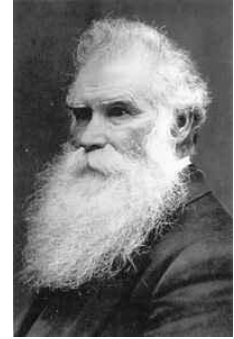


**Convince Us of Our Errors:  
Why I Believe Joseph Smith, Jr. Is Not a Prophet of God and Mormonism is not True**  
Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

**The Challenge of Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt:**

"...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."<sup>1</sup>



**I. The Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr.: Essential to Mormonism**

"Every intelligent person under the heavens that does not, when informed, acknowledge that Joseph Smith, Jun., is a Prophet of God, is in darkness, and is opposed to us and to Jesus and his kingdom on the earth."<sup>2</sup>

"Since the key of salvation were restored to the Prophet, it is in and through and because of his latter-day mission that the full redemptive power of the Lord has again become available to men."<sup>3</sup>

"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 appointed and 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 on fraud and deceit, there would appear many errors and contradictions, which would be easy to detect. The doctrines of false teachers will not stand the test when tried by the accepted standards of measurement, the scriptures."<sup>4</sup>

**II. The First Vision: The Basis of Joseph Smith, Jr. Being a Prophet of God**

- A. "The First Vision of 1820 is of first importance in the history of Joseph Smith. Upon its reality rest the truth and value of his subsequent work."<sup>5</sup>
- B. "Belief in the vision is one of the fundamentals to which faithful members give assent. Its importance is second only to belief in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>6</sup>
- C. "With this vision came the call of that Prophet who, 'save Jesus only,' was destined to do more 'for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.' (D. & C. 135:3)"<sup>7</sup>

- D. "Joseph Smith's first vision, in 1820, wherein he beheld God the Father and Jesus Christ, is one of the most significant religious events in the history of the world. This glorious vision restored the fullness of the gospel to the earth and established a new prophet to lead God's children out of darkness."<sup>8</sup>

### III. The Mormon Arguments for Joseph Smith, Jr. Being a Prophet of God: The "Authenticity" of the Book of Mormon

- A. Mormons claim that Joseph Smith, Jr. lacked the education and access to information to be able to fabricate a work of the caliber of the *Book of Mormon*.

1. They challenge anyone to duplicate the work Joseph Smith, Jr. did in writing the *Book of Mormon* in order to demonstrate that no one who lacks the education and access to information like he did would be able to fabricate a work of the caliber of the *Book of Mormon*.
2. But Joseph Smith, Jr. produced the *Book of Mormon*.
3. Therefore, the *Book of Mormon* was not fabricated.
4. Thus, Joseph Smith, Jr. must have done his work by the power of God.
5. Anyone who does such work by the power of God is a prophet of God
6. Thus, Joseph Smith, Jr. is a prophet of God.

- B. Mormons argue that the *Book of Mormon* was predicted by the Bible.

1. The one through whom God brought the *Book of Mormon* to light must be a prophet of God.
2. Since this one is Joseph Smith, Jr., then he must be a prophet of God.

- C. Mormons argue that no evidence, such as archeological or historical, exists against the *Book of Mormon*. Thus, no evidence against Joseph Smith, Jr. being a prophet of God based on an argument against the *Book of Mormon* is sound.

- D. The most important "argument" that Mormons offer to prove that Joseph Smith, Jr. is a prophet of God is a subjective test. No matter what objective evidence is brought against the authenticity of the *Book of Mormon* addressed in the above arguments, this subjective test always overrides it. Thus, ultimately, Mormons feel no obligation to try to answer the evidence against Joseph Smith, Jr., the *Book of Mormon* and their other scriptures, and Mormonism.

1. One is to read the *Book of Mormon* and pray and ask God to show him if the *Book of Mormon* is true and is from God. (Moroni 10:4; James 1:5)

2. God will show the one praying that the *Book of Mormon* is true by an "inner" testimony or feeling. (Galatians 5:22-23)
3. Once one "knows" that the *Book of Mormon* is true and is from God, then one can conclude that Joseph Smith, Jr., who was given the *Book of Mormon* and translated it, is a prophet of God.
4. Once one accepts Joseph Smith, Jr. as a prophet of God, then the other writings of Joseph Smith, Jr., viz., his "revelations" contained in the *Doctrines and Covenants* and his translation of the *Pearl of Great Price* can also be known to be true and from God.

#### IV. Problems with Joseph Smith, Junior's Story of His First Vision

- A. Joseph Smith, Jr. supposedly had his vision in 1820, yet a history of the church written in 1834 mentioned nothing about the visions.
- B. The vision was not reported until 1840 (by Orson Pratt) and was not published by Joseph Smith, Jr. until 1842, 22 years later.
- C. Joseph Smith, Jr. claimed in a revelation in 1832 when he supposedly received the priesthood, that no one could see God without it [D & C 84:21-22], yet he supposedly saw God back in 1820.
- D. An account of the vision, presumably the earliest, being dated 1833 and either dictated by Joseph Smith, Jr. to Frederick G. Williams, scribe to the Prophet and counselor in the First Presidency, or written by Joseph Smith, Jr. himself, was denied to exist by the church officials until it was published in a Master's Thesis at BYU by Paul R. Cheesman in 1965. This version is now admitted to be authentic by such Mormon scholars as James B. Allen, Associate Professor of History at BYU in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1966 pp. 30-34. The reason it was suppressed is evidently because it contains significant differences from the "official" version.
  1. The 1833 version does not mention the Father appearing to Joseph Smith, Jr. as does the "official" version.
  2. The 1833 version says that Joseph Smith, Jr. called upon the Lord and had the vision in the 16<sup>th</sup> year of age, but the "official" version has the vision happening in the spring of 1820. Since Joseph Smith, Jr. was born in December of 1805, he would only be in his 15<sup>th</sup> year of life in the spring of 1820. (cf. *Pearl of Great Price* Joseph Smith 2:7. For Joseph Smith, Jr. to be in his 15<sup>th</sup> year of life is for him to be 14 years old, since from 0 to 1 is the 1<sup>st</sup> year, 1 to 2 is the 2nd year, etc. Thus from 14 - 15 is the 15<sup>th</sup> year.)
  3. The 1833 version mentions nothing about religious revivals going on, yet the "official" version says a great deal about them.

4. In the 1833 version Joseph Smith, Jr. says that, before the visitation, he knew that all the churches were wrong, yet in the "official" version Smith says he went to the Lord to inquire as to which of the churches was right.
- E. Another early account, revealed in the autumn of 1966, is located in the back of Book A-1 of the handwritten manuscript of the *History of the Church*, and is dated around 1835. In this version, the personage that appears to Smith testifies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, indicating that this personage itself is neither the Father nor the Son. In fact, Smith claims that he was visited by many angels.
  - F. A published account of the 1<sup>st</sup> vision in the *Deseret News Saturday*, May 29, 1852, does not mention the Father and Son appearing to Smith, but rather refers to angels visiting him. The reference to angels was deleted in later printings to make the reference be to the first visitation rather than to the first visitation *of angels*.
  - G. Joseph Smith, Junior's description of these visitations sounds more like Satan who transforms himself into an angel of light.
    1. 2 Corinthians 13-15 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.
    2. 1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

## V. More Problems for Joseph Smith, Jr.

- A. David Whitmer, one of the three "witnesses" to the *Book of Mormon* testifies about Joseph Smith, Junior's apostasy.
  1. "Then let no man judge hastily as to my authority, lest he judge wrongly and continue in error; but go to God in prayer and fasting, and find out the truth, for the Holy Ghost will guide you into all truth. If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to 'separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them.' In the spring of 1838, the heads of the church and many of the members had gone deep into error and blindness."<sup>9</sup>
  2. "There is nothing in the New Testament part of either the Bible or Book of Mormon concerning a one-man leader or head to the church. ... And we had no such office [of Prophet Seer and Revelator] in the church in these last days for the first eight months of its existence, until Brother Joseph went into error on April 6, 1830. ... [The revelations] were changed to mean something entirely different from the way they were first given and printed in the Book of Commandments ..."<sup>10</sup>

- B. The *Book of Abraham* contained in *The Pearl of Great Price* has been proven to be a fraud.
1. The *Book of Abraham* was supposedly written on papyrus by Abraham about 4,000 years ago.
  2. Joseph Smith, Jr. supposedly translated the papyrus, but the papyrus was reportedly lost in the great Chicago fire of 1871.
  3. Mormons reported that that the papyrus had been rediscovered in 1967.
    - a. The *Deseret News* of November 27, 1967 said: "A collection of pa[p]yrus manuscripts, long believed to have been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871 was presented to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ... included in the papyri is a manuscript identified as the original document from which Joseph Smith had copied the drawing which he called 'Facsimile No. 1' and published with the Book of Abraham."<sup>11</sup>
    - b. Dr. Hugh Nibley of Brigham Young University discusses the papyri in *Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1968, p. 171.
  4. Analyses by Egyptologists have proven that the papyrus is a fragment from the Egyptian *Book of Breathings* from the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. (Cf. E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead, An English Translation of the Chapters, Hymns, Etc., Of the Theban Recension, With Introduction, Notes, Etc.* Vol. 1 (London, 1901): 50-51.

## VI. Testing a Prophet of God

- A. All things must be tested. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

- B. The basis of tests is reason not feelings. Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."

- C. The tests are theological. 1 John 4:1-3

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

D. The standard for the tests is the teachings of the Apostles and Prophets, i.e., the Bible.

1. The Bible is inspired by God.

a. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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.

b. 2 Peter 1:16-21

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no 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. The Bible has not been corrupted.

- a. The science of textual criticism proves that the Bible has been handed down to us intact.
- b. There is every reason to believe that God would not allow His inspired word to be lost or corrupted.

3. We know truth and error by the word of the Apostles. 1 John 4:5-6

They are of the world. Therefore they speak *as* of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

E. False Doctrine, especially about God, indicates a false prophet.

1. Deuteronomy 13:1-3

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'; which you have not known; 'and let us serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the

LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

2. 2 Peter 2:1-2

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

F. False Prophecies indicate a false prophet. Deuteronomy 18:20-22

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'; when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

VII. Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Tests of a Prophet of God

A. Joseph Smith, Jr. and False Doctrine

God

The Bible	Joseph Smith, Jr.
<hr/> <p>There is only one God.</p> <hr/> <p>Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD <i>is</i> one!"</p> <p>Isaiah 43:10 "And understand that I <i>am</i> He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me."</p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p>There are many Gods.</p> <hr/> <p>"And they (the Gods) said 'Let there be light' and there was light." (<i>Pearl of Great Price</i>, "Book of Abraham" 4:3)</p> <p>"According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was ..." D. &amp; C. 121:32</p> <p>"If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered that God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father, you may suppose that he had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son?"<sup>12</sup></p> <hr/>
<hr/> <p>God is a spirit, without flesh and bone.</p> <hr/> <p>John 4:24 "God <i>is</i> Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."</p> <p>Luke 24:39 "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."</p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p>God is a physical personage of flesh and bone.</p> <hr/> <p>"The Father has a body of flesh, and bones as tangible as man's" D. &amp; C. 130:22</p> <hr/>

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God has always been God.

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Psalm 90:2 "Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God."

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God is not a man.

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Numbers 23:19 "God *is* not a man"

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God was once a mere man.

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"God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! ... I am going to tell you how God came to be God. Ye have imagined and suppose that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea ... he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did."<sup>13</sup>

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God is an exalted man.

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"God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!"<sup>14</sup>

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## Salvation & Godhood

### The Bible

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Salvation is gaining eternal life whereby we are enabled to be with God forever in heaven. Becoming "like Him" (1 John 3:2) means that we will be made completely holy and righteous as He is, morally not ontologically.

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John 14:2-3 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also."

2 Peter 1:3-4 "as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (cf. Hebrews 12:10)

### Joseph Smith, Jr.

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Salvation means exaltation to Godhood. It involves faith in the Mormon Christ, baptism, obedience to the teaching of the Mormon church.

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"Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have go to learn how to be gods yourselves ... the same as all gods have done before you ... from exaltation to exaltation ... until you arrive at the station of a god."<sup>15</sup>

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## Salvation by Grace through Faith

### The Bible

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Salvation is a gift and cannot be earned by works. All that is necessary is belief in the gospel.

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Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Romans 4:4-5 "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him

### Joseph Smith, Jr.

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Works are necessary for salvation.

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"We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."<sup>16</sup>

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who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness"

## B. Joseph Smith, Jr. and False Prophecies

### 1. False prophecy about selling the copyright of the *Book of Mormon* in Canada

"Brother Hyrum said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money: and he persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. Hiram page [sic] and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father's house when they returned. I was there also, and am an eye witness to these facts. Jacob Whitmer and John Whitmer were also present when Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery returned from Canada. We, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired [sic] of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: 'Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.'"<sup>17</sup>

### 2. False prophecy about the coming of the Lord

"President Smith then stated ... it was the will of God that those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh—even fifty-six years should wind up the scene."<sup>18</sup>

- a. Klaus J. Hansen admits in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1966, p. 76, that there was widespread belief in 1890 that the prophecy would be fulfilled.
- b. Oliver Boardman Huntington testified in 1875 in his journal, *Journal of Oliver Boardman Huntington*, Vol. 2, pp. 128-129 that Smith made this prophecy.

### 3. False prophecy about the building of the temple of the New Jerusalem in Missouri in Joseph Smith, Junior's generation

"A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith Jun., ... beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri ... the city New Jerusalem shall be built ... beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation." (D. & C. 84:2, 3, 4)

- a. The Apostle Orson Pratt stated in the *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, p. 17, that they expected this prophecy to be fulfilled within ten years.
  - b. As late as the 1870's Orson Pratt, in the *Journal of Discourses*, Vol., 13, p. 138 and Vol., 15, p. 275, still expected the temple to be built in his generation and understood the expression 'this generation' to mean those living at the time the prophecy was given in 1832.
  - c. Brigham Young stated in *Times and Seasons* Vol., 6, p. 956, that he believed he would be a part of building this temple.
  - d. As late as 1935 Joseph F. Smith, in *The Way to Perfection*, p. 270, maintained that the prophecy would still be fulfilled.
  - e. In a later work Joseph F. Smith admitted that no one who was alive in 1832 was still living.
4. False prophecy about the Civil War

"Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of south Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the dearth and misery of many souls; and the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place. For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations. ... the inhabitants of the earth [shall] be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations." (D. & C. 87:1-3, 6)

- a. According to the *Boston Daily Advertiser & Patriot*, December 10, 1832, the Governor of South Carolina stated to his legislature on November 27, 1832, that South Carolina was prepared to resist the U. S. Government by force, thus when Smith made his prediction South Carolina had already rebelled.
- b. At the time Smith supposedly made this "prophecy" there was already a widespread belief that a war between the Northern and Southern states would break out beginning at South Carolina.
- c. This prophecy was never published during Joseph Smith, Junior's life time. It was not included in the first two printings of the *History of the Church*. According to B. H. Roberts in *Comprehensive History of the Church*, Vol., 1, p. 294, the "prophecy" was not printed until 1851.
- d. The prophecy failed in that war was not poured out upon all nations as a result of the Civil War.

- e. The prophecy failed in that the war did not bring about the end of all nations.
5. David Whitmer testifies that Joseph Smith, Jr. made other false prophecies.

"I will say here, that I could tell you other false revelations that came through Brother Joseph as mouthpiece, (not through the stone) but this will suffice. Many of Brother Joseph's revelations were never printed."<sup>19</sup>

**VIII.** Responses to the Mormon Inferential Arguments for Joseph Smith, Jr. Being a Prophet of God via the "Authenticity" of the *Book of Mormon*

1. First Argument: Mormons claim that Joseph Smith, Jr. lacked the education and access to information to be able to fabricate a work of the caliber of the *Book of Mormon*.

Responses:

2. Others in Joseph Smith, Junior's day did similar works.
- a. James Jesse Strang claimed that the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and led him to golden plates that he translated with the Urim and Thummim. He had witnesses who claimed to have seen the plates and who testified in a similar way to the *Book of Mormon*.<sup>20</sup>
  - b. Ann Lee claimed to have been visited by the Lord. More than sixty individuals give testimony to *A Holy, Sacred and Divine Roll and Book: From the Lord God of Heaven, to the Inhabitants of Earth*. Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the *Book of Mormon* accepted the *Sacred Roll and Book* as a divine revelation.
3. Much of the *Book of Mormon* is plagiarized from the King James Bible.
- a. There are over 400 parallels between the New Testament and the *Book of Mormon*.
  - b. The Book of Mormon contains Greek words (the language of the New Testament) despite the fact that the Greek language would not have been understood to the Nephites, having left Jerusalem hundreds of years before Greek was spoken there.
    - (1) The Greek words Alpha and Omega occur in 3 Nephi 9:18.
    - (2) The Greek name Timothy occurs in 3 Nephi 19:4.
    - (3) Joseph Smith, Jr. said there was no Greek upon the plates from which he translated the *Book of Mormon* in *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 4, p. 194.<sup>21</sup>
4. Some of the material of the Book of Mormon is evidently borrowed from the Apocrypha. The name 'Nephi,' which is a very important name in the *Book of Mormon*, comes from 2 Maccabees 1:36.

5. Contents of the Book of Mormon reflects the theological times in which Joseph Smith, Jr. lived, including discussions about current theological issues as infant baptism, ordination, the trinity.
    - a. Alexander Campbell, a contemporary of Joseph Smith, Jr. levied this charge against the *Book of Mormon* in the *Millennial Harbinger*, February 1831, p. 93.<sup>22</sup>
    - b. Mormon writers George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl admitted the theological similarities between the *Book of Mormon* and Joseph Smith, Junior's time in their *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 419.<sup>23</sup>
  6. The Book of Mormon has a conspicuous Masonic influence.<sup>24</sup>
  7. Intense interest over the origins of the Native Americans characterized Joseph Smith, junior's time, particularly the view that the American Indians were descendants of the ancient Hebrews.
    - a. Joseph Smith's mother says that Joseph Smith, Jr. had an interest in the ancient inhabitants of America in *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 1954 ed., p. 82-83.<sup>25</sup>
    - b. Articles from various sources and writers at the time discussed the ancient inhabitants of America and some entertained the notion that the American Indians were descendants of the Hebrews, including the *Palmyra Herald*, October 30, 1822 & February 19, 1823; the *Palmyra Register*, May 26, 1819; and the *Wayne Sentinel*, July 24, 1829.<sup>26</sup>
    - c. The book by Josiah Priest entitled *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, the fifth edition of which was published in 1835 and widely available in Smith's area, quotes extensively from the book *View of the Hebrews* by Ethan Smith. Priest has over 30 pages of proofs that "the Indians of North America are lineally descended from the ancient Hebrews."<sup>27</sup>
  8. Descriptions of the manner of "translation" of the golden plates indicate occultism. Joseph Smith, Jr. was known to use a "seer stone" or "peep stone" in divining occult information.
    - a. Joseph Smith, Jr. was cited with a misdemeanor offense for attempting to tell people's fortunes for money with a "seer stone." These court documents still exist.
    - b. David Whitmer's description of how the translation occurred indicates the same manner in which Smith, years earlier, tried to tell people's fortunes for money with a "seer stone." This process involved placing the stone into a hat and, blocking out the light, staring into the hat until the message appeared.
- B. Second Argument: Mormons argue that the *Book of Mormon* was predicted by the Bible. The one through whom God brought the *Book of Mormon* to light must be a prophet of God which is Joseph Smith, Jr.

Responses:

1. Jesus' reference to the "other sheep" in John 10:16 has nothing to do with the peoples of the North American continent to whom Jesus supposedly appeared, as recorded in the *Book of Mormon* in 3 Nephi 15:17,21, but rather it has to do with the Gentiles who would be included in the promise to the nation of Israel. (cf. Acts 15:7-9 Ephesians 2:11-19; Romans 11:11, 25)
  2. The "stick of Judah" and the "stick of Joseph" (Ezekiel 37:15-22) has nothing to do with the Bible and the *Book of Mormon*. The context of these verses clearly indicates that this was a promise of God to reunite the divided kingdom of Israel into one nation.
- C. Third Argument: Mormons argue that no evidence, such as archeological or historical, exists against the *Book of Mormon*. Thus, no evidence against Joseph Smith, Jr. being a prophet of God based on an argument from the *Book of Mormon* is sound.

Responses:

1. Incontrovertible archeological evidence militates against the authenticity of the *Book of Mormon* as is evidenced by the document from the Smithsonian Institution (see appendix).
  2. That there is no archeological evidence supporting the *Book of Mormon* is frankly admitted by Mormon archeologists.
    - a. Mormon anthropologist Dr. Ross T. Christensen admits in Brigham Young University's *University Archaeological Society Newsletter*, no. 64, January 30, 1960, p. 3, admits that the claim that the *Book of Mormon* is has been proved by archaeology is misleading.
    - b. In an address to the Brigham Young University Archaeological Society Fletcher B. Hammond said "There does not yet appear any artifact that we Latter-day Saints can present to the world—and prove by any scientific rule—that such artifact is conclusive proof of any part of the Book of Mormon."<sup>28</sup>
  3. There is no such language as "Reformed Egyptian."
- D. Fourth Argument: The most important "argument" that Mormons offer to prove that Joseph Smith, Jr. is a prophet of God is a subjective one. No matter what objective evidence can be brought against the authenticity of the *Book of Mormon* addressed in the above arguments, this subjective test always overrides it. Thus, ultimately, Mormons feel no obligation to try to answer the incontrovertible evidence against Joseph Smith, Jr., the *Book of Mormon* and their other scriptures, and Mormonism.

Responses:

1. Subjective experience is insufficient to adjudicate truth. James 1:5 says nothing about praying to discern truth.
2. As argued above, the proper tests of a prophet of God have to do with his doctrine and predictions.

**IX. Conclusion: Joseph Smith, Jr. is not a Prophet of God**

Joseph Smith, Jun. fails every test of a prophet of God that God's Word, the Bible, sets forth. Thus, my conclusion of the matter is that Joseph Smith, Jr., Jun. is a false prophet and the church he founded, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not of God. The God of Mormonism, the Jesus of Mormonism, and the Gospel of Mormonism are not the God, Jesus, and Gospel of the Bible. Everyone who believes in the God, Jesus, and Gospel of Mormonism is spiritually lost and is in danger of eternal condemnation in hell.

**Appendix: Statement from the Smithsonian Institution**

**SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20560

Your recent inquiry concerning the Book of Mormon has been received in the Smithsonian Department of Anthropology.

The Book of Mormon is a religious document and not a scientific guide. The Smithsonian Institution does not use it in any way in archeological research. Because the Smithsonian Institution receives many inquiries in this regard and in connection with Mormon statements about the origin and relationships of the American Indian, we have prepared a "Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon," a copy of which is enclosed for your information.

Department of Anthropology

Enclosure

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
Office of Anthropology  
Washington, D.C. 20560

STATEMENT REGARDING THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Smithsonian Institution has received hundreds of inquiries in recent years regarding the use of the Book of Mormon as a guide to archeological researches. Answers to questions most commonly asked are as follows:

1. The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archeologists see no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book.

2. The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid, being most closely related to that of the peoples of eastern, central, and northeastern Asia. Archeological evidence indicates that the ancestors of the present Indians came into the New World--probably over a land bridge known to have existed in the Bering Strait region during the last Ice Age--in a continuing series of small migrations beginning about 30,000 years ago.

3. Present evidence indicates that the first people to reach this continent from the East were the Norsemen who arrived in the northeastern part of North America around A.D. 1000. There is nothing to show that they reached Mexico or Central America.

4. There is increasing evidence of the spread of cultural traits to MesoAmerica and the northwestern coast of South America across the Pacific, beginning several thousand years before the Christian era. However, these appear to be the result of accidental voyages originating in eastern and southern Asia and show no relationship to ancient Egyptian or Hebrew cultures.

5. We know of no authentic cases of ancient Egyptian or Hebrew writing having been found in the New World. Reports of findings of Egyptian influence in the Mexican and Central American areas have been published in newspapers and magazines from time to time, but thus far no reputable Egyptologist has been able to discover any relationship between Mexican remains and those in Egypt.

6. There are two copies of the Book of Mormon (and part of a third copy) in the United States National Museum, and another copy

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was sent by the Smithsonian library to the Library of Congress for deposit. Two of these were gift copies, and one was received by transfer from another government agency. One or two members of the staff have personal copies that were presented to them by Mormons.

#### Suggested Reading

- Coe, Michael D.  
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- Jennings, Jesse D., and Norbeck, Edward.  
1963. Prehistoric Man in the New World. 633 pp., illus. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. (The most recent and thorough survey of New World archeology, written by leading American archeologists.)
- Ferguson, Thomas S.  
1958. One Fold and One Shepherd. 465 pp., illus. Books of California, San Francisco. (A book presenting the Mormon point of view.)
- Hunter, Milton R., and Ferguson, Thomas S.  
1950. Ancient America and the Book of Mormon. 450 pp., 53 figs., Kolob Book Co., Oakland, California. (Another book presenting the Mormon point of view.)
- MacGowan, Kenneth, and Hester, Joseph A., Jr.  
1962. Early Man in the New World. Rev. ed. 333 pp., illus. Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New Jersey. (The Natural History Library). (Good general reading; also provides some Old World background.)
- Morley, Sylvanus G.  
1956. The ancient Maya. 494 pp., 102 pls., 57 figs. (3rd ed., rev. by George W. Brainerd.) Stanford University Press, Stanford, California (Maya history: origin of their civilization, its rise, first florescence, first decline, renaissance and final decline, Spanish conquest.)
- Thompson, J. Eric.  
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- Morey, Robert A. *How to Answer a Mormon*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1983.
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- Ropp, Harry L. *Are the Mormon Scriptures Reliable?* Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987.
- Scott, Latayne Colvett. *The Mormon Mirage: A Former Member Looks at the Mormon Church Today*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
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- Tanner, Jerald and Tanner, Sandra. *The Case against Mormonism*. 3 vols. Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Company, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Changing World of Mormonism*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mormon Kingdom*. 2 vols. Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Company, 1969.
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- McConkie, Bruce R. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979.
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<sup>1</sup> The Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 853, pp. 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: George Q. Cannon, 1861), 8:223.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979): s.v. "Joseph Smith the Prophet," 396.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, 10th President, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1: 188.

<sup>5</sup> Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith—Seeker after Truth*, p. 19, as cited in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., 1972), 143.

<sup>6</sup> James B. Allen, Associate Professor of History, Brigham Young University, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn, 1966, p. 29, as cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 143.

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<sup>7</sup> McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 285.

<sup>8</sup> Richard I. Winwood, *Take Heed that Ye Be Not Deceived*, (Salt Lake City: Richard I. Winwood, 1995), 40.

<sup>9</sup> David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ by A Witness to the Divine Authenticity of The Book of Mormon* (Richmond, MO: by the author, 1887, reprinted by Pacific Publishing Company, Concord, CA, 1976), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Whitmer, *Address*, 46.

<sup>11</sup> Tanner, 294.

<sup>12</sup> *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 374, as cited in Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. S.v. "Plurality of Gods," 577.

<sup>13</sup> *Teachings*, p. 345-347, as cited in McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, s.v. "Godhood," 321.

<sup>14</sup> *Teachings*, p. 345-347, as cited in McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 321.

<sup>15</sup> *Teachings*, p. 345-347, as cited in McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 321.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Smith, Article 3 of *The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

<sup>17</sup> Whitmer, *Address*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> *History of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 182, as cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 187.

<sup>19</sup> Whitmer, *Address*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> *Gospel Herald*, May 4, 1848, as cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 55.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 64.

<sup>24</sup> Tanner, *Mormonism*, 69-72.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 81.

<sup>26</sup> Cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 81-82.

<sup>27</sup> *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, Albany, New York, 1825, p. 297, as cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 84.

<sup>28</sup> *Geography of the Book of Mormon*, March 25, 1964, p. 5, as cited in Tanner, *Mormonism*, 102.