

## Joseph Smith's Changing Scriptures By Sandra Tanner

When most people think of Christianity they usually associate it with the Bible. However, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly referred to as the LDS or Mormon Church) is not bound by that volume alone. The LDS Church asserts that the Bible has been corrupted but that their doctrines came directly from God to Joseph Smith, thus guaranteeing a pure transmission. Their eighth Article of Faith states:

We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.<sup>1</sup>

Notice, there is no qualification on the translation of the Book of Mormon, only on the Bible.

Even though their Articles of Faith do not mention their other two books of scripture, the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the *Pearl of Great Price*, those books play a more central role in LDS theology than the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith, as God's prophet, thus takes on a greater mantle than Moses or any writers of the Bible. Milton R. Hunter, author and General Authority in the LDS Church from 1945-1975, boasted:

The Prophet Joseph Smith produced for the world three new volumes of holy scriptures, namely the Book of

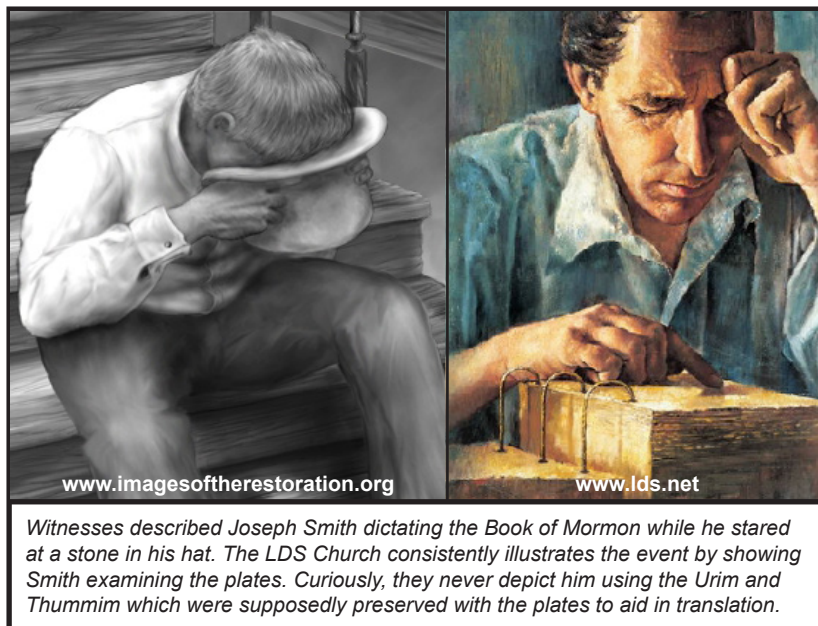
Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, and, in addition, he revised the Bible. No prophet who has ever lived has accomplished such a tremendous feat. There are only 177 pages in the Old Testament attributed to Moses, while Joseph Smith either translated through the gift and power of God or received as direct revelation from Jehovah 835 [pages].<sup>2</sup>

Granted, Joseph Smith wrote a number of scriptural texts, but on what basis should one accept these as the word of God?

### 1. The Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith grew up in a religious family, studying the Bible as a youth. However, his parents

were not members of any particular church. In Smith's official story, published in 1842, he wrote that due to a revival in the neighborhood in 1820 he went into the woods to inquire of God which church to join. Smith claimed that God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him, instructing him not to join any church as they "were all corrupt."<sup>3</sup> However, the revival described by Joseph and other early sources, point to a revival in his neighborhood in 1824 and 1825, not one in 1820.<sup>4</sup> As a result of these revival meetings Joseph's mother, sister and two brothers joined the Presbyterian Church.<sup>5</sup>



Witnesses described Joseph Smith dictating the Book of Mormon while he stared at a stone in his hat. The LDS Church consistently illustrates the event by showing Smith examining the plates. Curiously, they never depict him using the Urim and Thummim which were supposedly preserved with the plates to aid in translation.

1 *Pearl of Great Price*, Articles of Faith.

2 *Deseret News*, Church Section (July 18, 1970): p. 14.

3 Joseph Smith—History 1:19, *Pearl of Great Price*.

4 H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record* (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1994), pp. 15–41.

5 H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), p. 13.

The date of the revival becomes important as one examines the supposed chain of events. Smith said that as a result of the revival he went into the woods to pray about which church to join. Then three years later the angel appeared in his room to tell him of the Book of Mormon plates. But if the revival didn't occur until 1824/1825, then his first vision would have to be in the Spring of 1825. However, this would confuse the chronology of events, putting the vision of God and Jesus after the angel visit of 1823.

When Smith's mother wrote to her brother in 1831 relating the events of Smith's vision of an angel, a new book of scripture and the founding of a new church, she made no mention of a "first vision" of God and Christ in 1820.<sup>6</sup> Fawn Brodie observed:

If something happened that spring morning in 1820, it passed totally unnoticed in Joseph's home town, and apparently did not even fix itself in the minds of members of his own family. The awesome vision he described in later years may have been the elaboration of some half-remembered dream stimulated by the early revival excitement and reinforced by the rich folklore of visions circulating in his neighborhood. Or it may have been sheer invention, created some time after 1830 when the need arose for a magnificent tradition to cancel out the stories of his fortune-telling and money-digging.<sup>7</sup>

Smith's official account of his 1820 vision was not published until 22 years after the supposed event, in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842.<sup>8</sup> However, early documents and printed material by converts and critics alike fail to mention such a vision. They identify the beginning of Smith's story with his experiences of money digging or the angelic visit informing him of an ancient record.<sup>9</sup>

It is commonly agreed that when Joseph was about sixteen he found an unusual stone while digging a well for a neighbor and later announced that the stone had special powers. For the next few years Joseph Smith, his father, and various neighbors were engaged in treasure hunting, with Joseph acting as the diviner who could see in his stone where the treasure was hidden. However, some evil power always seemed to keep the prize from their grasp. After being arrested by the local magistrate as a possible fraud preying on the local farmers, Joseph Smith turned his attention to another treasure, the Book of Mormon.<sup>10</sup>

### The Plates

Smith claimed that on September 21, 1823, an angel appeared to him to commission him to translate an ancient set of metal plates, the long lost record of God's dealings with the former inhabitants of the American continent. Smith's idea for such a metal record could have come from books of the day. Dan Vogel observed:

According to various accounts, some of the North American mounds also contained metal plates. Plates constructed by the Indians were usually made of hammered copper or silver and were sometimes etched. . . . In 1775 Indian trader James Adair described two brass plates and five copper plates found with the Tuccabatches Indians of North America. According to Adair, an Indian informant said "he was told by his forefathers that those plates were given to them by the man we call God; that there had been many more of other shapes, . . . some had writing upon them which were buried with particular men." . . . Perhaps such discoveries of metal plates encouraged the persistent legend of a lost Indian book. The legend, as related by Congregational minister Ethan Smith [in his 1825 book, *View of the Hebrews*] of Poultney, Vermont, held that the Indians once had "a book which they had for a long time preserved. But having lost the knowledge of reading it, they concluded it would be of no further use to them; and they buried it with an Indian chief"<sup>11</sup>

The main part of the Book of Mormon story covers from 600 BC to 421 AD and tells of a small group of Israelites fleeing Jerusalem, who eventually settled in the Americas. The record, supposedly inscribed on golden plates, also included an appearance of Christ in the New World shortly after his crucifixion. The story concludes with a great battle at the Hill Cumorah in about 400 AD, after which the plates were buried in a stone box in the hill in 421 AD. Hundreds of years after Moroni, the last scribe, hid the plates, he returned as an angel in 1823 to tell Joseph Smith where the plates were buried.



Hill Cumorah, New York

<sup>6</sup> Ed. Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 215-217.

<sup>7</sup> Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York City: Knopf, 1992), pp. 24-25.

<sup>8</sup> *Times and Seasons*, vol. 3, (1842): pp. 728, 748.

<sup>9</sup> See *Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, (1834): pp. 78-79; E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio, 1834), pp. 232-235, 258-260; LaMar Petersen, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Freethinker Press, 2000), pp. 1-22.

<sup>10</sup> *Salt Lake City Messenger*, "Was Joseph Smith a Magician?" no. 95 (April 1999); <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no95.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), p. 18.

Along with the plates, the Lord supposedly preserved divine interpreters, called the “Urim and Thummim,” to enable a future translator to decipher the unknown script. These were described as large spectacles with stone lenses. However, Smith used the stone found in the well to produce all of the present Book of Mormon. Contrary to illustrations often produced in LDS Church material, those who witnessed his translation method did not describe him studying the plates as he dictated, but peering into the stone in his hat, and then dictating the text as the divine translation appeared on the stone in English. Meanwhile, the ancient plates were either covered with a cloth or hidden outside. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, gave this account:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.<sup>12</sup>

(See illustration on the first page of this newsletter.)

From the statements made by eye-witnesses it is clear that the book was produced by the same means he used to search for treasures, by looking at the stone.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the divine/magical method of reading the translation off the stone, like reading a text message on a cell phone, evidently the process was not infallible.

### Changes in the Text

The Book of Mormon was published in 1830. However in the next printing, in 1837, thousands of words were changed. While most of these changes were to correct spelling or grammar, a few definitely affected the meaning of the text.

In four places the phrase “the son of” was added to verses speaking of God.<sup>14</sup> For instance, on page 25 of the first edition is a prophecy of the coming Messiah: “the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh.” This was changed in 1837 to read, “... Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of **the Son of God**” (1 Nephi 11:18), thus altering the concept of God from Modalism to a more traditional Trinitarian view.

Another substantive change was the chronological error of referring to King **Benjamin** instead of his successor, King **Mosiah**, in Mosiah 21:28 (page 200 in 1830 edition). The same mistake was also corrected in Ether 4:1 (page 546 in 1830 edition). If this were truly an historical record, it doesn’t seem reasonable that the original writers would have mixed up the name of their current king, especially since Benjamin’s death was noted earlier in Mosiah 6:5.<sup>15</sup>

Smith made a change in 1 Nephi 20:1, where he was quoting from Isaiah 48. This was evidently made to strengthen the Mormon claim that baptism was practiced by the people of the Old Testament. In the 1830 edition, page 52, we read:

Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, . . .

Smith added a phrase so that it read “out of the waters of Judah, **or out of the waters of baptism, who swear...**” (1 Nephi 20:1). However, there is no Biblical manuscript that supports Smith’s addition. The passage is merely using a metaphor for those who descended, or flowed out, from Judah.

Curiously, Smith did not make the same correction in his revision of the Bible, which he began shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon. There his version of Isaiah 48:1 reads:

Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, . . .<sup>16</sup>

Since Joseph Smith claimed to return the Book of Mormon plates to the angel soon after completing his translation, he could not have consulted them when making these changes in the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon. Thus the new readings could not represent a better translation.

<sup>12</sup> David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri, 1887), p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), pp. 41–42; Don Bradley, “Written by the Finger of God?” *Sunstone*, issue 161 (Dec. 2010): pp. 20-29.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Nephi 11:18, 21, 32; 1 Nephi 13:40.

<sup>15</sup> Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry), Introduction.

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 48:1, *Inspired Version of the Holy Scriptures* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing, 1953).

Additional changes have been made since Smith's death. In 1981 a change was made to obscure the racial teachings in the Book of Mormon. In the Book of Mormon story the Israelites who came to the Americas divided into Nephites (the followers of God) and Lamanites (those in rebellion against God). The Lamanites were given a "skin of blackness" due to their rebellion,<sup>17</sup> but in 2 Nephi 30:6 they were promised that at some future time, when they repented, they would become "a **white** and delightsome people." This verse was changed in 1981 to read: "a **pure** and delightsome people."<sup>18</sup> However, the book still retains its racial position of dark skin as a mark of God's displeasure.<sup>19</sup>

In December of 2010 the LDS Church announced that they had revised the Book of Mormon chapter headings and footnotes.<sup>20</sup> This seems to be an effort to obscure the book's racial overtones. In an article posted on the website, *Times and Seasons*, February 2, 2011, Mormon author Marvin Perkins listed a number of these changes:

1. 1 Nephi 12:23 – The footnotes for "dark" have been removed [Jacob 3:3 and Alma 3:7 (6-19)] and replaced with 2 Nephi 26:33.
2. 2 Nephi 5 – the words in the chapter heading "the Lamanites are cursed, receive a skin of blackness" were changed to "the Lamanites are cut off from the presence of the Lord, are cursed . . ."
3. 2 Nephi 5:21 – The footnotes for "curse" [2 Nephi 1:17 and Alma 3:6 (6-19)] were removed and replaced with "TG Curse".
4. 2 Nephi 5:21 – The word "blackness" has a new footnote which is 2 Ne. 26:33.
5. Alma 3:6 – The footnotes for "curse" have been changed from 1 Ne. 2:23 and 2 Ne. 5:21(21-24) to 2 Nephi 5:21; 26:33.
6. Mormon 5 – the words in the chapter heading "The Lamanites shall be a dark, filthy and loathsome people" have been replaced by "Because of their unbelief, the Lamanites will be scattered, and the Spirit will cease to strive with them."
7. Mormon 5:15 – The footnotes for "become" no longer reference 1 Ne. 2:23 and Alma 3:19 (16-19) but are replaced by 2 Nephi 26:33.
8. Moses 7:8,22 – The words "blackness" and "black" both get new footnotes which lead to 2 Nephi 26:33.<sup>21</sup>

However, simply removing racial comments from the headings and redirecting the cross-references does not eliminate the racial teachings of the Book of Mormon.

Also, since DNA studies of the American Indian have established that they descended from Asian forbearers, not Israelites,<sup>22</sup> the LDS Church has tried to minimize the impact of the DNA studies by changing the wording of the Introduction to the Book of Mormon from the Lamanites being the "**principal** ancestors of the American Indians" to them being "**among** the ancestors of the American Indians."<sup>23</sup>

### Additional Scripture?

Joseph Smith anticipated Christians objecting to a new volume of scripture and addressed the issue in his book. In approximately 550 BC, Nephi, a prophet and leader in the first part of Smith's new scripture, was shown by an angel that in the last days, there would be Gentiles (meaning non-LDS) in the New World who would bring the Bible to the descendents of the Book of Mormon people, the American Indians. However, the pure word of God in the Bible had been corrupted by the "great and abominable church" (1 Nephi 13) and many important teachings had been removed. But God's word to those in the New World would be preserved and used to establish God's true doctrine. This message was then expanded in 2 Nephi 29, where God warns of those who will mock this new work of God, saying "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible" (2 Nephi 29). At the end of the Book of Mormon a person is assured that if he will pray "with a sincere heart" God will reveal the truthfulness of the book to him (Moroni 10:4-6). Thus the test of the Book of Mormon's historical validity is side-stepped and the focus is diverted to the sincerity of the one praying.

But if there had been millions of people in the Americas for hundreds of years, living as Hebrew Christians, writing in "reformed Egyptian," building mighty empires, going to battle with horses, chariots, swords and shields, one would expect there to be at least a handful of artifacts to substantiate such a culture. However, the LDS Church has yet to officially present any artifact from these people or identify any specific location for the story. Even though they

<sup>17</sup> Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 5:21; Alma 3:6.

<sup>18</sup> See also 3 Nephi 2:15.

<sup>19</sup> See "Racial Statements in LDS Scriptures," <http://utlm.org/onlineresources/racialstatements.htm>

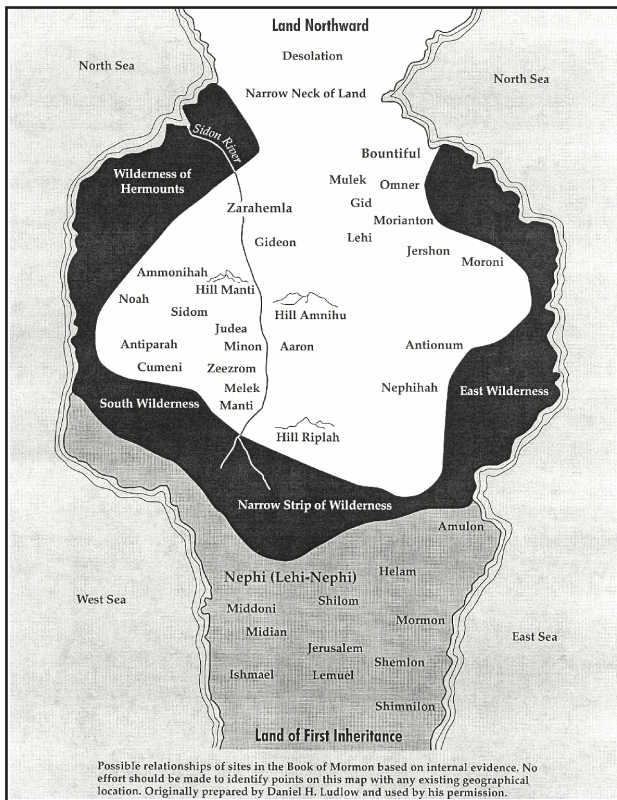
<sup>20</sup> Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Church Removes Racial References in Book of Mormon Headings," *Salt Lake Tribune* (Dec. 16, 2010), <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home/50882900-76/mormon-book-church-lamanites.html.csp>

<sup>21</sup> <http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2011/02/a-review-of-notable-changes/> These changes have been made to the online edition of the Book of Mormon as of April 19, 2011. See <http://lds.org/scriptures/bofm?lang=eng>.

<sup>22</sup> *Salt Lake City Messenger*, "Who Are the Lamanites?" no. 103 (November 2004), <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no103.htm#DNA>. See also Simon Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> *Salt Lake City Messenger*, "Sainly Scissors: The Cutting Away of Unwanted Revelation," no. 110 (May 2008), <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no110.htm>

print maps in their scriptures showing the LDS Church's westward migration from New York to Salt Lake City, they have yet to produce an official map for the Book of Mormon story.



"Book of Mormon Student Study Guide," 2008, p. 203.

There is a chart of Book of Mormon cities in the 2008 *Study Guide* used in LDS High School Seminary classes, titled "Possible Book of Mormon Sites." However, it cautions the reader to refrain from trying to correlate it with an actual map: "No effort should be made to identify points on this map with any existing geographical location."<sup>24</sup> This seems odd since on page 53 students are encouraged to "Study the geography of the Holy Land." If the Book of Mormon is an actual history why not study its geography as one studies the geography of Israel? The church obviously sees the value of maps as there are also maps of Arabia to show Lehi's trip from Jerusalem to the place where his group built their ship to sail to America.<sup>25</sup> Yet the manual never indicates where the group landed in the New World, or where they traveled once they arrived.

## Nephite Script

Many Mormons will point to the Mayan ruins in Central America as evidence of an advanced civilization like that described in the Book of Mormon. However, the Maya had a continuous history as a pagan group before, during and after the time frame covered by the Book of Mormon.

Michael D. Coe, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Yale University, observed that prior to 1000 BC "the Yucatan peninsula was sparsely inhabited by preceramic peoples following an essentially Archaic way of life, centered on hunting and gathering, with some maize and manioc horticulture. Only after 1000 BC did they [the Maya] have villages and pottery, with small temples appearing after 800 BC."<sup>26</sup> The height of Mayan culture extended from 250 AD to 900 AD.<sup>27</sup> Their temples and monuments show no relationship to the Israelites or Christians. Thus any association of the Book of Mormon people with the Maya would be contrary to existing evidence. In fact, after Dr. Coe met an RLDS Apostle in Merida, Mexico, who informed Coe that Christ had preached to the people of the Yucatan peninsula at the famous Mayan Temple of the Cross, Coe classified the idea as part of the "lunatic and near-lunatic fringe."<sup>28</sup>

Writing in 1973, Dr. Coe summarized the problems of historicity for the Book of Mormon in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*:

The bare facts of the matter are that nothing, absolutely nothing, has ever shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon, as claimed by Joseph Smith, is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere.<sup>29</sup>

In 1996 Dr. Coe was asked if he still endorsed his statements in the *Dialogue* article. He responded:

I see little worth in past efforts to "prove" the BOM an historic document. . . . in spite of decades of diligent archaeological research in the area, absolutely nothing relevant to the BOM has ever turned up (among literally millions of excavated artifacts).<sup>30</sup>

For years scholars struggled to decipher the Mayan glyphs, but this has changed. Their temples and monument inscriptions now can be read,<sup>31</sup> and they do not speak

<sup>24</sup> *Book of Mormon Student Study Guide*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (Salt Lake City: 2000, updated 2008), p. 203.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Michael D. Coe, *The Maya*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005), p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

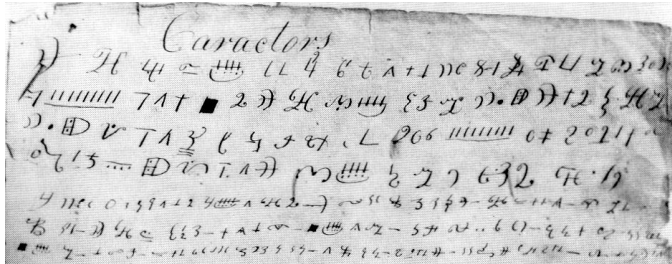
<sup>28</sup> Michael D. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p. 194.

<sup>29</sup> Michael D. Coe, "Mormons and Archaeology: An Outside View," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Summer 1973): p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Michael D. Coe, sent to Craig Churchill, February 15, 1996. Photocopy in UTLM files.

<sup>31</sup> Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, p. 262.

of Hebrew Christians. While Joseph Smith preserved half a page of characters supposedly copied from the Nephite plates,<sup>32</sup> that script has not been found in any of the excavations in the New World. There are numerous examples of Mayan script but nothing that matches Joseph's characters.



Purported copy of script on the gold plates, often referred to as Joseph Smith's "Anthon Transcript."



Mayan script

As you can easily see from the examples above, the style of the Mayan script is totally different from Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon characters.

After Smith finished his translation of the gold plates he claimed they were returned to the angel. Thus there is no way to verify his story of finding an ancient record or to check the accuracy of his translation.

### Origin of the American Indian

When composing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith tapped into the common view of the day that the American Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel. Ancient American ruins were already known in Smith's day. In the early 1800's there was high interest in American Indian culture and artifacts, resulting in many books and

newspaper articles. These writings often mentioned that the Indians claimed to have had a book from God that had been lost, artifacts stored in stone boxes, claims of two different cultures—one more advanced than the other, legends of great battles, etc. For example, the Smith's local newspaper, the *Palmyra Register* for May 26, 1819, reported that "this country was once inhabited by a race of people, at least, partially civilized, & that this race has been exterminated by the forefathers of the present and late tribes of Indians in this country." On October 11, 1825, the local *Wayne Sentinel* suggested that the Indians "are the lineal descendants of the Israelites."

This theme of Israelite descent appeared in a number of books published prior to the Book of Mormon. Two important books promoting the Israelite origin of the Indians were *View of the Hebrews*, by Ethan Smith, first published in 1823, reprinted in 1825, followed in 1826 with the printing of *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, by Josiah Priest. After examining *View of the Hebrews*, LDS General Authority B. H. Roberts commented:

But now to return . . . to the main theme of this writing—viz., did Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* furnish structural material for Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon? It has been pointed out in these pages that there are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not a few things merely, one or two, or a half dozen, **but many; and it is this fact of many things of similarity and the cumulative force of them that makes them so serious a menace to Joseph Smith's story of the Book of Mormon origin.** . . . The material in Ethan Smith's book is of a character and quantity to make a ground plan for the Book of Mormon.

<sup>33</sup>

*View of the Hebrews* proposed that the Indians were descended from Israel, and looks forward to the future gathering of Israel. It speaks of the ancient civilization using metal, having a written language taken from Hebrew, and of a lost book from God. It suggests that the Indians at one time had the gospel preached to them. It recounts vast mounds or military fortifications throughout the Ohio valley, high towers, wars, etc. Thus we see that the basic ideas behind the Book of Mormon were circulating in Smith's day.<sup>34</sup> Add to this Smith's familiarity with the Bible and you have the main source material needed for the book.<sup>35</sup>

Contrary to the views of Smith's day and the Book of Mormon, anthropologists today see no evidence for an Israelite civilization in the Americas between 600 BC

<sup>32</sup> *Book of Mormon Student Study Guide*, p. 14

<sup>33</sup> B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), p. 240.

<sup>34</sup> David Persuitte, *Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2010).

and 400 AD. DNA has shown that the American Indians descend from Central Asia, not the Middle East.<sup>36</sup>

### Doctrine

In April of 1830 Joseph Smith organized his church, the Church of Christ, which recognized both the Bible and the Book of Mormon as scripture. However, the teachings in his new scripture were not that far removed from many other movements of his day. It echoed the Restoration movement's call for a return to New Testament Christianity, a rejection of the Catholic Church and infant baptism (1 Nephi 13:4; Moroni 8:11-12). It taught that there was one God (2 Nephi 31:21), that faith in Christ and Christian baptism were essential for eternal life (Mosiah 18:13; Moroni 8:25) and that there should be no division between various churches (Mosiah 25:22). In fact, in 1831, Alexander Campbell, a leader in the American Restoration movement, wrote concerning the *Book of Mormon*:

This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies;—infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government, and the rights of man.<sup>37</sup>

What the book does **not** contain are Joseph Smith's later doctrines of pre-mortal life, temple rituals, eternal marriage, plural marriage, baptism and marriage for the dead, three levels of heaven and man's hope of future exaltation as a god presiding over his own world; this in spite of the fact that the introduction to the Book of Mormon promises that it contains "the fulness of the everlasting gospel."

### Plagiarism of the Bible

Two other problems for the Book of Mormon are the lifting of hundreds of phrases from the King James Version of the Bible and the introduction of New Testament concepts into the Book of Mormon before the time of Christ.

The Old Testament has no mention of Jesus Christ by name, or the Christian concept of baptism, yet these are an integral part of the Nephite religion in the Book

of Mormon during the period before Christ. For instance, in approximately 550 BC God instructs the Nephites, "repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son" (2 Nephi: 31:11). Another Book of Mormon passage supposedly written about 121 BC contains words obviously taken from 1 Corinthians 15:58. It says: "Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his." Hundreds of phrases from the Bible have been sprinkled throughout the Book of Mormon to give it the sound of scripture.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, over the last 180 years scholar after scholar has concluded that the Book of Mormon is a product of the nineteenth century, not an ancient record.

## 2. Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible

Months after finishing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith embarked on another ambitious project, his revision of the King James Bible, known as the *Inspired Version* or the *Joseph Smith Translation* (JST). Between the years 1830 and 1833 Smith and his scribes went through the Bible noting places to be changed, plus adding new verses to the text. Although Mormons often declare that Joseph Smith's Bible revision was never completed, in a letter dated July 2, 1833, Joseph Smith wrote: "We this day finished the translation of the scriptures, for which we return gratitude to our Heavenly Father."<sup>39</sup>

A number of the revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* relate to instructions from God about the Bible revision and the necessity of having it published.<sup>40</sup> However, due to the Mormons' frequent moves, financial plights, and other church duties, the project was not published during Smith's lifetime. When the main body of the saints moved west, Emma Smith, Joseph's widow, remained behind and had the manuscript for Smith's Bible in her care. It was eventually published in 1867 by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now known as the Community of Christ.<sup>41</sup> Since the Lord seemed so concerned in the early 1830's that the prophet finish and publish the new revised Bible, one wonders why the current LDS prophets do not complete the task?

This was not a translation in the regular sense as Smith had no ancient manuscripts and no training in Hebrew or Greek. It was a matter of revelation. Some of the changes were Smith's attempt to make a more logical reading, some

<sup>36</sup> Simon Southerton, "Answers to Apologetic Claims about DNA and the Book of Mormon," online at <http://signaturebooks.com/2010/06/answers-to-apologetic-claims-about-dna-and-the-book-of-mormon/>

<sup>37</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Delusions," *Millennial Harbinger* (February 1831): p. 93.

<sup>38</sup> See Tanner, *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible in the Book of Mormon*.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), vol. 1, p. 368.

<sup>40</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 35:20; 37:1; 42:15, 56; 73:3-4; 76:15; 104:58.

<sup>41</sup> H. Michael Marquardt, *The Four Gospels According to Joseph Smith*, (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), pp. 42-44.

were issues Bible commentaries had already discussed, some were simply insertions by Smith.<sup>42</sup>

As with the Book of Mormon, Smith moved knowledge of Christianity into the Old Testament. For instance, his revision of Genesis 6:52-53 indicates that Adam was baptized and received the Holy Ghost:

And he called upon our father Adam, by his own voice, saying, I am God; . . . If thou wilt, turn unto me and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be **baptized**, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is **Jesus Christ**, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men; and ye shall receive the **gift of the Holy Ghost**, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask it shall be given you . . .<sup>43</sup>

While Enoch only receives passing mention in the Bible, Smith added pages to Genesis, chapters 6 and 7, about Enoch and his city. He also added over 800 words to Genesis, chapter 50, including a prophecy about himself. Genesis 50:33 of Joseph Smith's translation reads:

And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called **Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father.**<sup>44</sup>

This was obviously intended to be a reference to Joseph Smith, whose father was also named Joseph. Furthermore, Genesis 14 was expanded to enlarge the role of Melchizedek and his priesthood.

Likewise, Isaiah received numerous corrections, with chapter 29 being greatly expanded. This was done so that the passage about a sealed book could be reinterpreted as a prophecy about the Book of Mormon.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, his revision of Isaiah still retains the verses declaring that there is only one God, such as Isaiah 43:10-11, which contrasts with Smith's later teachings on a multitude of Gods.

The Book of Mormon states that the Bible went from the Jews to the Gentiles in its purity, but was then changed.<sup>46</sup> With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls it is now clear that Smith's additions to the Old Testament are not supported by ancient manuscripts. Christianity was not taught in the Old Testament.

Smith also added many words to the New Testament, even rewriting the well-known opening of the gospel of John. John 1:1 states:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

However, Joseph Smith changed it to read:

In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. (JST, John 1:1)

Needless to say, there is no manuscript evidence for Smith's additions.<sup>47</sup>

One change he made in Revelation 1:6 was to reinforce the meaning of the text. In the KJV it says that we are made "kings and priests unto God and his Father." To eliminate any confusion that two gods are meant, Smith dropped the word "and," so that it read "God, his Father." However, preaching in 1844, Smith completely ignored his own revision, and used the KJV reading "God and his father" to bolster his new doctrine that there was a God above our Heavenly Father.<sup>48</sup> This is just one of many instances of Smith's evolving view of the godhead.

Curiously, Smith seemed to ignore his revision once it was finished, choosing instead to quote from the KJV or give a new rendering in his sermons. Writing in 1963, Mormon writer Merrill Y. Van Wagoner explained:

Whenever the prophet quoted from the Bible he either retained the words of the King James version or else flatly declared it to be wrong and then gave a rendering of the passage which differed from it. He seems to take no account of his changes in the Inspired Revision, which of course was not printed.<sup>49</sup>

One example of this is seen in his various renditions of Malachi 4:1-6. Recounting the visitation by the angel Moroni during his teenage years, in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph told how Moroni quoted from these verses:

. . . he [Moroni] quoted also the fourth or last chapter of [Malachi] the same prophecy, though **with a little**

42 See Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, (Oxford, 1991), pp. 46-61. Also, <http://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/9.1Matthews.pdf>

43 *Joseph Smith's "New Translation" of the Bible*, (Independence, Missouri: Herald House Publishers, 1970), Genesis 6:52-53, p. 47.

44 "Joseph Smith Translation," Holy Bible, (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), p. 799.

45 Paul Trask, *Part Way to Utah: The Forgotten Mormons*, (Independence, Missouri: Refiner's Fire Ministries, 2005), chapter 9, "Joseph Smith's Inspired Version of the Bible," pp. 103-112; online at <http://www.help4rlds.com/pwtu/PWTUChap9.pdf>

46 1 Nephi 13:24-28.

47 Joel Groat, "Joseph Smith's 'Inspired' Revisions to the King James Bible," online at <http://www.irr.org/mit/js-translation-condensed.html>

48 Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), p. 370.

49 Merrill Y. Van Wagoner, *The Inspired Revision of the Bible*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), pp. 48-51.



**variation** from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books, he quoted it thus:

*For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble, for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*

And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus: *Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*

He also quoted the next verse differently: *And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.*<sup>50</sup>

However, when Smith was working on his Inspired Revision, he marked the book of Malachi as “correct.” Curiously, the Savior’s words in the Book of Mormon are different from Moroni’s words to Smith:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (3 Nephi 25: 5-6)

But this is not the end of the confusion. Joseph Smith, preaching on January 24, 1844, gave yet another rendering of Malachi 4:5-6. Although he followed the wording of the King James Version, he claimed that the word “turn” should be translated “bind” or “seal”—a rendering which he did not use in either the Book of Mormon or the Inspired Version.<sup>51</sup>

### Formation of the Canon

As mentioned earlier, the LDS Articles of Faith state that they believe the Bible as far as it is translated correctly. However, this reservation extends beyond the reliability of the translation. Mormons often object to the form of our current canon, maintaining that early church councils decided which books were to be canonized and thus voted out many books that should have been included in the Bible. Interestingly, Smith did not restore any of these “lost” writings. In fact, he even eliminated the Song of Solomon from his Bible. Therefore, if the Mormons are going to insist that the current composition of the canon is in error, that there were books meant to be included in

the Bible that were voted out, it is up to them to supply a list of those that should have been used together with the reasons for their inclusion.<sup>52</sup>

In 1979 the LDS church printed its own edition of the King James Bible. At that time they certainly could have made their own compilation of books to be included in the canon. But they left it the same. While they did not make any alterations to the actual text, they did introduce new chapter headings and footnotes which cross-referenced topics in their other books of scripture. They also included numerous extracts from Joseph Smith’s Bible revision at the back of their Bible. This certainly raises the question as to why their prophet has not seen fit to publish a corrected Bible if the one we have is so unreliable?

## 3. Doctrine and Covenants

One of the founding principles of Mormonism is the belief in continuing revelation through a prophet at the head of the church. In their Articles of Faith it is stated that they believe “a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority.” It goes on to state “We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, vision, healing, interpretation of tongues and so forth.”<sup>53</sup> Joseph Smith dictated dozens of revelations between 1829 and 1844 and most of these have been canonized in the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

Section 1, verse 30, of the *D&C* declares that Smith’s church is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.” Section 13 tells of the appearance of John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, ordaining them to the Aaronic Priesthood, and giving them the authority to baptize. Section 22 revealed that all those who desired to unite with the LDS Church must submit to LDS baptism, regardless of the person’s prior baptism at another church.

While the Book of Mormon is the main book used in proselytizing, Mormonism’s more unique doctrines are found in the *Doctrine and Covenants*—such as pre-earth life [sec. 93], Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods [sec. 107], plural gods [sec. 121; 132], Heavenly Father having a body of flesh and bone [sec. 130], three levels of heaven [sec. 76], eternal marriage [sec. 131], polygamy and progression to godhood [sec. 132], baptism for the dead [sec. 124], and their dietary health code known as the Word of Wisdom [sec. 89]. On questions of doctrine, the *Doctrine and Covenants* takes precedent over both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Smith History 1:36-39, *Pearl of Great Price*.

<sup>51</sup> *History of the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 183-184. For more on Smith’s Bible revisions, see Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormon Scriptures and the Bible*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1970).

<sup>52</sup> Luke P. Wilson, “Lost Books and Latter-Day Revelation: A Response to Mormon Views of the New Testament Canon,” online at <http://www.irr.org/mit/lost-books.html>; “The New Testament Canon,” online at <http://www.bible-researcher.com/canon3.html>;

<sup>53</sup> “Articles of Faith,” *Pearl of Great Price*.

### Continuing Revelation?

Of the past sixteen presidents of the LDS Church, only two besides Smith contributed a section to the *Doctrine and Covenants* claiming to have received a revelation. Section 136 is the only one attributed to Brigham Young, Joseph Smith's successor, in 1847. The Lord explained how the Mormons were to organize in various companies, sharing their goods among the group, on their journey west to the Great Salt Lake. Section 138 is a dream of Joseph F. Smith, dated October 3, 1918, which was not canonized until 1976, when it was added to the *Pearl of Great Price*. A few years later it was moved to the *Doctrine and Covenants*. At the end of the *D&C* are two official LDS Church Declarations, which are presented as the result of the revelatory process but they are not the actual revelations, thus relegating them to the end of the book in a different category. Declaration-1 was issued in 1890 by President Wilford Woodruff instructing members to no longer enter into plural marriages (polygamy). Declaration-2 was issued in 1978 under President Spencer W. Kimball, which announced the end of the priesthood ban on blacks, opening the way for them to also attend the temple.

In the April 2008 General Conference LDS Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland explained the Mormon concept of continuing revelation:

The fact of the matter is that virtually every prophet of the Old and New Testament has **added scripture** to that received by his predecessors . . . If one revelation to one prophet in one moment of time is sufficient for all time, what justifies these many others? What justifies them was made clear by Jehovah Himself when He said to Moses, "My works are without end, and . . . my words . . . never cease."

I testify that the heavens are open. . . . I testify that Thomas S. Monson is God's prophet, a modern apostle with the keys of the kingdom in his hands, a man upon whom I personally have seen the mantle fall. I testify that the presence of such authorized, prophetic voices and **ongoing canonized revelations** have been at the heart of the Christian message whenever the authorized ministry of Christ has been on the earth.<sup>54</sup>

It has now been thirty-three years since an addition has been made to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, which raises the question of whether or not the LDS Church has arrived at a closed canon?

Since Joseph Smith had used the argument of the need for modern-day revelation as an essential element of his

new church, his followers assumed revelation would be available to all. One of the problems encountered by Joseph Smith was the dilemma of competing revelations from others in the group. Hiram Page, one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon, claimed to receive revelations for the church through his seer stone. This was soon resolved when Joseph gave an additional revelation that there is only one man at a time that speaks for God, thus solidifying Smith as God's authorized spokesman. Section 28 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* declares:

But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, **no one** shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant **Joseph Smith, Jun.**, for he receiveth them even as Moses.

Then in verse 11, Smith is told to take Hiram Page aside and explain to him that "those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him."

Section 4 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, given in 1829, is a good example of the ability of Smith to weave various Bible phrases into his revelations. We have supplied the Bible verses that were used for the wording in Smith's revelation:

Now behold, **a marvelous work** is about to come forth among the children of men. [Isaiah 29:14] . . . For behold the **field is white already to harvest**; [John 4:35] and lo, he that **thrusteth in his sickle** [Revelation 14:15] with his might, the same **layeth up in store** [1 Timothy 6:19] that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; And **faith, hope, charity** [1 Corinthians 13:13] and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work. . . . **Ask** and ye shall **receive**; **knock** and **it shall be opened unto you**. [Matthew 7:8]

Smith's talent for interspersing biblical phrases from the King James Version in his revelations helped to give them an added air of authority.

### Changes in the Text

Smith's revelations were first put in book form in 1833, as the *Book of Commandments*, then reissued in 1835 under the title *Doctrine and Covenants*. Since additional revelations had been received after the 1833 printing the volume was enlarged. However, most members did not realize that Smith had rewritten a number of his earlier revelations, introducing new doctrines, such as the inclusion of the Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>55</sup> David Whitmer, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated that

<sup>54</sup> "My Words . . . Never Cease," *Ensign* (May 2008): pp. 91-94.

<sup>55</sup> For a study of the changes in the *D&C*, see [http://www.saintswithouthalos.com/s/\\_d&c.phtml](http://www.saintswithouthalos.com/s/_d&c.phtml); also H. Michael Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations Text and Commentary*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999).

when it became known that Joseph Smith had changed his revelations, "the result was that some of the members left the church on account of it."<sup>56</sup>

Today the LDS Church claims that in 1829 God sent Peter, James and John to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to ordain them to the Melchizedek Priesthood. However, all early Mormon documents and diaries show that the founding members of the LDS church were not aware of any such claim. This is but one example of the way Smith's doctrines evolved over the fourteen years he acted as prophet.

While the Book of Mormon spoke of the authority that came from the "order of the Son" (Alma 13:9) or the "holy order of God" (Alma 13:18), it was not termed the Melchizedek Priesthood as it is today. In fact, the Book of Mormon spoke of high priests, priests, elders and teachers (Alma 4:7, 20; Alma 13:1-19) as all being of the same priesthood, not two divisions as is currently taught. Contrary to Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*, the concept of a restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood in 1829 was not taught at the beginning of Mormonism. David Whitmer wrote that it was not taught in 1830.<sup>57</sup> One of the evidences of this is the way Smith rewrote his revelations between the 1833 *Book of Commandments* and the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*.

A Mormon today would point to sections 20, 27, 42 and 68, of the *Doctrine and Covenants* as evidence that the early members were taught about that priesthood. However, sections 20, 27 and 42 have gone through revision and additions, and Section 68 was not even in the 1833 printing. One reason for these additions was to add concepts about priesthood that were not present in the original.

Another evidence of Smith's evolving story is his rewriting of section 5 of the *D&C*. In the original 1833 printing, chapter 4 of the *Book of Commandments*, he was told that the **only** gift God would give him would be the translation of the Book of Mormon. This was rewritten in 1835 to read that the translation was just the **first** gift God would give him, thus opening the door for further books of scripture.

In section 7 of the *D&C* is Joseph Smith's purported translation of a parchment written by John the Beloved. While it is labeled a translation, there is no evidence that Smith ever claimed to have such a record. It is simply a revelation. However, the current version is twice as long as the 1833 *Book of Commandments* printing (section 6). Thus we are once again faced with the problem of Smith's accuracy in receiving revelation.

Section 8 was also rewritten. In the 1833 printing (section 7) Oliver Cowdery, Smith's scribe, was commended for his gift of working with a divining rod, or "rod of nature," but now the revelation euphemistically refers to Cowdery's "gift of Aaron." Thus Cowdery's earlier involvement with treasure seeking and magic arts is camouflaged by altering a few words.<sup>58</sup>

### False Prophecy

Another problem with Smith's revelations is his failed prophecies. One of the ways the Bible tells us to test a prophet is found in Deuteronomy 18:22 where God declares that if a prophecy fails it is evidence that the person who gave it is a false prophet. When we apply this standard to Joseph Smith, he certainly fails.<sup>59</sup>

One of the most famous of Joseph's prophecies is section 87, given December 25, 1832, predicting the Civil War. It opens with these words:

Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls; . . .

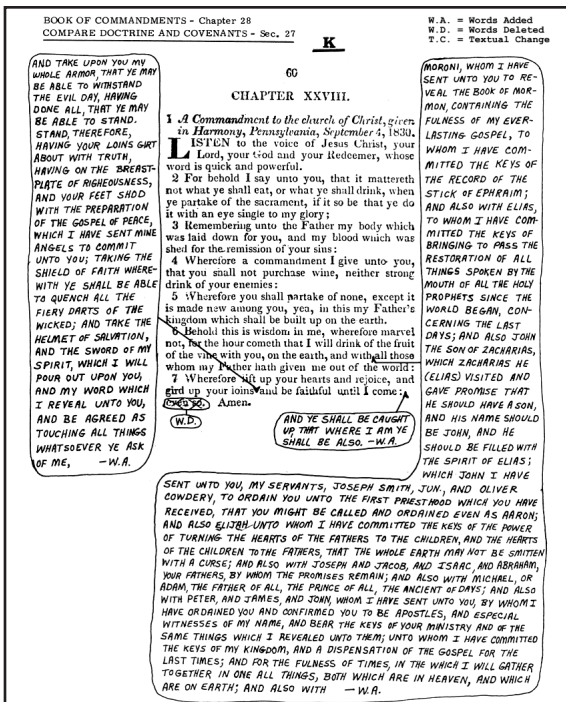
However, this revelation, which was not printed in either the 1833 *Book of Commandments* or the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*, has many problems. For instance, since South Carolina had just threatened to leave the union before this revelation was given, Smith's inspiration seems

56 Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, p. 61.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 64

58 Photocopies of both the 1833 *Book of Commandments* and 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* online at <http://www.irr.org/mit/boc/>

59 Further examples of Smith's failed prophecies, "A Sample of Joseph Smith's False Prophecies," <http://utlm.org/onlineresources/falseprophecies.htm>



Chapter 28 of the Book of Commandments, showing later additions at the side. Compare with D&C 27.

to have come from newspapers of the day. On December 10, 1832, the *Boston Daily Advertiser & Patriot* printed “Extracts from the Message of the Governor of South Carolina at the opening of the Legislature, November 27, 1832,” warning that “South Carolina was prepared to resist the U.S. Government by force if necessary.” Thus Joseph Smith’s revelation seems to be an outgrowth of the current news.

When the immediate crisis passed, and South Carolina gave up its threat of secession, Smith’s revelation was put in storage. It was not printed until 1851, and not canonized until 1876. But even so, there are parts of the revelation that have never been fulfilled. Verses 1 and 2 speak of “wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina,” and that this will lead to a war that “will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place,” meaning South Carolina. It goes on to speak of Great Britain joining the Southern States in fighting against the North, and that other nations will then join in, “and then war shall be poured out upon all nations.” Obviously, the Civil War never reached such proportions.<sup>60</sup> LDS scholar Paul Petersen conceded: “These matters are all history now, but certain verses in the Civil War prophecy have broader applications and it appears that portions of the revelation are yet to be fulfilled.”<sup>61</sup>

In 1832 Joseph dictated section 84, which was a command to build a temple in Independence, Missouri, known among the Mormons as “Zion” or “New Jerusalem.” The temple was to be “reared in this generation,” meaning during the life-time of those currently living but that temple has yet to be built. It goes on to command the Mormon bishop to preach the LDS gospel to the citizens of New York, Albany and Boston. If they reject the message, “utter abolishment” awaited them, “for if they do reject these things the hour of their judgment is nigh, and their house shall be left unto them desolate” (*D&C* 84:4-5, 114-115, Sept. 1832). Clearly, those cities did not embrace Mormonism, and no such calamity befell the northern cities.

### Lectures on Faith

When the LDS Church decided to do a new printing of Smith’s revelations in 1835, changing the name from *Book of Commandments* to *Doctrine and Covenants*, they added a series of lessons entitled the “Lectures on Faith.” These lectures had originally been delivered before a class

of the elders in Kirtland, Ohio. These lessons present clear evidence that they were not preaching the concept of God the Father as a resurrected man with a body as is taught today. Lecture 5 distinguishes between the Father being a “personage of spirit” and the Son as being “a personage of tabernacle.”<sup>62</sup>

The “Lectures on Faith” not only taught that God the Father is a **spirit**, but also that God is “omnipresent” and “without beginning of days.” However, in the 1840’s Joseph Smith changed his doctrine of God, teaching that God the Father not only had a resurrected body, but that God had not always been God, that there were deities before him.<sup>63</sup>

These lectures were included in every edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* until the 1921 edition, when they were removed to lessen confusion about the nature of God the Father.<sup>64</sup>

While these lectures were canonized in 1835, we know of no evidence that there was ever a sustaining vote for their removal. They were simply deleted from the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

## 4. Pearl of Great Price

The *Pearl of Great Price* is a compilation of several writings. First is the Book of Moses, which is an extract from Smith’s Bible translation, composed during the early 1830’s, covering parts of Genesis. However, chapter 1 of the Book of Moses does not appear in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (aka: Community of Christ) printing of the Joseph Smith translation.

Here we see Smith reinforcing the idea of only one God. In Moses 1:3 we read “I am without beginning of days or end of years.” Then in verse 6 we read “there is no God beside me.” The story of creation in chapter 2 is carried out by “the Almighty God” and “by mine Only Begotten.”

The Book of Moses is followed by the Book of Abraham, which is the purported translation of an ancient papyrus written by the very hand of Abraham. In it Joseph Smith moves from a strictly monotheistic view of God to that of polytheism. Abraham 4:1 states:

And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is **the Gods**, organized and formed the heavens and the earth.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pp. 190-192.

<sup>61</sup> “Civil War Prophecy,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1992, p. 287.

<sup>62</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants*, 1835 ed., p. 53.

<sup>63</sup> See *D&C*, Sec. 130; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 312, 342-354, 369-373.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Van Wagoner, Steven Walker, Allen Roberts, “The ‘Lectures on Faith’: A Case Study in Decanonization,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Fall 1987): pp. 71-77.

<sup>65</sup> See Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1991).

Next is another extract from Smith's Bible translation, Matthew, chapter 24. This is followed by an extract from Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* recounting the beginning of Mormonism. The last item is the LDS "Articles of Faith," which was printed in 1842, but does not enumerate their most heretical doctrines, such as temple rituals and multiple gods. Also, it only mentions two books of scripture, the Bible and Book of Mormon, leaving out the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the *Pearl of Great Price*.

As we have demonstrated in our book, *Flaws in the Pearl of Great Price*, each section of the *Pearl of Great Price* has undergone many revisions.

### Book of Abraham

In 1835 Michael Chandler brought his traveling Egyptian mummy exhibit to the Mormon town of Kirtland, Ohio. Upon examination, Joseph Smith offered to buy the collection as he had discerned that one of the Egyptian papyrus scrolls contained the writings of Old Testament patriarch Abraham. After purchasing the mummies and scrolls for \$2,400 (\$61,300 in today's value), Smith embarked on his new translation project. If this were truly the writings of Abraham it would be the oldest known biblical text. Even the Dead Sea Scrolls would dim in comparison.

Like the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith professed to be translating an ancient record, preserved by God to come forth in these last days. It was no less than the original account of the creation as recorded by Abraham, which would even pre-date his translation of the Moses account in his revision of the Bible.

During this time the study of Egyptian hieroglyphs was in its infancy, which no doubt left Joseph Smith feeling free to offer his interpretation of the papyri without challenge. While Frenchman Jean-Francois Champollion had been involved in deciphering the Rosetta Stone in the 1820's, which proved to be the key to translating Egyptian hieroglyphs, his research was little known in the United States during Smith's lifetime.

Joseph Smith first developed his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar<sup>66</sup> using various hieroglyphs from the papyri and then composed an English explanation. He then worked on his translation for the next several years, finally publishing it in 1842 in the LDS newspaper, *Times and Seasons*, and it was canonized in 1880.

Included in the Book of Abraham were three illustrations taken from the papyri, labeled Facsimile Nos. 1, 2 and 3.



**Facsimile No. 1** shows a black standing figure, a man lying on a couch, a bird, and four jars underneath the couch. Smith described this as "Abraham fastened upon an altar," and "The idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice." The bird was identified as the "angel of the Lord" and the four jars were said to represent four "idolatrous" gods. However, Egyptologists would later identify this as a standard scene from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, showing the god Anubis overseeing the embalming of Osiris. Originally the papyrus would have shown Anubis with a jackal head, but the papyrus had evidently been damaged and the Mormons had to guess at the type of head to place on the black figure. Underneath the couch are four canopic jars used to store the person's organs, with lids representing the sons of Horus, and the bird represents the soul of the person being embalmed.

66 H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2009).

### LDS CLAIMS

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**Facsimile No. 2** is a disc with numerous figures and hieroglyphic inscriptions. In Smith's purported translation of the text, he explained that the central figure represented "Kolob," the first creation nearest to the "residence of God." Other figures related to priesthood, various planets and stars, the measurement of time and "God sitting upon his throne." However, this object is known as a hypocephalus, a magical disc placed under the head of a mummy to aid the person in his journey after death. The figures represent well-known Egyptian deities. The Mormon copy is similar to a number of other such objects in various Egyptian collections around the world.<sup>67</sup> Smith identified figure 7 (upside-down seated figure in lower right area) as "God sitting upon his throne," while Egyptologists identify the figure as Min, the Egyptian god of male sexual potency, and is shown with an erection.

<sup>67</sup> Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 336.



**Facsimile No. 3** is a picture of five figures: a woman standing behind a seated man, and then another woman, a man and a black figure. Joseph Smith explained that this was a picture of "Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne," with Pharaoh standing behind him. Abraham is said to be "reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy." However, Egyptologists identify this as the Judgment Scene from the Book of the Dead, showing Isis standing behind the seated figure of Osiris.

Standing in front of the seated figure, according to Smith, is a "Prince of Pharaoh." Smith identified the next figure as "Shulem, one of the king's principal waiters" and the black figure as "Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince." However, the three figures in front of Osiris have been identified as Maat (the goddess of truth), the deceased person (for whom the papyrus was made), and the black figure is the half-man, half-jackal deity Anubis.

Smith produced three chapters of text but the work was not completed before his death. As scholars increased their ability to read Egyptian hieroglyphs attention was turned to examining the facsimiles reproduced in the Book of Abraham. In 1912 and 1913 several of the world's top Egyptologists commented on Smith's interpretation of the drawings.

One of the scholars who examined Smith's work was James H. Breasted, Ph.D., Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago, who wrote:

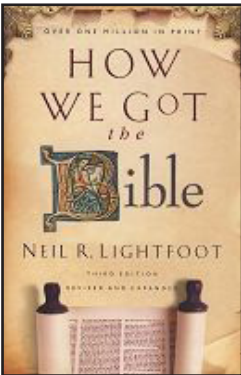
These three facsimiles of Egyptian documents in the "Pearl of Great Price" depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith's interpretations of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrate that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Rt. Rev. F. S. Spalding, *Joseph Smith Jr., As a Translator*, (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1912), pp. 26-27. Printed in *Why Egyptologists Reject the Book of Abraham*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry).

## How We Got the Bible

by Neil R. Lightfoot

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Answers questions like:

*How old are the earliest biblical manuscripts?*

*How has the Bible been preserved and transmitted to us?*

*Why do we have so many different translations of the Bible?*

The other Egyptologists rendered similar verdicts of Smith's erroneous interpretations.

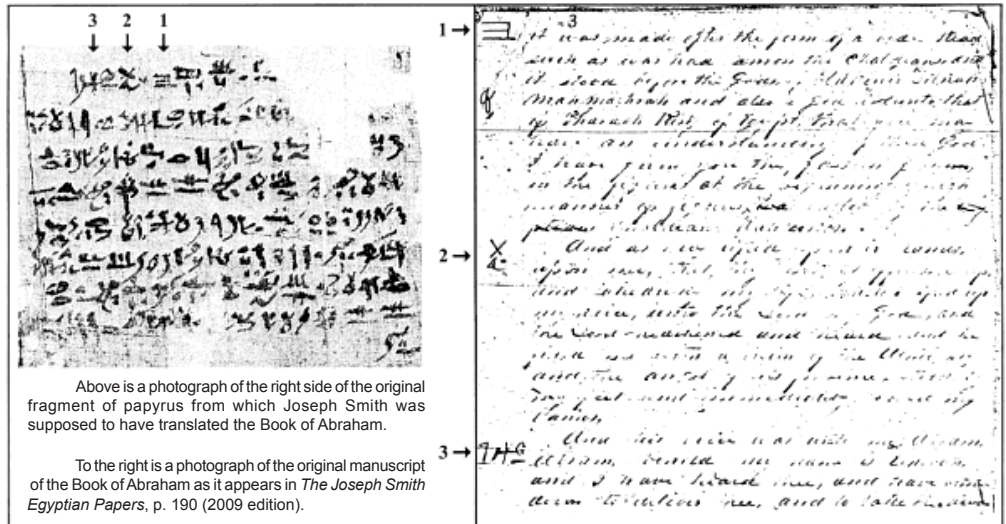
One has only to look at any credible source on Egyptian deities to see that the figures in the Book of Abraham facsimiles are standard images from the Book of the Dead. To suggest that Abraham would use pictures of pagan gods to illustrate the true God is in direct opposition to the teachings in the Old Testament. In the Ten Commandments, God explicitly stated that He had delivered the

children of Israel out of Egypt and that they were to reject all pagan deities, specifically stating that no one was to make any image or likeness of God (Exodus 20:2-4). Joseph Smith's identification of these pagan deities with the God of Abraham makes no more sense than to claim that a statue of the Buddha actually represents Jesus Christ. Today the heading on the Book of Abraham still contains the same claim of being an authentic translation of the papyri:

The Book of Abraham, Translated from the Papyrus, by Joseph Smith. A translation of some ancient records, that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt.— The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.<sup>69</sup>

While the facsimiles have come under attack, there had been no way for the scholars to test Smith's purported translation of the papyri, as it was assumed they had been destroyed. However, Smith's translation would be put to the test in 1967 when a number of pieces of the long-lost papyri were presented to the LDS Church by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Once photos of the papyri were printed in the 1968 *Improvement Era*, an official LDS magazine, scholars began the search to determine which piece Smith had utilized in his translation.<sup>70</sup> The piece was identified by comparing Joseph Smith's translation papers and his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar with the papyri. It was soon determined that Smith had used characters from the piece of papyri identified as "XI. Small 'Sensen' text (unillustrated),"<sup>71</sup> also referred to as the Book of Breathings (a condensed version of the Book of the Dead).



All of the first two rows of characters on the papyrus fragment can be found in the manuscript of the Book of Abraham. Other manuscript pages show that he used almost four lines of the papyrus to make fifty-one verses in the Book of Abraham. These fifty-one verses are composed of more than two thousand English words!<sup>72</sup> A person does not have to be an Egyptologist to know that it would be impossible to translate over two thousand words from a few Egyptian characters.

This piece, Joseph Smith's No. XI Small "Sensen" text, has been translated by several Egyptologists with virtual agreement. Contrary to Smith's version, the English translation takes up just slightly more space than the actual hieroglyphs.

In 1968 Richard A. Parker, professor of Egyptology at Brown University, supplied a translation of the piece, which was published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*:

[.....] this great pool of Khonsu [Osiris Hor, justified], born of Taykhebyt, a man likewise. After (his) two arms are (fast)ened to his breast, one wraps the Book of Breathings, which is with writing both inside and outside of it, with royal linen, it being placed (at) his left arm near his heart, this having been done at his wrapping and outside it. If this book be recited for him, then He will breath like the soul(s of the gods) for ever and ever.<sup>73</sup>

69 *Pearl of Great Price*, caption on Book of Abraham, p. 29.

70 "New Light on Joseph Smith's Egyptian Papyri," *Improvement Era*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (February 1968): pp. 40-41.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 41. See Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 311.

72 Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pp. 312-313.

73 Richard A. Parker, "The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Preliminary Report," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 3, no. 2, (Summer, 1968): p. 86.

Mormon scholars, realizing the problems of defending a literal translation for the Book of Abraham, have now proposed that either Smith didn't use the "Sensen" text and that the piece Smith did use no longer exists, or it doesn't have to be a literal translation of the papyrus, but could be a revelation triggered by looking at the artifacts. Some also propose that Smith used the drawings from the papyri only to illustrate his revelation, not that they originally were drawn to illustrate a composition by Abraham.<sup>74</sup> However, the heading of the Book of Abraham still carries the official statement that it is a translation of the papyrus and that it is "the writings of Abraham . . . written by his own hand, upon papyrus." If the Book of Abraham is a product of revelation, not an actual translation, and the facsimiles were not drawn to illustrate Abraham's text, one wonders why the Mormons needed to invest so much money to acquire these pagan documents in the first place? In Joseph Smith's day, the papyri were certainly presented to the public as actually being Abraham's record.

### Doctrine of the Book of Abraham

Many of the LDS doctrines have their origin in the Book of Abraham. Chapters 1 and 2 stress the importance of priesthood. It also reinforces the LDS concept of a racial curse (Abraham 1:21-24). Chapter 3:21-27 introduces the concept of pre-mortal existence, that men and women had a prior life (coexisted) with God before being born on earth. Those who were "noble" in their pre-earth life (man's first estate) were to be the "rulers" on earth (man's second estate). This led to an interpretation that everyone's birth on earth is a direct result of his/her worthiness in a prior life in heaven, thus the belief that those less valiant were born black while the righteous were born white.<sup>75</sup> The Bible, however, clearly teaches that only the Godhead has eternal existence. We are God's creation and did not have a spiritual existence prior to our birth on earth. When Jesus declared, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58 KJV), he is claiming to be truly and eternally God and that Abraham had a beginning. In Zechariah 12:1 we read that God "formeth the spirit of man within him" (KJV).

Chapters 4 and 5 of the Book of Abraham seem to be a rewrite of the Genesis creation story with the addition of multiple gods involved in the process. For instance, verse 3 reads "And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light." Curiously, this contradicts his earlier revelation of Moses' account: "And I, God, said: Let there

be light; and there was light."<sup>76</sup> If Moses was as inspired as Abraham, why didn't he understand that the creation was accomplished by a council of gods? During the early years of Mormonism, Joseph Smith preached the standard doctrine of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. However, by the 1840's he had begun to teach a plurality of gods, completely ignoring the biblical doctrine of one eternal, unchanging God and even contradicting his earlier writings.<sup>77</sup>

### Conclusion

When we look at the development of Joseph Smith's doctrine of God we can see a steady move from his modalistic one God doctrine in the Book of Mormon, to his separation of the Father and Son in his Book of Moses, ending with his plural god doctrine of the Book of Abraham. However, if we look at these items in the historical time frame in which they were supposedly written, it would be the reverse. The plural gods of Abraham would have been recorded first, then Moses would have taught only the Father and Son, culminating in the one God concept of the Book of Mormon. If the doctrine of plural gods in the Book of Abraham is true, why didn't Moses and the prophets in the Book of Mormon have that knowledge? The Bible is very definite that there is only one God:

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, . . . I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44: 6 and 8)

In 1992 the LDS First Presidency issued an official statement about the Bible and modern day revelation. It read in part:

The most reliable way to measure the accuracy of any biblical passage is not by comparing different texts, but by comparison with the Book of Mormon and modern-day revelations.<sup>78</sup>

However, as we have seen, LDS scriptures disagree among themselves, have undergone significant revisions and some are obviously not the ancient texts they claim to be. How would these books supply a more sure foundation? The Bible, supported by ancient manuscripts, maps and artifacts, was here long before Joseph Smith. It should stand as the point of reference for evaluating Smith's revelations, not the other way around.



<sup>74</sup> See articles on Book of Abraham in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, edited by Daniel H. Ludlow, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992, vol. 1, pp. 132-138.

<sup>75</sup> Speech of Elder Orson Hyde, delivered before the High Priests' Quorum, in Nauvoo, April 27, 1845, printed by John Taylor, p. 30.

<sup>76</sup> Book of Moses 2:3, *Pearl of Great Price*.

<sup>77</sup> Isaiah 43:10-11; 44:6; 45:5. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 345-47, 369-73. For his earlier teaching on God, see Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 31:21; Alma 11:27-29; 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Lectures on Faith, Section V; 1981 *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:28.

<sup>78</sup> "First Presidency Statement on the King James Version of the Bible," *Ensign*, (Aug. 1992): p. 80.



### Excerpts from Letters and Emails

**October 2010:** I just wanted to take a moment and thank you for your wonderful website! It was a great source of information for me as I transitioned out of Mormonism. You are doing such a great service to people and I really admire your work!! I came to Christ in April of this year and resigned from the Mormon church in August. I am now free of Mormonism and enjoying my walk with the Lord! . . .

**October 2010:** I REALLY appreciate your heart. My whole family watched your fireside chat and the TV show and were impressed by the sincerity and strength you speak with. [See video links at <http://www.utlm.org/navonlineresources.htm>]

**November 2010:** I would appreciate it if you would remove your information on the LDS church, as it is completely incorrect. You have claimed things on here that I have never heard in my entire life. I have been completely active in the LDS church my entire life, we do not believe the things you are claiming. I would not want an investigator be turned away by blasphemy.

**November 2010:** I came to the Lord about 25 years ago after being raised as a 5th generation Mormon. Someone at my church sensed my confusion and suggested I call you for help. I still recall the conversation we had and still appreciate your tender approach to a most confused young man.

**November 2010:** Hi. I am in the process of leaving the Mormon church and just sort of want to know the best thing to do with my temple garments. Can I just throw them away? I keep thinking I need to burn them or cut them up. [We told her it doesn't matter, just get rid of them.]

**November 2010:** More than 25 years ago my wife and I were happy members of the RLDS sect of Mormonism. [My wife started reading] the N.I.V. Bible. . . . What this bible was saying did not match with the things we were taught. She began asking Me questions . . . and reading this Bible my wife came to the point of believing Joseph Smith was a false teacher! Yet, I, while seeing the same things as she, was not yet completely convinced. Then one evening we were invited to supper at the home of . . . friends who were not RLDS. We eventually got to talking about what was happening to us. As [my friend] was RLDS in his childhood I considered him a sympathetic ear. After explaining how we were seeing problems and my reluctance to completely let go of "The Church" [he] went into another room, came back and handed me some papers."Have you ever heard of Jerald and Sandra Tanner?" He asked. Of course he already knew I had not! It was one of your newsletters that he had given me! It was exactly what I needed to see what a farce we believed all our lives! The story of my conversion goes on from here. It has been quite a journey! But to make a long story short, the most wonderful truth I came to see is what a wretched man I am, and what a wonderful Savior is Jesus My Lord. So, thank you again for your hard work. I know the Lord is using this ministry!

**November 2010:** I don't know if I ever passed this story on to you, but about 6 or 7 years ago, maybe longer, I was doing some research and I called the library in Salt Lake to get a copy of Brigham Young's statement in the Deseret newspaper from the 1870's when he equated going to heaven with only one wife to the parable of the talents.

In my research, I found that practically all of their writings were on the internet or copied to cd's. I asked the librarian about it and she said that I should talk to the person in charge of the library. I called him with the inquiry and, obviously thinking that I was a Mormon, he said, "It's funny that you should ask. Everyone on the library board agreed that the Deseret newspaper should be digitized, but when we took it to the President of the Church, he nixed the idea and said, 'Because our children are so computer literate, If we digitized the Deseret News and they accessed it, they would leave the church in droves.'"

**November 2010:** I had sent for information from you just last week and today received a packet in the mail! I found tons of stuff about the Mormon church that I'm sure can help me, as I have officially sent in my resignation letter! I expect the "love bombs" to start any day now, as LDS HQ acknowledged that they received my letter a week ago! Anyway, I just want to say THANK YOU for everything!

**December 2010:** Mrs. Tanner—Or should I say sister Tanner. Because even though I personally consider myself an ex-Mormon, like you, I still believe we may be brothers and sisters if we accept Christ as our savior and redeemer . . . I am Brazilian, . . . I got to know the LDS Church in '77, even though I just was baptized three years later. I stayed in it until March of the current year [2010], when I had the blessing (in disguise!) of reading your wonderful and so well-written and documented "Changing World of Mormonism." After that I stopped attending church and start getting deeper and deeper in my personal research.

**December 2010:** Thank you in advance for taking a moment to read this. I have requested in writing to have my name removed from LDS records. I am still having visiting and home teachers from the church come to my door. . . . God bless you and the work you do. Your website has brought me back to the Jesus I knew before my conversion to Mormonism.

**December 2010:** I am 33 years old. My father's side of my family are all devoted LDS members. . . . As an adult, because of my occupation, I never had Sundays off, now I have Sunday mornings off. So I want to take my children to church, at least a place where we can all learn about the bible. Wanting to make a good decision, I started to question Mormonism, something never felt totally right for me. That is how I arrived at your website. I feel deceived, why didn't my father question any of this? Although I realize that research is so much easier now that we have the internet, so I don't fault him . . .

**December 2010:** It saddens me to think that your ignorance has led you to promote this site against God, Which will cause the visitation of cursing to come upon you from our heavenly father which is his divine prerogative. matt, 13:24-30 also Paul warning to the Galatians Gal, 1:8-12. Now Let me correct just a couple of your points relating to the churches doctrine. . . . There are many gods. but all we need to worry about are three, that being god the father elohim , god the son Jesus or Jehovah of the old testament, and god the holy ghost. oh and Satan is our brother . . . We were all intelligence's existing forever but in some point of this forever god spiritually begot us therefore creating us as his spirit children. you sound like nehor in alma 1:2-15 you are an anti Christ so be careful.

**December 2010:** I just want you to know how much your website and testimonies of why you left the LDS church on You tube has helped me leave the LDS church and find the real Jesus in the bible.

**December 2010:** I am a Mormon that is converting to Christianity. I appreciate your web-site and all you do to get across the truth. You are a great person, and I hope to encourage you to hang in there.

**January 2011:** My parents joined the LDS church in my senior year of high school. I began the missionary discussions the spring of that year.

Having been raised in the Baptist church, I was uncomfortable with much of what I was hearing from the missionaries, but it wasn't until I attended Ricks College in Rexburg that I had a chance to really invest myself in investigating the church. The more I prayed about what was the true church, the more I knew the LDS was not true. On one particular trip down to BYU in the winter of 1973, a friend from my church in Littleton, Colorado suggested I go by and meet you and Gerald and pick up one of your books.

You were both very gracious to me and spent a fair amount of time working with me and corresponding with me to answer many of my questions. But I remember a statement that Gerald made to me one day during one of our conversations: "It is not about the church, or the family, or even you. It is about Jesus Christ. Don't get distracted by talk about what a good church or the true church is. Christ is the truth!"

**January 2011:** I am a branch president, I have been a bishop, seminary teacher . . . I have been struggling with my testimony for 4.5 years, but have continued to come and do my part because I figured if this church is not true, then no church is. . . . The problem that I have is I love Mormon Doctrine, degrees of glory, no hell, eternal families, a loving God and the ability to become God. . . . BUT, I do not believe the Book of Mormon, and I believe that once one learns about Joseph Smith, it is pretty clear he was a fraud. I am struggling . . . it is clear that Mormonism is founded on lies and good cover up jobs. . . . I have watched a few of your videos Sandra, I enjoyed them and appreciate your good sense of humor and non-aggressive approach. I was always taught that antis were bitter. So thank you for not making that true.

**January 2011:** I just wanted to say thank-you !! Your website and the contained documentation and your u tube presentations have done my lovely partner and I a great service. Mormonism has screwed us both over on so many levels. I met her on my mission to Manchester England back in 1990. Finally after all this time we are starting a new life together. From an ordinary guy thank you !!

**January 2011:** I've read all of the statements on your websites and they seem to be faulty. And a little prejudiced if I do say so myself. I am currently a member of the LDS church and I think . . . you have so many untrue statements . . . Please fix these idiotic mistakes. Bye bye smarty pants.

**January 2011:** Thank you for your hard work on dispelling the Mormon Myths. After 16 years of the LDS Church and 7 years of agnosticism, I finally came to know the True Lord. Your research and work is helping me battle the ever changing Mormon myth in the US Military and helping me advise my father, who is attempting to return to the Church after a 13 year hiatus. Keep it up!

**January 2011:** The information provided on your website was invaluable to me when I was grappling with the truth as a life-long faithful LDS member who had inadvertently stumbled onto information that ultimately set me on a quest to learn the "real" truth about Mormonism. I praise God for Ministries like yours that not only helped me learn the truth about Mormonism but that also helped me to navigate to the true and living Christ in the process.

**January 2011:** I recently read a book on facts of the Mormon church and it led me to your website as a resource. I dated a member of the LDS church for three years—and ended up joining the church even though I never really felt called to join—but more so because I loved him . . . I ended up breaking up with this member because I felt like the church just wasn't something that I could follow and live in a lie. Before joining the church I was an active member of my Presbyterian church and have rejoined it because I felt it actually pointed me towards salvation. I am very thankful for getting out of the LDS church and back on track—and feel like my faith has since increased and taken on a stronger note.

**January 2011:** I left the church 11 months ago. I wish I had known the truth much earlier. My letter of the law behavior hurt so many people. I pray that the church will finally admit the truth. The sad part is that I felt deep in my heart that there was something really wrong with the teaching for a very long time.

**January 2011:** I resigned this year thanks in no small part to you and your husband's excellent research and your willingness to share it. I was talking with a friend of mine who grew up in Salt lake and said no high school kid would dare go near your bookstore in Salt Lake. He said he would have been better off being caught buying porn than in your book store. There you have it your new slogan "Utah lighthouse ministries—better than porn."

**January 2011:** Thank you so very much for providing all of the resources you provide. I have always had a strong Christian Faith and when I moved to Idaho I thought "how bad could the Mormons be?", not knowing much about their faith. It was not until I married a Mormon with a very, very Mormon family, that I realized the need to research them and their beliefs, thus coming upon MRM and Utah Lighthouse Ministries. With God's help I have been able to show my husband the truth behind the Mormon faith and am bringing him closer to the Jesus and God of the Bible. Thank you for all you do!

**February 2011:** I am LDS, just a member, not a leader, and what makes it interesting is I have had special experiences similar to those which Joseph Smith had. I have received revelation for myself, and have a sure knowledge . . . There are many out there like me that have had similar experiences, they know also. They have been visited by the power of the Holy Ghost and instructed and have obtained knowledge first hand for themselves too.

**February 2011:** I was a strong believer—doer in Mormonism for 43 years, when I asked the Sugarhouse Bishop to excommunicate me (Nov 2004), he and his counselors had to pray 3 different times, which I would go into another room. The first 2 times, they said, "We feel that our Heavenly Father doesn't want you to be ex'd". Due to my insistence, after the 3rd prayer, they ok'd it!!! PRAISE GOD!!!

**March 2011:** Sandra, thirty four years ago when I was questioning the validity of the church I had been raised in, you, Jerald, and the lighthouse ministry gently guided me to the information that helped me to be a witness of God's salvation to many other people who were also searching. God bless you!

**March 2011:** Great job on the Capstone talk Sandra:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmH2CIXRB54>

Not too many years ago I would of stayed away from your talks being an active Mormon etc. Now it is the opposite.

**March 2011:** I have watched a few videos from Lighthouse Ministries and I just want to say Thank You so much for shedding the light on Mormonism. I have just left Mormonism and it is people like you have helped me and my family so very much on our journey. Thank you Thank you Thank you. You have no idea what you are doing for people like myself.

**March 2011:** My 2 daughters just left a Mormon polygamist compound [in Missouri]. They have really seen the light and loathe everything they have been through as they were highly abused.

**March 2011:** Periodically, I visit your website to see what else you have dug up. Happily I am not impressed either by your materials nor by your "scholarship." Having said that I would like you to know that I forgive you for your behavior and ignorance.

**March 2011:** MY views are you're an angry old hag who decided to start a church to bash on the most wonderful people I know.

**March 2011:** I am a life-long LDS member, served a mission, married in the temple, served in various high callings and finally ready to stop living this lie. . . . I am grateful for the information and material you have worked to publish as well as another ex-Mormon website I have read recently. I also know that nothing is more convincing of the truth than actual documentation of the secrets and controlling nature of the LDS church hierarchy.

**March 2011:** . . . I have a sure knowledge that the LDS church is in very deed the Lord's church. This is not a blind belief, this is first-hand experience like those of old, like the ones you read about in the scriptures. You have never had such experiences, hence your stance. I bid you to repent, humble yourself, and quit adding to the world's confusion.

**April 2011:** God bless you and your work . . . When I studied my way out, it was your work that helped keep me from becoming atheist and redirected my focus and trust on Jesus Christ. Thank you for showing me how to shovel straight through the garbage and look to HIM on the other side of it all . . . :) I will be forever grateful . . . much love and Godspeed to your ministry.

**April 2011:** I bet you guys are having a great time trying to figure out what to criticize next. Must be a sad life to be so confused <sigh>

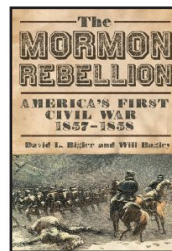
**April 2011:** I have been doing a lot of research on the LDS faith lately, and I happened to come across your website. I was surprised at how you claim to simply be presenting information, when there is a very obvious negative connotation to most everything you say. You guys would probably be a lot more credible if you didn't sound like you were so prejudiced. . . . I don't think any of it is valid.

**April 2011:** Thanks for your Ministry! I left the church at age 19 as a freshman at BYU. I am only 23, following Jesus, and still have so much to learn. God bless!

**April 2011:** To Jerald and Sandra Tanner: I can't wait to see you two at the Judgement Bar of Jesus Christ, and you will feel the utter "nakeness" of being stripped of your priesthood blessings, being excommunicated from the true church!! You, Ed Decker, and the rest of the Apostates who are kicking against the pricks. I AM WARD MISSIONARY, and have the authority to call you to repentance. I pray you do, because the Lord will not be mocked by those who violate their Temple Covenants.



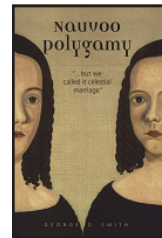
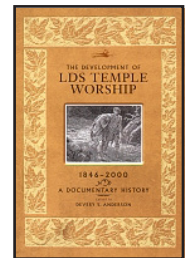
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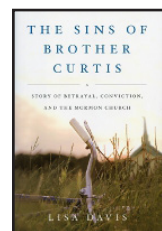
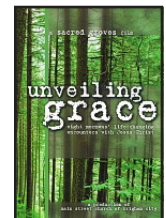
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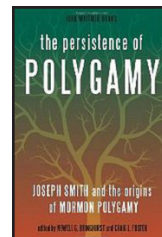
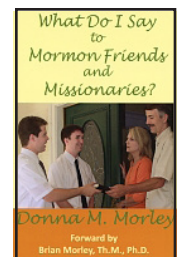
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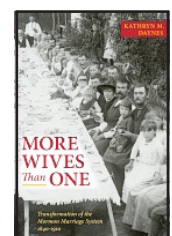
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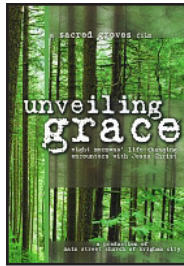
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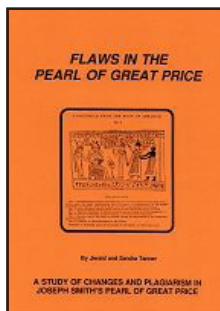
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