

“A God Who Doth Vary”
The Shifting Winds of Mormon Doctrine
by Greg Loren Durand



Is the Mormon “Gospel” Really Unalterable?

Nearly sixteen million people worldwide belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, otherwise known as the Mormon Church.¹ They believe it to be, as founder Joseph Smith, Jr. claimed, a restoration of the “Everlasting Gospel” which was supposedly lost after the death of the last of the original twelve Apostles.² Much emphasis is placed upon this “gospel” in the minds of Latter-day Saints (LDS), for it is the means by which they hope one day to earn “exaltation” into the “Celestial Kingdom,” thus becoming gods. For example, the Mormon Church publication *Deseret News* made the following statement:

1. 2016 Statistical Report for 2017 April Conference, www.mormonnewsroom.com (retrieved May 1, 2017).

2. *The Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint, 2008); available online at www.lds.org (retrieved May 1, 2017).

When the Lord commands us to become like Him, He really intends that we shall do so. But since He never changes, and since human nature is always the same, identical conditions are required to bring that human nature into harmony with the unchangeable God.

For that reason, the Gospel must always be the same in all its parts. To say that the Gospel may be changed is to say that either God has changed, or that human nature is no longer human nature.

It is obvious therefore that no one can change the Gospel, and that if they attempt to do so, they only set up a man-made system which is not the Gospel, but is merely a reflection of their own views.³

Likewise, John Taylor, who succeeded Brigham Young as third President of the LDS Church, stated:

The Gospel is a living, abiding, eternal and unchangeable principle that has existed co-equal with God, and always will exist, while time and eternity endure, wherever it is developed and made manifest. . . .

There is not a principle associated with the Gospel of the Son of God but what is eternal in its nature and consequences. . . . The principles of the Gospel being eternal, they were framed and originated with the Almighty in eternity before the world was, according to certain eternal laws, and hence the Gospel is called the Everlasting Gospel. It is like God, without beginning of days or end of years, and, as the Lord says, “I am the Lord, and I change not.” The Gospel does not change; it is eternal in its principles and consequences. . . .

It reaches back into the eternities that are past; it exists in time and it stretches forward into the eternities to come, and

3. *Deseret News*, Church Section, June 5, 1965, page 16.

everything connected with it is eternal.⁴

It should be noted here that genuine truth is completely defensible and will always stand up by itself under close examination. Therefore, those who make such truth claims as above must never expect their remarks to go unchallenged, and should not be offended when their claims are subjected to the very same criteria of judgment as any other belief system making similar claims. In fact, if Mormons really believe their own rhetoric, then they would gladly welcome critical analysis of their belief system by outside parties. Orson Pratt, one of the first LDS apostles, perhaps best expressed this sentiment: “Convince us of our errors of doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the word of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information, and you will ever have the pleasing reflection that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings from the darkness which you may see enveloping their minds.”⁵ Unfortunately, such confidence does not usually translate into actual practice, for whenever the acceptance of such a challenge reaps negative results, the typical Mormon will invariably complain of the “double standard” exhibited by “fundamentalists” or “anti-Mormons” when they demand the perfection of the Mormon Church that they themselves cannot live up to. In response, Christians may immediately point out that we are not the ones who have placed this standard upon the LDS Church, but rather its own leaders. For example, the following quotes,

4. John Taylor, Salt Lake Tabernacle, January 15, 1860, in *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: Albert Carrington, 1881), Volume VII, page 362; American Fork, November 28, 1879, in *ibid.*, Volume XXI, page 112.

5. Orson Pratt, *The Seer* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1990), Volume I:1 (January 1853), pages 15-16.

taken from authoritative Mormon literature, aptly demonstrate this fact:

Any Latter-Day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the “prophets, seers, or revelators” of the Church, is cultivating the spirit of apostasy.

It should be remembered that Lucifer has a very cunning way of convincing unsuspecting souls that the general authorities of the Church are as likely to be wrong as they are to be right. . . . He wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to “do their own thinking”. . . .

When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan – it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other way which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. God works in no other way. To think otherwise, without immediate repentance, may cost one his faith, may destroy his testimony, and leave him a stranger to the kingdom of God.⁶

Our organization is a very glorious one. It is a perfect organization – perfect – because it is divine. It was not originated by Joseph Smith, or by any of his associates. It came down from above, direct from above, direct from eternal worlds. It was not taken out of the Bible. It was not taken out of the Book of Mormon, or any other book. . . . God Almighty revealed it.⁷

The Latter-Day Saints have the most implicit confidence in all the revelations, given through Joseph, the prophet; and

6. *Deseret News*, Church Section, May 26, 1945, page 5.

7. Charles W. Penrose, Salt Lake Tabernacle, September 23, 1883, in *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: John Henry Smith, 1884), Volume XXIV, page 304.

they would much sooner lay down their lives and suffer martyrdom, than to deny the least revelation that was ever given to him.⁸

Although Christians should not expect the Mormon *people* themselves to be perfect, we can, however, fully expect, in light of the tremendous claims of their own prophets to have the “oracles of God continually,”⁹ that the *doctrines* of their church be in complete harmony with one another, and to have remained unchanged from the moment they were revealed until the present time, and remain so in the future. This, of course, can be easily shown not to be the case at all, for Mormon doctrine has undergone considerable change, much of which today directly reverses what was originally delivered. This will be sufficiently demonstrated in the following pages.

Is Divine Revelation Subject to Revision?

Contrary to what the anti-Mormons seem to believe, the biblical prophets took it for granted that a prophet could improve upon a previously received revelation. They also understood that the human factor in the revelatory process could produce errors in holy writ, and they felt at perfect liberty to make scriptural corrections when necessary.¹⁰

8. Pratt, *The Seer*, January 1853, page 13.

9. Brigham Young, Salt Lake Tabernacle, January 2, 1870, in *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: Horace S. Eldredge, 1871) Volume XIII, page 95; see also *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 68:3-4; Joseph Fielding Smith (editor), *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1979), page 139.

10. Michael T. Griffith, “A Reply to a Defense of the Godmakers” (unpublished manuscript, 1989), page 14.

Mormon apologists, such as Michael T. Griffith, attempt to justify the vacillating nature of Mormon theology by leaning upon an erroneous view of inspired Scripture. To claim that “the revelatory process could produce errors in holy writ” is to misunderstand what actually constitutes “holy writ,” and how it has been delivered to mankind. In 2 Timothy 3:15-17, we read, “. . . [F]rom childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” According to the Apostle Paul, Scripture is able to make one “wise for salvation” only because it has been “given by inspiration of God” (θεοπνεῦστος – *theopneustos*; literally, “God-breathed”). What the biblical prophets wrote under divine guidance does not, and indeed cannot, ever require correction because it was God’s direct revelation to mankind: “[N]o prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Furthermore, the sixty-six books of the Bible comprise God’s complete revelation to mankind. Of course, this is one truth which nearly all pseudo-Christian cults will dispute. Nevertheless, the testimony of Scripture is very clear that “the faith . . . was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The phrase “once for all” in this verse is noteworthy. Actually, only one Greek word (ἅπαξ – *hápax*) is used here, which indicates “what is of perpetual validity, not requiring repetition.” Consequently, since the Scriptures are the inspired and complete Word of God, the believer may confidently place his faith in what they teach

and need never fear that they will have to be revised or updated by new “revelations.” Jesus said: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

The Early LDS Doctrine of Plural Marriage

Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

Upon such a promise, the Christian may stake his eternal destiny, for since the Author of the Scriptures is immutable and thus wholly reliable, His Word must be likewise. God can no more renege on what He has caused to be written by His inspired prophets than He can cease to be Himself. This is not, by any means, comparable to the Mormon god, who seems to be greatly influenced by the laws of human government, as well as social pressure, to change “essential doctrine” at the drop of a hat. One example of this is the doctrine of plural marriage, which, when originally “revealed” to Joseph Smith, was said to be a necessary practice for exaltation to godhood:

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 in 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 my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant . . . they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation. . . . Then they shall be gods, because they have no end. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory. . . .

This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself. Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved. But if ye enter not into my law ye cannot receive the promise of my Father, which he made unto Abraham. God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law. . . . Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it. . . . Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law. . . . David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.¹¹

The reader will notice that the above revelation clearly states that the “law” of polygamy had been in force “from the beginning of creation until this time.” That this assertion directly contradicted God’s earlier pronouncements *against* polygamy, found

11. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:1-4, 18, 20, 31-38.

not only in Jacob 1:15 and 2:23-24 of the *Book of Mormon*, but also in Section 101:4 of the original 1835 edition of *Doctrine and Covenants*, did not seem to bother Joseph Smith. It is apparent that the revelation was concocted to provide justification before his wife Emma, and other potential dissenters, for his extramarital excursions that had been occurring for several years. The fact that he was already practicing polygamy *before* the revelation was given, is proven by the language of the revelation itself, which commanded Emma to "receive all those that *have been given* unto my servant Joseph. . . ." (emphasis added)¹² Furthermore, the heading of this revelation when it was originally published in *Doctrine and Covenants* clearly stated that it had been "*received* on July 12, 1843" (emphasis added). This was later changed to read "*recorded* on July 12, 1843" (emphasis added), which implied that the revelation had been given on an earlier date, thus conceding Joseph's adulterous activities prior to that time.

Joseph Fielding Smith, who served as Church Historian before becoming the sixth LDS president, admitted that Smith received the doctrine of plural marriage even as early as 1832, after which he secretly delivered it to his closest associates:

Of course there was no doctrine of plural marriage in the Church in 1835, but Orson Pratt said (I get this from my father who was his missionary companion) that the Lord did reveal to Joseph Smith, before 1835, and before 1834, and *as early as 1832*, the doctrine of plural marriage. The Prophet revealed that to some few of the brethren, and Orson Pratt was one of them. He said the Prophet told him that, but *it was revealed as a law or principle that was not at that time to be revealed to the Church, or made public or practiced*, but something that would yet come,

12. Ibid., 132:52.

that was *future*. I have the confidence that Orson Pratt spoke the truth (emphasis in original).¹³

It is also significant to note that Joseph Smith disobeyed the words of his own revelation, which explicitly prohibited the “sealing” of oneself to another man’s wife.¹⁴ The evidence is undeniable that Smith had no regard for the marriages of his followers, and, in the words of Wilhem Wyl, he “finally demanded the wives of all the twelve Apostles that were at home then in Nauvoo.”¹⁵ Such was practically admitted in 1854 by Jedediah M. Grant, who was second counselor to Brigham Young:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven – the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, “Joseph says all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants; now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?” “I would tell him to go to hell.” This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church. . . .

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, “Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God.” Or if he came and said, “I want your wife?” “O yes,” he would say, “here she is, there are plenty more.”¹⁶

13. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1954), Volume III, page 197.

14. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:61.

15. Wilhelm Wyl, *Mormon Portraits: The Truth About the Mormon Leaders* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Company, 1886), page 70.

16. Jedediah Grant, Salt Lake Tabernacle, February 19, 1854, in *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: F.D. and S.W. Richards, 1854), Volume II, pages 13-14.

In her 1876 memoirs, Ann Eliza Young, the nineteenth wife of Brigham Young, corroborated Grant’s testimony:

Joseph not only paid his addresses to the young and unmarried women, but he sought “spiritual alliance” with many married ladies. . . . He taught them that all former marriages were null and void, and that they were at perfect liberty to make another choice of a husband. The marriage covenants were not binding, because they were ratified only by Gentile laws. These laws the Lord did not recognize; consequently all women were free. . . .

One woman said to me not very long since, while giving me some of her experiences in polygamy: “The greatest trial I ever endured in my life was living with my husband and deceiving him, by receiving Joseph’s attentions whenever he chose to come to me”. . . .

Some of these women have since said they did not know who was the father of their children; this is not to be wondered at, for after Joseph’s declaration annulling all Gentile marriages, the greatest promiscuity was practiced; and, indeed, all sense of morality seemed to have been lost by a portion at least of the church.¹⁷

Joseph Smith Denies Involvement in Polygamy

Not only was Joseph Smith accused of adultery by his own closest associates, such as Oliver Cowdery,¹⁸ but rumors of his

17. Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19: The Story of a Life in Bondage* (Hartford, Connecticut: Dustin, Gilman & Company, 1876), pages 70-71.

18. Cowdery, who was one of the Three Witnesses to the *Book of Mormon*, accused Smith in January of 1838 of indulging in a “dirty, nasty, filthy affair” in 1833 with Francis (Fanny) Ward Alger, a young girl of 16 years who lived with her family ten miles from the Mormon settlement in Kirtland, Ohio.

affairs had also spread throughout the LDS Church, as well as outside of it. Indeed, the above revelation must have come as a great shock to faithful Mormons who had been assured that polygamy was not condoned by their church and never would be:

We are charged with advocating a plurality of wives. . . . Now this is as false as the many other ridiculous charges which are brought against us. No sect has a greater reverence for the laws of matrimony . . . and we do what others do not, practice what we preach.¹⁹

. . . [F]or the information of those who may be assailed by those foolish tales about two wives, we would say that no such principle ever existed among the Latter-day Saints, and never will. This is well known to all who are acquainted with our books and actions, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants; and also all our periodicals are very strict on that subject, indeed far more so than the Bible.²⁰

It is also interesting that the revelation threatened Emma with destruction if she failed to accept it,²¹ and yet it was Joseph Smith, not Emma, who was killed less than a year later. Amaz-

Smith responded by excommunicating Cowdery in April of 1838. Fanny is often said to have been the first of Smith's plural wives, although some researchers have concluded that his involvement with her was merely an illicit sexual relationship. He went on to be "sealed in marriage" to twenty-six other women, at least eleven of whom were already married to other men.

19. LDS member "H.R.," *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, Illinois), Volume IV:9 (March 15, 1843), page 143.

20. Parley P. Pratt, *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (Liverpool: Thomas Ward, 1843), Volume III, pages 939-940.

21. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:54.

ingly, Smith had even attempted to cover up his involvement in polygamy shortly before his death. Recorded in the *History of the Church* is the following statement made on May 26, 1844: “What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.”²² It was, in fact, Joseph Smith himself who was a perjurer, for the evidence shows that not only he, but several other Mormon leaders as well, had been secretly taking plural wives long before the official revelation was given on July 12, 1843 to sanction the practice.²³ This evidence was published for all to see in the one and only edition of the *Nauvoo Expositor* on June 7, 1844, the staff of which was comprised of Mormon leaders who had become disillusioned with the prophet partly due to his flagrant immorality. Apparently, Smith realized that if such information were made public, his entire career, as well as his campaign that same year for President of the United States, would disintegrate. Using his authority as Mayor of Nauvoo, he declared the *Expositor* to be a public nuisance and ordered the immediate destruction of the presses.²⁴

Did Early Mormons View Polygamy as Essential?

Many Mormon scholars have attempted to deny that polygamy was ever considered as important as their critics have

22. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1950; editor, George A. Smith), Volume VI, page 411.

23. Andrew Jensen, *The Historical Record* (Salt Lake City, Utah: self-published, 1886), page 220; William E. Berrett, *The Restored Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1965), pages 181-185.

24. Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, Volume VI, pages 432, 441-445.

alleged. For example, Bruce R. McConkie wrote, “Plural marriage is not essential to salvation or exaltation. . . . All who pretend or assume to engage in plural marriage in this day, when the one holding the keys has withdrawn the power by which they are performed, are guilty of gross wickedness.”²⁵ The following quotes of past Mormon leaders refute this denial:

Monogamy, or restriction by law to one wife, is no part of the economy of heaven among men. Such a system was commenced by the founders of the Roman empire. . . . Rome became the mistress of the world, and introduced this order of monogamy wherever her sway was acknowledged. Thus this monogamic order of marriage so esteemed by modern Christians as a Holy Sacrament and divine institution, is nothing but a system established by a set of robbers. . . .

Why do we believe in and practice polygamy? Because the Lord introduced it. . . .²⁶

Now if any of you will deny the plurality of wives, and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned; and I 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.

But the Saints who live their religion will be exalted, for they never will deny any revelation which the Lord has given or may give. . . .²⁷

25. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), pages 578-579.

26. Brigham Young, *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, Utah), Volume XII:6 (August 6, 1862), page 1.

27. Brigham Young, Provo, Utah, July 14, 1855, in *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: Orson Pratt, 1856), Volume III, page 266.

You might as well deny “Mormonism” and turn away from it, as to oppose the plurality of wives. Let the Presidency of this Church, and the Twelve Apostles, and all the authorities unite and say with one voice that they will oppose that doctrine, and the whole of them would be damned. What are you opposing it for? It is a principle that God has revealed for the salvation of the human family. He revealed it to Joseph the Prophet in this our dispensation; and that which he revealed he designs to have carried out by his people.²⁸

Do away with that [polygamy], then you must do away with Prophets and Apostles, with revelation and the gifts and graces of the Gospel, and finally give up our religion altogether and turn sectarians and do as the world does. . . . We just can’t do that. . . . We could not obtain a fullness of celestial glory without this sealing ordinance or the institution called the patriarchal order of marriage, which is one of the most glorious principles of our religion.²⁹

. . . I want to say a few words in regard to the revelation on polygamy. God has told us Latter-day Saints that we shall be condemned if we do not enter into that principle; and yet I have heard now and then . . . a brother or a sister say, “I am a Latter-day Saint, but I do not believe in polygamy.” . . . What an absurdity! If one portion of the doctrines of the Church is true, the whole of them are true. If the doctrine of polygamy, as revealed to the Latter-day Saints, is not true, I would not give a fig for all your other revelations that came through Joseph Smith the Prophet; I would renounce the whole of them. . . . The

28. Heber C. Kimball, discourse at Salt Lake Bowery, October 12, 1856, in *ibid.* (Liverpool: Asa Calkin, 1858), Volume V, pages 203-204.

29. Wilford Woodruff, Salt Lake Tabernacle, December 12, 1869, in *ibid.* (Liverpool: Horace Eldredge, 1871) Volume XIII, pages 166-167.

Lord has said, that those who reject this principle reject their salvation, they shall be damned. . . .

. . . All men and women who oppose the revelation which God has given in relation to polygamy will find themselves in darkness; the Spirit of God will withdraw from them from the very moment of their opposition to that principle, until they will finally go down to hell and be damned, if they do not repent. . . .

Now if you want to get into darkness, brethren and sisters, begin to oppose this revelation. . . . Oppose it . . . and teach your children to do the same, and if you do not become dark as midnight there is no truth in Mormonism.³⁰

Some people have supposed that the doctrine of plural marriage was a sort of superfluity, or non-essential to the salvation of mankind. . . . I want here to enter my protest against this idea, for I know it is false. . . .

I understand the law of celestial marriage to mean that every man in this Church, who has the ability to obey and practice it in righteousness and will not, shall be damned. . . . I testify in the name of Jesus that it does mean that.³¹

It later became expedient for LDS President Wilford Woodruff to withdraw this revelation after the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887 was passed by the United States Congress, which contained such heavy restrictions on the business dealings of the Mormon Church, as well as other legal penalties for individual members who continued to engage in the practice, that the very existence of “God’s restored Church” was at stake. On September 24, 1890,

30. Orson Pratt, Salt Lake Tabernacle, October 7, 1874, in *ibid.* (Liverpool: Albert Carrington, 1875), Volume XVII, pages 224-225.

31. Joseph F. Smith, Salt Lake Tabernacle, July 7, 1878, in *ibid.* (Liverpool: William Budge, 1880), Volume XX, pages 28-31.

Woodruff issued what became known as the Manifesto, merely *advising* that the practice of plural marriage among the Latter-day Saints be discontinued.

There is ample evidence to suggest that not only several Mormon officials, but even Woodruff himself, continued their involvement in polygamous marriages after the advice of the Manifesto was made public. Several complained that the principle had been given to Joseph Smith by "holy beings . . . commanding him to practice it," and therefore one "could not compromise it under any circumstances."³² Furthermore, it was asserted that "in requiring the relinquishment of polygamy, they [the U.S. Government] ask the renunciation of the entire faith of this people. . . ."³³ In response, the Government again put pressure on the LDS Church, resulting in the passage of the following anti-polygamy law in 1896 by the Utah State legislature: "The following ordinance shall be irrevocable without the consent of the United States and the people of this State. . . . Perfect toleration of religious sentiment is guaranteed. No inhabitants of this State shall ever be molested in person or property on account of his or her mode of religious worship; but polygamous or plural marriages are forever prohibited."³⁴

On April 7, 1904, a second Manifesto was issued from Salt Lake City by then-President Joseph F. Smith which threatened with excommunication "any officer or member of the Church" who either participated in or promoted the practice of polygamy.³⁵

32. *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (Liverpool: A. Carrington, 1875), Volume XXXVII, pages 307-308.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Utah constitution, Article III, Section 1.

35. "Official Statement by President Joseph F. Smith," *Improvement Era*, Volume VII:7 (May 1904), pages 545-546.

This was the same man who had earlier insisted that plural marriage was neither a “superfluity, or non-essential to the salvation of mankind.” This new revelation resulted in the excommunication of LDS apostles Matthias Cowley and John W. Taylor, son of former LDS president John Taylor, shortly thereafter in 1906, as well as the exile of many other members of the Mormon Church to Canada and Mexico, where anti-bigamy laws were less stringently enforced. Today, only “fundamentalist” Mormons in small polygamous communities in remote parts of the United States, primarily in Utah and Arizona, continue to obey the “eternal law of marriage.” Consequently, they believe that only they are the true followers of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

Did Joseph Renounce Polygamy Before His Death?

The history of polygamy in the LDS Church creates quite a dilemma for its members. If it is essential for salvation, as its founding prophets undeniably claimed, then millions of happily monogamous Mormon males are participating in a system invented by a pagan “set of robbers,” and would do well to return to the wedding altar as soon as possible lest they “become dark as midnight” and “go down to hell,” as apostle Pratt warned. If one is to believe that polygamy is *not* essential, and is, in fact, the “abominable practice” that God supposedly said it was in the Mormon scriptures, then one might ask whether Latter-day Saints are, at the same time, willing to point their finger at Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other early LDS leaders and accuse them of adultery.

In conclusion of this matter, it should be noted that there seems to be evidence that even Joseph Smith himself renounced his personal involvement in polygamy, acknowledging that the 1843 revelation to institute it as official church doctrine originated

with the Devil and not God. The following statement made by William Marks, who was Presiding Elder at Nauvoo, Illinois in 1844, may be quoted in this regard: “[Joseph] said it [plural marriage] eventually would prove the overthrow of the church, and we should soon be obliged to leave the United States unless it could be speedily put down. He was satisfied that it was a cursed doctrine, and that there must be every exertion made to put it down.”³⁶ The testimony of Isaac Sheen, who later became a leader in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS), matched that of Marks when he stated:

Joseph Smith repented of his connection with this doctrine, and said that it was of the devil. He caused the revelation on that subject to be burned, and when he voluntarily came to Nauvoo and resigned himself into the arms of his enemies, he said that he was going to Carthage to die. At that time he also said that, if it had not been for that accursed spiritual wife doctrine, he would not have come that.³⁷

If the man from whom all successive LDS prophets have derived their authority did indeed cause the revelation regarding polygamy to be destroyed, why then was it subsequently canonized thirty-two years later and included in *Doctrine and Covenants* (replacing the original Section 101, which condemned polygamy), and the practice, which he himself apparently repudiated, continued until its complete abandonment in 1904? Perhaps

36. William Marks, letter to Isaac Sheen, October 23, 1859 in *The True Latter Day Saints' Herald* (Cincinnati, Ohio) Volume I:1 (January 1860), page 26; Joseph Smith, Jr. and Heman C. Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Lamoni, Iowa: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1897), Volume II, page 733.

37. Isaac Sheen, *True Latter Day Saints' Herald*, Volume I:1, page 24.

Mormons should heed the following warning of David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the *Book of Mormon*:

. . . I desire to get you to comprehend the sin of trusting in an arm of flesh, by receiving Brother Joseph’s revelations as if they were from God’s mouth, when some of his revelations conflict with the teachings of Christ. . . .

Why will you cling to Joseph Smith, who was only a man, and believe all his revelations as if they were from God’s own mouth? Joseph Smith cannot save you in eternity! Cease to trust in him or in any other man; turn away from man entirely, and do not consider any man, but look to God and to his written word, for by it shall you be judged at the last day. . . .³⁸

Negroes Viewed as “Uncouth” and “Uncomely”

A similar situation to that described above may be found in the pre-1978 anti-Negro doctrine of the Mormon Church. Prior to that date, Blacks were considered by the Mormon leadership to be an inferior race of people and thus were banned from receiving the LDS priesthood. This doctrine rested upon the Mormon belief in the pre-mortal existence, or the “first estate,” of mankind in the spirit world. According to Joseph Smith and other LDS prophets, there was a revolt in heaven led by Lucifer and one third of the spirit children of the Mormon god, Elohim. Those who fought valiantly against Lucifer were rewarded with the privilege of being sent to this planet as the mortal children of White Latter-day Saints. However, those who were less courageous were cursed by Elohim and forced to be born on earth as members of the Negro race, the alleged descendants of the cursed

38. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri: self-published, 1887), pages 37-38, 42.

Cain. The following statements were made by authoritative Mormon sources in this regard:

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 “servants of servants”; and they will be, until that curse is removed. . . .³⁹

Not only was Cain called upon to suffer, but because of his wickedness, he became the father of an inferior race. A curse was placed upon him and that curse has been continued through his lineage and must do so while time endures. Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with a black skin and have been denied the privilege of the Priesthood and the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel. . . . They have been made to feel their inferiority and have been separated from the rest of mankind from the beginning. . . .

Our negro brethren have a black covering emblematical of eternal darkness.⁴⁰

39. Brigham Young, Salt Lake Tabernacle, October 9, 1859, in *Journal of Discourses*, Volume VII, page 290.

40. Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way To Perfection* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1931), pages 101-102.

When [God] destroyed the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, he suffered a descendant of Cain to come through the flood in order that [the Devil] might be properly represented upon the earth.⁴¹

... In a broad general sense, caste systems have their roots and origin in the gospel itself, and when they operate according to the divine decree, the resultant restrictions and segregation are right and proper and have the approval of the Lord. To illustrate: Cain, Ham, and the whole negro race have been cursed with a black skin, the mark of Cain, so they can be identified as a caste apart. . . .

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them. . . . Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned, 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, is based on his eternal laws of justice, and grows out of the lack of spiritual valiance of those concerned in their first estate.⁴²

Now let's talk segregation again for a few moments. Was segregation a wrong principle? 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. . . .

41. John Taylor, Grantsville, Utah, October 29, 1882, in *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: John Henry Smith, 1883), Volume XXIII, page 336.

42. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pages 14, 527-528. These remarks are found only in the first edition of this book, but have since been removed.

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. And He certainly segregated the descendants of Cain when He cursed the Negro as to the Priesthood, and drew an absolute line. . . .

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 we are generous with the Negro. We are willing that the Negro have the highest kind of education. 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? It reminds me of the scripture on marriage, “what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.” Only here we have the reverse of the thing – what God hath separated, let not man bring together again.⁴³

43. Mark E. Petersen, *Race Problems As They Affect the Church* (Brigham Young University: The Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, August 27, 1954), pages 13, 14, 15-16.

The LDS Church Gives in Again to Outside Pressure

One could go on ad infinitum quoting the declarations of the Mormon prophets, apostles, and apologists regarding the Negro race. In the midst of the Civil Rights movement in the mid-1960s, pressure was applied to the Mormon hierarchy to produce a new revelation that would grant LDS Negroes equal standing in the church with its accompanying temple privileges. In response, several statements were issued by noted Mormon authorities to the following effect:

Those who believe that the Church “gave in” on the polygamy issue and subsequently should give in on the Negro question are not only misinformed about Church history, but are apparently unaware of Church doctrine. . . . Therefore, those who hope that pressure will bring about a revelation need to take a closer look at Mormon history and the order of heaven. . . .

Those who would try to pressure the Prophet to give the Negroes the Priesthood do not understand the plan of God nor the order of heaven. Revelation is the expressed will of God to man. Revelation is not man’s will expressed to God. All the social, political, and governmental pressure in the world is not going to change what God has decreed to be.⁴⁴

The Church is either true or it isn’t. If it changes its stand on the strength of the “great stream of modern religious and social thought,” it will be proven untrue. If that happens, the more serious members would do well to join the Cub Scouts. It’s cheaper and there is less work and less criticism. . . .

If the Church is true, it will hold to its beliefs in spite of its

44. John L. Lund, *The Church and the Negro* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Paramount Publishers, 1967), pages 104-105, 109.

members. If it is false, more power to the easy-way-out philosophers who claim to know the “imperious truths of the contemporary world.”⁴⁵

One must wonder if Paul Richards, the author of the second quote above, was indeed true to his word and became actively involved in the Cub Scouts, for just eleven years after he made the above assertion of the Mormon Church’s inflexibility on the Negro issue, the LDS prophet Spencer W. Kimball issued a revelation that completely nullified a doctrinal stance that had persisted for over one hundred years. On June 9, 1978, the following statement was released by the First Presidency comprised of Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, and Marion G. Romney:

... 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, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, 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.⁴⁶

The same article went on to allege that this doctrinal change

45. Paul C. Richards, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Stanford, California: Dialogue Foundation), Autumn 1967, Volume II:3, page 6.

46. “LDS Church Extends Priesthood to All Worthy Male Members,” *Deseret News*, June 9, 1978, page 1A; “Every Faithful Worthy Man in the Church May Now Receive the Priesthood,” *The Ensign*, Volume VIII:7 (July 1978), page 75.

was in fact a fulfillment of the prophecies of early Mormon leaders, particularly Brigham Young, that the priesthood would “some day” be made available to Blacks. Though this is true in part, when read in their original context, these predictions clearly indicated that the lifting of the “curse” would take place only after all other faithful “children of Adam” (most notably the White race) were resurrected and exalted as gods in the Celestial Kingdom. Traditionally, Mormon scholars have interpreted this event to be set sometime after the return of Christ, or even after the Millennium.⁴⁷ The following statements of Brigham Young prove this to be the case:

When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of God, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity. He deprived his brother of the privilege of pursuing his journey through life, and of extending his kingdom by multiplying on the earth; and because he did this, he is the last to share the joys of the kingdom of God.⁴⁸

How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they can never 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 favorable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the

47. Lund, *Church and the Negro*, pages 45-49, 109-110.

48. Brigham Young, Salt Lake Tabernacle, December 3, 1854, in *Journal of Discourses*, Volume II, page 143.

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.⁴⁹

Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the Holy Priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the Holy Priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to. . . . The Lord cannot violate his own law; were he to do that, he would cease to be God.⁵⁰

Why Are Negroes Still Born With Black Skin?

If the curse that was placed upon Cain and his descendants was indeed “black skin and a flat nose,” why then are the children of Negroes today, who are supposedly no longer under this curse, not born with “white and delightful” skin as the *Book of Mormon* clearly promised that they would be? For example, we are told:

And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.

And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is

49. Young, Salt Lake Tabernacle, October 9, 1859, in *ibid.*, Volume VII, pages 290-291.

50. Young, Salt Lake Tabernacle, August 19, 1866, in *ibid.* (Liverpool: B. Young, Jr., 1867, Volume XI, page 272.

a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people.⁵¹

And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites;

And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites.⁵²

It is apparent that Mormon leaders prior to the so-called revelation of 1978 believed that the Negro, as well as the American Indian, who are said to be descendants of the wicked Lamanites, would become lighter in complexion as time progressed upon their reception of the ordinances of the LDS gospel. Brigham Young prophesied that the curse would some day be lifted from the dark-skinned races, and that they would then become “white and delightsome people.”⁵³ Spencer W. Kimball agreed with his predecessor by relating the following story:

The work is unfolding, and blinded eyes begin to see, and scattered people begin to gather. I saw a striking contrast in the progress of the Indian people today as against that of only fifteen years ago. Truly the scales of darkness are falling from their eyes, and they are fast becoming a white and delightsome people. . . .

51. *The Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 2 Nephi 30:5-6. In newer editions, the phrase “white and delightsome” has been replaced by “pure and delightsome” to avoid the obvious racial connotations.

52. *Ibid.*, 2 Nephi 2:14-15.

53. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume II, page 143.

The day of the Lamanites is nigh. For years they have been growing delightful, and they are now becoming white and delightful, as they were promised. In this picture of the twenty Lamanite missionaries, fifteen of the twenty were as light as Anglos; five were darker but equally delightful. The children in the home placement program in Utah are often lighter than their brothers and sisters in the hogans on the reservation.

At one meeting a father and mother and their sixteen-year-old daughter were present, the little member girl – sixteen – sitting between the dark father and mother, and it was evident she was several shades lighter than her parents – on the same reservation, in the same hogan, subject to the same sun and wind and weather. There was the doctor in a Utah city who for two years had had an Indian boy in his home who stated that he was some shades lighter than the younger brother just coming into the program from the reservation. These young members of the Church are changing to whiteness and to delightsomeness. One white elder jokingly said that he and his companion were donating blood regularly to the hospital in the hope that the process might be accelerated.⁵⁴

It is rather obvious to the objective observer that the revelation regarding the curse upon the Negroes, as well as that which lifted the same, originated not with the “unchangeable God” whom the Mormons claim to worship, but with a hierarchy of mere men who apparently have no reservations about altering the doctrines of their church whenever it is expedient to do so. The eternal folly of entrusting one’s salvation to such an organization goes without saying.

54. Spencer W. Kimball, *Improvement Era* (December 1960), Volume LXIII:12 pages 922-923.

The Many Changes in Joseph Smith’s Theology

Leading LDS scholar Hugh Nibley stated:

[Joseph Smith’s] teachings are so well-knit and perfectly logical that they have never had to undergo the slightest change or alteration during a century in which every other church in Christendom has continually revamped its doctrines. . . .

The gospel as Mormons know it sprang full grown from the words of Joseph Smith. It has never been worked over or touched up in any way, and it is free of revisions and alterations.⁵⁵

The assertion that Joseph Smith never changed his theology to later contradict that of the *Book of Mormon* displays either an incredible ignorance of, or an unwillingness to face, the early history of the Mormon Church. Smith’s theology may be roughly divided into three periods, each contradicting and replacing the previous one, not building “revelation upon revelation . . . knowledge upon knowledge,” as both Mormon scripture⁵⁶ and LDS scholars today would have us believe.

The first of these periods, which will henceforth be referred to as the “*Book of Mormon* period,” reflected Smith’s view of God from perhaps his childhood or early adulthood years, including the time that he had supposedly obtained and translated the Golden Plates, to around the year 1832 or 1833. During this period, his beliefs were undeniably Sabellian, or modalistic, in nature. This theological position, named after Sabellius who propagated it in the Third Century, has traditionally been rejected

55. Hugh Nibley, *No Ma’am, That’s Not History: A Brief Review of Mrs. Brodie’s Reluctant Vindication of a Prophet She Seeks to Expose* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1946), pages 57-58.

56. *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:61.

as heretical by orthodox Christianity, and even the modern LDS Church would stand in agreement. Briefly, modalism presents a unitarian view of the Godhead, in which the one God manifests Himself in three distinct and successive offices or modes of self-expression – the Father becomes the Son, who then becomes the Holy Spirit. This view was prevalent in the writings of a few pseudo-Christian mystics of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, such as Emmanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish founder of what today is known as the Church of the New Jerusalem, with whom Joseph Smith was no doubt familiar.⁵⁷ It is also held by several “Oneness Pentecostal” groups today, such as the United Pentecostal Church, as well as a large majority of the so-called “apostolic” churches, and is generally believed by theologians to exclude these from consideration as Christian sects.⁵⁸ Many unlearned Evangelicals themselves may hold to

57. The writings of Swedenborg were quite popular in Smith’s day, and were frequently advertised in the *Ontario Repository*, a newspaper that was printed in Canandaigua, New York, just twelve miles from his home in Palmyra. Edward Hunter, a convert to Mormonism from Swedenborgism, indicated that Smith was familiar with these occult writings and had even stated in 1839 that “Emmanuel Swedenborg had a view of the world to come, but for daily food he perished” (quoted by William E. Hunter, *Edward Hunter: Faithful Servant* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Publishers Press, 1970], page 51; see also Mary Ann Meyers, “Death in Swedenborgian and Mormon Eschatology,” *Dialogue*, Volume XIV:1 [Spring 1981], pages 58-64).

Another Mormon doctrine that could possibly have resulted from Smith’s familiarity with Swedenborg is the LDS description of the three levels of heaven: the Celestial, the Terrestrial, and the Telestial. In Swedenborg’s theology, the Celestial kingdom was said to be the highest, as it is also believed to be in Mormonism (Emmanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Caelestia* [R. Hindmarsh, 1784-1804]).

58. Robert M. Bowman, “Oneness Pentecostalism and the Trinity,” *Forward*, Fall 1986, page 27.

some variation of Sabellianism today, but, despite the accusation of many Mormon writers and apologists, this, by no means, reflects the traditional view of the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead set forth in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds.

Perhaps no other early Mormon document more clearly reflected Sabellianism than did the *Book of Mormon*:

And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son – And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God. . . .⁵⁹

Now Zeezrom saith again unto [Amulek]: “Is the Son of God the every Eternal Father?”

And Amulek said unto him: “Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. . . .⁶⁰

Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people, Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.⁶¹

. . . He that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father. . . .⁶²

59. *Book of Mormon*, Mosiah 15:1-2, 5.

60. *Ibid.*, Alma 38:39.

61. *Ibid.*, Ether 3:14.

62. *Ibid.*, Ether 4:12.

In his “Inspired Version” of the Bible, Joseph Smith even changed the words of Christ in Luke 10:22 to reflect his modalistic view of the Godhead: “. . . [N]o man knoweth that the Son is the Father, and the Father is the Son, but him to whom the Son will reveal it.”⁶³ Furthermore, the earliest revelations written down by Smith and published as the *Book of Commandments* in 1833 also demonstrate his modalistic views. It is apparent that he intended that these revelations be understood to have all been given by Christ Himself, for interspersed throughout the passages was the constant identification of the speaker as “Lord” and “God.” Although the speaker also identified himself as the “Son of God,” and spoke of the “Father” seemingly as if he were a separate entity, this must be understood in the context of the theology of the *Book of Mormon*, which depicts the one God in the dual role of both Father (spirit) and Son (flesh). This is best illustrated by the following statement from the revelation dated June 1829:

Behold Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved:

Wherefore all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father, for in that name shall they be called at the last day. . . .

And I Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it.⁶⁴

There are perhaps some Mormons who would attempt to interpret this passage to mean that Jesus Christ was not being revealed as the name *of* the Father, but rather that it was the

63. Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Holy Scriptures* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1974), Luke 10:23.

64. *A Book of Commandments For the Government of the Church of Christ* (Kirkland, Ohio: W. W. Phelps and Company, 1833), Chapter XV:24-25, 36.

name which was given *by* the Father. However, this is shown to be fallacious in light of another rather revealing statement a few pages later: “. . . the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, which Father and Son and Holy Ghost, is one God, infinite and eternal, without end. Amen.”⁶⁵ This passage was later changed to read, “. . . Father and Son and Holy Ghost, *are* one God. . . .” (emphasis added) This alteration was apparently made to convey a distinction between the persons, which did not exist in the original version. Even more revealing is the revelation dated March 1831, in which the speaker identified himself as God the Father,⁶⁶ and then, without any indication of a shift of narration, gave his name as Jesus Christ.⁶⁷

When the above evidence was presented by this writer to LDS apologist Michael Griffith, he responded as follows:

As far back as you want to go in Mormon history, the Father and the Son have always been identified as two separate persons. One of the major flaws in Greg’s exegesis is that he consistently interprets expressions of unity and oneness with a Sabellian mindset, when they were never intended to convey such a meaning, and at the same time he simply ignores all of the evidence that Christ and the Father have always been seen as two separate, sentient beings in LDS theology.⁶⁸

Other Mormon writers are more objective when dealing with the theological history of their church. For example, Thomas G.

65. Ibid., Chapter XXIV:18.

66. Ibid., Chapter LII:4.

67. Ibid., Chapter LII:30.

68. Michael T. Griffith, letter to Robert Durocher (on file), October 7, 1990, pages 9-10.

Alexander, a professor of American History at Brigham Young University, admitted that “there is little evidence that early [LDS] church doctrine differentiated between Christ and God.”⁶⁹ Another LDS writer, Dan Vogel, referred to the failure of the *Book of Mormon* “to clearly distinguish between the person of the Father and the person of the Son,”⁷⁰ and then went on to state:

The Book of Mormon . . . violates a major tenet of trinitarianism by confusing the persons of the Father and Son and by referring to Jesus as the Father. . . . Such ambiguities . . . suggest that the view of God which comes closest to that of the Book of Mormon is modalism or Sabellianism. Modalistic elements such as the literal oneness of the Godhead, the Father becoming the Son, and patripassianism are clearly expressed in the Book of Mormon.⁷¹

These men apparently saw no difficulty in continuing to affirm the *Book of Mormon* to be a divinely-inspired document while, in the same breath, calling into question its clear pronouncements of modalism. Such a mindset does not seem to be reasonable, particularly in light of Smith’s original claim that the *Book of Mormon* was the “most correct of any book,” as well as his unqualified promise that one “would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”⁷² One might wonder how such a promise could ever be fulfilled since, even by subsequent Mormon standards, its theology is completely

69. Thomas G. Alexander, “The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine,” *Line Upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1989), page 54.

70. Don Vogel, “The Earliest Mormon Concept of God,” *ibid.*, page 21.

71. Vogel, *ibid.*, page 24.

72. Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, Volume IV, page 461.

false, and thus would serve to lead one away from the True God rather than to Him. Consequently, the entire religious system of Mormonism is immediately suspect, especially since it currently rejects the clear teachings of its own “keystone.”⁷³

The Binitarianism of the “Kirtland Period”

The “Kirtland period,” lasting from approximately 1834 to 1838, included the publication of the first edition of *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1835 (for the most part a revamped version of the former *Book of Commandments*), as well as the second edition of the *Book of Mormon*, which, for the first time, was divided into chapters and verses to mimick the Bible. At this time, the members of the LDS Church also witnessed their founder’s complete rejection of the modalism so explicitly taught in the *Book of Mormon*, and its replacement with what some LDS scholars have considered to have been obvious binitarianism.⁷⁴ Joseph Smith even modified several passages in the *Book of Mormon* text to better coincide with his theological shift away from Sabellianism. For example, 1 Nephi 11:18, which spoke of the virgin Mary in classic Roman Catholic terminology as “the mother of God” in the original 1830 edition,⁷⁵ was altered in the 1837 edition to read “the mother of the Son of God.” Other passages that had previously referred to Christ as the “Eternal Father” and the

73. Smith, Jr., *ibid.*

74. Van Hale, “Defining the Mormon Doctrine of Deity,” *Sunstone*, Volume X:1 (January 1985), pages 23-27; reprinted in *Mormon Miscellaneous*, Reprint Series, Number 6 (1985), page 26.

75. Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon on Plates Taken From the Plates of Nephi* (Palmyra, New York: E. B. Grandin, 1830), page 25.

“Everlasting God” were likewise changed by the insertion of the words “Son of.”⁷⁶

The transition away from the unitarian modalism of the “*Book of Mormon* period” to the binitarian position of the “Kirtland period” is perhaps best illustrated by Smith’s “Lectures of Faith,” which were printed as an introduction to *Doctrine and Covenants*, from its first edition of 1835 until they were finally removed in 1921. Though he still spoke in terms of “one God,” Smith now stressed a clear distinction between the personages of the Father and the Son, and thus no longer referred to Christ as the Father. The following is taken from “Lecture Fifth” and gives an adequate illustration of Smith’s thinking with regards to the Godhead:

We shall in this lecture speak of the Godhead; we mean the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things. . . . They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness: The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made, or fashioned like unto man. . . .

Q: How many personages are there in the Godhead?

A: Two: the Father and the Son. . . .

Q: What is the Father?

A. He is a personage of glory and of power. . . .

Q: What is the Son?

A: First, he is a personage of tabernacle. . . .

Q: Why is he called the Son?

A: Because of the flesh. . . .

Q: Do the Father and the Son possess the same mind?

76. Smith, Jr., *ibid.*, pages 26, 32.

A: They do. . . .

Q: What is this mind?

A: The Holy Spirit. . . .

Q: Does the foregoing account of the Godhead lay a sure foundation for the exercise of faith in him unto life and salvation?

A: It does.⁷⁷

The reader will notice that only two personages were spoken of as comprising the Godhead: the Father, a “personage of spirit,” and the Son, a “personage of tabernacle.” The Holy Spirit, known today by Mormons as the Holy Ghost, was not believed to be a person of the Godhead, since “it” was merely the “mind” shared by the Father and the Son. This fact is further substantiated by Orson Pratt when he stated that he knew of no revelation that described the Holy Spirit as a person,⁷⁸ and instead speculated that the Spirit was “a substance that is diffused throughout space”⁷⁹ and “a living, all-pervading and most wonderful fluid.”⁸⁰ It must be noted that Joseph Smith did not begin to teach that the Holy Ghost was a “personage of spirit” until 1842.⁸¹

In 1840, LDS Apostle Parley P. Pratt, nicknamed by Brigham

77. Joseph Smith, Jr., “Lectures of Faith: Lecture Fifth,” *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints: Carefully Selected From the Revelations of God* (Kirtland, Ohio: F.G. Williams & Co., 1835), pages 52-58.

78. Orson Pratt, Salt Lake Temple Block, February 18, 1855, in *Journal of Discourses*, Volume II, page 338.

79. Pratt, *ibid.*, page 337.

80. Orson Pratt, “The Holy Spirit,” *A Series of Pamphlets on The Doctrines of the Gospel by the Late Elder Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), page 50.

81. Joseph Smith, Jr., *Times and Seasons*, Volume III:22 (September 15, 1842), page 926.

Young University professor Peter Crawley as the “Father of Mormon Pamphleteering” due to the thirty or more pamphlets to his credit,⁸² reiterated Smith’s teachings when he wrote:

Whoever reads our books, or hears us preach, knows that we believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as one God. That the Son has flesh and bones, and the Father is a spirit. . . . [A] personage of Spirit has its organized formation, its body and parts, its individual identity, its eyes, mouth, ears, and that it is in the image or likeness of the temporal body, although not composed of such gross materials as flesh and bones; hence it is said that Jesus is the express image of [the Father’s] person.⁸³

In a ten-page article for *Sunstone* magazine in 1980, BYU professor Thomas G. Alexander discussed the obvious differences between the concept of the Godhead in the “Lectures” and present-day Mormon theology. Though he mistakenly compared Joseph Smith’s binitarianism to the trinitarian views of historic Protestantism, his observations were nevertheless interesting:

. . . [B]efore 1835 the LDS doctrines on God and man were quite close to those of contemporary Protestant denominations. . . . [I will] further demonstrate that the doctrine of God preached and believed before 1835 was essentially trinitarian, with God the Father seen as an absolute personage of Spirit, Jesus Christ as a personage of tabernacle, and the Holy Ghost as an impersonal spiritual member of the Godhead.⁸⁴

82. Peter Crawley, “Parley P. Pratt: Father of Mormon Pamphleteering,” *Dialogue*, Volume XV:3 (Autumn 1982), pages 15-28.

83. Parley P. Pratt, *An Answer to Mr. William Hewett’s Tract Against the Latter-Day Saints* (Manchester, New York: W.R. Thomas, 1840), page 9.

84. Thomas G. Alexander, “The Reconstruction of Mormon: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology,” *Sunstone*, Volume V:4 (July/August 1980),

In 1978, Mormon apologist Van Hale admitted the following:

Prior to 1841, Church doctrine described the Father as “being a personage of spirit,” while the Son was a “personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto a man.” This was well established doctrine, having been taught to the elders at the School of the Prophets in 1834, published in the Church paper in Kirtland in 1835 to be part of the “doctrine” section of the Doctrine and Covenants, and taught by the elders until at least 1840. However, by April 2, 1843 the new doctrine taught, of Jesus, that “all things that he had seen the Father do, he had done, and that he had done nothing but what he saw the Father do.” Thus the Father is a resurrected being of flesh and bones like the Son. The old doctrine gave way to the new, upon Joseph’s frequent teachings on the subject, and its harmony with the concepts of eternal progression which were becoming more common in Nauvoo.⁸⁵

A few pages earlier in the 1835 edition of *Doctrine and Covenants*, the reader was given the following instruction in “Lecture Second”: “We here observe that God is the only supreme governor, and independent being, in whom all fullness and perfection dwells; who is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient [sic]; without beginning of days or end of life.”⁸⁶ In “Lecture Third,” we read, “Thirdly, that [God] changes not, neither is there variableness with him; but he is the same from everlasting, being the same yesterday today and forever; and that his course is one

pages 24-25.

85. Van Hale, “The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, Volume XVIII:2 (Winter 1978), pages 219-220.

86. Smith, Jr., “Lectures of Faith: Lecture Second,” *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835 edition), page 12.

eternal round, without variation. . . . For without the idea of unchangibleness [sic] in the character of the Deity, doubt would take the place of faith.”⁸⁷

It is no wonder that the “Lectures of Faith” have not been included in *Doctrine and Covenants* since 1921, for the doctrines they advance clearly do not reflect Mormon theology as it now stands, neither do they represent what Joseph Smith came to believe shortly thereafter regarding the personages of the Father and the Holy Ghost.

There have been some LDS apologists who would attempted to dismiss this blatant discrepancy by arguing that Sidney Rigdon wrote the “Lectures,” not Joseph Smith.⁸⁸ However, there really is no substantive evidence to support this claim, and even Mormon officials such as Bruce R. McConkie have disagreed.⁸⁹ Actually, the *Book of Mormon* itself seems to suggest rather strongly that Smith did indeed initially believe and teach that God the Father was a “personage of spirit” who had always been God:

And then Ammon said: “Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?” And he said, “Yea.” And Ammon said: “This is God.” And Ammon said unto him again: “Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth?”⁹⁰

87. Smith, Jr., “Lecture Third,” *ibid.*, page 38.

88. Larry E. Dahl, “Authorship and History of the Lectures on Faith,” in Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (editors), *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1990), pages 1-21.

89. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, page 319.

90. *Book of Mormon*, Alma 18:26-28. This passage also contradicts the Mormon belief that God did not create all things in heaven and in the earth, but merely “organized intelligence,” which is “eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle” (Smith, Jr., *Times and Seasons*, Volume V:15 (August 15, 1844); Smith,

And the king said: “Is God that Great Spirit that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem?” And Aaron said unto him: “Yea, he is that Great Spirit, and he created all things both in heaven and in earth. Believest thou this?” And he said: “Yea, I believe that the Great Spirit created all things, and I desire that ye should tell me concerning all these things and I will believe thy words.”⁹¹

However, even if Rigdon’s authorship of the “Lectures of Faith” can be proven, that does not diminish the fact that Joseph Smith allowed them to be published as official Mormon doctrine and even added his name to the Preface of the document.⁹² This proves his later claim that the LDS leaders had always taught the plurality of Gods and that the Father was a “personage of tabernacle” as is the Son, to be untrue.⁹³

It is also interesting to note that the official Mormon account of the First Vision found in *The Pearl of Great Price* is undermined by the above “Lecture Fifth” as well, since it specifically speaks of both the Father and the Son as personages of “tabernacle.”⁹⁴ This version, written in 1838, was not even published until 1842,⁹⁵ which was after Smith’s theology had already begun to degenerate considerably from a unitarian view of the Godhead into

Teachings of the Prophet, page 354. See also *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:29 and *The Pearl of Great Price* [Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982], Abraham 3:22).

91. *Book of Mormon*, Alma 22:9-11.

92. *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835 edition), pages iii-iv.

93. Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, Volume VI, page 474.

94. *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 1:17-19.

95. *Times and Seasons*, Volume III:10 (March 15, 1842), pages 8-10. See also *ibid.*, Volume III:11 (April 1, 1842) pages 14-15.

blatant polytheism. This will be discussed shortly. The original account, written in 1831 or 1832, spoke only of the appearance of Christ in the grove, and made no mention at all of the Father:

... [T]he Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day came down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy way walkin in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned asside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it was written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father. ... (poor grammar and misspelled words in original)⁹⁶

Nauvoo: The Birthplace of Modern Mormonism

The third and final stage of Joseph Smith’s changing theology is what may be labeled as the “Nauvoo period,” which lasted

96. *Brigham Young University Studies*, Volume IX:3 (Spring 1969), pages 277-280. Apparently, this is the only version of the First Vision that is written in Joseph Smith’s own handwriting (*ibid.*, Volume XI:4 [Summer 1971], page 462); see also Scott H. Faulring (editor), *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1989), pages 5-6.

from 1838 until the time of his death in 1844, and may, for all intents and purposes, be viewed as continuing today. It was during this time that most of the doctrines and practices which set Mormonism apart from orthodox Christianity (i.e. polygamy, the Temple Endowment, the Priesthood, etc.) were formulated and became standard LDS beliefs from that time forward.

With the writing of the official version of the First Vision, it became apparent that Joseph Smith had taken a significant step in the rejection of his former binitarian description of the Father as a “personage of spirit” and of the Son as the fleshly manifestation of the Father on earth. From the following account, we can see that, in Smith’s mind, the Father had been given a body of flesh and bone which was apparently identical to that of the Son: “When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other – ‘This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!’”⁹⁷ Of this account, Brigham Young University professor Marvin S. Hill wrote:

. . . [T]here are, undeniably, differences in the several accounts, not all of them minor from the standpoint of Mormon theology. . . . To focus upon the discrepancies touching the personages of the Godhead in the first vision story, whether one or two personages, is to concentrate on a theological question and to miss its historical significance. . . . If over the years Joseph’s conception of the Godhead changed, this is not evidence of fraud any more than the adoption of other aspects of his theology in later years proves to be.⁹⁸

97. *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 1:17.

98. Marvin S. Hill, “Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal,” *Dialogue*, Volume VII:4 (Winter 1972), pages 78-79.

Though many Mormon historians, such as Hill, have downplayed the significance of the obvious discrepancies between the 1832 account of the First Vision and that which is officially published today by the LDS Church, they apparently have overlooked one point in particular. Mormon apostle John A. Widtsoe explained:

It was an extraordinary experience. Never before had God the Father and God the Son appeared to mortal man. . . . It shattered many a false doctrine taught throughout the centuries. . . . Men had held up their hands in horror at an anthropomorphic God. . . .

The First Vision clarified this whole matter. . . . It answered the centuries' old query about the nature of God. The Father and the Son had appeared to Joseph as persons, like men on earth in form. . . .

From the early days of Christianity, the erroneous doctrine of the nature of God had led to . . . the conception that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Godhead, were One, a unity. . . .

This false doctrine was laid low by the First Vision. Two personages, the Father and the Son, stood before Joseph. . . . There was no mingling of personalities in the vision. Each of the personages was an individual member of the Godhead. Each one separately took part in the vision.⁹⁹

The official account of the First Vision provides, as Widtsoe indicated above, the entire foundation for the Mormon Church's teaching that God the Father inhabits a body of flesh and bone, that He was once a man, and that man has the potential of be-

99. John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker After Truth* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1957), pages 4-7.

coming a god as well. However, this is shown to be an unstable basis for these doctrines when the inconsistency of the First Vision accounts is considered.

It was this period that also introduced the Holy Ghost – no longer referred to as the Holy Spirit – as a third member of the Godhead, albeit a “personage of spirit.”¹⁰⁰ Later, he was even identified by Heber C. Kimball as “one of the sons of our Father and our God.”¹⁰¹ However, to demonstrate that he had not embraced orthodox Trinitarianism, but had rather adopted a tritheistic position, Joseph Smith made the following statements:

... [T]he Godhead ... was not as many imagined – three Heads & but one body. ... The three were separate bodys – God

100. *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22. This passage presents quite a problem for modern Mormon theology. Joseph Smith, as well as subsequent LDS prophets, stated that exaltation to godhood was contingent upon receiving a physical body on earth and obeying the ordinances of the Mormon gospel, such as “celestial marriage” (Hunter, *Gospel Through the Ages*, pages 118-120; *Doctrine and Covenants* 132). This was why it was necessary to abandon the teaching that God the Father, whom Smith believed was once a man, was merely a “personage of spirit,” for in such a condition, his so-called godhood would have been invalid. Unfortunately, while this doctrinal change solved one problem, another was created when Smith decided to make the Holy Ghost the third member of the Godhead instead of merely the “mind” shared by the Father and the Son. Since we are now told that it is the Holy Ghost who is a “personage of spirit,” one must therefore wonder how he can be said to be a god, since he obviously has never been granted a body to earn such a position. In fact, according to Mormon sources, to be bodiless and unmarried is the judgment pronounced upon the Devil and his angels (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Volume I, pages 16, 65; Young, Salt Lake Bowery, October 7, 1857, in *Journal of Discourses*, Volume V, page 331; Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, pages 181, 297, 305-306).

101. Heber C. Kimball, Salt Lake Bowery, August 23, 1857, in *Journal of Discourses*, Volume V, page 179.

the first & Jesus the Mediator the 2d & the Holy Ghost & these three agree in one (misspelled words and poor sentence structure in original).¹⁰²

Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God. I say that is a strange God anyhow – three in one, and one in three! It is a curious organization. . . . All are crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God – he would be a giant or a monster.¹⁰³

Again, in 1842, Smith made himself quite clear in church publications that Mormons were expected to believe in three Gods, not one.¹⁰⁴ He substantiated this theological stance by claiming:

I have always and in all congregations when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached by the Elders for fifteen years. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.¹⁰⁵

102. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (editors), *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980), page 63.

103. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, page 372.

104. Smith, Jr., *Times and Seasons*, Volume III:22 (September 15, 1842), page 926.

105. Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, Volume VI, page 474; Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, page 370.

This claim, when honestly compared with the evidence that has been presented here, proves that either Smith had an extremely poor memory, or that he had deliberately lied to his followers. The latter is most likely the case since the fifteen years spoken of would have pinpointed the origin of the doctrine in 1829 – one year before the Mormon Church had even been organized at Fayette, New York. The fact is that Smith and the elders of his church had only begun to hint at the plurality of gods about six years previously, and had not officially begun to teach such an unorthodox idea until 1842. Though the great majority of the Latter-day Saints accepted Smith’s fabrication as truth, there were some who decried him as a fallen prophet, pointing out that he had begun to introduce “false and damnable doctrines . . . such as the plurality of Gods.”¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

In contrast to Dr. Nibley’s previously quoted assertion, the evidence is beyond dispute that the “gospel” originally revealed by Joseph Smith has undergone far more than the “slightest change or alteration,” and, in fact, has been completely “worked over [and] touched up” by the Mormon Church down through the years to conceal his obvious lack of divine guidance. Indeed, it would seem that David Whitmer’s accusations against the Utah-based church were accurate:

You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given and as they are today in the Book of Commandments, to support the error of Brother Joseph in taking upon himself the office of Seer to the church. You have changed the revela-

106. *Nauvoo Expositor*, Volume I:1 (June 7, 1844), page 2.

tions to support the error of high priests. You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood, high counselors, etc. You have altered the revelations to support you in going beyond the plain teachings of Christ in the new covenant part of the Book of Mormon. You have changed and altered the revelations to support the error of publishing those revelations in a book: the errors you are in, revelations have been changed to support and uphold them. You who are living did not change them, but you who strive to defend these things, are as guilty in the sight of God as those who did change them.¹⁰⁷

Joseph Fielding Smith made a rather interesting statement in this regard:

Inspiration is discovered in the fact that each part, as it was revealed, dovetailed perfectly with what had come before. There was no need for eliminating, changing, or adjusting any part to make it fit; but each new revelation on doctrine and priesthood fitted into its place perfectly to complete the whole structure, as it has been prepared by the Master Builder. . . .

Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground.

If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, for the doctrines of an imposter cannot be made to harmonize in all particulars with divine truth. If his claims and declarations were built upon fraud and deceit, there would appear many errors and contradictions, which would be easy to detect. The doctrines

107. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 49.

of false teachers will not stand the test when tried by the accepted standards of measurement, the scriptures.¹⁰⁸

The foregoing evidence overwhelmingly establishes that Joseph Smith was indeed a deceiver and that the religion he founded is a gigantic fraud. Mormons should therefore heed the following warnings taken from their own “standard works”:

For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not a God of miracles.¹⁰⁹

For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said. . . .¹¹⁰

108. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Volume I, pages 170, 188.

109. *Book of Mormon*, Mormon 9:9-10.

110. *Doctrine and Covenants* 3:2a.

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