused me to have to reinterpret this and other seeming miracles in my life as just random circumstances instead of a God taking a personal interest in me and interceding in my life.

For years I have known that the Tanner's Lighthouse ministry bookstore is located on West Temple across from the Salt Lake Bee's Baseball Field. I have driven past the building many times over the years, thinking someday I need to go in there and share my missionary experience with the Tanner's but never have. Early on it would have been to go and testify to the lies that they were spewing but in recent years it would have been to share the story of how their book was instrumental in planting the seeds that would eventually lead me out of Mormonism.

Yesterday, as I was driving along West Temple, I passed the store and I thought today is the day. . . . I'm going to go in there. Upon entering, I asked if Sandra was available and was quickly introduced to a kind, gentle grandmotherly woman. After introducing myself, I proceeded to share my story.

For years I have thought about what this day might be like and I must admit that the years of my Mormon indoctrination did kick in which had taught me to fear this woman and what she represented, but those fears quickly vanish as I shared my story. We had a nice friendly conversation, one not unlike the many she must have on a weekly bases from others who have also discovered that the church is not what it claims to be. After sharing my story of how her book had been a real miracle in my life, I thanked her and left. The seed that she had help[ed] plant over 40 years ago had finally grown into a full tree and born fruit, the fruit of truth and knowledge.

**November 2017:** I have experienced many emotions as I have come to the realization that Joseph was not only a false prophet but also an Antichrist, in my opinion. I feel angry and betrayed. I live here in Utah. My family genealogy goes back to the beginning of the formation of the LDS church and on both sides of my family. I was raised in a polygamist family to later become LDS. It scares me to know how deeply this religion is embedded into our very fibers of our body. Once the greatest truth and now I just see another cult. My heart does break and yet I rejoice to come to this knowledge. I am so thankful for you and others like you who made the sacrifice to embrace the truth and then labor continually for people like me. I cry tears of relief and thankfulness to God and to you who serve him, thank you, thank you and may God bless you forever for your work.

**December 2017:** I am a family law attorney (married 29 years) and father of four. . . . I am a returned missionary and have been an active tithing member throughout my life.

My doubts about LDS truth claims began when watching the PBS special "The Mormons" in about 2008. For the first time, I learned that Joseph Smith "translated" the Book of Mormon using a seer stone.

Since that time, I have undertaken a deep study of LDS history. About six months ago, my proverbial "shelf" then collapsed. I have learned and clearly understand that Joseph Smith was deceptive and that he engaged in a pattern of making repeated grandiose and untrue claims.

The good news is that my faith in Christ is stronger than ever. I am excited that I can now follow Christ free from the clutter and distraction of Joseph Smith's incorrect ideas. (Though, I have also taken many good things with me.) I have started to attend a non-denominational Christian Church. . . .

All of that said, I must now socially operate within a strong LDS family, neighborhood, and social network.

**December 2017:** Thank you for helping people like me out of Mormonism. Your documents have been enlightening and I treasure this new, free relationship I have come to know with Christ. Continue the good work!

**January 2018:** Sandra tanner is a joke

**January 2018:** I am so shocked to find that the one true church isn't as true as it claims. After 56 years of devotion and donating I'm angry. My husband seems to think that only Mormons tell the truth while everyone else makes up lies. I feel so lost and alone.

**February 2018:** Your Darkhouse will soon join Jerald in his darkhouse. I think he is with the evil spirits and you soon will join him in Outer Darkness. I think you both are son/daughter of perdition. You have accepted the antichrist as your savior, Satan/

**February 2018:** I read *No Man Knows My History* and *No Ma'am That's Not History*. Fawn Brodie? A fraud. Knows how to twist facts quite nicely.

Sandra Tanner? Good candidate for the Missionary Alliance Church, whatever man-made group of teachings that may be. Sandra would crucify the Saviour all over again if He tried to teach her the truth. Very strange.

Trinity? Oh yeah. That's a word found in the Bible. Right, Sandra. Oh. Maybe not. But we should believe this Catholic innovation. Because . . . Always fun to read your ramblings.

**March 2018:** I recently came to the Lighthouse Bookstore with my missions team Evangelical Mormon Interactions from Biola University. I was able to listen to Sandra tell some of her story and tell of her ministry. I just wanted to say that I found out after my trip to Utah that it was because of Sandra and Jerald Tanner's book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, that my mom decided to finally leave the Mormon church when she was 20 years old. From there she raised me and my brother to be evangelical Christians. It certainly is wonderful to see how God works in families' lives.

**March 2018:** Sandra, when was the last time that you prayed and asked the Lord to forgive your sins?

Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

If you are not repenting of your sins then Satan has deceived you into a false sense of complacency, and as a result of this deception and the accumulation of sin in your life, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven . . . worlds without end.

**March 18:** [My family and] I drove out to the Mountain Meadows Massacre site. They were vaguely aware of the atrocity but knew nothing about it. Now they do know about it, not only as a historical curiosity in the distant past, but also as an evil event in the history of the Mormon Church. Good enough.

I have begun reading *Mormon Enigma* and am hoping I will be able to recommend it to my wife. From what I have read so far, I think I will be able to without causing any stress or hurt feelings. My goal is to avoid rude bashing of the faith, but instead to make available or gently reveal historical facts that are not known . . .

As for myself . . . it is by reason that I am a firm believer in an intelligent creator. It is by faith that I believe he is good

in the Judeo/Christian sense of things. The idea of atheism just makes no sense to me whatsoever and I've listened to both sides of that discussion by some of the best thinkers.

What that all means to me in the eternal scheme of things is something I seem to be constantly considering. But I have concluded that from evidence that I have read (some of it thanks to you and your husband's efforts), I have discarded the idea that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and, instead, consider him to be a grand fraud. And if he was a fraud, everything that came after him that uses him as a base of faith must also be wrong at best and a fraud at worst.

I grew up [attending Christian churches] . . . [I] became involved with the Mormon Church in my senior year in high school. I joined the Mormon Church shortly thereafter and had an enthusiasm for it that only a young convert can have. I look back on that time now with a certain amount of embarrassment at my zeal. . . . Based on the YouTube videos I have watched of you (some several times) as well as your seeing me at a time convenient for me, I hold you in very high regard.

**April 2018:** When our lives are over we will NEVER enter the kingdom of heaven unless and until we have repented of our sins.

When are you going to HUMBLE YOURSELF, Sandra, and kneel down and ask your Father in Heaven to forgive your sins? Pride is a killer, pride is a deceiver, and pride is a destroyer. Proverbs 16:18 "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

**April 2018:** I've followed this ministry since the late 70's, and live in the heart of Mormon Country in Montana. I so appreciate your work and continuing education on behalf of the lost LDS. God has used the Tanners as pioneers leading Mormons out of bondage into to liberty in Christ—I have numerous LDS friends and it is heartbreaking to see how hard their lives are and to observe the fear they live in if they even question their teachings. We need to be going to battle daily for our LDS friends and family! Invite Missionaries in to your home and love on them . . . God has allowed you to be home when they called, for a reason! Bare your testimony of what God has done for you . . . they cannot argue that. God bless your work!

**April 2018:** I just finished reading *Mormon Enigma* and enjoyed it very much. I was able to share a few things with my wife. Nothing that she would consider faith shattering but things she did not know, nonetheless. I told her that the first few chapters were written in a faith promoting manner but soon delved into area's that were shocking, even to me.

She asked me how the authors knew so much and I told her that they relied on journals and published accounts of the day. I also told her that the book was well received as being an accurate account of Emma Smith's life by many in and out of the church.

I also told her that this second edition was modified from the first due to the discoveries of Mark Hoffman's forgeries. I

invited her to read the book, but she complained about the lack of time to do so, which is actually true. Interestingly, a lady at work knows who you are and is fairly well informed about Mormon history. She has even ordered books from your store.

When she saw that I was reading *Mormon Enigma* she asked if she could read it when I was finished. It now sits on her desk. My next book I have just started is Grant Palmer's *An Insider's View* . . . Following that will be Charles Larson's book on the papyri. I will save . . . your [*Mormonism*—] *Shadow or Reality* for last as I think that one is going to take some time to get through.

**April 2018:** One of the best moments of my transition from Mormonism was the chance to sit down and talk to Sandra for a couple of hours. She kindly asked about "my story," we talked doctrine, and most importantly grace in Jesus Christ. Oh, and I got to apologize for harboring the bad feelings I held for she and Jerald because they had indirectly made my life as a Mormon missionary a refiners fire! You two are pioneers in your own right, and have my admiration and gratitude.

**April 2018:** Sandra Tanner has a large resource of published works and YouTube videos that allowed me to start to examine why the Mormon church is false and what is the truth.

I began my exploration when I woke up and asked what happened to the gold plates and found out they had conveniently been taken into heaven. Mormonism is burdensome to women, not just lacking power and equality, but in wanting to maintain family ties. There are so many broken family lines and those who do not believe, that the church cannot be true. When the absurd facts about Joseph Smith fall into place, it is a great relief to know that through Sandra Tanner I was able to see it for what it was and let it go. Polygamy is dreaded by church women and they fear being subject to it in the "next life." Thank you Sandra Tanner. Access to your works continue to keep me mindful of the truth.

**May 2018:** I was born into the Mormon Church and my family dates back to 1848 when my ancestors were "sealed" in the temple. I always felt guilty because I could never keep all the laws and commandments they required so I would try, fail, give up and rebel. It was a vicious cycle. . . . [years later] I started to perform my own research. I noticed the Bible taught a completely different Gospel and I trusted the Bible over the Church due to the overwhelming evidence. . . . I was still living in the world and was selfish. . . . I fell on my knees and worshiped Jesus as my personal savior, I surrendered my life to Him and was Changed at that moment. My whole view of Grace was completely WRONG. I was baptized shortly after and I have been sharing the good news with everyone I run into. There was a major change due to faith, fear of the Lord, and gratitude for Grace. I was mormon for 25 years and have been born again (praise God) for 1 year.

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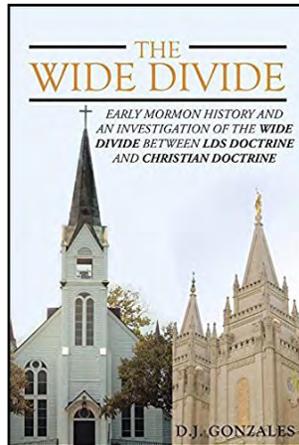
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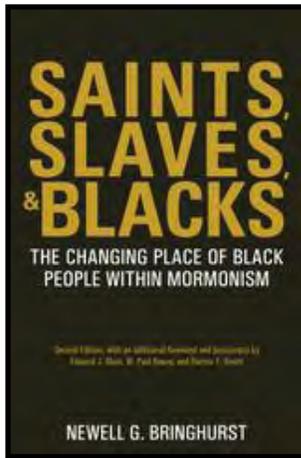
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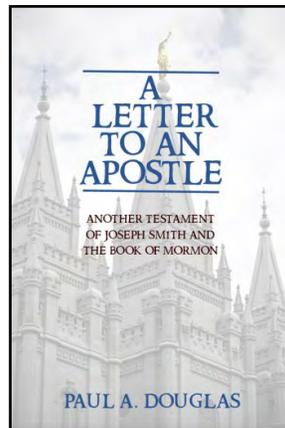
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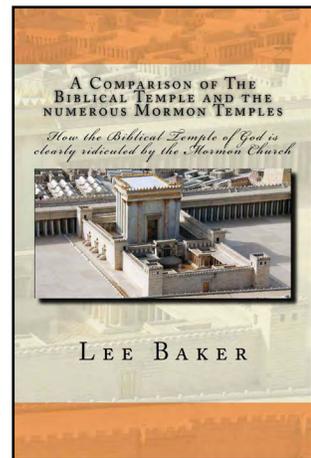
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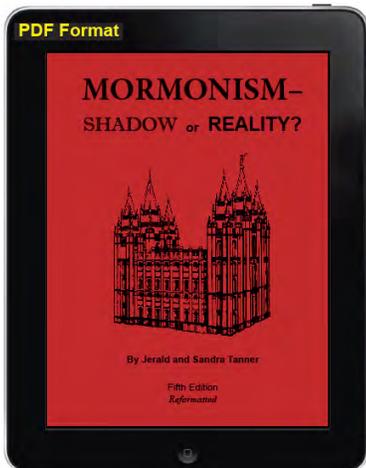
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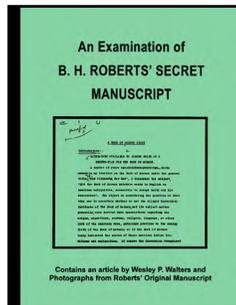
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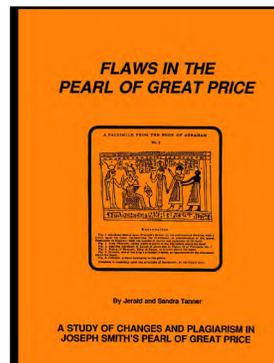
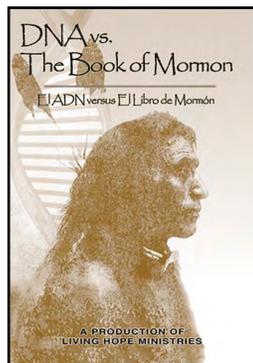


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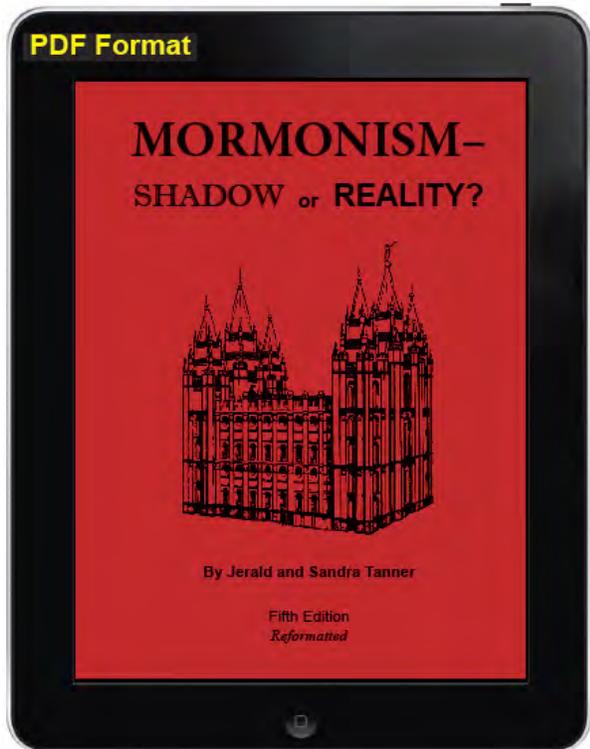
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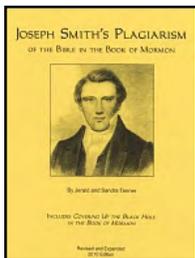
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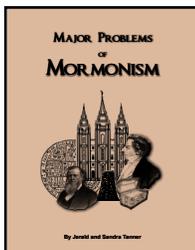


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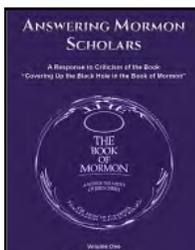
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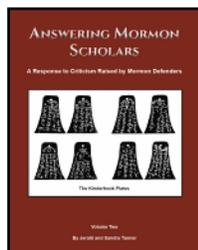
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