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# DID BRIGHAM YOUNG TEACH FALSE DOCTRINE?

One of the founding principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [the Mormon Church] is that there must be a living prophet at the head of the true church. Joseph Smith was designated as God's "prophet, seer and revelator," as have all the succeeding presidents of the LDS Church.<sup>1</sup>

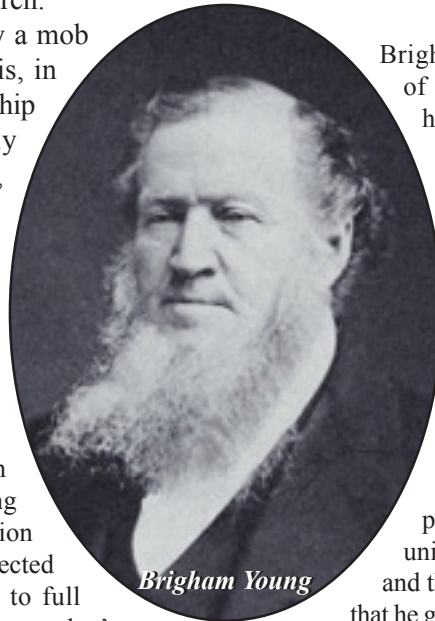
When Joseph Smith was killed by a mob while under arrest at Carthage, Illinois, in 1844, it left the Mormons with a leadership vacuum. While several men, mainly Sidney Rigdon and Brigham Young, vied for leadership, Smith had not left instructions on who was to be his successor. LDS historian Richard S. Van Wagoner explained:

Despite frequent kidnapping and assassination attempts, Joseph Smith established no firm policies regarding presidential succession in the event of his death. The resulting confusion threw the prophetic transition into turmoil. He simply had not expected to die at thirty-eight. Never given to full disclosure to any man or woman, the prophet's public and private statements between 1834–44 suggested at least eight different methods for succession, each pointing to different successors with some claims to validity.<sup>2</sup>

After much debate, Brigham Young was able to convince the majority of the leaders to turn the control of the church over to the twelve apostles, of which he

was head. Later he was formally installed as the president of the LDS Church in 1847.<sup>3</sup>

John Turner, in his new book, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet*, gave this overview of Young's leadership:



Brigham Young

After the founding prophet's murder Brigham Young gathered the largest portion of Smith's followers under his leadership, held them together amid persecution and exile, and planted the Mormon kingdom in what became Utah. Young was no less controversial than his predecessor, and non-Mormons routinely accused him of ecclesiastical tyranny, licentiousness, and even murder.<sup>4</sup>

Further on Turner observes:

Within a Protestant America dedicated to monogamy, monotheism, and Jacksonian democracy, Young advocated the plurality of wives, a plurality of gods, and a unity of power. Given the scope of his vision and the novelty of his beliefs, it is not surprising that he generated intense controversy and opposition. Young's siege mentality, forged in the crucible of anti-Mormon persecution, led him to demonize his enemies, employ violent rhetoric, and condone murders. A leader who understood himself as following in the footsteps of the ancient biblical patriarchs could not readily function within the U.S. territorial system. Convinced that Young—Utah's [territorial] governor as of 1857—was leading a rebellion against the U.S. government, President James Buchanan sent an army to Utah with Young's gubernatorial replacement. Young eventually

<sup>1</sup> Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 3, (Macmillan Publishing: 1992), pp. 1165, 1170.

<sup>2</sup> Richard S. Van Wagoner, "The Making of a Mormon Myth: The 1844 Transfiguration of Brigham Young," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 28, no. 4 (Winter 1995): p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Presidents of the Church Student Manual*, Religion 345, LDS Church, 2004, pp. 21, 30; John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet*, (Boston: Harvard Press: 2012), pp. 110-118.

<sup>4</sup> Turner, *Brigham Young*, p. 3.

learned to live with the presence of U.S. soldiers and officials, but in other ways he defended his kingdom with ever-greater desperation until the end of his life. In the end, Young's ambitions for his church and himself were so great that he could at best bring them only partly to fruition.<sup>5</sup>

## YOUNG'S SERMONS

Approximately 500 of Brigham Young's sermons were recorded by a stenographer, more than 350 of which were printed in the *Journal of Discourses*, a 26-volume set published by the LDS Church.<sup>6</sup> Many of his sermons were also published in the church-owned *Deseret News*. Young's sermons were published during his lifetime, and he never issued any statement that they had been printed incorrectly. In fact, Brigham Young even went so far as to compare his published sermons with scripture. Preaching in January of 1870, Brigham Young declared:

I know just as well what to teach this people and just what to say to them and what to do in order to bring them into the celestial kingdom. . . . I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call Scripture. **Let me have the privilege of correcting a sermon, and it is as good Scripture as they deserve.** The people have the oracles of God continually.<sup>7</sup>

Later that same year Young stated:

Brother Orson Hyde referred to a few who complained about not getting revelations . . . I say now, when they [Young's sermons] are copied and approved by me **they are as good Scripture as is couched in this Bible** . . .<sup>8</sup>

On another occasion Brigham Young preached:

"If there is an Elder here, or any member of this Church, called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who can bring up the first idea, the first sentence that I have delivered to the people as counsel **that is wrong**, I really wish they would do it; but they cannot do it, for the simple reason that **I have never given counsel that is wrong**; this is the reason."<sup>9</sup>

Yet it is common to have a Mormon dismiss doctrinal statements by Brigham Young and other past prophets. Today the church leaders send a mixed message when they admonish the Mormons to follow the living prophet

(as opposed to past prophets) and then quote past prophets to make their point. For example, speaking at the October 2010 LDS Conference, Claudio M. Costa, of the Presidency of the Seventy, preached on the necessity of following the words of the living prophet by quoting past prophets:

I testify to you that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and because I have received this answer from the Lord, I know that **all of his successors are prophets too**. What a great blessing it is to have prophets in our day! . . .

In 1980, when President Ezra Taft Benson was serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he gave a powerful message about **obedience to the prophets** at a BYU devotional in the Marriott Center. His great talk, titled "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet," touched my heart. It made me feel good that I had made the decision to follow the prophets for the rest of my life when I accepted baptism in the Lord's true Church.

I would like to share with you some of the principles that President Benson taught:

"First: **The prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything**" (1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year [1981], 26). . . .

We are counseled to "give heed unto all his words and commandments" (D&C 21:4). We also learn:

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith. . . ." (D&C 21:5-6).

Second fundamental: "**The living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works**" ("Fourteen Fundamentals," 26). . . .

Third fundamental: "**The living prophet is more important to us than a dead prophet**" ("Fourteen Fundamentals," 27). . . .

Fourth fundamental: "**The prophet will never lead the Church astray**" ("Fourteen Fundamentals," 27).

Again we learn from the **living prophets**. President Wilford Woodruff said: "**The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray**. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty" (Official Declaration 1).<sup>10</sup>

Notice that Mr. Costa quoted two past prophets in his sermon to reinforce the importance of a "living prophet."

<sup>5</sup> Turner, *Brigham Young*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 4, pp. 1607, 1611.

<sup>7</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 13, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 13, p. 264.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 16, p. 161.

<sup>10</sup> Claudio R.M. Costa, "Obedience to the Prophets," *Ensign*, (Nov. 2010): pp. 11-12.

When a Mormon is confronted with statements by past prophets that don't agree with the current position of the church, he will often claim that we are to only heed the statements of the "living prophet." However, LDS conference speakers and manuals repeatedly quote from their past prophets to support their point. In fact, starting in 1997, the church has yearly produced new manuals in a series called *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, which covers the sermons of each of their past prophets.

In the introduction to the first manual of that series, entitled *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, we read:

The prophet Brigham Young taught the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in a basic, practical way . . . Though more than a century has now passed, **his words are still fresh and appropriate for us today** as we continue the work of building the kingdom of God. . . .

This book reflects the desire of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to deepen **the doctrinal understanding** of Church members and to awaken within them a greater desire to know the things of God.<sup>11</sup>

However, as one studies the manual it becomes apparent that Young's sermons have been carefully edited. Young repeatedly preached on such topics as Joseph Smith's importance, polygamy, the Adam-God doctrine, blood atonement, and the ban on blacks holding the LDS priesthood. Yet, these subjects are not covered in the 1997 manual. In light of this, we will now explore some of Brigham Young's more controversial sermons as they were originally printed.

## JOSEPH SMITH

In the manual *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, is a quote from Brigham Young about the importance of Joseph Smith to the restoration of "the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God."<sup>12</sup> When we go back to the original source of the quote we find that it is taken from a sermon where Young declared that Joseph Smith rules over the spirit world and that one must accept him in order to gain entrance into the Celestial Kingdom:

**Joseph Smith** holds the keys of this last dispensation, . . . **no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith.** From the day that the Priesthood was taken from the earth to the winding-up

scene of all things, **every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith, junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansion where God and Christ are—I with you and you with me. I cannot go there without his consent.** He holds the keys of that kingdom for the last dispensation—the keys to rule in **the spirit world**; and he rules there triumphantly, for he gained full power and a glorious victory over the power of Satan while he was yet in the flesh, and was a martyr to his religion and to the name of Christ, . . . He reigns there [in the spirit world] as supreme a being in his sphere, capacity, and calling, as God does in heaven.<sup>13</sup>

On another occasion Young stated that anyone who rejects Joseph Smith is "of Antichrist":

For unbelievers we will quote from the Scriptures—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Again—"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." I will now give my scripture—"Whosoever confesseth that **Joseph Smith** was sent of God to reveal the holy Gospel to the children of men, and lay the foundation for gathering Israel, and building up the kingdom of God on the earth, that spirit is of God; **and every spirit that does not confess that God has sent Joseph Smith, and revealed the everlasting Gospel to and through him, is of Antichrist,** . . . They may say that they acknowledge Him until doomsday, and he will never own them, nor bestow the Holy Spirit upon them, and they will never have visions of eternity opened to them, **unless they acknowledge that Joseph Smith is sent of God.** Such people I call unbelievers. They talk about believing in Jesus Christ, but they might as well talk about birds understanding the Hebrew language. This statement is no more positive than true.<sup>14</sup>

The Bible cautions us to examine the teachings of anyone claiming to be a prophet. John wrote:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* (1 John 4:1)

God calls us to faith in Christ, not a man. John wrote:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16)

<sup>13</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, p. 289.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 176-177.

<sup>11</sup> *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, LDS Church, 1997, page v.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

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## POLYGAMY

Curiously, the LDS manual on Brigham Young never mentions his 55 wives or his 56 children (by 16 of his wives).<sup>15</sup> It does tell of his first wife's death and his subsequent marriage to Mary Ann Angel in 1834,<sup>16</sup> but does not mention the others. This leaves the impression that he only married one wife after the death of his first wife. Not only that, when quoting his sermons the LDS Church edited out the references to "wives" and substituted "wife." For instance:

"... especially to those who are presiding officers,  
Set that example before your [**wife**] and your children,  
..."<sup>17</sup>

But the source cited, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, has it as "wives":

"... especially to those who are presiding officers,  
Set that example before your **wives** and your children,  
..."<sup>18</sup>

Here is another example from the manual:

"Let the husband and father learn to bend his will  
to the will of his God, and then instruct his [**wife**] and  
children..."<sup>19</sup>

However, the quote as printed in *Discourses of Brigham Young* actually reads:

"Let the husband and father learn to bend his will  
to the will of his God, and then instruct his **wives** and  
children..."<sup>20</sup>

Another problem is the use of a few select sentences from a sermon that was actually about polygamy. An example of this appears on page 166 of the manual:

Let the father be the head of the family, the master  
of his own household; and let him treat them [his family]  
as an angel would treat them.<sup>21</sup>

15 Jeffery Ogden Johnson, "Determining and Defining 'Wife': The Brigham Young Households," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 20, no. 3, p. 64; also George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), pp. 635-636.

16 *Teachings: Brigham Young*, p. 4.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

18 John A. Widtsoe, ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young*, Deseret Book, 1941, p. 198; 1925 ed. p. 306. This book is condensed versions of Brigham Young's sermons that are found in the 26-volume *Journal of Discourses* printed by the LDS Church.

19 *Teachings: Brigham Young*, p. 165.

20 *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1941, p. 198; 1925 ed. pp. 306-307.

21 *Teachings: Brigham Young*, p. 166.

However, the same sentence in *Discourses of Brigham Young* reads:

Let the father be the head of the family, the master of his own household; and let him treat them as an angel would treat them; and let **the wives** and the children say amen to what he says, and be subject to his dictates, instead of their dictating the man, instead of their trying to govern him.<sup>22</sup>

Even the quote above, from *Discourses of Brigham Young*, is an edited version of Young's sermon. Ironically, the quote was part of a sermon given by Brigham Young in 1856 threatening to disown the women who were complaining about polygamy:

Men will say, "My wife, though a most excellent woman, has not seen a happy day since I took my second wife;" "No, not a happy day for a year," says one; and another has not seen a happy day for five years. . . .

I wish my own women to understand that what I am going to say is for them as well as others, and I want those who are here to tell their sister, . . . I am going to give you from this time to the 6th day of October next, for reflection, that you may determine whether you wish to stay with your husbands or not, and then I am going to set every woman at liberty and say to them, Now go your way, my women with the rest, go your way. **And my wives have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, or they may leave,** for I will not have them about me. . . .<sup>23</sup>

Two paragraphs later we read the quote that is given in the current manual about the father being the head of the family. But the context of that portion of Young's sermon was about women obeying their husbands in polygamy.

Although the LDS Church today tries to minimize the importance of their past teachings on polygamy, it is still a part of their scriptures. Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* warns that once this doctrine has been revealed to a person they are under obligation before God to practice it.

Verily, thus saith the Lord . . . inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and **doctrine of their having many wives and concubines**—Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

22 *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1941, p. 198; 1925 ed. p. 306.

23 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, p. 55.

. . . For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned . . . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:1-4)

Brigham Young was very adamant about the necessity of practicing plural marriage to achieve exaltation:

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into **polygamy**.<sup>24</sup>

On another occasion he preached:

Now if any of you will deny **the plurality of wives**, and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned; and will go still further and say, take this revelation, or any other revelation that the Lord has given, and deny it in your feelings, and I promise that you will be **damned**.<sup>25</sup>

It should be noted that polygamy in the Bible was never commanded by God or presented as a requirement for eternal life.

## ADAM IS GOD

One of the more controversial doctrines taught by Young was that Adam is the God over this earth, under the supervision of yet a higher god, and Adam is the father of Jesus. However, the current manual on Brigham Young has carefully avoided this doctrine. On page 30 of the manual is a quote on the nature of God:

Our Father in Heaven begat all the spirits that ever were, or ever will be, upon this earth [see Hebrews 12:9]; and they were born spirits in the eternal world.<sup>26</sup>

The reference given for the quote is *Discourses of Brigham Young*.<sup>27</sup> However, when we take the reference back another step and look at the original source we find it is Young's famous sermon on Adam-God:

Our Father in Heaven begat all the spirits that ever were, or ever will be, upon this earth; and they were born spirits in the eternal world. . . .

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, **one of his wives**, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Arch-angel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken—**He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do**. . . . When the Virgin Mary conceived the child

Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost, And who is the Father? **He is the first of the human family**; and when he took a tabernacle, it was begotten by his Father in heaven, . . . I could tell you much more about this; but were I to tell you the whole truth, blasphemy would be nothing to it, in the estimation of the superstitious and over-righteous of mankind.<sup>28</sup>

In 1857, after some members had questioned the Adam-God doctrine, Brigham Young declared:

Whether Adam is the personage that we should consider our heavenly Father, or not, is considerable of a mystery to a good many. I do not care for one moment how that is; it is no matter whether we are to consider Him [Adam] our God, or whether His Father, or His Grandfather, for in either case we are of one species—of one family—and Jesus Christ is also of our species.<sup>29</sup>

The Adam-God doctrine was no idle speculation: Brigham Young taught that doctrine throughout his life and declared it to be a matter of revelation. In 1873 the *Deseret News* quoted one of Brigham Young's sermons:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to **one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our father and God**—I do not know, I do not inquire, I care nothing about it. Our Father Adam helped to make this earth, it was created expressly for him, and after it was made he and his companion came here. **He brought one of his wives with him**, and she was called Eve, . . .<sup>30</sup>

Contrary to present LDS understanding that Elohim is the father of our spirits, Brigham Young taught that Elohim, as a higher god, appointed Adam to be the father of our spirits:

We say that Father Adam came here and helped to make the earth. Who is he? He is Michael, a great prince, and it was said to him by Eloheim, "Go ye and make an earth." . . . Father Adam came here, and then they brought his wife. "Well," says one, "Why was Adam called Adam?" He was the first man on the earth, and its framer and maker, he, with the help of his brethren, brought it into existence. Then he said, "I want **my children** who are in the spirit world to come and live

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

25 *Journal of Discourses* vol. 3, p. 266.

26 *Teachings: Brigham Young*, p. 30.

27 See page 24 in the 1941 edition, page 37 in the 1925 edition.

28 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, pp. 50-51. For more on Young's Adam-God teaching, see "The Adam-God Doctrine," by David John Buerger, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982); online at [content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/dialogue/id/19915](http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/dialogue/id/19915).

29 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, p. 217.

30 *Deseret Weekly News* (June 18, 1873): p. 308. Also *Deseret Evening News* (June 14, 1873).

here. I once dwelt upon an earth something like this, in a mortal state, I was faithful, I received my crown and exaltation. . . . **I want my children that were born to me in the spirit world** to come here and take tabernacles of flesh that their spirits may have a house, a tabernacle or a dwelling place as mine has and where is the mystery?<sup>31</sup>

Even though Young taught the Adam-God doctrine for over twenty years, at least one apostle was troubled by it. In Apostle Wilford Woodruff's journal for September 17, 1854, we read about a meeting where this was discussed:

Brother Pratt Also thought that Adam was made of the dust of the Earth. [Pratt] Could not believe that **Adam was our God or the Father of Jesus Christ. President Young said that He was that He came from another world & made this. Brought Eve with him** partook of the fruits of the Earth begat Children & they were Earthly & had mortal bodies & if we were Faithful we should become Gods as He was. He told Brother Pratt to lay aside his Philosophical reasoning & get Revelation from God to Govern him & Enlighten his mind more . . .<sup>32</sup>

In 1877 Brigham Young even introduced the Adam-God doctrine into the LDS endowment ceremony in the temple at St. George, Utah, which was the only one then in operation. This lecture was a summary of the theological meaning of the ritual, including the Adam-God doctrine. Young explained that Adam and Eve were once mortals on some other world and after receiving their exaltation the gods sent them to form this world for the habitation of their spirit children, of whom Jesus was the first born. The lecture also taught that Adam was the literal father of Jesus in the flesh. While the original manuscript of the lecture at the veil is not publicly available, L. John Nuttall, Young's scribe, recorded it in his diary:

In the creation **the Gods** entered into an agreement about forming this earth & putting Michael or Adam upon it. These thing[s] of which I have been speaking are what are termed the mysteries of godliness . . .

We have heard a great deal about Adam and Eve, how they were formed &c. . . . He was made just the same way you and I are made but on another earth. Adam was an immortal being when he came on this earth. He had lived on an earth similar to ours. . . . and gained his resurrection and his exaltation . . . **And [he] had begotten all the spirit[s] that was to come to this earth. And Eve[,] our common Mother who is the Mother of all living[,] bore those spirits in the celestial world.** And when this earth was organized by Elohim, Jehovah & Michael[,] who is Adam our common Father, Adam &

31 *Deseret Weekly News* (June 18, 1873): p. 308. Also *Deseret Evening News* (June 14, 1873).

32 Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833-1898*, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books), p. 288.

Eve had the privilege to continue the work of Progression [and] consequently came to this earth . . .

**Father Adam's oldest son (Jesus the Saviour)** who is the heir of the family is **Father Adams first begotten in the spirit World, who according to the flesh is the only begotten[,]** as it is written. (In his [Adam's] divinity[,] he having gone back into the spirit World and come in the spirit to Mary[,] and she conceived[,] for when Adam and Eve got through with their Work in this earth, they did not lay their bodies down in the dust, but returned to the spirit World from whence they come.[])<sup>33</sup>

Contrary to Young's doctrine, the Bible, in Genesis 1:26-27, clearly presents Adam as God's creation. Also, Isaiah declared that there is only one God:

*"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior."* (Isaiah 43:10-11)

Some may argue that the Adam-God doctrine was never canonized, but by placing this teaching in the temple ceremony Young placed it above the authority of the LDS scriptures. Anyone may read the scriptures, but only faithful Mormons may participate in the temple rituals. One should also note that the temple ceremony itself has never been canonized, but no Mormon would argue that it is not doctrine.

While the Adam-God doctrine has dropped into obscurity, the polygamist splinter groups and some Mormons have continued to believe the doctrine. In 1976 President Spencer W. Kimball denounced the teaching in the October LDS Conference:

Another matter. We hope that you who teach in the various organizations, whether on the campuses or in our chapels, will always teach the **orthodox truth**. We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which

33 Devery S. Anderson, *The Development of LDS Temple Worship, 1846-2000*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), pp. 36-37; David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship*, (Salt Lake City: Smith Research, 1994), pp. 110-111.

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are not according to the scriptures and which are **alleged** to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such, for instance, is **the Adam-God theory**. We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of **false doctrine**.<sup>34</sup>

Kimball's statement, however, did not end the discussion. In 1981 Apostle Bruce R. McConkie sent a letter to BYU professor Eugene England regarding the Adam-God doctrine:

As it happens, I am a great admirer of Brigham Young and a great believer in his doctrinal presentations. He was called of God. . . . Nonetheless, as Joseph Smith so pointedly taught, a prophet is not always a prophet, only when he is acting as such. . . .

**Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits, and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him. This, however, is not true. He expressed views that are out of harmony with the gospel. But, be it known, Brigham Young also taught accurately and correctly, the status and position of Adam in the eternal scheme of things. What I am saying is, that Brigham Young, contradicted Brigham Young, and the issue becomes one of which Brigham Young we will believe. . . . If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us.**<sup>35</sup>

This raises the question: When does a prophet speak for God? Young, as God's prophet, declared the Adam-God doctrine to be a revelation. Kimball, as God's prophet, declared it to be false doctrine. Since Deuteronomy 13 states that a true prophet will not lead the people after a false god, it appears that Brigham Young was a false prophet.

## BLOOD ATONEMENT

Another troubling doctrine of Brigham Young's was blood atonement. This didn't relate to Christ's atonement, but to the sinner's personal blood atonement. In reading the following statements, remember that Brigham Young was not just the president of the LDS Church, but was also the Governor of Utah Territory. In 1856 Brigham Young explained this doctrine:

**There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that**

<sup>34</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Our Own Liahona," *Ensign* (Nov. 1976): p. 77; *Mysteries of Godliness*, pp. 110-111

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Bruce R. McConkie to Eugene England, Feb. 19, 1981, pp. 5-7, photo of entire letter in *LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1982.

which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, **they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; and the smoking incense would atone for their sins**, whereas, if such is not the case, they will stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world.

I know, when you hear my brethren telling about **cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it is strong doctrine**; but it is **to save them**, not to destroy them. . . . I do know that there are sins committed, of such a nature that if the people did understand the doctrine of salvation, they would tremble because of their situation. And furthermore, I know that there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, **would beg of their brethren to shed their blood**, that the smoke thereof might ascend to God as an offering to appease the wrath that is kindled against them, and that the law might have its course. **I will say further; I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.**

It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, **yet men can commit sins which it can never remit**. As it was in ancient days, so it is in our day; and though the principles are taught publicly from this stand, still the people do not understand them; yet the law is precisely the same. There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days; and there are sins that the blood of a lamb, of a calf, or of turtle doves, cannot remit, **but they must be atoned for by the blood of the man**. That is the reason why men talk to you as they do from this stand; they understand the doctrine and throw out a few words about it. You have been taught **that doctrine**, but you do not understand it.<sup>36</sup>

Brigham Young further explained:

Let me suppose a case. Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, **and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified**, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands. . . .

There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. **The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it . . .**<sup>37</sup>

In another sermon Young stated that this has been carried out:

<sup>36</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, (September 21, 1856) pp. 53-54.

<sup>37</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 3, (March 16, 1856) p. 247.

Now take a person in this congregation who has knowledge with regard to being saved in the kingdom of our God and our Father, and being exalted, . . . and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, . . . is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, “shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?” . . . Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? That is what Jesus Christ meant. . . .

**I could refer you to plenty of instances where men, have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins.** I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance (in the last resurrection there will be) if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil, until our elder brother Jesus Christ raises them up—conquers death, hell, and the grave. I have known a great many men who have left this Church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but **if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them.** The wickedness and ignorance of the nations forbid this principle’s being in full force, but the time will come when the law of God will be in full force.

**This is loving our neighbour as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it.** Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind.<sup>38</sup>

However, the New Testament never mentions any such practice. The atonement for man’s sins was completed with Christ’s death and resurrection. Paul explained:

*This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, **through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.** (Romans 3:22-25)*

<sup>38</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, (February 8, 1857) pp. 219-220.

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## BLACKS CURSED

While a few blacks were admitted to the LDS priesthood during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, Brigham Young put an end to that in Utah. Denial of priesthood to blacks was carried on until 1978 when President Kimball reversed the ban.<sup>39</sup> Young was very vocal in his disregard of the African race. In 1859 Young declared that blacks are cursed due to Cain’s sin:

You see some classes of the human family that are **black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild, and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence** that is generally bestowed upon mankind. The first man that committed the odious crime of killing one of his brethren will be cursed the longest of any one of the children of Adam. Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed, and that would have put a termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be, and the Lord put a **mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin.** Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then another curse is pronounced upon the same race—that they should be the “servant of servants;” and they will be, until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionists cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree. **How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them?** That curse will remain upon them, and **they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood** and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain **cannot** receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed. **When the residue of the family of Adam come up and receive their blessings, then the curse will be removed** from the seed of Cain, and they will receive blessings in like proportion.<sup>40</sup>

While the Civil War was raging in the east in 1863, Brigham Young declared:

The rank, rabid abolitionists, whom I call black-hearted Republicans, have set the whole national fabric on fire. . . . The Southerners make the negroes, and the Northerners worship them; this is all the difference between slaveholders. and abolitionists. I would like the President of the United States and all the world to hear this.

Shall I tell you **the law of God** in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen

<sup>39</sup> *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 102, (May 2004); online at utlm.org/newsletters/no102.htm

<sup>40</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, (October 9, 1859) pp. 290-291.



seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is **death on the spot. This will always be so.**<sup>41</sup>

Later in the same year Young preached:

What is the cause of all this waste of life and treasure? To tell it in a plain, truthful way, one portion of the country wish to raise their negroes or black slaves and the other portion wish to free them, and, apparently, to almost worship them. . . .

Ham will continue to be the servant of servants, as the Lord has decreed, until the curse is removed. **Will the present struggle free the slave? No;** but they are now wasting away the black race by thousands. . . .

Treat the slaves kindly and let them live, for **Ham must be the servant of servants until the curse is removed.** Can you destroy the decrees of the Almighty? You cannot. Yet our Christian brethren think that they are going to overthrow the sentence of the Almighty upon the seed of Ham. They cannot do that, though they may kill them by thousands and tens of thousands.<sup>42</sup>

This attitude prevailed among the Mormons for the next hundred years. Then in 1978, after years of civil rights protests, President Kimball made the following announcement that lifted the ban on blacks:

In early June of this year, the First Presidency announced that a revelation had been received by President Spencer W. Kimball extending priesthood and temple blessings to all worthy male members of the Church.<sup>43</sup>

This shift left many Mormons wondering what to make of the many past statements of their leaders that the blacks would not receive the priesthood until all the rest of mankind were given the opportunity. Consequently, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated:

There are statements in our literature by the **early Brethren** which we have interpreted to mean that **the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things**, and people write me letters and say, “You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?” And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and

41 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10, (March 8, 1863) p. 110.

42 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10, (Oct. 6, 1863) p. 250.

43 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Official Declaration—2.

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believed in a living, modern prophet. **Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.**<sup>44</sup>

As one former Mormon quipped, “Today’s truth may be tomorrow’s heresy.”

There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that white skin is superior to dark skin or that dark skin denotes a curse from God.

## CONCLUSION

Mormons are often advised by their leaders to avoid reading material on the LDS Church that is not produced by them, usually with the warning that those outside of Mormonism distort the church’s true beliefs or misquote the leaders. Speaking at the October 2012 LDS Conference, Apostle Quentin L. Cook admonished the members against reading critical material on the internet:

Some have immersed themselves in **Internet materials** that magnify, **exaggerate**, and, in some cases, **invent** shortcomings of early Church leaders. Then they draw **incorrect conclusions** that can affect testimony. Any who have made these choices can repent and be spiritually renewed.<sup>45</sup>

However, from the examples given in this newsletter, it is obvious that it is the LDS Church leaders who edit, “exaggerate” or “invent” statements of their past leaders to suit the current agenda. The real concern of the LDS Church seems to be that the members will read unvarnished, uncensored quotes of their past prophets.

Since each LDS president is ordained as a “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” one is left to wonder why their doctrinal statements vary from man to man? If the prophet can never lead one astray how do we reconcile their contradictory sermons? Those in the audience when Brigham Young was preaching would have been listening to the “living prophet.” Obviously, then, a “living prophet” can teach false doctrine. Since both the Bible and the Book of Mormon warn that false prophets will come there is a need for vigilance.

Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 14:15)

44 Bruce R. McConkie, “All Are Alike Unto God,” BYU, (August 18, 1978); online at [speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1570](http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1570)

45 Quentin L. Cook, “Can You Feel So Now?,” October 2012 LDS Conference; online at [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/can-ye-feel-so-now?lang=eng](http://lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/can-ye-feel-so-now?lang=eng)

Mormonism is presenting a gospel that depends on the revelations of Joseph Smith and his successors, not on the Christianity revealed in the Bible. In the book of Mark we are warned about false prophets:

*For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mark 13:22)*

Peter, in the New Testament, specifically warned against such deception coming not just from without but even from within the Christian community:

*But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. (2 Peter 2:1-3)*

Rather than providing a bedrock of trust in the unchanging God of the Bible, Mormonism is presenting a gospel that depends on Joseph Smith and his successors, not simply on Christ.



## EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

**March 2012:** I was a former mormon, I was around 2 years, my wife was mormon her entire life, I took out my family from the mormon church, your documentation was very useful, my wife found a book regarding the changes of the temple ceremony . . . she was very surprise about all the changes made on the endowment ceremony . . .

we are now in processing in take out our names from the church, we are so graceful for your efforts and your dedication to your ministry, I have my wife's family still on the church, we are praying for them in order to take them out and show them the real gospel but it is so hard because they have all their brains full of bad doctrine, they do not even read the bible, we are constantly encourage them in read the bible. . . . they are so mad at me because they think that I was the reason in take my wife out of the church, in part it is true, they think that my wife had not a testimony about the church, but she has it and a big one, there was a lot of thing that doesn't match on the church, because all the time I encouraged to my wife in read the bible. . . . I always felt that something wrong was on the book of mormon. . . we now are assisting to a christian church, we are so happy . . . I fall in love of my lord Jesus christ.

thank you Sandra for your work and efforts, you are my hero. . . .

**March 2012:** Really trying to totally leave is so difficult. . . . I'm challenged at this point with not becoming super angry and feeling betrayed by the church.

Thank you for your work, it has been liberating for me and I feel a sense of happiness I hadn't before really truly knowing that the church was hiding so much factual history.

**April 2012:** I left Utah 4 years ago and now live in California. I am currently experiencing the "What just happened to me over the past 36 years" moment and have left the Ids church. . . . Thank you for providing research links.

**April 2012:** I hope you're watching the General Conference of the Church you hate so much. . . .

I WITNESS TO YOU IN THE HOLY AND SACRED NAME OF JESUS CHRIST THAT THESE MEN ARE EXACTLY WHAT THEIR TITLES STATE.

I REBUKE YOU IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND WITNESS TO YOU THAT IF YOU DO NOT REPENT YOU WILL LITERALLY HAVE HELL TO PAY FOR YOUR BEARING FALSE WITNESS AGAINST, BY ANY MEASURE, GOOD AND HONORABLE MEN.

**April 2012:** I just wanted to write you and thank you for all you do . . . You may not remember me, but a year ago today April 1, 2011 that my husband and I came into Lighthouse Ministry looking for the DVD "Unveiling Grace", some one thought you may have a copy.

While there I ask several questions because I had been on path of trying to come out of Mormonism. I walked around with just a part of me still Mormon, However with your help and your loving council, I left your ministry full of literature and a conviction of Joseph Smith not being a prophet of God, and that with that foundation no longer true to me, then the whole LDS religion was also false.

It was that day I turned to my husband and declared myself no longer Mormon. Today I am a Christian, a follower of Christ, I was baptized the end of January of this year. Had I not stepped into your Ministry a year ago today, I would not be who I am in Christ today. I am utmost thankful for all you do, you are such an instrument to bring truth to those who are searching as I was. Again thank you!!

**April 2012:** I can't thank you enough for your inspiration and the way you have paved for many Christians who are transitioning out of Mormonism. It has been a painful road. I watched one of your fireside presentations yesterday and it gave me a lot of hope and affirmation. . . . I discovered that the Mormon church isn't what it claims to be this past December. I have stopped going to Church a month ago. I have been happier over the past few weeks . . . I still have tremendous faith in Christ and God.

**April 2012:** Many years ago you and your husband spoke to my husband who had been a life long Mormon. He had many questions about the religion and you spent several hours discussing it with him and even gave him some tapes to watch. He was a changed person and was born again and has been a Christian for almost 25 years now. Thank-you!

**April 2012:** I saw u speak in West Monroe, Louisiana at First West! I was born and raised a Christian but my girlfriend is Mormon! She has had questions so I took her to watch you speak! I believe it helped her a lot but she is going through a really tough time in life!

(continued on page 20)

# *The Mormon Testimony*

By Sandra Tanner

**I**n talking with members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints about their faith and the differences between it and standard Christianity, a Mormon will often revert to “bearing his testimony.” LDS Apostle Russell M. Nelson gave a typical testimony at the end of his October 2010 conference address:

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. The Book of Mormon is true. Joseph Smith is its translator and the prophet of this last dispensation. President Thomas S. Monson is God’s prophet today. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking at the October 2006 LDS Conference, Apostle Dieter F. Uchtdorf gave this definition of a testimony:

When we talk about testimony, we refer to feelings of our heart and mind rather than an accumulation of logical, sterile facts. It is a gift of the Spirit, a witness from the Holy Ghost that certain concepts are true.<sup>2</sup>

When Mormons are asked how they “know” that Joseph Smith is a prophet or that the LDS Church is the true church they will usually respond that they received a burning conviction, a special feeling, as a result of prayer. This burning feeling is based on a passage in their *Doctrine and Covenants*, sec. 9:8:

... behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that **your bosom shall burn within you**; therefore, you shall **feel that it is right**.

However, simply having a good feeling about something does not necessarily make it true. People from the various polygamist groups bear similar types of testimonies, recounting spiritual experiences that convinced them to embrace Warren Jeffs, or one of the other polygamist leaders, as God’s true prophet. Obviously the numerous testimonies of people for different prophets and religious movements can’t all be right. This is why Paul warned in Galatians 1:8—“*But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*”

<sup>1</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “Be Thou an Example of the Believers,” *Ensign* (Nov. 2010): p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Power of a Personal Testimony,” *Ensign* (November 2006).

So here we have the test: are they teaching the same doctrines taught in the New Testament?

## *Missionary Challenge*

LDS missionaries challenge potential converts to put Mormonism to the test by praying according to the instructions in the Book of Mormon, in Moroni 10:4—

... ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, **with real intent**, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

This sets up the investigator to either affirm what the missionaries have said, or be labeled as one who did not pray with “real intent.” When Mormons ask me if I have read and prayed about the Book of Mormon I tell them, yes, and God showed me that it wasn’t true. But somehow their testimony is always the valid one and mine is false. To a Mormon, if you don’t get their answer, you didn’t pray with “real intent.”

For the Christian, however, it all comes down to comparing the doctrine of anyone who claims to speak for God with that of the Bible. In the book of Acts we read how Paul preached to the Jews in Berea regarding the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies related to the Messiah. Unlike the Jews at Thessalonica, the Bereans mentioned in Acts 17:11 “*searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed.*”

Here we have the Biblical test of a religious leader—not whether we had some sort of spiritual experience, but does the leader’s message agree with the Bible. Paul did not tell the Bereans to go home and pray about it. While Christians have had many spiritual experiences, those feelings must always be in line with what God has already revealed in the Bible.

My earliest memories of the LDS Church include their monthly Fast and Testimony service, where members of the congregation are invited to come to the pulpit and share something about their faith. Often parents will encourage their young children to go to the podium and say something similar to the testimony of LDS Apostle Nelson, mentioned earlier. All through your life as a Mormon you are encouraged to affirm that you



“know” the LDS Church is God’s true church, not simply that you “believe” that to be the case. In fact, sometimes a parent will stand behind the child and prompt him on the words to say.

While I agree with the basic philosophy of training young children in their faith, I am troubled by the LDS methods that seem to border on brainwashing. In 1983, LDS Apostle Boyd K. Packer commented on the process of acquiring a testimony:

It is not unusual to have a missionary say, “How can I bear testimony until I get one?” . . . A testimony is to be found in the bearing of it! . . . The skeptic will say that to bear testimony when you may not know you possess one is to condition yourself; that the response is manufactured. . . . Bear testimony of the things that you hope are true, as an act of faith. . . . The Spirit and testimony of Christ will come to you for the most part when, and remain with you only if, you share it.”<sup>3</sup>

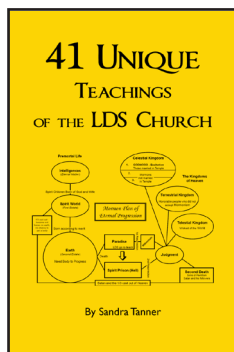
But Packer’s method is simply brainwashing. If you assert something enough times you probably will come to believe that it is true.

This reminds me of a young Christian man I met some years ago that was dating an LDS girl. She asked him to meet with an apostle so that he could get answers to his questions. He agreed and later met with LDS Apostle Spencer W. Kimball. Kimball brushed aside the young man’s questions and instructed him that if he really wanted a testimony regarding Mormonism he need only follow three simple steps:

1. You must want to believe that Mormonism is true.
2. Pray to know that it is true.
3. Read only the LDS books.

Kimball assured him that this never fails. But such a method would probably work for the polygamist groups as well. It does not establish that what you feel is actually true.

<sup>3</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign* (January 1983): pp. 54-55.



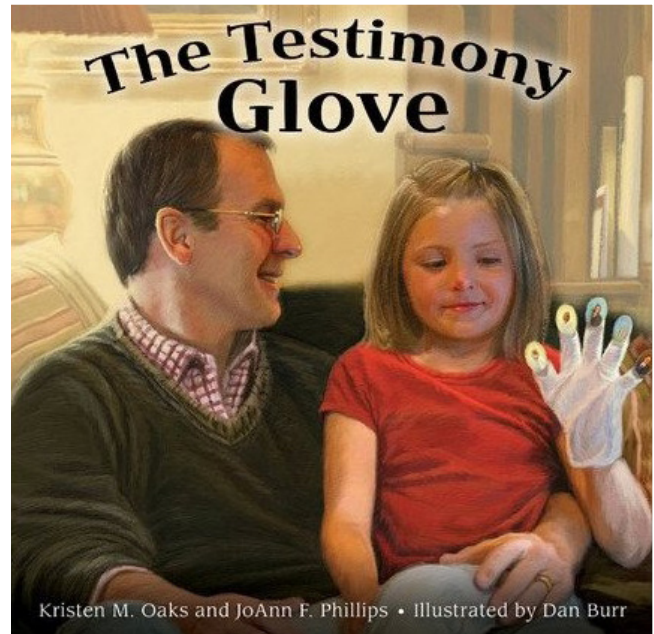
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### *The Testimony Glove*

I recently purchased a book at an LDS bookstore, titled *The Testimony Glove*. It was written by the wife of current LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks and published by Deseret Book.<sup>4</sup> Through this book we get a glimpse of what the LDS Church thinks are the basics of their faith.



First children are instructed to put on the special glove at the front of the book. The glove represents the Holy Ghost, who will guide them in learning the truth.

Next they attach a small picture of a man to the thumb of the glove, who represents God. The child is then taught that we once lived in heaven with God and that “Heavenly Father made a great plan of happiness for us” so that we can “live with Him” again after we die. The book includes an illustration of their view of our journey from pre-earth life to death on earth, and then on to one of three levels of heaven.<sup>5</sup>

Next they attach a picture of Jesus to the index finger. This is to represent Jesus, “the Son of our Heavenly Father.” It is then explained that Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer.<sup>6</sup>

On the third finger is attached a picture of Joseph Smith holding the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The child is then instructed that Joseph Smith “saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ,” who called him to be a prophet and to “restore the gospel and translate the Book of Mormon.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The concept of the testimony glove was originally introduced in an article in the October 2008 issue of the Mormon magazine for children called *The Friend*.

<sup>5</sup> Kristen M. Oaks and JoAnn F. Phillips, *The Testimony Glove*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), pp. 10-11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

The fourth picture is the Salt Lake Temple. The child is instructed that “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Savior’s true church” and that being sealed in the temple means the child’s family will be together forever.<sup>8</sup>

On the last finger the child places a picture of the current LDS prophet. From this the child is to conclude that the LDS Church is the true church which is “led by a living prophet, who gets revelation from God” and that she is to “follow the prophet.”<sup>9</sup>

This glove is to help the child learn the basic components of a testimony: Heavenly Father is real and has a great plan for our lives, Jesus Christ is the Savior, Joseph Smith is God’s prophet, the temple is necessary to be an eternal family, and the current president of the LDS Church is God’s spokesman on earth. As the child continues to attend LDS classes she will be given more in-depth instruction on the five concepts presented in this book. Now let us look at these five points more closely.

### *Heavenly Father’s Plan*

The first point is the LDS doctrine of Heavenly Father and his “great plan of happiness for us.” Since the days of Joseph Smith the LDS leaders have consistently taught that God was once a mortal, after death he received a resurrected body and advanced to godhood, which would necessitate a higher god to oversee the world on which our Heavenly Father grew up.

The 2002 LDS manual *Gospel Fundamentals* informs us that “our Father in Heaven was once **a man who lived on an earth, the same as we do. He became our Father in Heaven by overcoming problems, just as we have to do on this earth.**”<sup>10</sup> Further on the manual informs us that Heavenly Father has “a **resurrected** body of flesh and bones.”<sup>11</sup>

Past LDS president Joseph Fielding Smith explained that our Heavenly Father had a father, a grandfather, and so forth back through the eternities:

*Our father in heaven, according to the Prophet, had a father, and since there has been a condition of this kind through all eternity, each Father had a Father.*<sup>12</sup>

However, Joseph Smith’s doctrine of God is in direct contradiction to the teachings of the Bible.

In Malachi 3:6 the Bible informs us that God does not change and Psalms 90:2 declares that He is “*from everlasting to everlasting.*”

In Isaiah 44:6 and 8, God instructed Isaiah: “*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.*”

In fact, the concept that our God was once a mortal man who advanced to the position of God is the most heretical doctrine of Mormonism. This reminds me of Paul’s warning in Romans 1:23 about those who “*changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.*”

Coupled with the LDS concept of God is the doctrine of eternal progression, or “plan of happiness” as used in the *Testimony* book.<sup>13</sup> The teaching of man’s eternal progression is the bedrock of LDS doctrine. In the October 2010 LDS Conference, Apostle Robert D. Hales explained: “Before we came to this earth, Heavenly Father presented His plan of salvation—a plan to come to earth and receive a body, choose to act between good and evil, and progress to become like Him and live with Him forever.”<sup>14</sup>

This concept assumes that there is both a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother who literally procreated us in a pre-earth life and then set in motion a plan for our advancement to godhood.<sup>15</sup> Joseph Smith declared: “you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you.”<sup>16</sup> In the LDS view, we are literally spirit children of Heavenly parents and the same species as the gods. While Christians talk of being children of God, they are using the term in a spiritual sense, not biological children. Paul wrote about our spiritual adoption in Romans 8:14-16:

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

There is nothing in this teaching that would suggest we are literally God’s biological children. We are children

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> *Gospel Fundamentals*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, p. 204.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, comp., *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, vol. 2, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> *Testimony Glove*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Robert D. Hales, “Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life,” *Ensign* (Nov. 2010): p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, Religion 430 & 431, LDS Church, 2010, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), pp. 345-346.

of God by faith, not by birth. In the classic book *Articles of Faith* by LDS Apostle James E. Talmage, we read:

**We believe in a God who is Himself progressive**, whose majesty is intelligence; whose perfection consists in **eternal advancement**—a Being who has **attained** His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow, whose glory it is their heritage to share. In spite of the opposition of the sects, **in the face of direct charges of blasphemy**, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: **“As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.”**<sup>17</sup>

Thus we see that when Mormons speak of becoming God-like or Christ-like, they are not simply speaking of some sort of spiritual growth, but of their hope of achieving actual godhood, the same as their Heavenly Father did before them.

This would include their children, born on some future world, worshipping the now exalted man as their god. This was the clear intent in the 1997 edition of *Gospel Principles*. It declared that those who achieve exaltation, or godhood, would then procreate spirit children who will “have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father.”<sup>18</sup> Thus the spirit children of the exalted LDS man will be sent to the world he creates to become mortal and they will pray to him, the same as he does to his Heavenly Father. Keep in mind that the Mormon is not saying that he will one day be equal to Heavenly Father. The LDS concept is one of a hierarchy of gods, with each god in submission to the one before him, and each god worshiped by his own spirit children.

In the Mormon manual *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women*, published in 2000, is a quote from past LDS president Lorenzo Snow:

When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that **they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring, worlds without end. . . .**<sup>19</sup>

Notice that it says they will “administer salvation and exaltation” to their offspring. Thus they are acting in the capacity of a god to their children. Actually, this quote is a little misleading as this only applies to the husband.

17 James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), p. 390 [1899 ed., p. 442].

18 *Gospel Principles*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997, p. 302.

19 *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women*, Part A, LDS Church, 2000, p. 66.

The wife will be involved in procreating these children, but not in answering their prayers.

So what is our purpose in life? The Bible does not teach that man’s goal is personal godhood, but to bring glory to the one eternal God, our creator. Isaiah 43:11 records God as saying: “*before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.*” Further on, in Isaiah 48:11, God declares “*My glory I will not give to another.*” According to 1 Peter 4:11, all things are to be done with the goal of bringing glory to the Father.

The Christian plan of salvation is summed up in John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” There is nothing there about personal exaltation to godhood. We are sinners saved by grace, not “gods in embryo,” as declared by past LDS prophet Spencer W. Kimball.<sup>20</sup>

### *Jesus Christ*

The second point of *The Testimony Glove* is Jesus Christ. While it does teach that Jesus is our savior, it does not elaborate on their doctrine that Christ’s atonement is just the first step in our ability to acquire eternal life. Besides the atonement, according to Mormonism, one must also live a faithful LDS life, hold their Melchizedec priesthood, and fully participating in their temple rituals throughout life in order to qualify to live in the presence of Heavenly Father. This is the way one achieves eternal life, which is also referred to as exaltation, or godhood.

Mormons value Christ’s atonement as an essential element of their eternal life, but not the full payment. In the February 2003 *Ensign*, LDS Apostle Russell M. Nelson explained the difference between simply receiving the gift of immortality as opposed to the goal of qualifying for eternal life:

Thanks to the Atonement, the gift of immortality is **unconditional**. The greater gift of eternal life, however, is **conditional**. In order to **qualify**, one must deny oneself of ungodliness and honor the ordinances and covenants of the **temple**.<sup>21</sup>

Keep in mind that Mormons make a distinction between “immortality” and “eternal life.” They view Christ’s atonement as a guarantee of resurrection and the ability to live forever, which is termed “immortality.” But they do not believe that this is the same as “eternal life.” That is defined as being married for eternity in an LDS temple, which gives them the ability to procreate

20 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006, p. 1.

21 Russell M. Nelson, “Divine Love,” *Ensign* (Feb. 2003): p. 24.



millions of spirit children to be sent to their own world. "Eternal life" is defined as having an eternal marriage and the ability to procreate life eternally.<sup>22</sup>

Thus we see that for the Mormon, Christ's atonement is not enough to return to Heavenly Father. The person must be a fully active, temple going, member of the LDS Church in order to merit eternal life. In Mormonism, "saved by grace" means resurrection to some level of heaven, but should not to be confused with "eternal life," or godhood, in the highest level of heaven where God resides. If eternal life, or "exaltation," is "conditional" and something for which we must "qualify," then it is not a gift, but a reward.

On the other hand, the Christian's hope is summed up in Ephesians 2:8-9: "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

### *Joseph Smith*

The next picture on the glove is one of Joseph Smith. In the book the child says "The third truth is that Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. . . . I know that Joseph Smith is the prophet who was called to restore the gospel and translate the Book of Mormon."<sup>23</sup>

This statement brings up three separate issues: Smith's first vision [which supposedly revealed to him that God and Jesus are separate deities with resurrected bodies], the LDS claim that Joseph Smith restored the true gospel [which implies that all Christians outside of Mormonism do NOT have the true gospel] and the validity of the Book of Mormon [which opens the door for scriptures and doctrines beyond the Bible].

Regarding his claim that in 1820 God and Jesus appeared to him, Joseph Smith did not commit his vision experience to paper until 1832, and later accounts contain significant differences. The earliest account only recorded Jesus as appearing, with no mention of God the Father. Smith's 1835 version referred to many angels, but with no specific claim that God and Jesus were present. It wasn't until 1838 that he wrote that the Father and Son appeared to him in his first vision.<sup>24</sup> In the early 1830's neither LDS nor non-LDS sources raised the issue of an 1820 vision or that Joseph Smith was teaching an anthropomorphic deity. This was a doctrinal development of the 1840's in Nauvoo, Illinois.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:19-24.

<sup>23</sup> *Testimony Glove*, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), chapter 6; online at [utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech6.htm](http://utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech6.htm)

<sup>25</sup> See [utlm.org/onlineresources/firstvision.htm](http://utlm.org/onlineresources/firstvision.htm)

Keep in mind, the Mormons are not just saying God could appear as a man, but that eons ago our Heavenly Father actually was a finite being on some other world, married, had children, died, was resurrected, and then achieved his current level of godhood. Speaking in 1844 Joseph Smith preached:

**God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, . . . That is the great secret. . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did . . .**<sup>26</sup>

This is not just a past teaching. Smith's sermon is quoted in current LDS manuals.<sup>27</sup>

I often talk to Mormons who are unacquainted with Smith's sermon on the nature of God, but if one is going to assert that he is a prophet, the accuracy of his teaching on God is of vital importance. One of the tests of a prophet is laid out in Deuteronomy 13, where it states that a true prophet will not lead you after a strange god. As we have already pointed out, Smith's doctrine of a God who was once a finite mortal is totally opposite the teachings of the Bible.

The next problem with the child's statement is the claim that she "knows" that Joseph Smith, as God's prophet, restored the true gospel. When a Mormon asserts that he "knows" that Smith was a prophet, he is usually referring to some spiritual conviction that came to him through prayer, not from any sort of testing of his prophetic claims.

The importance of Joseph Smith is canonized in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 135, verse 3:

Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.

However, if Joseph Smith is a false prophet then he has been the means of sending many people down the broad path to destruction instead of pointing them to the narrow way that leads to life.<sup>28</sup>

The LDS Church is not just claiming to be a better church than the one down the road, but the only "true" church recognized by God. When they talk about Smith restoring the "gospel" they are talking about the doctrines laid out in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*, not the gospel presented in the New Testament.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 6, ch. 14, pp. 305-6.

<sup>27</sup> *Presidents of the Church Student Manual*, Religion 345, LDS Church, 2004, p. 89.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 7:13.

Smith taught that Christ's atonement was just the first installment on our eternal life. We must now faithfully participate in all of the LDS rituals and practices to return to Heavenly Father and achieve exaltation. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie defined the gospel as follows:

The gospel is the plan of salvation. It consists of the laws, ordinances, and eternal truths by conformity to which the spirit children of God can progress and advance until they become like their Eternal Parent.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the LDS gospel is described as the system of progression of men to godhood.

When Christians talk of the gospel they are referring to the "good news" of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, done on our behalf, to reconcile us to God, as laid out in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15.

The Mormon gospel, on the other hand, is one of Christ plus self-effort and centers around a personal quest for exaltation; the Christian gospel is centered in Christ. The Bible does not point us to personal exaltation, but to bring glory to the one eternal, holy God.

Another problem with the *Testimony* book is the assertion that Smith's prophetic call included the translation of the Book of Mormon.

First, there is no evidence that there ever were any physical plates. The witnesses to the supposed translation process never mention seeing the plates, uncovered, on the table while Smith was dictating the story to his scribe. They describe a process of Smith looking at a stone in his hat while he dictated the book. They mention hefting the plates that were in a box or in a sack, but who is to say that it actually contained an ancient record? It could have contained scrap metal, rocks or anything heavy.<sup>30</sup>

Next, there are no artifacts, inscriptions, or monuments produced by the Book of Mormon people. There is no evidence that the American Indians grew wheat, had horses and cows, had chariots or made steel swords, as asserted in the Book of Mormon.<sup>31</sup>

Third, the Book of Mormon echoes the assumptions of Smith's day about the American Indian that are no longer seen as valid. Many books of the day speculated that the Indians were descended from the lost tribes of Israel.<sup>32</sup> However, DNA shows that the American

Indians descend from East Asia, and are not Semitic.<sup>33</sup>

Fourth, the excessive plagiarism and dependence on the King James translation of the Bible throughout the Book of Mormon shows it to be a modern invention.<sup>34</sup>

Once a person accepts the Book of Mormon as true, he has accepted the concept that the Bible is unreliable and further revelation is needed. This opens the door to accept all the rest of Smith's teachings. This raises a curious dilemma. The Book of Mormon does **not** contain the Mormon doctrines of Heavenly Father and Jesus being separate deities, eternal progression to godhood, temple marriage or work for the dead. If these crucial doctrines were not in the book, but revealed later to Smith, one wonders why God would bother with the Book of Mormon in the first place.

As for the LDS charge that the Bible is not complete, Apostle John acknowledged that all of Jesus' teachings had not been recorded. However, in John 20:31, he asserted that everything we needed for eternal life has been preserved. He wrote:

*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

If we already have everything we need to know for eternal life in the Bible, why would we need further scriptures?

### *The LDS Temple*

This brings us to the fourth picture on the glove, the LDS temple. In the book, the child says "I know that being married in the temple like Mom and Dad were, makes it possible for our family to be sealed together forever."<sup>35</sup>

LDS temple marriage is repeatedly emphasized in various instruction manuals. In the 2004 book, *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, the college-age Mormon is instructed:

The most important things that any member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ever does in this world are: 1. To marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and 2. To keep the covenant made in connection with this holy and perfect order of matrimony—thus assuring the obedient persons of an inheritance of exaltation in the celestial kingdom.<sup>36</sup>

29 Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, vol. 3, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), p. 27.

30 See *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 117 (November 2011); online at [utlm.org/newsletters/no117.htm#Witnesses](http://utlm.org/newsletters/no117.htm#Witnesses)

31 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 107 (October 2006); online at [utlm.org/newsletters/no107.htm](http://utlm.org/newsletters/no107.htm)

32 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 114 (May 2010); online at [utlm.org/newsletters/no114.htm#contemporary](http://utlm.org/newsletters/no114.htm#contemporary)

33 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 103 (November 2004); online at [utlm.org/newsletters/no103.htm](http://utlm.org/newsletters/no103.htm)

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

35 *Testimony Glove*, p. 16

36 *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, Religion 430 and 431, LDS Church, 2004, p. 77.

Notice, the promise of eternal life requires more than just a temple marriage. The couple must also continue to live as faithful Mormons until their death in order for them to achieve exaltation. If temple marriage were this important in God's plan, one wonders why it was never mentioned in the Bible or the Book of Mormon?

The emphasis on temples is an example of the way Mormon doctrine appropriates Biblical terms and then infuses them with a different meaning. An example is their use of the word "temple." In the Old Testament the temple, along with its animal sacrifices, were symbolic of Christ's future atonement for sin. Once Christ died on the cross and was resurrected there was no longer any need for the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. While the New Testament makes mention of the Jewish temple, Christian rituals were never conducted in it. Christian author Luke Wilson explained:

Jesus replaced the Old Covenant, of which the biblical temple was a part. He established a New Covenant based on His once-for-all atoning sacrifice, and under which He now serves as the believer's "great high priest" in the very sanctuary of heaven (Hebrews 4:14-16). A New Testament temple building is therefore a contradiction in terms, for it ignores the finished work of Christ, and harks back to the Old Covenant.<sup>37</sup>

An example of the way LDS prophets have twisted the scriptures is this statement by LDS President Spencer W. Kimball:

"Only through celestial marriage [meaning LDS temple marriage] can one find the straight way, the narrow path. Eternal life cannot be had in any other way."<sup>38</sup>

Kimball was alluding to Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:14: "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." However, there is nothing in Christ's teachings to connect eternal life with marriage. In fact, Jesus plainly stated that there is no marriage in heaven in Matthew 22:30:

. . . Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. [Also see Luke 20:34-36]

Obviously Paul had no such doctrine. In Romans 7:2 he wrote that when a man dies his wife is free from that

marriage. In 1 Corinthians 7:7-8 Paul advised those who were single or widowed to remain unmarried that they might spend more time serving God. If Paul believed that marriage continued in heaven and was essential for eternal life, why did he never mention it?

Also, marriages were never performed in the Jewish temple and the first century Christians did not build temples. They were meeting in the homes of various believers. Another curious fact is that the doctrine of eternal marriage isn't even taught in the Book of Mormon. Yet the angel who supposedly appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823 declared that the Book of Mormon contained "the fulness of the everlasting Gospel."<sup>39</sup>

Another difference is the secrecy surrounding the LDS temple ceremony. The Bible describes the Jewish temple rituals in Leviticus, chapters 1-7. Even though the High Priest was the only one who could enter the Holy of Holies, all Israel knew what he did in there. There was no secrecy. Yet the Mormon takes an oath to never divulge their temple ceremony.

The LDS teaching on eternal marriage comes from section 132 of their *Doctrine and Covenants*. Joseph Smith dictated this revelation in 1843 specifically so that it could be read to Smith's wife Emma to convince her of the truthfulness of plural marriage. Smith's faithful scribe, William Clayton, recorded the event in his diary.<sup>40</sup> As we outlined in our May 2009 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, Smith was married to at least 33 plural wives.<sup>41</sup> Most of them married Smith behind his wife's back and contrary to the teachings in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*.<sup>42</sup>

Even though the LDS Church currently tries to distance itself from the doctrine of polygamy, their sealing practices demonstrate that they still believe people will live polygamy in the celestial kingdom. As an example, Kristen Oaks, the author of *The Testimony Glove*, was sealed in marriage to LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks after his first wife died. He has now been sealed in an eternal marriage to two women, thus guaranteeing, according to LDS teachings, that he will be a polygamist in heaven.

The polygamist groups and the LDS Church all believe that plural marriages prior to 1890 were ordained of God and that those with the proper sealing will be able to live polygamy in heaven. The only difference

39 "Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith," Introduction to the Book of Mormon, 1981 ed.

40 George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), p. 110.

41 See *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 112 (May 2009); online at [utlm.org/newsletters/no112.htm](http://utlm.org/newsletters/no112.htm)

42 *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 101, 1835 edition.

37 Luke Wilson, "Are Mormon Temples an Extension of the biblical Temple?" (Institute for Religious Research, 1997); online at [irr.org/mit/ot-temple-nt-faith.html](http://irr.org/mit/ot-temple-nt-faith.html)

38 "Temple Marriage—Requirement for Eternal Family Life," *Young Women Manual 1*, LDS Church, 2002.



is whether they believe a person should currently live polygamy on earth.

Another aspect of the LDS teaching on eternal marriage is their doctrine that there is a Heavenly Mother as well as Heavenly Father. The Mormon goal of an eternal marriage is predicated on the concept that God has also been sealed in an eternal marriage to his wife, or wives as the case may be. According to LDS president Spencer W. Kimball, “God made man in his own image and certainly he made woman in the image of his **wife-partner**.”<sup>43</sup>

According to Brigham Young, Joseph Smith once said he “would not worship a God who had not a father; and I do not know that he would if he had not a mother; the one would be as absurd as the other.”<sup>44</sup>

Even though Mormonism teaches that there is a Heavenly Mother, members are taught that they are not to pray to her. In the October 1991 LDS Conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley instructed members that:

... in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, I regard it as **inappropriate** for anyone in the Church to pray to our **Mother in Heaven**. . . . The fact that we do not pray to our **Mother in Heaven** in no way belittles or denigrates her.<sup>45</sup>

While President Hinckley said the prohibition on praying to Heavenly Mother in no way “belittles or denigrates her,” it surely makes her a silent partner.

### *The Living Prophet*

The last picture to be attached to the glove is one of current LDS President Thomas S. Monson. The girl in the story then testifies “I know we are led by a living prophet, who gets revelation from God.”<sup>46</sup>

One wonders how the girl in the book was supposed to know that Monson gets revelations? The LDS Church has not presented any revelation to the church body since 1978, when the church extended the priesthood to blacks. One could argue that the leaders pray for guidance and feel a spiritual conviction to proceed in a particular way. But how would this differ from thousands of Christians who pray daily for direction? Her testimony is simply a matter of parroting the statements made by LDS leaders.

Joseph Smith claimed that in 1830 God instructed the founding members of the LDS Church to receive Smith’s

words “as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.”<sup>47</sup>

This is still the position of the LDS church. The command to follow the current LDS prophets and apostles is laid out in section 68 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

“And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, . . .”

The importance of a living prophet was driven home in the October 2010 LDS Conference when two different church leaders made reference to past President Ezra Taft Benson’s talk on “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet.”<sup>48</sup> Benson proclaimed that “the living Prophet . . . is more vital to us than the Standard Works” which would include the Bible, Book of Mormon, *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*. In fact, his speech is held in such high regard that it is printed in its entirety in the 2010 manual, *Teachings of the Living Prophets*.<sup>49</sup>

By asserting the supremacy of a current prophet’s teachings over all previous scripture it eliminates any test of its truthfulness. One is expected to simply accept the current LDS leader’s teachings as divine instruction.

For example, when the church changed the authority of the Seventies to also include High Priests, Apostle Harold B. Lee challenged then current President David O. McKay on the change. President McKay asked Lee “have you ever thought that what was contrary to the order of heaven in 1840 might not be contrary to the order of heaven in 1960?”<sup>50</sup>

But this raises the question as to how any Mormon can have confidence that what he currently believes and affirms will be equally true next year?

The LDS leaders would deny that they are teaching the members to have blind faith in them by pointing to speeches where they counsel the members to seek for divine confirmation through prayer. However, the person is still expected to come up with an answer to obey the leaders. Speaking at the April 2001 LDS Conference, Apostle M. Russell Ballard instructed the members: “If you will listen to the living prophet and the apostles and heed our counsel, you will not go astray.”<sup>51</sup> This was further emphasized in the 2010 LDS manual, *Teachings of the Living Prophets*:

43 *Doctrines of the Gospel: Student Manual*, Religion 430 & 431, LDS Church, 2004, p. 8.

44 *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9, p. 286.

45 Gordon B. Hinckley, “Daughters of God,” *Ensign* (November 1991): pp. 97-98.

46 *Testimony Glove*, p. 18.

47 *Doctrine and Covenants* 21:5.

48 *Ensign* (Nov. 2010): pp. 11-13; 34-36.

49 *Teachings of the Living Prophets*, Student Manual, Religion 333, LDS Church, 2010, pp. 22-27.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Speaking under the direction of the Holy Ghost, the living prophet's words take precedence over other statements on the same issue. . . . Doctrine are eternal and do not change; however, the Lord, through His prophet, may change practices and programs, according to the needs of the people.<sup>52</sup>

But historically we see a trail of past teachings and scriptures that have been changed or eliminated. The LDS scriptures have gone through repeated editing, with severe changes being made in several of Joseph Smith's revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

### *Examples of Changing Doctrine*

**Plural Marriage**—The church affirmed in 1835 that it did not teach or practice plural marriage. Yet we know that Joseph Smith was already practicing it at that time. Then in 1842 Smith dictated a secret revelation commanding plural marriage while publically denying it.<sup>53</sup> Once polygamy was openly taught and practiced in the 1850's the leaders taught that plural marriage was essential for eternal life. Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* was considered a mandate for taking additional wives. Now section 132 is reinterpreted to mean one must have a temple marriage in order to enter the celestial kingdom, and plural marriage is no longer considered an important part of the revelation.

**Temple Endowment Ceremony**—In the 1840's Joseph Smith instituted the secret temple endowment ceremony, which was supposedly received directly from God. However, these ordinances have undergone repeated changes to tone down some of the more disturbing elements. In 1990 they removed the part in the temple play where a minister was portrayed as making a deal with the devil to teach false doctrine for money. Also removed were the blood oaths where a person swore on his life to always be faithful to Mormonism.<sup>54</sup>

**Priesthood and Patriarchs**—From the time of Joseph Smith's death until 1978 blacks were denied priesthood.<sup>55</sup> The various priesthood offices have also been revised. For example, the office of Presiding Patriarch, held by Joseph Smith's father and then by his brother, Hyrum, was thought to be a lineal line of authority. In 1979 Eldred G. Smith, a descendent of

Joseph Smith's brother Hyrum, was released from his calling as Presiding Patriarch to the LDS Church and placed on emeritus status. Now there is only a local patriarch in each stake, who does not need to be a descendent of the Smiths.<sup>56</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In spite of the many changes, the leadership continues to assert that the LDS Church is the "restored gospel" from ages past. One wonders how it can be a restoration and yet continually change?

When Joseph Smith gave a revelation to send several early converts to Canada to sell the copyright to the Book of Mormon, the men came back in dismay. The revelation had been a complete failure. But Smith had a ready explanation: "Some revelations are of God, some revelations are of man, and some revelations are of the devil."<sup>57</sup> But that is the very problem, how are we to determine when his revelations are from God? The LDS Church teaches its members to use a very subjective test for determining truth: "Pray about it, and if you get a good feeling, it must be true." But supposedly Joseph Smith and the early Mormons who took this journey had all prayed about the revelation and it had failed. Time after time in LDS history we see that their inner convictions were proven wrong. The Bible warns us in 1 John 4:1—"believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Mormons often appeal to James 1:5—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." However, this is not instruction for testing a prophet. The Bible instructs us to test a prophet by examining his message. Paul challenged the Christians at Thessalonica to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good." [1 Thessalonians 5:21] Also, Peter warned that in the Christian community there would be "false teachers" that would preach "damnable heresies."<sup>58</sup> Certainly Mormonism comes under this heading. Their doctrines of God once being a man, man's ability to achieve godhood, and the necessity of a temple marriage for eternal life are in direct contradiction to the teachings of the New Testament. To say that anything, any ritual could add to the work of Christ is belittling his atonement. The writer of Hebrews summed it up this way:

<sup>56</sup> See Irene Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> David Whitmer, *An Address To All Believers in Christ*, (Richmond, Missouri, 1887); online at utlm.org/onlinebooks/address1.htm

<sup>58</sup> 2 Peter 2:1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>53</sup> See George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> See Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse, 2004).

<sup>55</sup> See Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2004); online at utlm.org/onlinebooks/curseofcain\_contents.htm

*“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrew 12:2)*

The High Priest in the Old Testament did not sit down in the temple. The metaphor of Jesus sitting down indicated the atonement had been finished. It was complete. In John 19:30 we read that after Jesus had hung on the cross for hours he finally said: *“It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”* The good news is that Christ accomplished everything that was needed for our full salvation in God’s presence. It is our joy and responsibility to share the Biblical gospel with our LDS friends, that they, too, may find the narrow way that leads to eternal life.



## LETTERS AND EMAILS (continued from page 10)

**April 2012:** If you insist on continuing what you’ve been doing just remember—everything you do and say against Joseph Smith is a fulfilment of Moroni’s prophesy!

**April 2012:** I’m an ex-mo from the UK. Baptized in 1977 but formally resigned last year after learning about the deceptions. Love the profound simplicity of biblical Christianity. Thank you for all you’ve done to help others—you and your husband’s website helped me and my husband.

**April 2012:** If you are looking for outdated information, refuted claims, and an era of Mormonism that died 100 years ago, then UTLM is for you. If you’re looking for current, factual information on Mormons and what they believe, I would suggest <http://www.mormon.org/> or <http://www.lds.org/>

**April 2012:** I am Brazilian, I live in São Paulo, and thanks to you, I left Mormonism. Your searches are wonderful and opened my eyes. I was baptized [LDS] three years ago, and last month I would go for the mission. I read your stuff and gave up because I found all that the Mormon Church hides. Thank you!

**April 2012:** You likely have no idea what your work has meant to so many people like me. I’m married to an ex-Mormon, . . .

**April 2012:** You may not remember me. I worked at the Double Tree in Tulsa. You gave me a lot of pamphlets from your ministry when you were in Tulsa, well before the Olympics in Salt Lake City. . . . You were a blessing to me and I just wanted to say thank you.

**April 2012:** I am heartbroken to see my nieces doing Temple work, and one recently married at the San Diego Temple. . . . I was never baptized LDS but was once an attender. Your ministry saved me from going any further. I decided to research the truth of Mormonism, which was not easy then. . . .

I am glad to see that the internet is producing scholars that more closely resemble the quality of your husband’s research, but he was a benchmark that is unlikely to be surpassed. From my angle, it seems like UTLM is more influential than ever. The internet has been a blessing in this regard.

We hold you, and your staff, in our thoughts and prayers.

**April 2012:** I have been a christian for about 15 years now, but never really knew how to talk to mormons about true grace in Jesus. After watching Heart of the Matter and learning about utlm.org and looking through your resources, I felt comfortable about being able to talk with mormons. I live in South Korea and I had not seen one the whole time I had been here, then one day I saw a couple on the subway—on their mission. I was able to invite them over and make them food and share the grace of Jesus with them. My wife, who is also a christian, shared her testimony for the first time with someone who was not a christian.

It was SUCH a blessing to share about God’s work in our lives with them and God used you to help us feel comfortable about sharing. Your great work in this area really allows us and so many people to dialogue with mormons in a deep and thoughtful way.

Thank you for your work as God works in you to will and to do. Praise God!

**May 2012:** I am a 35 year old LDS woman who was born and raised in the LDS church. I am also a great great great granddaughter of Brigham Young through his second wife, mary ann Angel. . . .

Several months ago my younger sister confided in me that she didn’t want to go to church anymore. She told me of some issues she had with the church that she’d been researching for years. I had no idea she felt this way and i was really shocked. Her main issues were polygamy, and blacks and the priesthood. She also pointed out that she didnt know why she needed to give signs and tokens to see God again because he should already know her. This was a very powerful point to me. I have struggled with health problems since I was 10. It has been a great trial in my life. and yet, God has always been there with me—even in my darkest times when I wasn’t sure how I’d live to see another year.

I got my endowments out in 2009 and went again to the temple several times after that. Although i felt peace in the Celestial room—i felt uncomfortable in certain parts of the endowment session. more specifically—the prayer circle and when you raise your arms up and down and say “oh God, hear the words of my mouth”. I didnt know why this made me uneasy, but it [did]. I got the same feeling each time I went to the temple and through the endowment session. I haven’t been very many times due to health problems that make it hard to travel.

When my younger sister mentioned her issues with the church, I spent several weeks trying to reconcile my own testimony. Then the weekend of Easter my sister and I got together with another friend who was also leaving the church. My sister and my friend talked about their reasons with each other. I just listened. After a few hours I felt comfortable sharing with them about my uncomfortable feelings in the endowment session. I told them that I didn’t know why I had these feelings, I couldn’t explain it.

That night and for 4 nights afterwards, I prayed to know why I felt uncomfortable during the endowment session. The 4th day I got sick with a high fever and the flu. I was home from work and school. It was this morning that i remembered someone telling me that there were similarities between masons and lds temples. I also remember people at church mentioning that Joseph Smith was a Freemason. I knew nothing of Masons or Freemasons. So, I began researching about them on the internet. I didn’t want to be “biased”, so i tried to find out about freemasons first. Then I went to the FAIR website and found



an article on the similarities between freemasons and temples. What I read really intrigued me and I couldn't type fast enough to do more research into what the Master Masons ritual was (as the FAIR article mentioned Smith became one in 1842.) I found a script of the master mason ritual online and scanned over it. I was shocked when I read it. In my mind I could see similarities. I am sure you can guess what I found next. The similar handshakes, clothing, the masonic symbols were on my garments. I felt disgusted and went to the bedroom and took my garments off. It was a pretty bold move, I know—but I told God that I was not a Freemason!

I was still very sick with the flu for the next 5 days, but my research continued. I told my sister what I found and how upset it made me. Shouldn't our temples be unique and not have similarities to an organization (the freemason)?

This is where my journey began. The weeks that followed I began to have more spiritual experiences regularly. Driving up to KU campus, I felt the Spirit and it testified to me that God created this world and that He loves all His children. these may be small to some people, but according to some LDS people . . . when you start to "stray" . . . doesn't the Holy Ghost leave you? well that wasn't and hasn't happened to me.

I don't know if that "remembrance" I had that one morning—was an answer to my prayer—but I am so thankful that I have begun to unravel the mystery behind my "uncomfortable feelings". I also am disturbed by Joseph Smith's multiple First Vision accounts. I even shared it with my Mom who joined the church before I was born, and she is still very much a strong LDS member. She said she could understand why those would make me upset—but it doesn't bother her. This is astonishing to me. I even had her go to LDS.org and look at Joseph's journal from 1832 and read his First Vision account. She agreed that it was Smith's handwriting. And yet—she isn't touched by it. maybe some day she will start to understand. I told my Mom that if I had seen God and Jesus, that I wouldn't forget the details, or change the details to "fit the audience". People who experience dramatic events in their life don't forget the key details of those events. Therefore the excuses given by lds scholars are fallible.

So, this leads to me where I am now. I want to resign from the church. My sister has told me to take it slow because it's like "ripping off a big bandaid". She will also be resigning. Our family doesn't know yet. They will take it very hard. But i must do what I feel is right. What has emerged from this is that I feel a whole world has opened to me, I am less judgmental of people I see and meet and most importantly, my prayers and relationship with God and with Christ are becoming stronger than I hoped for. This has always been my goal. I have Christian friends who seem to be close to Christ and I was jealous of that. Now, I can also have that and it is truly glorious! I really wish i lived closer to you guys, so I could meet and talk with you in person.

**May 2012:** You have been a big support for me leaving the lds faith. Its been a journey for the last 6 months, and each day gets better than the next. Not to say that the beginning was not super hard and sad and lonely. But thank you for standing up for truth.

**May 2012:** Thank you for staying strong and exposing the big fraud that the Mormon church is. I was a member for 45 years . . . Now I know truth. I left in 2008 with my husband, and all our family (at least 20) are out of the cult.

**May 2012:** I just wanted to say THANKS for your ministry. I will keep it short (Even though I could write pages and pages and pages.) Anyways, I'm a former LDS member, married in the temple, with a . . . name that dates back to the start of it all. Neil A Maxwell was good friends with my Grandpa etc. etc. . . . I'm now born again with a relationship with the One true God. Free from the chains of a false religion. As you can imagine, at one time I was told by my "leaders" that your website was nothing more than "Anti-Mormon" literature. So I must confess, I thought you were not on God's side :) Oh, how the tables have turned! I thank God for giving you the courage to do what you do! Your website helped me more than you will ever know. I sincerely thank you. Me, my wife, my Mom, my brother, his wife, and more, have all left the LDS church and into an eternal relationship with Jesus. God bless!

**June 2012:** I would LOVE to personally thank you for your books and dedication. It was due solely to your and Jerald's books that brought me out of Mormonism after 19 yrs and a Mission served. I would have never left the church IF not for the both of you, OR help bring out 30 members within my first yr out, all due to material from your books. Keep up the good work . . .

**July 2012:** I was so thankful that I found you on the Internet. . . . I first want to thank you for giving me the truth and leading me to the God of the Bible! I grew up in Mormonism so you saved me from eternal hell!

Thank you for allowing Jesus to used you in a powerful way!

**July 2012:** I am disgusted with the cruel sense that you have to bash other people's religion and beliefs down because I don't remember Christ ever show that kind of hatred towards others by bashing other people's religion and beliefs.

Jesus Christ taught to love one another not hatred. So how can you say that you are showing this Christ-like love that Jesus taught by doing this. . . . You may not agree with LDS faith, and you may feel you know the only truth. Jesus Christ taught to love one another, should that not go both ways? I am certain that members of your family as well as others who are members of the LDS faith haven't posted anything against what your beliefs are, how dare you do it to ours and then call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ. Maybe you need to take a step back and think about that. . . . I think you are taking it way too far, and the things you say about the LDS faith does nothing but hurt the people as well as yourself. People like yourself that goes around and bashes other peoples religion shows that they have NO love for the Savior, themselves or others when they do this sort of thing.

**August 2012:** Thank you so much for your informative website!! I only came to my full knowledge of the LDS church a week ago. Having been a member for 47 years of my life, I have been so indoctrinated!! But not completely. From my own awful experiences with the leadership I became suspicious of doctrines and teachings about two years ago. From that time on, I have had a tendency to speak out in RS [Relief Society] and GD [Gospel Doctrine] classes in disgust of lessons taught there. Now, I am not ashamed to let all my LDS friends know that I have resigned, quit, forsaken, etc, the mormon church. In one week I have learned more about the truth [than] in the 47 years of cover up and lies taught me in the church. . . . Thank you so much for these resources!

**August 2012:** First off I have lived in Utah my whole life and married the love of my life two years ago, however she was Mormon, she has since converted to Catholicism and we both attend church weekly. I stumbled across your site because we try to find ways to have counter arguments when her family engages in conversation with us and sends missionaries to our house. At church last week our deacon had the book "Mormonism Shadow or Reality" I have since ordered that book on Amazon which directed me to your site. I really appreciate what you are doing, . . .

**August 2012:** I started reading UTLM materials back in the 80's as a bible college student (Mormonism Shadow or Reality—the BIG book). In 2002 as an Army Chaplain my chaplain assistant was Mormon. We were in Iraq for a year and after almost 25 years of study I was well prepared to discuss Mormon issues with him over a year's time.

**September 2012:** First, I have to apologize and ask for your forgiveness for my disrespectful attitude toward you and your message [in the past].

Second, I want to thank you for your work and your concern for the members of the mormon church. Until last January I had been a member of the church for 45 years. I knew it all and was proud of it.

Through your efforts and those of others the Lord was showing me all along that His love doesn't come through men nor their organization. My wife was the strength behind our leaving and it has taken me this long to build up the courage to admit that I was wrong that the church is wrong and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not something to be ashamed of. I thank God for his grace and thank you for your efforts. May God bless you.

**September 2012:** After I became a Christian in 2007 we emailed back and forth because God made you my first authority on Mormonism and the intro to cults. I want to thank you for being there to answer my questions and your wonderful resources.

**September 2012:** I received my latest shipment from Utah Lighthouse Ministries yesterday and decided to start with the [*LDS Doctrines of the Gospel*] Student Manual, because it is very current and shows what young Mormon students are being taught. . . .

Never in my lifetime, in the years I have been a Christians, or before so far as I know, have I seen so much deception and so much of a need for Christians to have discernment. My wife \_\_\_\_\_ and I have known for quite a few years that Mormonism does not teach the same things as orthodox Christianity, but what I am seeing in the Student Manual demonstrates why so many Christians do not realize that Mormonism is not the same as Christianity, or else they think the differences are so negligible as not to matter.

Any religion that teaches the existence of plural gods, that men are in essence the same as God to the extent they can achieve exaltation to godhood, that Lucifer is the brother of Jesus, that our spirits existed prior to our earthly existence—cannot be the same as orthodox Christianity.

In reading the [*Doctrines of the Gospel*] Student Manual I have to pay very close attention and pray for discernment because there will be a long passage about repentance, about the nature of Jesus Christ that sounds like it could have been written by a born-again Christian, but, not too farther on there

will be a mention of our ultimate purpose in life, for people to prepare themselves to become gods. It is important for me to see this in LDS-approved material in case I am questioned about what I write in the future. There is a chapter on "pre-mortal existence" which I recognized immediately as outside of Christian thought, at least as expressed in the Bible.

It has been very disillusioning to me to see some of the most respected ministers in this country condoning Mormonism, but I have to remember The Bible warned us that there would be those who "if possible would deceive the very elect," and my wife and I see that happening with people we know closely and love, relatives and friends. We need to be diplomatic but as I say, discerning as well.

**September 2012:** I wanted to say I received my order today . . . I want to give you a REALLY BIG THANK YOU, for the extra material, especially the DVD — "Joseph Smith/ Jesus/Search for the TRUTH", and the handout on terminology of the LDS church. This will greatly improve my effectiveness in teaching Mormons about the True Jesus.

I have been watching Ms. Sandra Tanner on the John Ankerberg DVD series on Mormons and have learned a great deal. Your written material, especially the terminology handout will help me learn and retain the info to help lead Mormons out of the deception they are in.

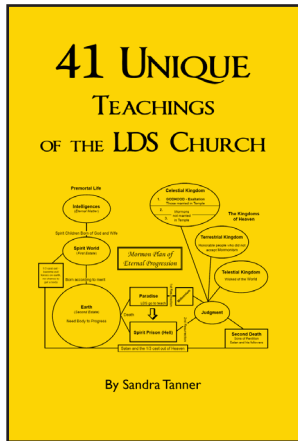
**September 2012:** Thanks to the You Tube videos, I have stopped going to Mormon meetings of any kind & am letting my Temple Recommend expire with no plans of renewing it. I have shared what I am reading online with my spouse who now sees where he has been lied to in past church teaching. He has been "less active" for some time now with no plans of becoming active again. We will be looking for a new church in \_\_\_\_\_ Utah.

**September 2012:** You start by hating the dead. And getting others to hate them. Then hate the living for having the nerve to worship God, according to the dictates of their hearts. 'They enter not nor do they suffer others to enter' . . . sound familiar. Hating God's prophets has always been in vogue, but you act as though it is something you alone have the moral superiority to do right. Squinting at gnats they swallowed a camel. You ridicule the idea of perfection, then in the same breath condemn those who were not. Bla bla bla I'm sure you have heard it all before and will smile and ignore it this time as well. All I can do is pray for you. It isn't too late to break off your employ with the prince of pride. Come to Christ.

**September 2012:** I just wanted to thank you for this site. I am a convert to the church. i joined when i was 18 and now I'm 24. i came into the church feeling like a new person and now i am leaving feeling broken. What i do know is that my god is a loving god. Mormon god, seems to be someone a tab bid raciest, sexiast, and closed minded. I didn't want to spend 1 more minute in sacrament meeting or with SOME of my lds friends who thought that was [ok]. I am a strong, out spoken, democratic, African American woman who was raised by two white lesbian moms. There was no place for me in that church. i thank you for giving people like me hope and the information that we need to go on with our lives.

**September 2012:** Your site has really good material. i'm a practicing mormon at present but i like your site, id love more info and want to donate.

# NEW TITLES

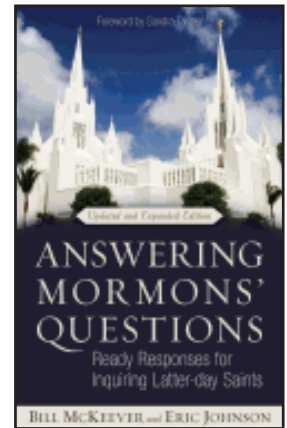


**41 Unique Teachings of the LDS Church**

By Sandra Tanner  
\$7.00

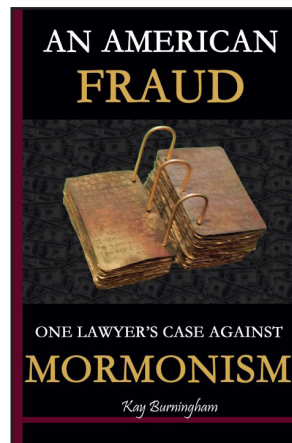
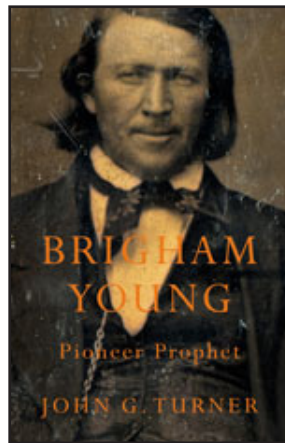
**Answering Mormons' Questions: Ready Responses for Inquiring Latter-day Saints**  
(Updated and Expanded)

By Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson  
\$16.00



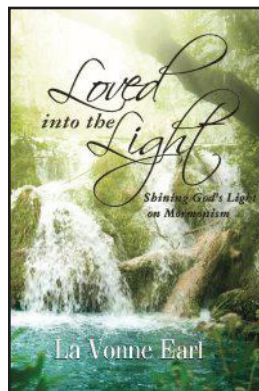
**Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet**

By John G. Turner  
\$28.00



**An American Fraud: One Lawyer's Case Against Mormonism**

By Kay Burningham  
\$25.00

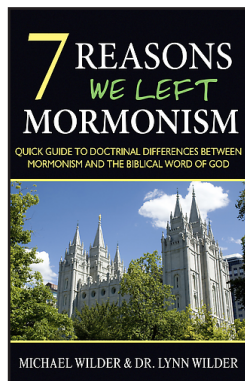
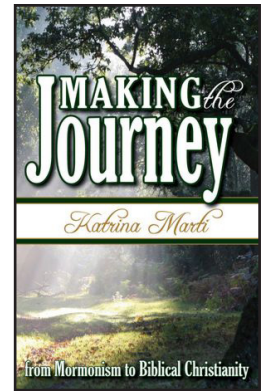


**Loved into the Light: Shining God's Light on Mormonism**

By La Vonne Earl  
\$15.00

**Making the Journey: From Mormonism to Biblical Christianity**

By Katrina Marti  
\$14.00



**7 Reasons We Left Mormonism: Quick Guide to Doctrinal Differences Between Mormonism and the Biblical Word of God**

By Michael Wilder and Dr. Lynn Wilder  
\$8.00

See complete list at [utlm.org](http://utlm.org)



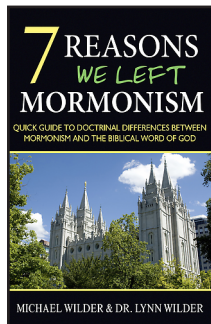
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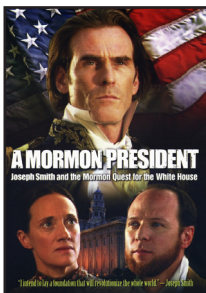
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*7 Reasons We Left Mormonism*  
Quick guide to doctrinal differences between  
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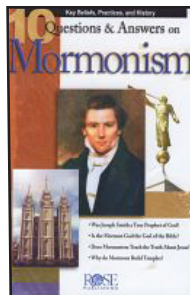
By Michael Wilder and Dr. Lynn Wilder

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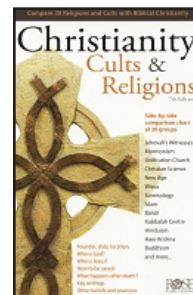
*A Mormon President:  
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