

THE MORMON PUZZLE

A New Video About Mormonism

We are very happy to announce that a new video regarding Mormonism is now available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry. This video was prepared by the Southern Baptist Church, an organization that has over 15 million members.

Although those involved in the production of this video do not agree with Mormonism, they have been very tactful in their approach to the subject. Moreover, Brigham Young University professors and other members of the Mormon Church were given an opportunity to give their side of the story.

Southern Baptists are taking this matter very seriously. We have recently learned that 40,000 copies of the video will be distributed to their pastors. This video will also be distributed to many different parts of the world. We have been informed that it will be translated into six or eight different languages. While the video was produced by the Interfaith Witness Division of the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board, it does not stress the Southern Baptist faith. It is, in fact, a video that can be profitably used by almost all evangelical Christians who wish to know the truth about Mormonism.

A FIRST CLASS PRODUCTION

Although she is not a Southern Baptist, Sandra Tanner, one of the editors of this newsletter, was asked to help with the project. Sandra spent a great deal of time assisting those involved in the production. Some of the scenes, in fact, were filmed at Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

Interestingly, Peter Scarlet, a reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, made a thorough review of the video. We quote the following from his articles:

Are Mormons Christians? That is the central question of a 70-minute video prepared for the Southern Baptist Convention, which will hold its 1998 annual meeting in Salt Lake City.

The question is answered, although not neatly. It could do no more. Any answer depends on how "Christian" is defined.

Southern Baptists and evangelical Christians conclude that Mormons are not because their theology about God, Jesus Christ and salvation differs from that of historical, biblical Christianity with its monotheistic deity.



Mormon Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley uncertain about one of Joseph Smith's most important teachings (see page 9).

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Conversely, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints portrayed in the video conclude that they are Christians because they believe that Jesus Christ is the head of the church that bears his name. . . .

Some recent videos about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . have used sensationalism to paint a vituperative picture of the church.

“The Mormon Puzzle” is quite different . . . Southern Baptists and evangelical Christians explain how Mormon views differ from historical Christianity. . . . The video message is that Mormons, like the unchurched or others need to hear the gospel and gain the personal relationship with Jesus Christ that most evangelical Christians believe is necessary for salvation.

The LDS Church clearly cooperated in the making of the video. Southern Baptist film crews were given access to Temple Square, where they shot footage of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir . . . they interviewed Brigham Young University faculty, missionaries and the mission president in the church’s Georgia Atlanta Mission. . . .

LDS Church spokesman Don LeFevre declined to comment about the church’s role in the video. But others were less reticent. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 5, 1997)

Some members of the Mormon Church have become concerned that so many Southern Baptists will be coming to Utah in 1998. In a recent call-in show on the Mormon Church’s radio station (KSL) a devout Mormon, who previously lived in the South was very concerned that some members of the Mormon Church would be unable to cope with the arguments used by the Baptists.

In the same issue of the *Tribune* cited above, Peter Scarlet reported:

When it comes to witnessing one’s faith to others, turnabout is fair play. . . .

For generations The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has sent proselytizing missionaries throughout the world to win converts to the faith.

The Rev. Mike Gray, pastor of Salt Lake City’s 1,200-member Southeast Baptist Church, is quick to point out the distinction between proselytizing and evangelism.

“Our objective is not to take people from one church and into another, but to share Jesus and urge people to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,” he said. “You don’t have to be Southern Baptist to come into Jesus.” . . .

From Gray’s perspective, it was LDS Church founder Joseph Smith who spurned the Christian label during his account of what Mormons call the First Vision.

In it, God and Jesus Christ are said to have appeared to the 14-year-old Smith and told him not to join any church because they all were wrong; that their creeds were an abomination; and that their people were corrupt.

“What the LDS doctrine system has done is criticize all other evangelical churches and put us on the outside,” Gray said. “His first vision was a personal attack on all of the Christians of his day. It’s an affront to all of us who are Christian.”

Nonetheless, he said next year’s convention will not be a forum for Mormon bashing.

“The whole spirit of what we’re trying to do will be very positive,” Gray said. “This is not a Mormon thing, but Southern Baptists coming in for a meeting and to share Jesus with the people while we’re here.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 5, 1997)



TIME LOOKS AT MORMONS

The August 4, 1997, issue of *Time* magazine devoted 10 pages to an examination of the Mormon Church. The outside cover of the magazine shows a beautiful picture of the Salt Lake City Temple and carries this intriguing headline: **MORMONS, INC. *The Secrets of America’s Most Prosperous Religion.***

Because of the interest that many had in the subject, copies of *Time* were very hard to obtain in Salt Lake City. Some Mormons who were fortunate enough to find copies were distressed with some of the observations found in the magazine. On the other hand, however, many Mormons were happy that the church received so much publicity.

The portion of the magazine relating to financial matters was upsetting to many Mormons. The following appeared in *Time*:

The church’s material triumphs rival even its evangelical advances. With unusual cooperation from the Latter-day Saints hierarchy (which provided some financial figures and a rare look at church businesses), *Time* has been able to quantify the church’s extraordinary financial vibrancy. Its current assets total **a minimum of \$30 billion**. If it were a corporation, its estimated **\$5.9 billion** in annual gross income would place it midway through the FORTUNE 500, a little below Union Carbide and the Paine Webber Group but bigger than Nike and the Gap. And as long as corporate rankings are being bandied about, the church would make any list of the most admired: for straight dealing, company spirit, contributions to charity (even the non-Mormon kind) and a fiscal probity among its powerful leaders that would satisfy any shareholder group, if there were one.

Yet the Latter-day Saints remain sensitive about their “otherness” — more so, in fact, than most outsiders can imagine. . . .

THE TOP BEEF RANCH IN THE WORLD IS NOT the King Ranch in Texas. It is the Deseret Cattle & Citrus Ranch outside Ireland, Fla. It covers 312,000 acres; its value as real estate alone is estimated at \$858 million. It is owned entirely by the Mormons. The largest producer of nuts in America, AgReserves, Inc., in Salt Lake City, is Mormon-owned. So are the Bonneville International Corp., the country’s 14th largest radio chain, and the Beneficial Life Insurance Co., with assets of \$1.6 billion. There are richer churches than the one based in Salt Lake City:

Roman Catholic holdings dwarf Mormon wealth. But the Catholic Church has 45 times as many members. There is no major church in the U.S. as active as the Latter-day Saints in economic life, nor, per capita, as successful at it. . . . Last year 5.2 billion in tithes flowed into Salt Lake City, \$4.9 billion of which came from American Mormons. . . .

The Mormons are stewards of a different stripe. Their charitable spending and temple buildings are prodigious. But where other churches spend most of what they receive in a given year, the Latter-day Saints employ vast amounts of money in investments that *TIME* estimates to be at least \$6 billion strong. Even more unusual, most of this money is not in bonds or stock in other peoples' companies but is invested directly in church-owned, for-profit concerns, the largest of which are agribusiness, media, insurance, travel and real estate. Deseret Management Corp., the company through which the church holds almost all its commercial assets, is one of the largest owners of farm- and ranchland in the country, including 49 for-profit parcels in addition to the Deseret Ranch. Besides the Bonneville International chain and Beneficial Life, the church owns a 52% holding in ZCMI, Utah's largest department-store chain. . . . All told, *TIME* estimates that the Latter-day Saints farmland and financial investments total some \$11 billion, and that the church's nontithe income from its investments exceeds \$600 million. (*Time*, pages 52-53)

On page 54 of the *Time* article, we find the following: "The **Hotel Temple Square Co.** owns much of the real estate around the headquarters in downtown Salt Lake City. Their **Polynesian Cultural Center** is Hawaii's No. 1 paid visitor attraction, with annual revenues of at least **\$40 million**. Other holdings include **11,571** meetinghouses and **50** temples around the world."

On the same page we read: "The church owns **16 radio stations** and **one TV station**. 1996 sales: **\$172 million**. *Deseret News* circulation: 65,000. **Deseret Book Co.** owns a chain of about 30 bookstores in Utah."

The article also notes that the church has colleges: "**B.Y.U.** in Provo, Hawaii and Jerusalem, **L.D.S. Business** and **Ricks** in Idaho."

The Mormon Church claimed that *Time* magazine exaggerated its financial worth. Not surprisingly, however, the church did not divulge what its assets really amount to. Unlike many other churches, the LDS Church refuses to give a financial statement to its members.



MORMON DOCTRINE ALTERED

Unfortunately, most members of the Mormon Church are completely oblivious to the serious changes that have been made by church leaders since the days of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith.

Dr. Hugh Nibley is proclaimed by many to be one of the greatest defenders the Mormon Church has ever known. Nibley once made this fantastic claim regarding Mormonism: "Yet of **all** churches in the world only this **one** has **not** found it necessary to readjust **any part** of its doctrine in the last hundred years" (*No, Ma'am, That's Not History*, page 46). Nibley originally printed this statement in 1946, and as far as we know, he has never repudiated this false assertion.

A careful examination of the evidence reveals that Nibley was absolutely incorrect. For example, in the last issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* (April 1997) we demonstrated that church leaders changed the law of adoption in 1894. Prior to that time the Mormons sealed living men as adopted sons to other men in an unusual ceremony known as "the law of adoption." In this way a man could greatly increase his family and kingdom, making himself a more powerful God in the hereafter.

Both the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith and his successor, Brigham Young, gave strong support to this strange doctrine. Both of them had many men adopted to them in a sacred ceremony. They were, in fact, absolutely convinced that they would have these men in their own kingdoms on other planets. Some of the men who entered into this covenant even added the last names of those who adopted them onto the end of their own surnames.

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE ON THE INTERNET

For some time we have wanted to have our own web site so that we can send our message throughout the world. Fortunately, we have recently received a great deal of help and it appears that the dream will soon become a reality. Our readers can visit our web site at:

www.utlm.org

We hope that many people will take advantage of this opportunity and tell others about our new site. Although Moody Press originally held the copyright on our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, they have been kind enough to allow us to make it available on our own web site. We hope to be able to present a great deal of material in the months that follow.

THE BEACON

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LDS CLAIMS

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As we noted in our last newsletter, Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth president of the church, was deeply involved in this practice. He wrote the following in his journal: “I officiated in Adopting **96 Men to Men.**” (*Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 1833-1898, typescript, 1985, vol. 9, page 408)

Unfortunately for those like Nibley who believe that Mormonism has never changed its doctrines, the evidence clearly shows that the law of adoption was repudiated by the leaders of the church. Ironically, it was President Wilford Woodruff, who had been deeply involved in sealing men to men, who finally squelched the practice of adoption.

Although President Brigham Young called the law of adoption “a great and glorious doctrine” and “the **means of salvation left to bring us back to God,**” President Woodruff repudiated the practice! He taught instead that men should be sealed to their own fathers.

Speaking in the Mormon Tabernacle in 1894, President Woodruff acknowledged: “I have had **friends adopted to me. We all have**, more or less. But **I have had peculiar feelings about it, especially lately.**”

On April 8, 1894, George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church publicly stated: “I have never thought of this subject of **adoption without having a certain amount of fear concerning it . . . this revelation [to stop the practice] that God has given to His servant, the President of our Church, removes **all the danger** which seemed to threaten us . . .”**

For more information concerning “the law of adoption” see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 480-483, and *The Case Against Mormonism*, vol. 1, pages 17-26)

GIVING UP POLYGAMY

In addition to giving up “the law of adoption,” the Mormon Church abandoned the practice of polygamy, a doctrine which Joseph Smith claimed he received by revelation from God. John Taylor, who became the third prophet of the Mormon Church, once declared, “. . . we are firm, conscientious **believers in polygamy . . . it is part and parcel of our religious creed**” (*Life of John Taylor*, page 255). Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, once stated: “The **only men who become Gods**, even the Sons of God, **are those who enter into polygamy**” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, page 269). On another occasion Brigham Young emphatically declared: “Now if any of you will **deny the plurality of wives** and continue to do so, I promise **you will be damned . . .** 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**” (*Deseret News*, November 14, 1855).

Although the Mormon leaders adamantly maintained they would never give up polygamy, they finally yielded to the civil law and the practice was discontinued.

Strange as it may seem, however, Joseph Smith’s revelation regarding the importance of practicing polygamy still remains in the *Doctrine and Covenants*—one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church. We extract the following from the revelation:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that 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 . . .**

Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them **must obey** the same.

For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye **damned**; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. . . .

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife . . . by the new and everlasting covenant . . . they shall pass by the angels, and the gods . . . to their exaltation . . .

Then they shall be **gods**, because they have no end . . .

Abraham received **concubines**, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness . . .

David also received **many wives and concubines**, and also Solomon and Moses . . . and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

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

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those **that have been given unto my servant Joseph**, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be **destroyed**, saith the Lord God. . . .

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood — if any man espouse a virgin, and **desire to espouse another**, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

And if he have **ten virgins** given unto him by the law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him: therefore is he justified.” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132, verses 1, 3-4, 19-20, 37-38, 52, 61-62)

It is difficult to imagine the trauma that the Mormons experienced when they were forced to give up the practice of polygamy. In light of this major doctrinal change made by Mormon leaders, it seems incredible that Dr. Hugh Nibley would boast: “Yet of **all** churches in the world only this **one** has **not** found it necessary to readjust **any part** of its **doctrine** in the last hundred years.”

CHANGING THE ANTI-BLACK DOCTRINE

Prior to 1978, Mormon Church leaders taught that blacks were cursed by God and inferior to whites. Because of this they **could not hold the priesthood, participate in the sacred temple ceremonies, or be married for eternity** in a Mormon Temple. Since a temple marriage is required for anyone to live in God's presence, it was very difficult for LDS blacks to understand why they would be banned from the temple.

In 1966, Wallace Turner, a correspondent for the *New York Times*, explained what it meant to be denied the priesthood:

The Negro Mormon can hold no office whatsoever in a church which offers some office to every one of its male members at some time in his life. A gray-haired Negro Mormon who may have spent his adult life in careful practice of all the complicated and demanding rules set down by the LDS church stands disenfranchised before the altar where a youth whose beard is just beginning to fuzz may preside. A twelve-year-old boy may become a member of the Aaronic priesthood, more than this Negro man has been able to achieve through a lifetime of devotion. To hold any church office, a Mormon must be a member of the priesthood. (*The Mormon Establishment*, pages 243-244)

The doctrine which Mormon leaders used to teach concerning blacks was clearly set forth in a letter written by the First Presidency of the church in 1947:

From the days of the Prophet Joseph even until now, it has been **the doctrine of the Church, never questioned by any of the Church leaders, that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel.** (Letter from the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, July 17, 1947, as cited in *Mormonism and the Negro*, by John J. Stewart, 1960, pages 46-47)

Bruce R. McConkie, who later served as an apostle in the LDS Church, made this statement in 1958:

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. . . . The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . .

The negroes **are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned**, particularly the priesthood and the temple blessings that flow therefrom, but this inequality is not of man's origin. It is **the lord's doing . . .** (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1958, page 477)

Mormon theology has always taught that a black skin is a sign of God's displeasure. This teaching came directly from Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon. Smith taught that a group of Jewish people came to the New World in about 600 B.C. The good people were called Nephites and those who were evil were referred to as Lamanites.

In the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 5:21 we read about the Lamanites being cursed with a black skin: "And he had caused the **cursing** to come upon them, yea, even a **sore cursing**, because of their iniquity . . . wherefore, as they were **white**, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a **skin of blackness to come upon them.**"

In the Book of Mormon, Alma 3:6 we read: "And the **skins** of the Lamanites were **dark**, according to the **mark** which was set upon their fathers, which **was a curse** upon them because of **their transgression . . .**"

The prophet Joseph Smith taught that the Lamanites eventually destroyed the white skinned people (Nephites) and that the American Indians are the descendants of the ancient Lamanites. In his *Book of Moses*, Joseph Smith wrote about a group of people in the Old World who were cursed with a black skin: "For behold the Lord shall curse the land with much heat . . . and there was a **blackness** came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were **despised** among all people" (*Pearl of Great Price*, Book of Moses 7:8).

Joseph Smith himself taught that "Negroes" are the "sons of **Cain**" (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, page 501). Mormon leaders also taught that "As a result of his rebellion, **Cain was cursed with a dark skin**; he became the father of the **Negroes**, and those spirits who are **not worthy** to receive the **priesthood** are born through his lineage" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1958, page 102).

Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, asserted: "Cain slew his brother. . . . and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is a **flat nose and black skin**" (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, page 290).

Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth prophet of the church in 1970, made it clear that Mormons should consider blacks as inferior: "Not only was Cain called upon to suffer, but because of his wickedness he **became the father of an inferior race**" (*The Way to Perfection*, page 101). On the following page Smith asserted that the "negro brethren" have a "black covering **emblematical of eternal darkness.**"

Those who are familiar with Mormon doctrine know that the Latter-day Saints believe that all people who are born on earth had a previous existence in heaven. Mark E. Petersen, who served as an apostle in the church for many years, gave the following information concerning the doctrine of pre-existence and the effect it had on blacks and other races:

Let us consider the great mercy of God for a moment. A Chinese, born in China with a **dark skin**, and with all the handicaps of that race seems to have little opportunity. But think of the mercy of God to Chinese people who are willing to accept the gospel. **In spite of whatever they might have done in the pre-existence to justify being born over there as Chinamen**, if they now, in this life, accept the gospel and live it the rest of their lives they can have the Priesthood, go to the temple and receive endowments

and sealings, and that means they can have exaltation. Isn't the mercy of God marvelous?

Think of the Negro, **cursed as to the Priesthood**. . . . This negro, who, in the pre-existence lived the **type of life** which justified the Lord in sending him to the earth in the lineage of Cain with a **black skin**, and possibly being born in darkest Africa—if that negro is willing when he hears the gospel to accept it, he may have many of the blessings of the gospel. **In spite of all he did in the pre-existent life**, the Lord is willing, if the Negro accepts the gospel with real, sincere faith, and is really converted, to give him the blessings of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If that Negro is faithful all his days, he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there **as a servant**, but he will get celestial glory. . . .

Now let's talk **segregation** again for a few moments. . . . When the Lord chose the nations to which the spirits were to come, determining that some would be Japanese and some would be Chinese and some Negroes and some Americans, **He engaged in an act of segregation**. . . .

Who placed the Negroes originally in darkest Africa? Was it some man, or was it God? And when He placed them there, He **segregated** them. . . . At least in the cases of the Lamanites and the Negroes we have the definite **word of the Lord Himself** that He placed a **dark skin upon them as a curse** . . . He forbade intermarriage . . . He certainly **segregated** the descendants of Cain when **He cursed the Negro** as to the Priesthood, and drew an absolute line. You may even say He **dropped an Iron curtain there**. . . .

We must not intermarry with the Negro, Why? If I were to marry a **Negro woman** and have children by her, my children would **all be cursed as to the Priesthood**. Do I want my children cursed as to the priesthood? If there is **one drop of Negro blood in my children**, as I have read to you, **they receive the curse**. There isn't any argument, therefore, as to inter-marriage with the Negro, is there? There are 50 million Negroes in the United States. If they were to achieve complete absorption with the white race, think what that would do. With 50 million Negroes inter-married with us, **where would the Priesthood be?** Who could hold it, in all America? Think what that would do to the work of the Church!

Now we are generous with the negro [*sic*]. . . . I would be willing to let every Negro drive a cadillac if they could afford it. I would be willing that they have all the advantages they can get out of life in the world. **But let them enjoy these things among themselves**. I think the Lord segregated the Negro and who is man to change that segregation? . . . **what God hath separated, let not man bring together again.**" (*Race Problems — As They Affect The Church*, Address by Apostle Mark E. Petersen at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, August 27, 1954)

While Apostle Mark E. Petersen was very concerned about the need for segregation, Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, was even more adamant about the matter. Young gave this chilling warning:

Shall I tell you the **law of God** in regard to the **African race?** If the **white man** who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the **penalty**, under the **law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so.** (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10, page 110)

PRESSURE FORCES REVELATION

During the 1960s and 1970s a great deal of pressure was put on the Mormon Church to abandon the anti-black doctrine. This pressure came from both members and non-members of the church. Serious protests were mounted against the church's Brigham Young University and even the church itself. Mormon leaders, however, claimed that since the ban on blacks was a doctrine of the church there was no way it could be changed except through revelation from God.

Finally the pressure became so great that the church was forced to reverse it's position. Notwithstanding the claim by Mormon prophets that the ban on blacks holding the priesthood could not be changed while "time endures," on June 9, 1978, the church's *Deseret News* carried the startling announcement by the First Presidency that the prophet Spencer W. Kimball had received a "revelation" that blacks could hold the priesthood, marry in the temple and receive the same privileges as any other member of the church. The announcement contained the following:

" . . . we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the upper room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

"He has heard our prayers, and **by revelation** has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the church may receive the holy priesthood . . . including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color."

The repudiation of the ban on blacks holding the priesthood was probably the most significant doctrinal change the church has made in the 20th century.

Since we probably printed more material critical of the Mormon anti-black doctrine than any other publisher, the new revelation came as a vindication of our work. We printed our first criticism of this doctrine in 1959 — almost two decades before the Mormon leaders changed their doctrine regarding blacks. This was followed by a number of articles, books and pamphlets which we printed on the subject. Many faithful Mormons also joined in criticizing the church's doctrine. If there was any "revelation" about the matter, some members of the church received it long before their leaders.

Speaking out regarding the discrimination was certainly not a popular cause to espouse in Salt Lake City in those days. Those of us who criticized the church for its racial teachings were ridiculed for attempting to change the doctrine. In fact, one irate Mormon man threatened to punch Sandra in the nose because of this issue.

In any case, after the revelation was made public, a number of Mormons became very concerned that church leaders had betrayed their trust. They knew that former LDS prophets taught that blacks could not have the priesthood until after the coming of Christ.

President Brigham Young went so far as to proclaim that if the church gave “all the blessings of God” to the blacks prematurely, the priesthood would be taken away and the Mormon Church would go to destruction. We extract the following from a typed copy of Brigham Young’s speech which retains the spelling errors of the original:

... the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the priesthood **nor his seed**, until the **last** of the posterity of **Abel** had received the priesthood, until **the redemption of the earth**. . . . **Let this Church** which is called the kingdom of God on the earth; [say] we will summons the first presidency, the twelve, the high counsel, the Bishoprick, and all the elders of Isreal, suppose we summons them to appear here, and here declare that it is right to **mingle our seed with the black race of Cain**, that they shall come in with us **and be pertakers with us of all the blessings God has given us. On that very day, and hour we should do so, the preisthood is taken from this Church** and kingdom and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we **consent to mingle with the seed of Cain the Church must go to destruction, — we should receive the curse** which was placed upon the seed of Cain, and never more be numbered with the children of Adam who are heirs to the priesthood untill that curse be removed. (Brigham Young Addresses, Ms d 1234, Box 48, folder 3, dated Feb. 5, 1852, located in the LDS Church Historical Department)

President Brigham Young’s address presents a serious dilemma for Mormon Church leaders. If they really believe Young was a prophet, then it follows that the church has lost the priesthood, been put under “the curse” and is going to destruction! In spite of Brigham Young’s emphatic warning against giving blacks “all the blessings God has given us,” the present leaders have announced that blacks will now receive “**all of the privileges and blessings** which the gospel affords” (*Deseret News*, June 9, 1978).

Although the Mormon Church has always maintained that it is led by revelation, it appears that the word “revelation” is greatly misused. The revelations given to Joseph Smith contained the words “Thus saith the Lord” or similar wording indicating that the message had come directly from God. The expression, “Thus saith the Lord” is found **over fifty times** in the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

In recent times, however, it is evident that church leaders use the word “revelation” merely to indicate that they have agreed that a matter should be handled in a certain way.

Historian D. Michael Quinn reported that Wilford Woodruff’s “published sermon is [the] only available text of the revelation” changing the doctrine of adoption. Both the Manifesto to stop the practice of polygamy and the revelation allowing blacks to hold the priesthood have been declared to be revelations from God. Unfortunately for those who believe in Mormonism, neither of these “revelations” are set forth with the statement, “**thus sayeth the Lord.**” There is, in fact, no written message coming directly from the Lord to abandon these practices.

Both the practice of polygamy and the anti-Black doctrine were very offensive to American citizens. In both cases the church was under a great deal of pressure to abandon the unusual doctrines. The leaders apparently felt that the word “revelation” had to be used in these particular cases to get the people to conform to their decisions. They knew that if they claimed that they made the decisions on their own to abandon these doctrines it could cause a significant schism in the church.

In his recent publication, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, D. Michael Quinn gives some important information regarding the church’s decision to allow blacks to hold the priesthood. Quinn shows that Mormon leaders made an aborted attempt to abandon the practice in 1969:

On 12 November 1969 Stanford University refused to participate in athletic competitions with BYU because of the church’s refusal to ordain blacks. First Counselor Hugh B. Brown had been on record for six years as favoring an end to this ban. . . .

In November 1969 Brown told the university’s vice-president that he expected the church to drop this restriction. Shortly after Stanford’s decision Brown “was able to get a proposal allowing full priesthood for blacks approved by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.” With church president David O. McKay unable to function, the way was now open for the two counselors and the Quorum of Twelve to issue a joint declaration granting priesthood to those of black ancestry. Second counselor N. Eldon Tanner confided to BYU’s president Ernest Wilkinson on 3 December 1969 that “a special committee was to report on the Negro situation.” Wilkinson labeled his memorandum of the conversation as “ULTRA CONFIDENTIAL.” Apostle Harold B. Lee, an increasingly powerful member of the Twelve, was absent during his quorum’s decision and rejected it upon his return. Lee not only opposed giving priesthood to blacks, he also held “the traditional belief as revealed in the Old Testament that the races ought to be kept together.”

Lee persuaded the Quorum of Twelve to rescind its vote. Then he pressured the first counselor to sign a

statement which reaffirmed the priesthood restriction on blacks “in view of confusion that has arisen.” . . .

Five years after Lee’s death, church president Spencer W. Kimball in June 1978 extended priesthood ordination to all Mormon men of black African ancestry. For decades he had been troubled about this racial restriction, and was among the apostles who unsuccessfully voted for this proposal eight-and-a-half years earlier. (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, pages 13-15)

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, who was present during the discussions regarding giving blacks the priesthood, claimed that the General Authorities of the church had a powerful and miraculous experience of “complete harmony, between the Presidency and the Twelve on the issue involved.” Nevertheless, McConkie acknowledged that there was no vision or voice from heaven:

The Lord could have sent messengers from the other side to deliver it, but **he did not**. He gave the revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost. Latter-day Saints have a complex: many of them desire to **magnify and build upon what has occurred**, and they delight to think of miraculous things. And maybe some of them would like to believe that the Lord himself was there, or that the Prophet Joseph Smith came to deliver the revelation . . . which was one of the possibilities. Well, **these things did not happen**. The stories that go around to the contrary are not factual or realistic or true . . . (“All Are Alike Unto God,” by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, as published in *Following The Brethren*, Part 2, page 2)

In his new book, D. Michael Quinn quoted the following from Gordon B. Hinckley, who is now president of the Mormon Church: “**No voice audible to our physical ears was heard**. But the voice of the spirit whispered into our minds and our very souls’ ” (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, page 16).

The fact that the Brethren were finally in agreement with one another regarding a doctrine that could have caused a serious split in the church undoubtedly brought a feeling of peace to those who were present.

The thing that is distressing about this matter, however, is that instead of church leaders admitting that they made a grave error when they stubbornly denied blacks equality, they turned right around and claimed that they had a “revelation” from God about the matter.

It is obvious from President Spencer W. Kimball’s statement printed in the church’s own newspaper that he did not receive any word from God concerning the matter:

“I asked the Twelve not to go home when the time came. I said, ‘Now would you be willing to remain in the temple with us?’ And they were. I offered the final prayer and **I told the Lord if it wasn’t right, if He didn’t want this change** to come in the Church that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and **I’d fight the world against it if that’s what He wanted**.

“We had this special prayer circle, then I knew that the time had come. I had a great deal to fight, of course, myself largely, because I had grown up with this thought that Negroes should not have the priesthood and I was prepared to go all the rest of my life till my death and fight for it and defend it as it was. But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it.” (*Deseret News*, Church Section, January 6, 1979, page 4)

It would appear, then, that when President Kimball asked the Lord if He had any objections to his changing the doctrine, he received no answer from heaven. Since God did not seem to contest the idea, Kimball felt he had the “assurance” that it must be the Lord’s will. This, of course, seems like a very unusual way to obtain a “revelation.”

We feel that it was wrong for the leaders of the church to fail to accept any blame for their treatment of blacks before 1978. Instead of pretending to have a “revelation” to get them out of their dilemma, they should have publicly apologized to the blacks. By their actions, however, church leaders made it appear that God Himself was a racist who stubbornly refused to allow blacks to hold the priesthood.

Church leaders gave the impression that by “pleading long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the upper room of the Temple,” they finally persuaded God to give blacks the priesthood.

The truth of the matter, however, is that “**God is no respecter of persons**: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). It was the Mormon leaders who kept blacks under a curse. They continually and stubbornly opposed the advancement of black people, threatening and excommunicating those who differed with them on the matter. Finally, when their backs were to the wall, the Mormon leaders were forced to change their position.

Interestingly, the three doctrines which were reversed — sealing men to men, polygamy, and refusing to allow blacks to have the priesthood — were all attempts to abandon past teachings made by the early founders of the Mormon Church. As someone once observed, “Today’s truth may become tomorrow’s heresy.”

Besides the revelation regarding blacks and a vision given to Joseph Smith in 1836, the only other revelation added to the *Doctrine and Covenants* during this century was a vision that church President Joseph F. Smith had less than two months before his death. He was eighty years old and “was very ill” at the time.

Church officials did not include this revelation in the *Doctrine and Covenants* after it was given in 1918. In fact, they did not add it until many decades after Joseph F. Smith’s death. Michael Quinn wrote: “14 Nov., First Presidency and Twelve vote to accept Joseph F. Smith’s revelation on spirit world, even though several apostles have misgivings about it” (*The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, page 816).

As early as 1972, we were pointing out that although the church claimed to have “living prophets,” the leaders were failing to canonize any new revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. We stated: “The Manifesto of 1890 is the last revelation, if it can be termed a revelation, that has been added to the *Doctrine and Covenants*.” (*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 184)

While we will never know for certain whether our statements had any impact on church officials, the leaders were apparently concerned about the matter and eventually added the two revelations mentioned above to the *Doctrine and Covenants*. In any case, this hardly solved the problem since both revelations were anything but new revelations. As noted above, the first revelation was given in 1836 and the other in 1918.

Surprisingly, church leaders made a mistake when they finally printed the two old revelations as scriptures of the church. Instead of printing them in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, they added them to the *Pearl of Great Price* in 1976. In our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, page 435, we pointed out that this was the wrong place to publish them. We noted that President Joseph F. Smith clearly stated that, “if the Lord should reveal His mind to His people and it should be accepted by His people in the way that He has appointed, it would then become a matter **to be added to the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.**”

Mormon leaders later realized they made a mistake when they added the two revelations to the *Pearl of Great Price*. Consequently, in 1981, they removed the two revelations from that book and added them into the *Doctrine and Covenants* as sections 137 and 138. While we do not have access to the original text of Joseph F. Smith’s revelation (section 138), a comparison of the prophet Joseph Smith’s vision (section 137) with his diary reveals falsification has occurred to protect Smith’s reputation as a prophet. Over 200 words which appear in Joseph Smith’s diary have been omitted. If these words had been included in the *Doctrine and Covenants* it would show that Joseph Smith had given a false prophecy (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 31-B).

This fumbling with the revelations only tends to emphasize that the Mormon Church is led by fallible men rather than by direct revelation from God.

Interestingly, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the current “living prophet” of the Mormon Church, has recently revealed in a newspaper interview that “revelation” does not come in the way most of us were brought up to believe:

“**Revelation no longer comes by vision,**” Mr. Hinckley said, “but in the ‘still, small voice,’ like that heard by Elijah.

“We wrestle with a problem, we discuss it, we think about it, we pray about it,” he said of the First Presidency,

made up of Mr. Hinckley and his two counselors. “And the answer comes in a remarkable and wonderful way.” (*Washington Times*, December 3, 1996, page A8)

Don Lattin, a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* also interviewed President Hinckley and asked him about divine revelation:

Q: And this belief in contemporary revelation and prophecy? As the prophet, tell us how that works. How do you receive divine revelation? What does it feel like?

A: Let me say first that we have a great body of revelation, the vast majority of which came from the prophet Joseph Smith. **We don’t need much revelation.** We need to pay more attention to the revelation we’ve already received. Now, if a problem should arise on which we don’t have an answer, we pray about it, we may fast about it, and it comes. Quietly. **Usually no voice of any kind, but just a perception in the mind.**” (Interview with President Gordon B. Hinckley, as published on the Web site of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 13, 1997)

In the same interview the current prophet of the Mormon Church seemed to be downplaying one of the most important doctrines of the church — i.e., that God Himself was once a man:

Q: There are some significant differences in your beliefs. For instance, don’t Mormons believe that God was once a man?

A: **I wouldn’t say that.** There was a little couplet coined, “As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.” Now that’s more of a couplet than anything else. That gets into some pretty deep theology that **we don’t know very much about.**

Q: So you’re saying the church is still struggling to understand this?

A: Well, as God is, man may become. We believe in eternal progression.”

Significantly, President Gordon B. Hinckley also wavered concerning the Mormon doctrine that God was once a man when he was questioned by *TIME* magazine:

In an interview with *TIME*, President Hinckley seemed intent on downplaying his faith’s distinctiveness. . . . At first Hinckley seemed to qualify the idea that men could become gods, suggesting that “it’s of course an idea. It’s a hope for a wishful thing,” but later affirmed that “yes, of course they can.” (He added that women could too, “as companions to their husbands. They can’t conceive a king without a queen.”) On whether his church still holds that God the Father **was once a man, he sounded uncertain, “don’t know that we teach it.** I don’t know that we emphasize it . . . I understand the philosophical background behind it, but **I don’t know a lot about it, and I don’t think others know a lot about it.**” (*Time*, August 4, 1997 page 56)

Unlike the first Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, President Hinckley gives the impression that he is ashamed of the teaching that God was once a man. In the Mormon Church publication, *Times and Seasons*, Smith boldly proclaimed that God was once a mortal man and that men can become Gods:

First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, **is a man like unto one of yourselves**, that is the great secret. . . . I am going to tell you how **God came to be God**. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity. . . . **God himself**; the Father of us all **dwelt on an earth** the same as Jesus Christ himself did . . . You have got to **learn how to be Gods yourselves** . . . No man can learn you more than what I have told you. (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, pages 613-614)

Since the days of Joseph Smith, the Mormon church has always taught that God the Father had a Father, and that God's Father also had a Father, and so on. Smith's successor, Brigham Young declared:

He [God] is our Father — the Father of our spirits, and **was once a man in mortal flesh** as we are, and is now an exalted being. . . . there never was a time when there were not Gods . . .

It appears ridiculous to the world . . . that God has once been **a finite being** . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, page 333)

President Young's statement was restated in the 1985 Melchizedek Priesthood manual (see page 153).

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt made it very clear that God was once in a **"fallen state," "died"** and was **"redeemed from the grave"** (*The Seer*, Jan. 1853, page 23).

That President Hinckley would downplay this important doctrine of the church in at least two major interviews seems almost incredible. It has, in fact, shocked some members of the church. There seems to be only two reasons why Hinckley would be reticent about discussing a doctrine which is so ingrained in the minds of the Mormon people and taught in some of their current manuals.

1. He may fear that orthodox Christians would be shocked to hear about this doctrine and declare it to be blasphemous.

2. On the other hand, however, it is possible that Hinckley himself doubts the authenticity of Joseph Smith's strange doctrine about God and is trying to curtail the dissemination of information about it.



EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

The letter which follows was written by a Mormon attorney who is very displeased with our work on Mormonism. A photocopy of it was forwarded to us by the individual who received the letter:

I apologize for not returning the document entitled "Major Problems of Mormonism" by Jerald and Sandra Tanner sooner. . . .

I had originally intended to read the entire 256 pages, but after 20-something pages I was so disappointed by the Tanners' poor writing skills and lack of scholarship that I saw no purpose in going any further. I have read much better anti-Mormon literature. . . . I was offended by the inarticulate meanders of the authors. . . . the Tanners constantly quote from sources not available to the reader, including numerous unnamed sources and out-of-print sources (or make their own quotes up. . . .) their work reads like right-wing militia propaganda concerning conspiracies within the federal government or claims of alien abductions. The Tanners' diatribe is so salacious and "out there," that they probably support the videotape "Alien Autopsy" occasionally shown on tabloid T.V. shows.

I am concerned that you place so much stock in the ramblings of a not-so-bright former "machinist". . . . The Tanners do this solely for the notoriety that their crying and wailing brings them. They probably started with the object of getting rich, but obviously have been so ineffective that they can hardly raise enough funds to prolong their miserable work. . . . You should be aware that the Tanners' "Salt Lake City Messenger" is a tiny gossip rag read by few, even though free of charge. Even the crummiest of tabloids do better. . . .

Initially, I began making notes of the numerous lies, inaccuracies, and half truths of the Tanners, but found it to be such an extensive list that would have covered hundreds of pages, that I quit. . . . All the Tanners have done is write an *Enquire*-type article on the LDS Church.

I would encourage you to pursue true scholarship of the things that apparently fascinate you, and not rely on this feeble machinist's deranged thoughts. . . . I found Tanners' work and your suggestion that it was "overwhelmingly convincing" to be offensive and worthy only of a brief, blunt, clear response. (Letter from Texas)

Take my name off your mailing list. I do not want any more "SATINISTIC GARBAG" [*sic*]. I dare you to print this letter in your next issue. (Letter from Utah)

Dear Tanners, I want to thank you for all the intricate research you have compiled over the years. I was able to check out ". . . Shadow . . ." [*Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*] from the university library and have enjoyed reading each page with wide eyes. I appreciate the documentation and honesty in your book that was lacking as I grew up in the church. You answered many questions

that were never properly answered by my parents and leaders. Don't give up on people — I wouldn't have been ready for things like this a year ago — there are times when things make sense and you allow yourself to listen. (Letter from Missouri)

You have given me so much help in leaving Mormonism behind in my life & in the lives of my two children. (Letter from Louisiana)

The young [Mormon] missionary girls started coming here in December 96. They made their usual pitch . . . they started talking baptism. I still couldn't believe several things. But I went ahead and was baptized in Feb of 1996. By Nov 1997 I had had all I could take. So much was false I couldn't wait to get out. When I received your brochures etc. that topped it off. I sent in a letter of resignation. (Letter from West Virginia)

Thanks to you guys and especially Jerald and Sandra Tanner I canceled my baptism with the Mormon Church . . . there was so much so hard to believe that it seemed like heresy. I could not in clear conscience go to church any more . . . there was something missing in the Mormon version of Joseph Smith's story. (Letter from Illinois)

I want to thank you two for your help. I finished reading A Gathering of Saints today and coincidentally dug out your news letter — Mormon Leaders Suppress Key Item in Murder Case — I need no more proof. If I still think they [the Mormon leaders] talk to God after this fiasco then there's no help for me. The Hoffman episode proves to me that its all a hoax. . . . I think your work is very important. You look for the truth and I admire you for that. (Letter from Oklahoma)

Just a note to say thanks for the info that you produce. You are shaking up the Mormon empire enough to merit your own special publication within their church. The following is a cover sheet from a long 'letter' about you and your publications given to me by some Mormon missionaries that I have had discussions with. They bristle at the Tanner name. (Letter from Hawaii)

I just wanted to drop you a quick note saying thank you for all the work you have done. Your research and work has been greatly appreciated by me and others trying to get out of Mormonism. . . . I didn't even know so much of this evidence existed . . . You have helped me and countless others by showing us that there is not only one or two problems with the church, but books upon books of them. There is no way the church can avoid this other than pretending you don't exist to their true believers. . . . I am impressed, also, with the tone you have taken in dealing with the problems. This tone seems to say to me, "Here is the evidence, look for yourself if you want." (Letter from Arizona)

Reading . . . has completely destroyed any remaining idea I had of the authenticity of Joseph Smith's "prophetic" mission and the Book of Mormon. Thank You. I requested excommunication and left the Mormon Church . . . in spite of having . . . served a mission, taught at the Missionary Training Center, attended BYU, and married in the Salt Lake Temple. At age 32, after 13 years of living as an active Mormon, I left the Church having realized I spent years engaged in double-think and self-deception . . . While [I] was a Church member I never read your books or articles, having been warned away from you . . . As you know, Mormonism is hard to leave emotionally and psychologically even after one has left physically. Thank you for loosening its remaining holds on me. (E-mail, dated May 27, 1997)

I can't begin to thank you for the freedom you have given me. I am 45 years old, I spent at least 35 years of my life trying to make Mormonism work. I am free now . . . Your book, "Mormonism, Shadow or Reality?" freed me completely. Before your book I could not completely rid myself of the programming of that cult, and give my life to Jesus. I have to thank [you] from the bottom of my heart for your work and for leading me to our savior. (E-mail, dated March 27, 1997)

The material is extremely good! We needed . . . documentation for our book about Mormonism and for all the conversations with Mormons as well (they always say: I don't believe what you say, show me the documents!).

So we just want to say thank you for your thoughtfulness and generosity. May the Lord bless you and give you His love and power in the ministry you do for the Kingdom of God! (Letter from Hungary)

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Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a non-profit organization. In addition to our work with Mormons, we provide support for **44 children** through World Vision, and furnish some help to a local Rescue Mission. Those who are interested in helping this ministry can send their **tax-deductible** contributions to **Utah Lighthouse Ministry**, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110. Both contributions and orders can be made over the phone (801-485-8894 or 801-485-0312) with Visa, MasterCard or Discover Card.

While we deeply appreciate the financial support we receive, we strongly desire your prayers. We believe they will bring thousands of Mormons to the truth. As Apostle Paul admonished: "*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving*" (Colossians 4:2).

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BOOKS AND TAPES

(Mail orders add 10% — Minimum postage \$1.50)

No Regrets: How I Found My Way Out of Mormonism, by Judy Robertson. Regular price: \$11.00
Special Price: \$10.00

Utah in the 1990s: A Demographic Perspective, by T. Heaton, T. Hirschel & B. Chadwick. Regular price: \$20.00
Special Price: \$19.00

No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, by Fawn M. Brodie (Paperback) Regular price: \$17.00
Special Price: \$16.00

The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, (vol. 1), by D. Michael Quinn. Regular price: \$30.00
Special Price: \$28.00

The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, (vol. 2), by D. Michael Quinn. Regular price: \$45.00
Special Price: \$40.00

Sandra Tanner Tape No. 4. Two talks given at the Christian Institute for Mormon Studies entitled, *Struggles of Leaving Mormonism* and *Obstacles to Leaving Mormonism*. **Price: \$3.00**

Quest for the Gold Plates — Thomas Stuart Ferguson's Archaeological Search for the Book of Mormon, by Stan Larson. (Paperback) **Price: \$13.00**

Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons, by Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine. **Price: \$11.00**

Early Mormon Documents, vol. 1, edited by Dan Vogel. Over 450 documents relating to Mormon origins. Includes writings of Joseph Smith, Jr., Emma Hale Smith, Lucy Mack Smith, Katherine Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr., William Smith. Regular price: \$35.00
Special Price: \$32.00

The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of Biblical Prophets, Kenny Barfield. **Price: \$13.00**

Know Why You Believe: The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith, by Paul A Little. **Price: \$9.00**

MANY MORE BOOKS!!!

We have a good supply of books which are not listed in this issue of the newsletter. A complete book list will be sent free upon request by writing to us at:

Utah Lighthouse Ministry
PO Box 1884
Salt Lake City, UT 84110

UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY
PO BOX 1884
SALT LAKE CITY UT 84110