

JOSEPH SMITH'S VALIDITY AS A PROPHET

Evaluating his prophetic role

May 19, 2009



My last article, "*Is the Mormon Church Turning Christian?*" topped the list as drawing the most viewers. Therefore, in view of this interest and the fact that the leaders of the Mormon Church are trying to eradicate their cult reputation and draw Christian converts in by concealing their controversial doctrines yet, refusing to renounce them, I thought a closer scrutiny of Joseph Smith's claim to being God's latter-day prophet would be appropriate. Especially since the LDS Church stresses that, "The appearing of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith is the foundation of this church." (*Pres. Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, 1:188.*)

I also want to call your attention to a new addition to my newsletter. I am including a section entitled, "*Recommended.*" This will include books on Mormonism that I especially endorse. I have also included an outstanding Christian worship CD that truly touched my heart.

Recommended:

A Quiet Place. CD (*DougMeeker.com*) This worship CD truly touched my soul, and enhanced my personal relationship with God. I've listened to many great CDs, many of which come across as a "performance." But this one is different. It is so genuine that you can actually feel Meeker's heartfelt love for God behind every single word he sings. An outstanding feature is that the words to the songs are in the first person as if the listener is saying them to God. I listen to this tape preparatory to my prayer time and periodically throughout the day. The best setting if for the individual to listen to it privately. If you are ever "out of the mood" to pray, this will definitely get you into the proper frame of mind. If you go to his website, it allows you to listen to excerpts from these songs.

The Mormon Mirage: A Former Member Looks at the Mormon Church Today, Nonfiction. (revised) by former Mormon, Latayne C. Scott. This book presents one of the most complete treatments of Mormon theology that I've read in some time. It is thorough, historically accurate, well researched and documented with up to date evidence that substantiates even further the falseness and deceptiveness of Mormonism. Her presentation of the errors of Mormonism is admirably balanced by her honest portrayal of not only the positive values of the Mormon Church, but in sharing her soul-wrenching resolve to leave the religion she had so loved, to embrace only Biblical truths--a heart-tugging decision that I can well identify with.

Latter-day Cipher, a novel by Latayne C. Scott. This is a suspense thriller that takes place in Utah, opening with the discovery of the murdered body of Utah socialite Kirsten Young in Provo Canyon. Strange markings are carved into her flesh along with a note written in the old Mormon Code based on Brigham Young's Deseret Alphabet. This horrific event is followed by more murders. The story fascinated me from beginning to end. The author also weaves in historical facts regarding Mormonism's ties to Masonry, Blood Atonement and Polygamy.

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I need to set the stage first, since I am copying Chapter 6 from my book, *The Mormon Missionaries*. The setting is a Bible College in San Antonio. Earlier, two Mormon missionaries bravely ventured onto campus and Susan, a student, falls for one of the Mormon Elders, Elder Black. She takes them up on their invitation to attend their presentation at a Mormon member's home (Ellen). She thinks she will eventually convert him to Christianity and marry him. A teacher on campus realizes that Susan is in over her head, so attends the presentation with her. The below chapter is the next day in the cults class where the students are anxious to hear Susan's

blow by blow description of her encounter. Covering up her mixed feelings and attraction for the missionary, she puts on a very Christian front to the class. (The remaining chapters describe Susan's struggle between her romantic feelings and the realization that she must choose between truth and deception.)

Characters:

Teacher

Susan, student

Matt, student

Ilya, student from Russia

Robert, student

Tia, student of Spanish descent

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"Let's hear it Susan!" the class urged.

"Yeah, how did it go?" Matt roared. "Did you tell them where it's all at?"

Susan nervously made her way to the front of the class.

"Well," she said, looking into their expectant faces, "it was just like what was explained to us in class. The missionaries' presentation sounded biblical, but it sorta' wasn't—not when you knew ahead of time what they really believe."

Hesitantly, she began describing Ellen's house, the friendship, especially the homemade bread. Then, gradually gathering energy from the class' enthusiasm, her voice grew bolder—even cocky. Soon she was parroting everything I had said to her in the car. She even threw in Scripture that I had shared with her before class.

The students hung on to her every word as if she were some celebrity who had escaped from the very jaws of hell. No one would have guessed that she was still a very mixed-up girl.

Flipping her hair with a dramatic flourish, she said, "Oh yes, they even tried to make us think they believed in the biblical God. But, we knew they believed God was flesh and bone, which of course contradicts John 4:24 and Luke 24:39.

"The missionaries also quoted John 3:16, but failed to understand from it that salvation is free to all who believe in Christ.(1) In fact," she said, pulling a piece of paper out of her pocket that I had given to her during assembly, "the President of their church came right out and contradicted Romans 10:9 by saying, 'It is a most serious error to believe that Jesus did everything for men if they would but confess him with their lips.'(2)

"They also refute Acts 4:12 which says, 'There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved' (niv). They teach that being saved in heaven rests upon the name of Joseph Smith.(3) I mean, really, did God ever say that salvation rested on the name of his prophets, Moses, Jeremiah, or Isaiah?"

The class applauded.

"And," she continued, "I found out something about Joseph Smith's first vision that I never knew before. He wrote *more* than one account, each one contradicting the other. But, I think more detail about that will be given in class." She then looked at me, signaling she was through.

As Susan took her seat, I walked around the front of my desk.

"Today," I began, "as I cover the subject of Joseph Smith, I want you to understand something. I don't do it hoping to instill any kind of antagonistic or belligerent attitude in you toward Mormons. But, I present the material to you for three reasons.

"First, it's my responsibility as teacher of this class. Second, you may some day find yourself swayed by Mormon logic and I hope to save you from that. Third, by knowing the facts, you may help some Mormon who is searching for the truth or prevent someone from being converted to it.

"But, before I tell you the specifics of today's lesson, I'd like to comment briefly about last night.

"What the Elders presented on God and Jesus sounded very Christian. And, while they gave a beautiful lesson expressing how much they loved their heavenly Father, it was, in a way, deceptive. It was deceptive because of what they *didn't* tell us.

"They didn't tell us that they believe God is an exalted man of flesh and bone, which contradicts John 4:24 that says, 'God is spirit.'

"They didn't tell us they believe in a plurality of gods.

"They didn't reveal their belief that Jesus' death on the cross only partially saves believers.

"They didn't tell us that salvation can only be achieved through conformity to Mormon rules and ordinances.

"They didn't tell us their belief that there are some sins that Jesus can't forgive, such as murder and, after the second time, adultery.(4)

"They didn't tell us that they have redefined the Bible's new covenant as temple marriage.(5)

"They didn't tell us that when they talk about wanting to become more like their heavenly Father it is a doublethink statement meaning they anticipate becoming gods themselves.

"Lastly, they didn't tell us that belief in Jesus will not get one into the Celestial heaven—that one has to go through a temple ceremony, learn secret signs and passwords, and wear special undergarments."

"All I hear," Ilya suddenly gasped, "is different gospel zan Bible teaches!"

"That's it in a nutshell," I replied.

Then, glancing at Susan, I said, "When one considers Galatians 1:8, 'Even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed,' the consequences of accepting such false teachings are very serious."

Susan looked away as I continued.

"Since Susan and I plan on meeting with the missionaries again, I'll be sure and address each subject as they present them to us. "But, today we're going to cover Joseph Smith's role as prophet. This will include:

- Joseph Smith's first vision
- Joseph Smith's prophecies
- Joseph Smith's translating ability
- The real origin of Joseph Smith's doctrines

Holding up a picture of Joseph Smith praying in the sacred grove, I said, "Profound importance is given to this first vision, beautifully portrayed here. Its significance is reflected in an astounding statement from James B. Allen, BYU professor of history. He said that Smith's vision 'is second only to belief in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth.'"(6)

A low hum of disapproval swept through the classroom.

"In addition," I continued, "another reason we should focus on the so-called first vision is because two presidents of the Mormon Church stated that it is the *cornerstone* upon which all of Mormonism rests.

"President David O. McKay said, 'The appearing of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith is the foundation of this church.'⁽⁷⁾ President Joseph Fielding Smith said, 'Mormonism . . . must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith.'⁽⁸⁾

"Therefore," I said, "if the foundation of all Mormonism rests upon Smith's vision, then we need to take a serious look at it.

"There is, as Susan indicated, more than one account of Smith's first vision. In reality, there are three, all differing from each other. While there are more accounts, they don't vary much in content, so we'll just concentrate on the three.

"One version was written in 1832; another in an 1835–36 diary; and the last in 1838. Smith's 1838 version states, 'When the light rested upon me I saw *two* Personages . . . One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!'

"This version is what the church has chosen to canonize in their Doctrine and Covenants. At the same time, they have suppressed the 1832 version and deliberately altered the 1835 diary."

Tia raised her hand. "What did Joseph Smith say in those other versions?"

"In the 1832 version," I replied, "Smith has only *one* personage visiting him, the Son. It is this rendition that Mormon historians now admit is the most genuine. In Smith's own handwriting, he says, '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. . . .' [emphasis mine].⁽⁹⁾ Notice, there is no mention of the Father.

"In his 1835 diary entry, however, he sees neither the Father or the Son, only angels, 'I received the first *visitation of angels* which was when I was about 14 years old.'⁽¹⁰⁾

"Since his diary only mentions angels, church leaders altered the account by omitting any mention of them. It now reads, 'I received my first vision, which was when I was about fourteen years old.'⁽¹¹⁾

"So, on the singular day in 1820, when he supposedly had his famous vision, we have the following:

1832 account----- Jesus only
1835–36 diary-----Angels only
1838 account-----God the Father and Jesus

"Smith just couldn't keep his stories straight. To make matters worse, Mormon leaders insist that 'during Joseph Smith's lifetime, he told but one story.'⁽¹²⁾

Ilya raised her hand. “Now dat everyvun know about three versions, how does Mormon Church excuse it?”

“Their only defense,” I said, “is reflected in a statement by BYU professor Marvin S. Hill. He claims that each version became different because Smith gradually ‘changed his view of the Godhead.’”(13)

The class snickered as Matt said, “That statement doesn’t hold much water. Individuals don’t change what they see just because years later they acquire a different understanding of the Godhead. He either saw what he said he saw, or he didn’t! How much stock can a person put in a prophet who fabricates?”

“Great observation, Matt. Here’s an example. If I were sharing with you that a long-lost relative, Aunt Marie, came and visited me on Tuesday, then later changed my story to insist it was three cousins, then again changed my story a third time to say it was really both Aunt Marie and Uncle Ralph—one could rightly say that something is wrong with my story.

“There’s also another problem to consider. The missionaries made quite a point of saying that the first vision establishes Smith as a prophet. Therefore, we need to look at his prophecies.

“Who can tell me what the test of a true prophet is?”

“Robert?”

“Deuteronomy 18:22,” he responded quickly, proceeding to quote it verbatim, ‘If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously’ (niv).

“In view of that,” I said, “one would expect Smith’s prophecies to be fulfilled. But, as we’ll see, he doesn’t pass the biblical test. He had too many unfulfilled prophecies.

“The Mormon Church, realizing this, came to the rescue by refusing to publish those prophecies that didn’t come to pass.

“For example, in section 137 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the church deliberately left out four unfulfilled prophecies. (14) Here is one:

I also beheld Elder M’Lellin in the south, standing upon a hill, surrounded by a vast multitude, preaching to them, and a lame man standing before him supported by his crutches; he threw them down at his word and leaped as a hart, by the mighty power of God.

“This prophecy never came true because M’Lellin apostatized from the church. Here is another:

And I finally saw the Twelve [Mormon apostles] in the celestial kingdom of God. I also beheld the redemption of Zion and many things which the tongue of man cannot describe in full.

“Since seven of the twelve apostatized or were excommunicated, they couldn’t possibly end up in the Celestial Kingdom. More especially since Smith had already stated that ‘whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come,(15)

“He also prophesied that Lyman E. Johnson would be like Enoch so that Satan would tremble before him. But, Johnson also apostatized. Johnson, along with Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, David W. Patten, and others were also promised they would be alive to see Christ’s second

coming. They all died.(16) Smith further said that he, himself, would be eighty-five years old when Jesus returned.(17)

“Smith further prophesied that a temple would be built by his generation in Independence, Missouri.(18) He also prophesied that the Nauvoo house in Nauvoo, Illinois would be in his family forever. Neither of the two materialized.(19)

“He prophesied in the Book of Mormon that Lamanites (American Indians) who convert to the church will turn ‘white and delightsome.’ Since, over the last 160 years this miraculous event never occurred, the church altered the phrase to ‘pure and delightsome.’(20)

“In another unfulfilled prophecy, Smith and a few of his leaders traveled from Kirtland, Ohio, to Salem, Massachusetts, after hearing that there was treasure concealed in the basement of a widow’s house. He prophesied having God say He would give them power over the city of Salem so that gold and silver would be given to them and they could pay their debts. No such treasure was acquired and the leaders returned empty-handed.(21)

“A revelation was given to Smith while in jail, promising him that he would ‘triumph over all [his] foes.’ But, his foes forced the church from the state eight years later. He was also told that his enemies ‘and their posterity shall be swept from under heaven.’(22) This prophecy proved false, because Smith was murdered and his enemies outlived him.

“Smith also claimed that the Lord said that if his wife Emma would not accept plural marriage ‘she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord.’(23) She fought against this practice and after her husband’s death lived to enjoy a ripe old age and even helped start the Reorganized LDS Church.

“Smith prophesied that W. W. Phelps would not taste of death until Jesus came.(24) Phelps died March 7, 1872.

“He also prophesied that the Lord’s coming would be in 1891.(25) This, obviously, never took place.

“Although there are many others, I’ll conclude with Smith’s Civil War prophecy.(26) Mormons enjoy referring to this one because it was given about thirty years before the Civil War. Members say it is proof of his prophetic calling.

“However, rather than being prophetic, Smith simply produced a revelation that matched current thought. South Carolina, at the time of his ‘prophecy,’ was already rebelling and newspapers were predicting an impending war between the North and South.(27) Therefore, Smith’s ‘prophecy’ only reflected that expectation.

“However, while the Civil War did come to pass, there are statements within that prophecy that never came to pass. Verses 3 to 6 declared that as a result of the civil war, ‘war shall be poured out upon all nations . . . slaves shall rise up against their masters . . . [and] remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves [against the non-Mormons, and God would bring] a full end of all nations.’(28) These four events never occurred.

“The test of a true prophet,” I said, “is whether his prophecies are fulfilled. God never said that a prophet should be judged by a good feeling in one’s heart or by praying about him.

“But, now we need to examine another aspect of Smith’s role as prophet. Up to this point, we’ve covered his vision and prophecies. But, what about his translating ability? Let’s take a look at the Pearl of Great Price.

“This standard work of their church contains the Book of Moses (received by revelation),

Matthew 24 (revised by Smith from the King James Version of the Bible), the Writings of Joseph Smith (portions from his personal history, including his first vision), and the Book of Abraham (translated from an Egyptian papyrus).

“Take the latter,” I said. “This was supposed to be a translation of a four-thousand-year-old papyrus that Abraham actually wrote and *signed*.”

“Found in the wrappings of a mummy, it fell into Smith’s hands in 1835. Since the Egyptian language was in its infancy at the time, no one could challenge Smith’s translation of the facsimiles (drawings) or the hieroglyphics.

“The papyrus was thought to have been destroyed in the great Chicago fire of 1871. But, in 1967, the Metropolitan Museum of Art discovered it in their archives and presented it to the LDS Church.(29)

“Since Egyptology was a well-developed science by then, Marvin Cowan, a Baptist missionary, sent the facsimiles and Smith’s translation to the Smithsonian Institute for verification.

“John A. Wilson, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, and Richard A. Parker of the Department of Egyptology at Brown University both came to the same conclusion.(30) Smith’s translation was incorrect. What he had actually translated was a pagan funeral text called the ‘Book of Breathings’ from the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. There was nothing about Abraham in it, let alone his signature.

“However, the church, totally unaware of this, was excited about having found the Book of Abraham papyrus again. They turned it over to a Mormon well versed in deciphering Egyptian. But he, along with other scholars, confirmed the two Smithsonian professors’ conclusions. It definitely was not the Book of Abraham, but a funeral text.

“Mormon leaders began to make excuses. They claimed that Smith did not translate the *literal* meaning of the lines, but treated the Egyptian text as ‘super-cryptograms—that is, writings with hidden meaning.’(31) Others believed that the Egyptian text simply served as a trigger for revelation.(32) But, Smith had made it very clear that this was not what he was doing.(33)

“The Mormon Church refuses to admit the truth to its members. Why? Because it would discredit the Book of Mormon, which also claims to be a translation.

“The most glaring proof,” I continued, “that Smith could not translate was the case of the Kinderhook plates, not to be confused with the Book of Mormon plates.

“A group of men in the 1840s, intent on tricking Smith, falsely forged six brass plates with the help of a blacksmith. Using beeswax and acid, they copied hieroglyphic characters from a Chinese tea chest onto the plates. They buried them in the ground, pretended to find them, and the unsuspecting Smith proceeded to translate them:

I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth.(34)

“When these oriental characters were later submitted to Professor Li Hsueh-chih of Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University, he identified the writings as ideographs used by the Lolo tribes in Yunnan Province in southwest mainland China.(35) While he was able to identify them, he could not read them.

“Now,” I said, picking up my notebook, “for the remainder of the class I want to cover the *true*

origins of Joseph Smith's doctrines. But, before I do, I'd like to say this: Many Mormons are wonderful individuals and love their faith just as we do ours. They truly believe they have the truth and that everything their leaders tell them is factual. The problem is that they don't know the real truth about Joseph Smith and early Mormon history because their leaders have taken great pains to conceal it.

"Why have they done this? Because they know that Joseph Smith was a product of his cultural environment—and they know exactly what that environment was. It was one steeped in magic, witchcraft, the occult, blood sacrifices, magic, masonry, divining rods, seer stones, treasure digging, and superstition.(36)

"Yes, Robert?"

"That kind of superstition," he said, "seems strange for early America. Especially, when one considers that the Puritans were the first ones to settle the colonies. Surely, they wouldn't have brought that kind of stuff with them."

"You're right. So, to find out where all that stuff came from, necessitates a little history lesson."

As the class shot dagger looks at Robert, I laughed.

"Don't worry, history can really be fascinating if you give it a chance.

"We'll need to start our story in early Europe.

"I'm sure you're already familiar with the Protestant Reformers. But, there were other contenders during that time known as Radical Reformers—utopian prophets who felt the need for direct revelation and a literally setting up of God's kingdom. Their concepts would eventually reach America and take hold with Joseph Smith.

"There were also the 'cunning folk' who offered supernatural services to solve personal problems.(37) They claimed the ability to heal, tell the future, protect against the devil, and find lost property and ancient treasure troves. The idea of using occult methods to find buried treasure also had an impact in Joseph Smith's time.(38)

"Then, there were the Hermetic Magi. They were called such because they took their metaphysical teachings from the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This was a manuscript supposedly containing revelations from the Greek god, Hermes Trismegistus, to an ancient Egyptian prophet older than Moses.(39) Within the *Corpus* was a book called the *Pimander*, nicknamed the 'Egyptian Genesis,' which we'll see played a huge part in Smith's doctrines which we'll see played a huge part in Smith's doctrines.

"Along with the *Pimander's* teachings, the Hermetic Magi used a mixture of pagan beliefs from the Kabbalah and alchemy, and fused them into their Christian beliefs.(40)

"Alchemy's main teaching was the belief that base metals could be transmuted into gold.(41) But, there was also a mystical side to alchemy, origins of which came from Greco-Roman Egypt. This school of thinking believed they could use the same principle of transmutation to *divinize* human beings. Through this, man could recover the divine power and perfection Adam possessed before the Fall.(42)

"The popularity of alchemy brought one more person into the picture—the con man. Less interested in changing the human condition, he induced people to make a small investment, promising them gold beyond their wildest dreams. These alchemist con men became the models for con men of nineteenth-century America, as diviners of buried treasures.

“Joseph Smith was also a diviner of buried treasure. But, more than swindling people out of their possessions, he swindled people out of the most precious possession they had—faith in the God of the Bible.

“Now, here’s where it really gets interesting,” I said. “In Europe, after mystical Hermeticism enjoyed popularity, it died down for a while. But it later revived in 1463 when Cosimo de Medici ordered his court scholar, Ficino, to stop working on Plato and work on a collection of manuscripts found in Macedonia in 1460. This is where the *Corpus Hermeticum* comes in.

“The manuscript produced startling concepts. The *Pimander* introduced the idea of *creatio ex deo*, creation out of God, instead of the biblical *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing. It also stated that the beginning of matter and the beginning of God Himself, came out of ‘primal divine intelligence from which also sprang the entire universe. Divine spirit was . . . the original primal matter.’(43)

“The book also taught universal salvation and emphasized free agency. It portrayed a divinely empowered Adam helping in the creation and voluntarily giving up his divinity to ‘mate with matter.’ It declared his fall voluntary, therefore, not a sin. The Hermeticists also taught the Kabbalah belief in three heavens.

“Now,” I said to the class, “listen to the following and see if anything sounds familiar: divinizing human beings, matter springing from primal intelligence, three heavens, negation of the Fall, and divinity of Adam.

“Yes,” Tia exclaimed. “It’s Mormonism! Especially the part about Adam voluntarily giving up his divinity. It reminds me of an earlier lesson you gave on the Mormon’s Adam-God doctrine. In that teaching, God gave up His divinity to become Adam so He could start His spirit children off physically.”

“Right! We’ll find that none of Smith’s concepts were new. Nor, as he claimed, did he receive them by divine revelation. How he found out about these teachings, we’ll soon see.

“The Hermetic philosophies developed throughout Europe and one can recognize additional Mormon concepts.

“In the twelfth century John Saltmarsh pursued the idea of three heavens comparable to the sun, moon, and stars.(44) The Muggletonians taught that ‘God was a finite being’ about ‘five foot high,’ complete with body parts.(45) This particular teaching extended to America in the area of Connecticut where Joseph Smith’s mother came from.(46)

“In the sixteenth century, Paracelsus carried on the philosophy from Joachim of Fiore’s teaching of the twelfth century. He spoke of restoring the primitive church in a new dispensation that would be inaugurated by the coming of the prophets Elijah and Elias . . .”(47)

“Hold on,” Matt interrupted. “Didn’t Joseph Smith claim Elijah appeared to him?”

“Right. That account appears in the Doctrine and Covenants with not only Elijah appearing in the Kirtland temple but also Elias.(48)

“Further,” I continued, “the Anabaptists, in the sixteenth century city of Münster, claimed a New Jerusalem with a sociology that reminds one of Smith’s United Order. They also practiced polygamy and instigated a Melchizedek priesthood.(49) John Dee’s sixteenth-century hermetic underground sect, House of Love, also taught a ‘hierarchy of priesthoods,’ which probably influenced Smith’s concept of the Aaronic, Patriarchal, and Melchizedek levels of priesthood.(50)

“The idea of ordaining men to the Melchizedek priesthood, as well as Rosicrucian, Masonic,

alchemic, and Kabbalistic concepts, was later carried to New England from Europe and practiced by the Zionitic Brotherhood of priests at the Ephrata community in Pennsylvania. This community also practiced baptism for the dead by proxy, which 'spread among the local Germans, surviving into the 1840s,'—Joseph Smith's time.(51)

"Marriage for eternity as the *new covenant* was established by Emmanuel Swedenborg in the seventeenth century.(52) This concept was transferred to New England and continued by the Rhode Island perfectionists, especially John Finney, Jr., who taught *spiritual wifery*, a term later incorporated into Mormon polygamy.

"In conjunction with all of the above, there was the influx of esoteric Freemasonry that contributed heavily to Smith's secret temple rituals and teachings.

"Professor John L. Brooke states that the Radical Reformation in Europe was the 'immediate precursor of critical themes in the popular religion of the early American colonies.'(53) In other words, all the mystical and heretical teachings of the Egyptian Genesis (*the Pimander*), the Kabbalah, the occult, the alchemists, and the Hermetic Magi, were transferred to New England and later utilized by Smith.

"Now, test your memory and see if you can remember the European beliefs that Smith incorporated into his new religion."

Matt called out, "The appearance of Elijah!"

"Good! What else?" Robert raised his hand. "The preexistence of man, the eternal nature of matter, creation coming from divine primal intelligence, the divinity of Adam, his fall not being a sin, and human beings becoming divine."

"And ve mustn't forget," Ilya said, "polygamy and new covenant of marriage for eternity."

"Also," Tia remarked, "Baptism for the dead by proxy and three heavens comparable to the sun, moon, and stars."

"There's a few more. Matt?"

"The Melchizedek priesthood, levels of priesthood, restoration of the primitive church, and establishing of a new dispensation." He leaned back in his seat looking quite proud of himself.

"Great job!" I said, disappointed that Susan wasn't contributing.

"In addition," I said, "there was the Masonic-Rosicrucian myths of buried treasure in underground vaults. Also, astrology, magic, and use of occult talismans all of which I'll save for our next class.

"Robert was right," I smiled. "This 'stuff' didn't come by way of the Puritans.(54) Rather, it came in the post 1660–1730s migrations of Quaker and German sect survivors of the Radical Reformation.(55)

"The Puritans did, however, bring with them the belief that America was the Adamic paradise. Also, the concept of restoring the primitive church and insisting that only the elect could claim keys to the legitimate church. All these ideas, Joseph Smith capitalized on.

"The Hermetic and Rosicrucian mysteries were mainly spread in America by John Withrop, Jr. and others who were advocates of Paracelsus' concepts. The philosophy of mystical alchemy continued and was even reflected in seventeenth-century New England poets.(56)

“Along with the hermetical philosophies, folk and occult magic was also brought here. That magic included using divining rods to locate buried treasure, animal sacrifices, and magic circles to overpower guardian spirits assigned to the treasures.

“All this played a heavy part in the culture Joseph Smith grew up in, eventually sparking the idea of gold plates being buried in the ground with a guardian spirit named Moroni.”

“Are you saying,” Tia interrupted, “that the only way these practices continued from Europe to America was by word of mouth and that’s how Joseph Smith learned it? Or were there books on these practices?”

“Both, Tia. And, if someone will plug in the overhead, I’ll show you what books were available in Smith’s time. While it’s a rather lengthy list, I’d like you to consider the idea that one day you just might meet a Mormon who will require such information. So, stay with me.”

Placing the transparency on the projector, I continued.

“While Joseph Smith had access to these books, many feel that it was really Sidney Rigdon who was more familiar with them. He was more of a scholar than Smith.(57) Nevertheless, let’s take a look.

“There were the theological dictionaries containing summaries of the hermetic and Kabbalah teachings. They also included discussions on preexistence, materialism, and three heavens.(58)

“Then, there were the *Theological Astronomies* by Thomas Chalmers and Thomas Dick that described uncreated spiritual material and hierarchies of heavenly spheres.(59) We know that Mr. Dick’s work was in the Nauvoo library in 1844, available for Smith to check out.(60) Also, we know that Mormon newspapers in 1836 were quoting Dick.

“Thomas Paine’s *Age of Reason* could also have planted the idea in Smith’s head of ‘worlds without number.’(61)

“There were also short texts of Emmanuel Swedenborg’s books in Palmyra where Smith lived, with full translations available in other areas.

“Swedenborg’s books taught Jacob Boehme’s ideas about three heavens comparable to the sun, moon, and stars; a celestial kingdom; rejection of original sin; and universal salvation achieved through works.

“Another book available to Smith at the Manchester, New York library, also at a bookstore in Hanover, New Hampshire, was *The Travels of Cyrus* by Andrew Michael Ramsay. Published in England in 1738 and republished in Boston and New Jersey in the 1790s, this book told about spiritual preexistence, primal matter, spirit intelligence with God as common father, alchemy, the occult, Freemasonry, ancient mystery religions, and the Egyptian *Pimander*.

“Ramsay’s later book *The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* covered the two spiritual and material creations of preexistence. His works must have been popular in Smith’s circle, for Parley P. Pratt, a Mormon contemporary of Smith’s, in his work, *Key to the Science of Theology*, used similar terms such as *spiritual and holy fluids* in speaking of divine, preexistent intelligent materials.(62) He could have taken it from Ramsay’s book or else picked it up from Joseph Smith who had already read it and was passing it off as revelation.

“Although we’ll be covering Masonry in our next lesson, I’ll also mention Masonic sources available to Smith.

“There was *Masonry Exposed* by William Morgan, *Inquiry into the Nature and Tendency of*

Speculative Freemasonry by Stearn, *Some Beauties of Freemasonry* by Joshua Bradley, *Free Masonry* (an anti-Masonic book) by Henry Dana Ward, and Thomas S. Webb's *Free-Mason Monitor*.(63)

"There were other sources for Smith as well. There was his brother Hyrum, as well as church members who were Masons.

"The occult Masonic books available in the 1780s and 1790s in American lending libraries and book shops" I said quickly placing another transparency on the projector, "were Aristotle's *Masterpiece*, apocryphal Erra Pater's *Book of Knowledge and The Complete Fortune Teller*, Ebenezer Sibley's *A New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences*, *The Magus* by Francis Barrett, *Astrology* by John Heydon, Herman Kirchenhoffer's *Book of Fate*, and *Christian Astrology* by William Lilly.(64)

"Lastly," I added, "although this is not an idea that came from Europe, there was a book that provided Smith with the idea that the American Indians were Israelites. *View of the Hebrews or the Tribes of Israel in America* by Ethan Smith was published in 1823 at Poultney, Vermont. It was so popular, a second edition was printed in 1825.(65)

"There was also Josiah Priest's *Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed*, published at Rochester, about twenty miles from the Smith home, that presented ideas similar to those later found in the Book of Mormon.(66) In our next class we'll examine the subject of the American Indians closer.

"While Smith, possibly with Oliver Cowdery or Sidney Rigdon's help, derived the majority of his teachings from the Hermetic books, it is well to remember that he may have picked up ideas from his immediate environment. For example, the idea of Adam's upward stumble was already prevalent with Freewill Baptists, Shakers, and Universalists.(67)

"In addition, other communities were ordaining men to the Melchizedek priesthood and practicing marriage for eternity, and baptism for the dead by proxy. I should add that Joseph Smith could also have taken the idea of the Melchizedek priesthood from the Masons.

"So," I said, turning to the blackboard, "Which aspect of today's lesson did you find the most interesting? Joseph Smith's first vision? Joseph Smith's prophecies? Joseph Smith's translating ability? Or, the European Hermetic sources for Smith's doctrines?"

Much to my delight Susan raised her hand.

"I enjoyed the different accounts of Joseph Smith's vision—actually thought they were funny. I wonder if the Mormon Elders know about them?"

"I doubt it," I replied, wishing she had offered a more serious response.

"Yes, Matt?"

"What blew me away," he began, "were Smith's unfulfilled prophecies. You'd think that if any Mormon took the time to find out what the biblical test of a prophet is, then checked Smith's prophecies out, one would see that he couldn't possibly have been called of God."

"I found his translating attempt," Robert said, "more fascinating. I mean, what an actor! You said that the European con man who fooled people into thinking he could turn money into gold was the model for all later con men—well, Smith sure takes the cake, pulling off that thing with the Egyptian mummy!"

"Those are interesting comments," I responded. "But, weren't any of you impressed with where

he got all his so-called Mormon ideas?”

“Yea,” one student said. “All that was good, I guess. It’s just that it’s pretty heavy stuff.”

“No, it wasn’t too heavy,” Ilya quickly chimed in. “It was very good.”

“Thank you Ilya.”

“Out of all this information I’ve given you,” I said, “here’s what I think is significant.

“Besides Smith’s making up his first-vision story, his prophecies failing to come true, and his translating ability exposed, what impressed me the most was his borrowing from Radical Reformationist ideas.(68)

“He copied the Egyptian *Pimander’s* teaching on preexistence, spiritual matter and primal divine intelligence, as well as adopted its idea of *creatio ex deo* instead of the biblical *creatio ex nihilo*.

“He applied alchemic teachings to divinize and transmute human beings into gods.(69) He promulgated the idea of Adam’s divinity and his fall as an upward stumble. He followed the practice of baptism for the dead by proxy, Melchizedek priesthood ordinations, polygamy, marriage for eternity, three heavens, and a celestial kingdom comparable to the sun. He also claimed direct revelation, an appearance by Elijah, and a literal setting up of the kingdom.

“He plagiarized the Masonic myth of finding a treasure beneath the ground, in his gold plates, and continued the prevalent idea of American Indians being Israelites into his Book of Mormon.

“Lastly, he inherited the cunning folk’s occult and superstitious practice of divining for buried treasure and using seer stones.

“However,” I added, “although all these concepts were available to Smith in books and in his cultural surroundings, he actually committed no crime by teaching them.

“What he was guilty of, however, was passing them off as God’s revelation and claiming they were a restoration of what Jesus and His apostles taught to the primitive church.

“But, now,” I said, “we’re out of time. In tomorrow’s lesson we’ll see how Joseph Smith put all the above together, along with Masonry, magic, and the occult, to form one of the most influential, fastest-growing religion of our times.

END

ENDNOTES

1. Acts 16:31.

2. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. Mc Conkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 3:91.

3. Joseph Field Smith said: “If Joseph Smith was verily a prophet . . . this knowledge is of the most vital importance to the entire world. *No man can reject that testimony without*

incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Doctrines of Salvation, 1:189–90 [emphasis in original]. Brigham Young said: “No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God *without the consent of Joseph Smith.* (*Journal of Discourses*, Joseph F. Smith, ed., (1854–86; reprint, Salt Lake City: Brigham Young Press, 1967), 7:289). He further said: “No man or woman in this generation will get a *resurrection* and be crowned *without Joseph saying so*” (Ibid., Conference discourse on October 8, 1854).

4. See note 21, Chapter 5. A very dear elderly friend of mine joined the Mormon Church and, believing that all his sins were washed away in baptism, did not tell Mormon leaders that in his younger days he had committed murder. At the time of the murder, he had been sentenced to a state prison but, while working on a chain gang, had escaped. After that he lived an exemplary life. I acted as proxy for his deceased wife in the temple marriage ceremony which allegedly sealed him to her for eternity. A few years later, after joining the Mormon Church, his story was discovered. He was told by Mormon leaders that he would never have been baptized and admitted to the Mormon Church had they known, and that Jesus’ blood does not cover murder. However, due to his age, the many letters from friends and acquaintances to Mormon officials attesting to his changed character, mine included, the motion for his excommunication was set aside and he was only disfellowshipped. The Stake President (my uncle-in-law) explained to me that he would have to become an “outcast and a wanderer of the earth” until such time that God required him to “pay the uttermost farthing of suffering,” meaning “being cast into hell for a thousand years.” After that, he would be saved in the Telestial Kingdom. Although Doctrine and Covenants 42:79 states there is no forgiveness for murderers, section 76:81–88, 98–112 further expounds on this by clarifying that after murderers suffer in hell, spiritual death will no longer apply to them and they will be saved in the Telestial Kingdom (See *Mormon Doctrine*, 520 and 758).

5. Hebrews 9:15.

6. James B. Allen, “The Significance of Joseph Smith’s ‘First Vision’ in Mormon Thought,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Autumn 1966: 29).

7. “Mormonism’s Self Destruct” (La Mesa, Calif.: Utah Christian Tract Society, n.d.), quoting from David O. McKay’s *Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953], 85).

8. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:188.

9. Cited in Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1972), 146. A copy of the 1832 account in Joseph Smith’s own handwriting, can be obtained by writing to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P.O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, UT 84110.

10. Scott Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, in association with Smith Research

Associates, 1989), 59, quoted in “Joseph Smith’s Vision,” *Salt Lake City Messenger*, No. 87 (November 1994): 5. See also Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 143–153. Brigham Young verified the diary account by stating: “*The Lord did not come But He did send His angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith . . . and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day, for they were all wrong*” (Wally Tope, “Honest Questions for Honest LDS,” flyer). Mr. Tope’s reference: *Journal of Discourses*, 2:171. Compare George Albert Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:294.

11. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed., B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 2:312. [Hereinafter, Smith, *History of the Church*.] See also Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 143–153.

12. Preston Nibley, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1944), 30, quoted in Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 145.

13. Marvin S. Hill, “First Vision Controversy: A Critique and Reconciliation,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Summer 1982): 39–41.

14. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:380–1. See also, J. Edward Decker and William J. Schnoebelen, comp., *And It DIDN’T Come to Pass: The False Prophecies of Joseph Smith (Issaquah, Wash.: Saints Alive in Jesus)*, 3–4. Available from Saints Alive in Jesus, P.O. Box 1076, Issaquah, Wash.: 98027.

15. Doctrine and Covenants, 84:40–41.

16. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:188–91. According to Heber C. Kimball, in *Times and Seasons*, 6:868, Joseph Smith confirmed these false blessings.

17. Smith, *History of the Church* 5:336.

18. Doctrine and Covenants, 84:2–5, 31, 114–15.

19. Doctrine and Covenants, 124:56–60.

20. 2 Nephi 30:6. This also appears in the original, handwritten manuscript of 2 Nephi 30 and in the original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. The change was made in 1981.

21. Joseph Smith first heard of this from a Mormon named Burgess who said that a treasure of money was buried in a cellar of a widow’s house in Salem, Massachusetts (Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 49). After hearing the story, Joseph immediately produced a revelation (Doctrine and Covenants, 111) to the effect that they would be successful in obtaining it.

22. Doctrine and Covenants, 121:5–15.

23. Doctrine and Covenants, 132:54.

24. Decker and Schnoebelen, *And it DIDN'T Come to Pass*, 23. See also T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (Salt Lake City: Shepard Books, 1904), 42.

25. *And it DIDN'T Come to Pass*, 26–27. See also Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:182.

26. Doctrine and Covenants, 87.

27. See Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 190ff.

28. Doctrine and Covenants, 87. Other prophecies concerning the Civil War were made in various letters and other statements of Joseph Smith. See Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 190ff.

29. A study of Tanners' book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, reveals that the Museum, as well as some Mormons, were aware of its existence before 1967. Because the details of this and other facets of the case are too lengthy to include here, one is invited to study Tanners' book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, which offers a more complete presentation.

30. Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 301–2.

31. *Ibid.*, 320. Since Smith was heavily involved in the study of hermetic-Kabbalism which promoted the return “to the primal vision” and “encouraged a *creative* rereading of sacred texts” within the “prophetic consciousness,” the Book of Abraham would not be expected to be a literal translation (See Lance S. Owens “Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: *Dialogue* 27, no. 3 [Fall 1994], 166) [emphasis mine].

32. In a new publication, Michael W. Hickenbotham (*Answering Challenging Mormon Questions* [Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Pub., 1995]), says the Church now admits that papyri, formerly believed to be the Book of Abraham, is an Egyptian funerary text. LDS scholars now claim that none of the papyri in their possession contain the text of the Book of Abraham. This is based upon a statement of Joseph Smith's that the Book of Abraham papyri contained red ink, but the papyri now held by the church contains none (p. 212). Some LDS scholars are suggesting that the original papyri purchased by the Mormon Church in 1835 never did contain the Book of Abraham. Since no extant copy of the Book of Abraham exists, it cannot be used to challenge the accuracy of Mormon claims. Hickenbotham also states that Smith's explanation of the facsimiles in the Book of Abraham “correspond closely to the interpretation of Egyptologists” (p. 213). This is false. Facsimile number 1, which Joseph Smith explains as an “idolatrous priest of Elkenah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice,” has been refuted by Egyptologists. Their interpretation, backed up by similar facsimiles found in other Egyptian locations, is that it is Osiris lying upon his bier and the jackal-god, Anubis, embalming him. There is also evidence that the original facsimile in Joseph Smith's possession had been altered. A charge of altering also holds true for the hypocephalus

(circular sheet of stiffened papyrus), known as facsimile number 2. The original hypocephalus had missing parts that were obviously filled in later with pencil. Smith, however, drew a picture of the hypocephalus from the original papyrus, showing the missing parts (*see Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*), and the Mormon Church suppressed the drawing for 130 years. Someone in the 19th century (Smith?) drew in the missing parts on this facsimile before it was published in the 1842 Mormon newspaper "Times and Seasons." (For an extensive treatment, as well as pictures of the facsimiles, see Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 294–369.)

33. *Ibid.*, 294–369.

34. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:372.

35. Ideographs "are graphic symbols representing an object or idea without expressing, as in a phonetic system, the sounds that form its name. A symbol representing an idea rather than a word. A pictorial representation of an idea of object" (*Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, Deluxe 2nd ed., 1979, 902). For a more indepth presentation, see Tanner and Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*, 111–114.

36. A seer stone is comparable to a crystal ball used by fortune tellers. However, since a seer stone is a rock, it is not "transparent" as portrayed in movies. 37. John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

38. *Ibid.*, 6.

39. "Although the texts made it seem that Trismegistus was a predecessor of Moses, he was a creation of second- and third-century pagan Gnostics, a fusion of the Greek Hermes with the Egyptian Thoth. Though the French scholar Isaac Casaubon demonstrated their second-century origin in 1614, occult philosophers continued to read the hermetic texts as ancient revelation until the end of the seventeenth century" (*Ibid.*, 10).

40. Kabbalah was not a tradition of historical dogma in Judaism but of mysticism which claimed to be open-ended, a 'pathway to prophetic consciousness.' Claiming to be guardian of the original knowledge Adam received from God, any person who had access to Kabbalistic symbols and lore, qualified for further revelation and visions from God. Kabbalah's powerful influence was, according to some scholars, one of the main sources of the Renaissance. Lance S. Owens states that "[Frances A.] Yates suggests that the true origins of the Renaissance genius may be dated from two events: the arrival of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in Florence and the infusion of Kabbalism into Christian Europe by the Spanish expulsion of the Jews" (Owens, *Dialogue*, 130). See Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 3–4. Therefore, "Christian Kabbalah" [or Hermeticism], as Owens explains, "was not a recapitulation of the Jewish tradition, but its creative remolding, a metamorphosis engendered by newly aroused religion-making vision. . . . Like early Christian Gnosticism, the tradition reborn had a dynamism which bred creative reinterpretation"

(Owens, “Joseph Smith and Kabbalah,” 131). Joseph Smith had extensive exposure to its teachings and was probably the basis for his claim to extra-Biblical revelation.

41. According to Brooke, Greco-Roman Egypt was where the Hermetic philosophy originated. It was a combination of Gnosticism, Platonism, Egyptian theology, and metallurgical traditions. It passed from Islamic sources at the end of the twelfth century, with portions ending up in medieval Europe as alchemy (See *Ibid.*, 8).

42. *Ibid.*, 7.

43. *Ibid.*, 10. Alchemy also stressed, “that which is below is above.” That is, matter was a reflection of the divine realm above. This led Christian alchemists to insist that everything was created spiritually first, a teaching which Joseph Smith incorporated into Mormonism.

44. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 22, quoting John Saltmarsh’s “Sparkles of Glory,” that “history would break into three dispensations of Law, Gospel and Spirit, or of letter, graces and God, or of the first, second and third heavens” (Saltmarsh bibliographic information unavailable).

45. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 24.

46. *Ibid.*, 25.

47. *Ibid.*, 13.

48. *Doctrine and Covenants*, 110.

49. See Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 14.

50. *Ibid.*, 17, 192.

51. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 14, 44. Historically, baptism for the dead by proxy was practiced by the Gnostics, including the Marcionites, the Montanists and the Cerinthians, according to Irenaeus and Origen. The Marcionites, for example, would hide a living man under a dead man’s bed. The officiator would then ask the dead man if he wished to receive baptism. With no answer from the corpse, the man under the bed then responded that he wished to be baptized in behalf of the dead person. In some instances, the actual corpse was baptized. There are also suggestions of a distant precedent in Greek religious practices (See C. K. Barrett, “The First Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *Harper’s New Testament Commentaries* [New York, Harper & Row, 1968], 363). Aside from Paul’s reference in 1 Corinthians 15:29, there is no written evidence that this kind of rite was practiced much before the mid-first century. Although, as Barrett notes, this doesn’t mean it didn’t take place—especially in the bizarre city of Corinth. It has been suggested by some scholars that the “Christ” faction mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:12, were the Gnostics. They had the ability to infiltrate a religion and deceptively take on its color,

much like a chameleon. Their unique beliefs led to their baptizing for the dead. Gnostics believed the spirit was good, but the body was evil and by baptizing for the dead, the departed's spirit would be released to heaven. Because of their stance that only the spirit mattered, they felt they could bodily participate in incest or any other sin and it didn't matter as long as their spirit was saved. Salvation for one's spirit was acquired through special wisdom or knowledge. Once achieved, they considered themselves spiritually elite. Although believing in the "Christ" principle within one's spirit, they did not believe it had anything to do with the body, which God would certainly not raise in any literal resurrection. Only the spirit would ascend to heaven at death. They probably saw Paul's willingness to be torn by wild beasts as a futile commitment demonstrating his lack of spiritual wisdom. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:29 asks, in speaking on the subject of the literal resurrection of the dead, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" (kjuv). He may be referring to the Gnostic Christ faction within the Corinthian church. As a brief aside, Paul was mimicking their belief that if they believe the body is evil and will *not* be resurrected, what's the point of their being baptized for the dead if the dead aren't raised? Paul then goes on to logically explain that if the dead aren't raised and the body is of no value, why would he fight wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons? Paul, after making his brief reference to this group, then continues his theme on the resurrection of the dead. A simpler explanation is that Paul may be referring to new converts taking the place of deceased believers who were influential in bringing them to faith.

52. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 217. In the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition, Lance S. Owens says: "The image of [the] eternal, transformative union [of the primal form of God] was perhaps mirrored in Joseph Smith's ritual of [the New Covenant of] celestial marriage" (Owens, "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah," 150). In Alchemical philosophy the mystery of God was the unknowable God as a single unity emanating into both male and female, mother and father. Kabbalists used sexual metaphors to show how divine intercourse between the divine Mother and Father produced the rest of creation. Therefore, marriage and sex had a spiritual significance portrayed by the sacred royal wedding of alchemy's mythological characters, King and Queen Rex and Regina. They represented Adam and Eve as metaphors of the primal mystery. The Kabbalistic text *Zohar* teaches that one can only become one like God, through sexual union (Ibid., 185). Therefore, the union of man and woman in sex or a sacred wedding, represented this divine mystery and sexual rituals were practiced within some Masonic and Rosicrucian ceremonies (Ibid., 140, 145, 149, 190). Seventeenth and eighteenth-century Kabbalists also practiced polygamy to express this mystery. "In Talmudic tradition the cherubim [on the Arc of the Covenant] were male and female and were sometimes found in sexual embrace. . . . The Talmud states, 'When the Israelites came up on the pilgrim [sic] Festivals the curtain would be removed for them and the cherubim shown to them, their bodies interlocked with one another, and they would say to them, 'Look, you are beloved of God as the love between man and woman'" (Ibid., 126).

53. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 19.

54. Ibid., 38.

55. Puritans were against supernatural claims because they had been condemned in England. However, if occasional miracles happened, they considered them divine. Brooke says that in the fringe communities, folk magic made itself evident.
56. Alchemic principles are found in the poetry of Anne Bradstreet of Andover and Edward Taylor in Massachusetts. Cotton Mather also referred to prayer as a “spiritual alchemy” (Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 37).
57. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 208, from David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Self-published, Richmond, Mo.: 1887; reprint, 1938), 35.
58. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 205.
59. See E. Robert Paul’s, “Joseph Smith and the Plurality of Worlds Idea.” *Dialogue*, 19 (Summer 1986): 15–36; “Joseph Smith and the Manchester New York Library” *Brigham Young University Studies*, 22 (Summer 1982): 333–56. Erich Robert Paul, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 76–78.
60. *Ibid.*, 379.
61. *Ibid.*, 379.
62. *Ibid.*, 207.
63. William Morgan’s *Masonry Exposed* was first printed in 1827. According to John L. Brooke, Heber C. Kimball had a copy. Lucinda Morgan (widow of William Morgan) who was plural wife of Smith, had a copy of Stearns’ *Inquiry into the Nature and Tendency of Speculative Freemasonry* and Brigham Young had a copy of Joshua Bradley’s *Some Beauties of Freemasonry* (Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 250). The Tanners’ book, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, 50, states that “both Masonic and anti-Masonic books were available at the bookstore in Palmyra.” Also that Henry Dana Ward’s anti-Masonic book, *Free Masonry*, printed in 1828, contained the Masonic myth, e.g., the Enoch legend of the gold plate, from which Joseph could have borrowed.
64. See Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 98.
65. According to Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*, 361, Oliver Cowdery may have assisted Ethan Smith in the printing of his book. Cowdery had experience as a printer and peddled his trade, according to the *Cleveland Herald*, in the towns of eastern New York and Canada. Cowdery’s home town was Poultney, the same town where Ethan Smith’s book was published. No doubt he had a copy of it when he moved to western New York and met the Smith family. Cowdery’s stepmother also belonged to Rev. Ethan Smith’s congregation. The idea of the Indians being Israelites was well known for years before Joseph Smith. Joseph Mede first stated, in 1634, that the devil led the Indians to America. But by 1650, Thomas Thorowgood insisted they were the Lost Tribes. This motivated

John Eliot to do missionary work among the Natick Indians. James Adair and Elias Boudinot, the latter in *A Star in the West, or an Attempt to Discover the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel*, continued the idea in 1775 and 1816. Ethan Smith then tried, in his book, to reconcile the lack of confirming data (See Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 163).

66. This book was in the Manchester rental library, five miles from Joseph Smith's home. Since it was repeatedly checked out, the book's subject was "common knowledge" (Wesley P. Walters, *The Human Origins of the Book of Mormon*, [1979, "The Origin of the Book of Mormon," n.p., Institute of Pastoral Studies of the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation; reprint, Clearwater, F.L.: Ex-Mormons For Jesus, n.d.], 9). It also included the idea that the Indians were the Tribes of Israel. Josiah Priest later published *American Antiquities* (n.p.: Hoffman & White, 1833), three years after the Book of Mormon came out. It summarized material available before 1830, quoting at least forty writers having the idea that the American Indians were Israelites. B. H. Roberts, Mormon Historian, says the works of Josiah Priest and Ethan Smith "were either possessed by Joseph Smith or certainly known by him, for they were surely available to him" (Walters, *The Human Origins of the Book of Mormon*, 8). For similarities between Ethan Smith's book, *View of the Hebrews, or the Tribes of Israel in America* (1st ed. 1823, 2nd ed. 1825. Reprint 1977, n.p. Arne Press) and the Book of Mormon, see Walters, *The Human Origins of the Book of Mormon*, 11.

67. See Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 204.

68 Many of these ideas were also incorporated into Masonry.

69. The alchemist philosophy of divinizing human beings was adopted into Masonry. In the *Royal Arch* degree, its lecture begins with the question: "Are you a Royal Arch Mason? Ans. I AM THAT I AM." Towards the end of the ceremony, the initiate enters the first, second and third veils of the holy tabernacle of God with the password, "I AM THAT I AM" (Henry Dana Ward, *The Antimasonic Review* [1828]: 2:117–118, available through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, American Periodical Series 1800–1850, Reel 769).

END

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