

# MORE MORMON THAN THE MORMONS:

*A World for Joseph Smith.*<sup>1</sup>

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A FEW MONTHS before Joseph Smith was born in Vermont, a young woman living twenty miles southwest of Palmyra, New York added a line of early revival news to her family letter. “[I]t apers to be a Refam<sup>a</sup>tion hear,” reported Mercy Walker in Bristol, Ontario County. “[T]hare is more or less baptisde evry wek[,] sumtims Seven in a day . . .” Would Mercy or her relatives back in Massachusetts have been surprised to learn that in less than a quarter century, a persistent new religion would start in her part of the country - or that its fledgling prophet would ask Mercy’s brother-in-law George for money to print the Book of Mormon?<sup>2</sup>

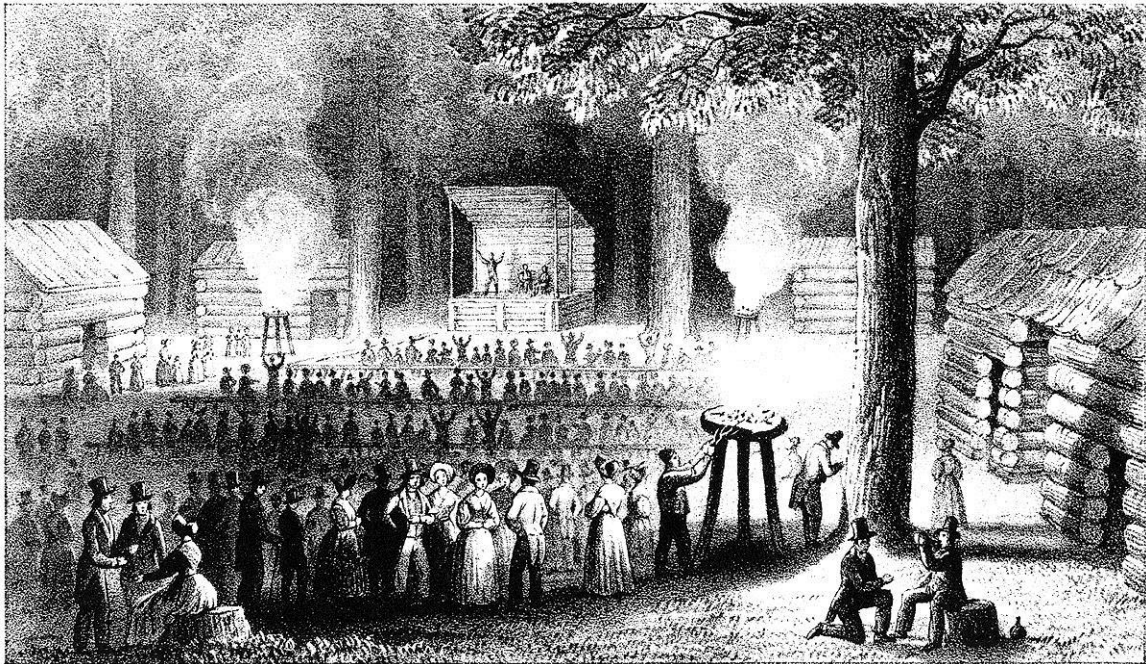
THE BURNED-OVER DISTRICT, which I think we can consider more as symbol than boundary, was a perfect setting for the rise of Mormonism. But it was much more than that, and it did not stop influencing Mormonism in 1829 or ‘30. My proposition now is that some of the fires of that place and of its broader culture burned more brightly-“Mormon” than earliest Mormonism itself at first, at least as Mormonism was preached to the general body of Latter-day Saints. Analogies based on fire appear frequently in the religious literature of the early nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> A shorter version of this article was presented September 28, 2019 under title, “The Spirit, Like a Fire: A World for Joseph Smith” at the annual conference of the John Whitmer Historical Association held at Fairport, New York. I explore most of the themes which are treated here in much greater depth in my *Mormon Parallels: A Bibliographic Source* (Lafayette, New York: Rick Grunder - Books, 2008; 2014, available in PDF at [MormonParallels.com](http://MormonParallels.com). A limited hard-cover printed edition in five volumes was published by Bear Hollow Books, South Jordan, Utah, in 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Tisdale Walker and Mercy Lincoln Walker. Individual autograph letters signed on a single folded sheet to Benjamin Lincoln (in Taunton, Massachusetts). Bristol, Ontario County, New York, September 8, 1805. Original in my collection. Mercy’s sister Charity married George Crane, the Quaker whom Joseph Smith would one day approach unsuccessfully for funds to print the Book of Mormon. Regarding Crane, see the following summary accessed April 2, 2020: <http://www.fullerconsideration.com/sources.php?cat=ER-GC>

century. The phenomena presented in my samplings below spread wherever fuel and receptacles provided - kindling, illuminating or consuming - in a variety of hues and patterns as diverse and unpredictable as the most capricious flames.



Sparks were certainly in the air Smith breathed.<sup>3</sup> To refuse the concepts of these works for fear they might detract from some uniqueness of the Mormon faiths is to deny their prophet his right to adhere to anything he found "virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy."<sup>4</sup> Resemblances between Mormon thought and its precursors and early contemporaries go only so far as one will see them - hopefully never beyond limits of judicious research and comparison. Yet, like the myriad colors that spring from unexpected sources at the base of a flame, the light of Mormonism is only richer for the countless beginnings from which it may be seen to partake.

In the pages which follow, I will share sentiments of Joseph Smith's era from contemporary manuscripts and publications treating the meaning and need of spiritual experience, the separate personages of the Father and Son, infinite atonement, universal salvation, paranoia against works of darkness, and struggles for higher gifts.

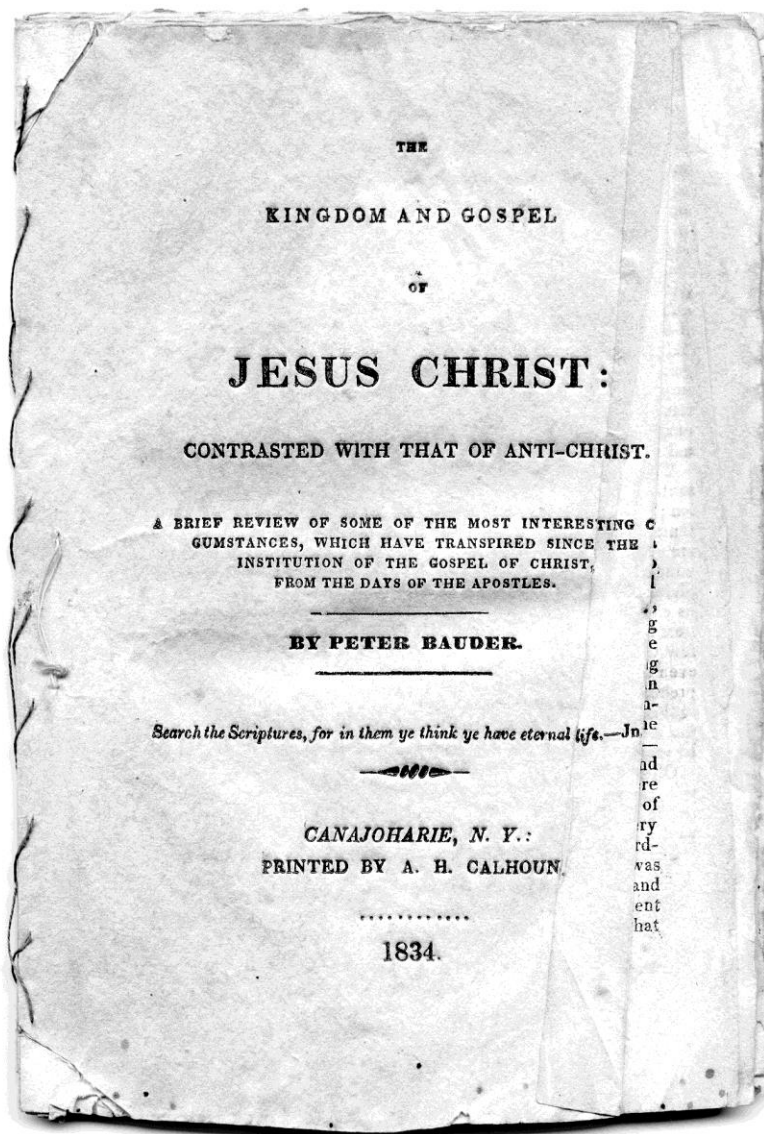
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<sup>3</sup> Illustration above from one of four lithograph plates in Henry Caswall, *America and the American Church* (London: For J. G. & F. Rivington, 1839); see *Mormon Parallels*, 1583.

<sup>4</sup> ". . . indeed we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul 'we believe all things we hope all things,' we have endured many things and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is any thing virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praise worthy we seek after these things." Joseph Smith to ". . . Mr. John Wentworth, Editor, and Proprietor of the 'Chicago Democrat,' . . ." as published in the *Times and Seasons* 3:9 (March 1, 1842), 710.

## I. THE MEANING AND NEED OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Readers may have heard of *The Kingdom and Gospel of Jesus Christ: Contrasted With That Of Anti-Christ*, an 1834 pamphlet by one Peter Bauder who searched for a pure and primitive Christian church. In October 1830, Bauder found himself



more than a hundred miles from home, visiting the Whitmer cabin in Fayette, New York to search “into the mystery of [Joseph Smith’s] system of religion . . .” He spent nearly twenty four hours there, much of the time in private conversation with the Mormon prophet. Smith let Bauder see his “church records,” and told him about the angel and the plates and his seerstone.<sup>5</sup> Smith even showed

<sup>5</sup> Peter Bauder, *The Kingdom and Gospel of Jesus Christ: Contrasted With That Of Anti-Christ. A Brief Review of Some of the Most Interesting C[ir]-cumstances, Which have Transpired Since the Institution of*

Bauder the first pages of the Book of Moses manuscript, recently dictated, which only a few Saints had seen.

Bauder was himself a translator,<sup>6</sup> and a sort of primitivist seeker filled with boundless arcane religious insight. Smith probably hoped to make a disciple of Bauder, as he would do with Sidney Rigdon in that same house a few weeks later. But Bauder wanted something deeper than colorful visions or artifacts. And in this, he was disappointed. As he phrased it in 1834, Joseph Smith “could give me no christian experience.” I suspect the question rather caught Smith off guard.

The term “Christian experience” never meant simply going to church in those days, or casually joining a particular denomination. Nor did it intend outwardly theatrical manifestations. It pointed more to inner transformation that was all-transcending, not merely visible. Presbyterian pastor Seth Williston, preaching fifty miles south of Bauder’s home, encouraged true “religious *experience*,” in terms suggesting a first-hand taste and knowledge of divine goodness instilling selfless, saintly, scripture-consistent sentiments to promote “the *whole Christian character*,” as opposed to “[v]isionary experiences, however varied in different periods and places,” which he said “are all deceptive; . . .”<sup>7</sup>

Joseph Smith told a striking story about an angel and plates of gold - a “treasure” for the entire “human family.” But where was Smith’s essential conversion, his granted work of grace, the inner change? Bauder ultimately left the Whitmer farm unfulfilled, still longing for an assembly of pure people with “reformation wrought in the hearts of their members, by a godly sorrow for sin, and a compunction of soul, and pungent conviction, which precedes a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory . . .”<sup>8</sup>

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*the Gospel of Christ, From the Days of the Apostles. By Peter Bauder. Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life. —Jn. (Canajoharie, N.Y.: Printed by A. H. Calhoun, 1834), 36-37. In my collection. For discussion, see Mormon Parallels, entry 45. While long known, this pamphlet’s primitive title page is now first illustrated here in this paper.*

<sup>6</sup> Bauder seems to be an obscure figure, and the only other work credited to him is a translation from the German of *The Spiritual Mirror, or Looking-Glass: Exhibiting the Human Heart as Being Either the Temple of God, or Habitation of Devils . . . Anciently Published in the French Language . . . in 1732, Translated into the German Language, From Which it is Now Translated by P. Bauder*, (Albany, New York: Printed by E. & E. Hosford, 1825, with subsequent editions in Newburyport, Massachusetts published by Charles Whipple from 1830-44).

<sup>7</sup> *A Sermon on Revivals of Religion; Containing a Caution to the Church, in the Nineteenth Century, to Beware of the Devices of Satan in Corrupting Them. By Seth Williston, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Durham, N.Y. (New-York: Printed by D. Fanshaw, at the American Tract Society House, 1827), 37, 39 and 38, respectively.*

<sup>8</sup> Bauder, 36.

An argument offered by Latter-day Saint defenders, of course, is that Smith felt too cautious around Bauder to mention his first vision, even though Smith seems to have shown him everything else. Whether or not Joseph Smith had actually *had* a First Vision by then is something people will debate “until the cows come home” –resurrected. But that misses the point, because Joseph Smith was not *ready* to preach a First Vision in 1830, *nor was Bauder asking for one*. Instead, a simple declaration in humble “fisherman style” (to use Bauder’s expression)<sup>9</sup> would have answered nicely for some “christian experience” in the life of Joseph Smith. What’s more, we are told that just such a thing had already been presented publicly at the Whitmer home four months earlier, during the Church of Christ’s first conference.

The Mormon Articles and Covenants, at least as preserved in the two earliest surviving copies - printed and handwritten six months *following* Bauder’s visit with Joseph Smith - included an assurance that “. . . it truly was manifested unto this first elder that he had received a remission of his sins, . . .”<sup>10</sup> That’s all Bauder needed, but back in October 1830, Smith gave Bauder “no christian experience.” If there had been something more that day, I see no logical motive for either man to have concealed it, given the sort of background they seemed to share.

When I say that the surrounding culture was in some parts “more Mormon than the Mormons,” I’m talking about the parts we can touch and measure. At a time when plenty of theophanies were available in Joseph Smith’s world, the Latter-day Saints were not promoting such things predominantly, such as I was trained to do as a young missionary in the 1960s. How many of us from that tradition can still recite the 1839 Joseph Smith story today, perhaps in Spanish or German or Italian? For decades before the Church of Christ was organized in 1830, people were publishing their various experiences, ranging from visions down to simpler but sublime impressions of transcendent bliss and sanctification triggered by prayer to relieve desperate feelings of guilt and unworthiness.

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<sup>9</sup> Bauder 4: “. . . for the man of common education to understand, I thought best to present a pamphlet in plain fisherman style, . . .”; Bauder, 31, in reference to the first Methodists in England, 1739: “In consequence of their unusual humble manner of worshiping God, the enemies of the cross called them Methodist, in order to ridicule them; they however, fishermen-like, continued faithful; . . .”; Bauder 35, in reference to Jacob Albright’s Evangelical Association in Pennsylvania: “God owned HIS word, which was dispensed in Fishermen stile, . . .”

<sup>10</sup> Book of Commandments and Revelations, Revelation Book 1 (manuscript, Church History Library; hereafter, BCR), 53; published Book of Commandments 24:6; 1835 Doctrine and Covenants 2:2 with words reversed to read “was truly,” as remains in the modern LDS D&C 20:5. For background discussion and the earliest known text of the Articles and Covenants, printed in the *Painesville Telegraph* on April 19, 1831, see The Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, various editors and dates; hereafter, JSP) Documents 1:116-26.

Consider Jacob Loucks, “a man of no learning” in Upstate New York. He thought *his* sins were forgiven, but he wanted something more. He couldn’t write, but he knew how to sign his name with an X after he bore his testimony to the Reformed Methodists in 1817. Brigham Young and his relatives probably knew of this account when they showed up in Kirtland to meet Joseph Smith in 1832, because Reformed Methodism was what the Youngs had been preaching, and it was a denomination that urged and preserved such testimonies in what they called their “experience books” or “Witnesses,” printed around 1817.<sup>11</sup>

Jacob Loucks testified that . . .

. . . one morning, when I awaked up, after I had been praying the night before, my burden was all gone, and I felt as though I had peace with my God. . . . And it was in me to go to my barn and cry to God for a witness. . . . and as I was praying, it seemed as though I almost beheld the goodness before it came down, and seemed to come on my head, and descend right down through my body, and it seemed as though flesh and skin, and all opened, and my teeth snapped together, and the tears run, and I cannot tell how I felt, but knew my sins were forgiven, and this was the witness of it. And then this operation went off almost, and I prayed God to send it again more powerful, I was a man of a strong constitution, and as it went through me the second time, I came very near falling. And something said, how do you know but what it came from the devil; and something struck on the barn floor like a man, but I did not see any thing, but I said, satan depart from me, for I know that my sins are forgiven.<sup>12</sup>

There was another testimony the Youngs probably knew, which came from Mary Brown Stevens, a freshly Reformed Methodist in Monroe, Orange County, New York who, as she related,

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<sup>11</sup> For background on the Young family’s association with the Reformed Methodists, see *Mormon Parallels*, 1168-74, and Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801-1844* [edited by Elden Jay Watson. (“from volumes 25 and 26 of Millennial Star”; Salt Lake City: printed by Smith Secretarial Service, Copyright Elden Jay Watson, 1968), xiv-xxiv (by Phineas Young). Regarding the September 1832 visit of Brigham Young and his brother Joseph with Joseph Smith (at Kirtland, Ohio, in company with their brother-in-law John P. Greene then living in Kirtland), see Young, 3-5. No copy of the Reformed Methodist experience books (ca. 1817) is known to survive today, but some dozen of the accounts they contained survive in extracts reprinted in a few extremely rare Reformed Methodist books of that era; for background, see *Mormon Parallels*, 1178.

<sup>12</sup> “*The Experience of Jacob Loucks taken from his own words, July 27, 1817, who is a man of no learning, and of the nation called High Dutch,*” in William Pitts, *The Gospel Witness: Containing Evidence that the Holy Ghost is Given to All That Believe. Together with the Journal of a Travelling Preacher; And the Religious Experiences of Several Persons. To Which is Subjoined A Sermon, Delivered by an Indian. By William Pitts, Preacher of the Gospel.* (Catskill [New York]: Published by Junius S. Lewis and Co., for the Author [U. C. Lewis, printer, Newburgh], 1818), 162-63. Loucks was born at Nine Partners, Dutchess County, New York, May 3, 1774. See *Mormon Parallels*, 1195-96.

. . . got into a wonderful struggle of soul, to obtain the gift of the Holy Ghost. And by claiming the promise, I did receive it, for it came down and struck me on the head, and went all through me or over me; and as it went down it cleansed and purified me, so that I felt as clear as pure water; and it was different from any thing that I ever received before, . . . And I had a discovery of the Lord by faith; who appeared to set between me and the chamber floor, for about one hour. And after this, I had the same views, and it often seemed as though I could see the Lord before me, almost as clear as at the first.<sup>13</sup>

Young Mrs. Stevens, age 18, signed her affidavit with an X on November 27, 1818.

When Joseph Smith finally recorded the first surviving version of his own theophany in 1832 - the year he met the Youngs, and nearly two years after Peter Bauder stumped him about his history with "christian experience," Smith described with some color his own personal struggling with guilt, relieved by the appearance of "the Lord of glory [who] was crucified for the world." It would be his only version of the First Vision to prioritize so intensely his anxious redemption from sin.<sup>14</sup> Yet Smith himself, and his Saints in general seemed slow, as a body, to echo the most overt theophanies of their day, or even to institutionalize mandatory, uniformly-defined, intensely inward infusions of the Spirit.

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<sup>13</sup> "The Experience of Mary Stevens, Wife of Reuben Stevens, of the town of Monroe, County of Orange, State of New-York; formerly Mary Brown," in William Pitts, *The Spiritual Testimony; Containing Nine Sermons, Three Letters, Experiences of Two Different Persons on Remission of Sins, and of the Gift of the Holy Ghost. Questions and Answers on the Whole Duty of Man Under the New Dispensation. And About Forty New Hymns and Odes, Together with a Few Altered Ones.* By William Pitts. (Hudson [New York]: Printed by Ashbel Stoddard, 1821), 91-92; see *Mormon Parallels* entry 323.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Smith Letterbook 1 (manuscript, Church History Library), 3; JSP Histories 1:13. "I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world . . . I cried unto the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go and to obtain mercy and the Lord hear my cry in the wilderness . . .," p. 12; ". . . and he spake unto me saying Joseph <my son> thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy <way> walk in my statutes and keep my commandments . . .," p. 13. According to the editors of the Joseph Smith Papers, this manuscript "history was most likely composed between 20 July and 22 September 1832." (ibid., 10). John P. Greene was living in Kirtland at that time, and Brigham Young and his brother Joseph were there for an unspecified week that September, leaving in October. (Young, 5). Complicating the dating of the Youngs' visit to Kirtland is a statement by Brigham Young that while there for "about one week," he "baptized one man while in Kirtland, by the name of Gibson Smith," Newel K. Whitney's father-in-law "who had just come from Connecticut" to investigate the Church (ibid.). However, the only record I can find of Gibson Smith's *month* of baptism in 1832 occurs in Andrew Jenson's retrospective roster of early missionaries (list assembled in 1925), which gives Gibson Smith's baptism date as June 1832, rather than September; see LDS Church website: <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/missionary/individual/gibson-smith-1780?lang=eng>, accessed August 25, 2019.

“Oh, do not be discouraged,” admonished camp-meeting hymn books during Joseph Smith’s youth,

For Jesus is your friend,  
And if you lack for knowledge,  
He'll not refuse to lend:  
Neither will he upbraid you,  
Though often you request;  
He'll give you grace to conquer,  
And take you home to rest.<sup>15</sup>

This comes from the oft-read hymn beginning with the line, “O When shall I see Jesus?”<sup>16</sup> Newell Knight saw Jesus at the first Mormon conference at Fayette, sitting at the right hand of God, according to the 1839 Manuscript History of the Church,<sup>17</sup> but we certainly do not see the Mormons as a body promoting appearances of the Father or the Son in 1830. Instead, that would enter Mormon lore gradually, garnished with added or changing details.<sup>18</sup>

For all the talk of spiritual gifts by the Mormons - and in the Book of Mormon itself - I wait until late 1835 to hear Joseph Smith relax enough to give a visitor some fledgling version of his own First Vision story.<sup>19</sup> I wait until 1836 to see mass immersions in a baptism of the holy ghost as described at the Kirtland Temple,<sup>20</sup> or as related individually by young Lorenzo Snow praying alone for a

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<sup>15</sup> *Social and Camp-Meeting Songs, for the Pious . . . Third Edition.* (Baltimore: Published by John J. Harrod, 1819), Hymn 29, p. 50, referring to James 1:5; cf. Joseph Smith—History 1:11. See *Mormon Parallels*, entry 407.

<sup>16</sup> I have owned or examined several hymnals of that era containing these lyrics.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . [edited by, and with] An Introduction and Notes by B. H. Roberts. Published for the Church. Second Edition Revised.* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret Book Company, 1978) 1:85, but taken from the 1839 Manuscript History of the Church. Draft 1 of this account reads: “<Brother> Newel Knights . . . saw there <represented> the great work which through my instrumentality was yet to be accomplished, He saw Heaven opened and beheld the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting [at] the right hand of the Majesty on high, and had it made plain to his understanding that the time would come when he should be admitted into his presence to enjoy his society for ever and ever, . . .” JSP Histories 1:388.

<sup>18</sup> Richard P. Howard, “An Analysis of Six Contemporary Accounts Touching Joseph Smith's First Vision,” in *Restoration Studies I, Sesquicentennial Edition: A Collection of Essays About the History, Beliefs, and Practices of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.* Maurice L. Draper, . . . Editor, Clare D. Vlahos, . . . Assistant Editor. (Independence, Missouri: Temple School, The Auditorium, 1980), 95-117 (includes “An Examination of Fourteen Aspects of the First Vision as Variouslly Treated in Six Contemporary Accounts,” 107-117).

<sup>19</sup> Related by Smith to Robert Matthews who was then posing as “Joshua, the Jewish Minister”; Howard, 99-100. See a primitive contemporary portrait of Matthews, below.

<sup>20</sup> Lorenzo Snow recorded in his journal that on one occasion during the early days in the Kirtland temple,

Father Smith presided over the meeting . . . and in course of supplication he very earnestly prayed that the Spirit of God might be poured out as on the day of Pentecost—that it might



## MATTHEWS, *alias* MATTHIAS,



CHARGED WITH HAVING

## *Swindled Mr. B. H. Folger,*

witness that season.<sup>21</sup> The background culture of the Restoration had been waiting for Latter-day Saints to catch up, in some respects, until the mid- to late-1830s and beyond.

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come "as a rushing mighty wind." Some time after, in the midst of the exercises of the forenoon, it did come; and whether Father Smith had forgotten what he had prayed for, or whether in the fervency of his heart, when praying he did not realize what he prayed for, I never ascertained; but when the sound came and filled the house, with an expression of great astonishment he raised his eyes, exclaiming, "What! Is the house on fire?" But presently he comprehended the cause of his alarm, and was filled with unspeakable joy.

[Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Written and Compiled by his Sister, Eliza R. Snow Smith* . . . (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, Printers, 1884), 13-14.]

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-9.

ILLUSTRATION above from a rare woodcut portrait of Robert Matthews on the title page of W. E. Drake, *The Prophet! A Full and Accurate Report of the Judicial Proceedings in the Extraordinary and Highly Interesting Case of Matthews, alias Matthias, . . .* (New-York: Printed and Published by W. Mitchell, 1834), 1. In my collection, obtained from noted Shaker bibliographer David Newell.

## II. The SEPARATE PERSONAGES of the FATHER and the SON.

If Joseph Smith was not ready to share a theophany with Peter Bauder in 1830, the woods were nonetheless full of such stories, figuratively speaking, and they would hardly have shocked.

In 1998, Richard Bushman published "The Visionary World of Joseph Smith," an article presenting what he characterized in his subtitle as "visionary experiences, opening a way for some to hear and receive the Prophet's unique messages."<sup>22</sup> But much of that backdrop was more Mormon than the Mormons themselves, at first - a fact that jumps from the pages in a published pamphlet which Dr. Bushman selected as "the one most like any of Joseph's revelations," *The Religious Experience of Norris Stearns, Written by Divine Command*.<sup>23</sup>

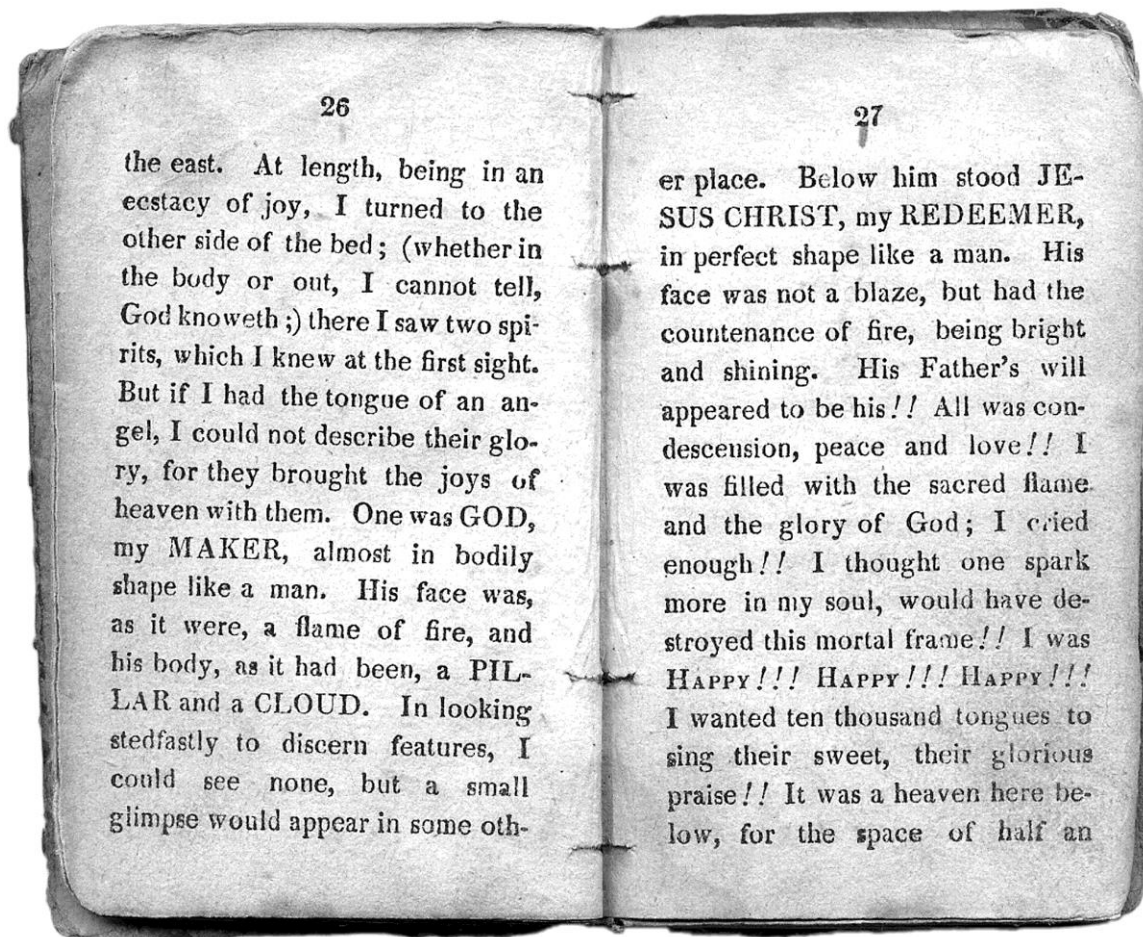
Stearns' testimony was first printed in 1815 in Greenfield, Massachusetts, after which Stearns must have moved to Central New York State, because in the town of Cortland he had a revised and corrected edition printed in 1820, the same year which Joseph Smith would ultimately attach to his own theophany. Of this final version of Stearns' account, one copy is known to survive. Its primitive, worn pages reaffirm his testimony . . .

. . . I was in great despair, and could not pray, . . . And if I attempted to plead for mercy, sin, for a while, clouded all hope. At length, as I lay, apparently upon the brink of eternal wo, suddenly there came a sweet flow of the love of God to my soul, which gradually increased. At the same time, there appeared a small gleam of light in the room, above the brightness of the sun, then at his meridian, which grew brighter and brighter. As this light and love increased, my sins began to separate, and the mountain was removed towards the east. At length, being in an ecstasy of joy, I turned to the other side of the bed; (whether in the body or out, I cannot tell, God knoweth;) there I saw two spirits, which I knew at the first

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Lyman Bushman, "The Visionary World of Joseph Smith," *Brigham Young University Studies* 37:1 (1997-98), 183-204.

<sup>23</sup> Bushman, 190; Norris Stearns, *The Religious Experience of Norris Stearns, Written by Divine Command. Shewing the marvellous dealings of GOD to his Soul, and the miraculous manner in which he was delivered from the Jaws of Death and Hell; and his soul set at liberty.--Likewise his appointment to the Ministry; and Commission from on High, to preach the gospel to every creature.* (Greenfield, [Massachusetts]: Printed for the Author, at the Herald Office, 1815).



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the east. At length, being in an ecstasy of joy, I turned to the other side of the bed; (whether in the body or out, I cannot tell, God knoweth;) there I saw two spirits, which I knew at the first sight. But if I had the tongue of an angel, I could not describe their glory, for they brought the joys of heaven with them. One was GOD, my MAKER, almost in bodily shape like a man. His face was, as it were, a flame of fire, and his body, as it had been, a PILLAR and a CLOUD. In looking stedfastly to discern features, I could see none, but a small glimpse would appear in some oth-

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er place. Below him stood JESUS CHRIST, my REDEEMER, in perfect shape like a man. His face was not a blaze, but had the countenance of fire, being bright and shining. His Father's will appeared to be his!! All was condescension, peace and love!! I was filled with the sacred flame and the glory of God; I cried enough!! I thought one spark more in my soul, would have destroyed this mortal frame!! I was HAPPY!!! HAPPY!!! HAPPY!!! I wanted ten thousand tongues to sing their sweet, their glorious praise!! It was a heaven here below, for the space of half an

sight. But if I had the tongue of an angel, I could not describe their glory, for they brought the joys of heaven with them. One was GOD, my MAKER, almost in bodily shape like a man. His face was, as it were, a flame of fire, and his body, as it had been, a PILLAR and a CLOUD. In looking stedfastly to discern features, I could see none, but a small glimpse would appear in some other place. Below him stood JESUS CHRIST, my REDEEMER, in perfect shape like a man. His face was not a blaze, but had the countenance of fire, being bright and shining. His Father's will appeared to be his!! All was condescension, peace and love!! I was filled with the sacred flame and the glory of God; I cried enough!! I thought one spark more in my soul, would have destroyed this mortal frame!! I was Happy!!! Happy!!! Happy!!! I wanted ten thousand tongues to sing their sweet, their glorious praise!! It was a heaven here below, for the space of half an hour! <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *The Religious Experience of Norris Stearns, Written by Divine Command. Shewing the marvellous dealings of God to his soul, and the miraculous manner in which he was delivered from the jaws of Death and Hell; and his soul set at liberty.—Likewise, his appointment to the Ministry and Commission from on high, to preach the Gospel to every creature. Second Edition—(corrected.)* (Cortland Village [Cortland, New York]: Printed by David Campbell for the Author, 1820), 24-28. In my collection.

In 1820 when this was printed at Cortland, New York, a different printer was active in that same town - Mormonism's eventual first editor, W. W. Phelps,<sup>25</sup> future author of "The Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning." Phelps may well have seen Stearns' little booklet, but we don't know, and it doesn't matter, because I'm talking about broad cultural richness here, not specific focused borrowing. Defenders online, and Dr. Bushman himself in his article, work hard to show how Joseph Smith was not Norris Stearns. But it seems to me that God was in the air there, and in 1815 and 1820, Stearns was rather more Mormon than Joseph Smith when it came to theophanies.

In 1832, Joseph Smith did not sound like the vision of Norris Stearns with Stearns' separate Father and Son. But, Smith would come closer to Stearns in late 1834-1835 with the fifth Lecture on Faith's Godhead composed of two beings, among whom the Son was the most physically defined of the two.<sup>26</sup> What we need is more inclusive perspective. Seeds were germinating for almost anything in the Burnt-Over District, and a surprising variety of them continued to sprout in Mormonism as it evolved.

### III. INFINITE ATONEMENT.

In young Joseph Smith's world, the Unitarians were preaching that the Father and the Son are two separate, distinct beings. Back where Joseph Smith had first grown up, four out of five ordinary folk in some communities already took that much for granted. As one "good woman" of the region observed, "This is what we ignorant people always believed."<sup>27</sup> But Unitarians viewed the Godhead as

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<sup>25</sup> H[enry]. P[erry]. Smith, ed., *History of Cortland County with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of its Prominent Men and Pioneers*. (Syracuse, New York: D. Mason & Co., Publishers, 1885), 188-89, 236.

Designations can become confusing until one explains that "town," in Eastern parlance, refers to a large, somewhat square township within a county, often containing several villages. In Cortland County near the geographic center of New York State, the *town* of Homer where the Phelps family settled by 1800 contained the developing *villages* of Homer and Cortland, among others.

Due to population expansion, a new town of Cortlandville was created from the south portion of the town of Homer, and just south of the Phelps farm, on April 11, 1829. That new town included the village of Cortland. The hundred-acre Phelps property was situated in the hills at the east edge of the town of Homer, some five miles to the east of Homer village and six miles northeast of Cortland village (near the coordinates 42.644387, -76.071659). Around 1820, W. W. Phelps was in a state of publishing transition between the two villages.

<sup>26</sup> "The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness: The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, . . ." Lecture Fifth. Of Faith. 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, page 53.

<sup>27</sup> Reportedly thus stated, after she saw Thomas Worcester's 1810 Unitarian tract, *Our Savior's Divinity in Primitive Purity. A Sermon, on the Divine Sonship of Christ. . . .* (Concord, New Hampshire, printed by George Hough, July 1810); see *Mormon Parallels* entry 489. The quote

composed uniquely of the Father, who created the Son as a subsequent or “derived creature” who thus did not partake of the same divinity as his Father. Of course orthodox Trinitarians saw this as a problem, as did many plain folk, whatever their practical beliefs may have been.

Then in 1810, a New Hampshire minister by the name of Noah Worcester published a book called *Bible News, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, a work which found a way for the Father and Son to be completely separate personages, while still keeping the Son fully, equally divine like the Father, through holy inheritance, much as humans inherit the traits of their mortal parents. Think of *Bible News* as the *CES Letter*<sup>28</sup> of the 1810s, questioning the very foundations of Trinitarian thought and authority.

The local association of Congregationalist ministers headed by Ethan Smith censured Noah Worcester severely,<sup>29</sup> but Worcester kept preaching and publishing. His doctrine eventually inspired members of the Christian Connection, including Pastor David Millard in West Bloomfield, New York. Millard’s pamphlet *The True Messiah Exalted, Or, Jesus Christ Really the Son of God . . .* was published two years prior to 1820 in Canandaigua - a dozen miles from the Smith farm. Millard was thus noticed by Milton V. Backman in his Bookcraft publication, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*.<sup>30</sup> But Millard gave Noah Worcester ample credit for the doctrine of the separate Father and divine Son, calling Worcester’s writings “a rich treasure,” and wishing that a copy of *Bible News* “were in the hands of every sincere inquirer after truth.”<sup>31</sup>

Ethan Smith, meanwhile, became increasingly exercised over this burgeoning heresy. What would it mean for religion as he practiced it, or for the very

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from this woman and the report of widespread similar belief appear in Thomas Worcester, *A Defence of Truth and Character against Ecclesiastical Intolerance . . .* (Concord, N. H.: printed by I. and W. R. Hill, 1812), 17, see *Mormon Parallels* entry 487; see also, Thomas Worcester, *The Most Plain Harmonious Sense of Scripture the Test of Opinions. . . .* (Boston: Published for the Author, and for sale by Bradford & Read, 58 Cornhill, and by most of the Booksellers in New-England. Watson & Bangs, Printers, 1812), 34 (*Mormon Parallels* entry 488).

<sup>28</sup> Jeremy T. Runnells, *CES Letter: My Search for Answers to My Mormon Doubts*. Updated and Expanded Edition (CES Letter Foundation, 2017), an unexpectedly influential compilation of difficult Mormon issues, widely published and debated in the 2010s; see <https://cesletter.org/>

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Worcester, *Defence*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> David Millard, *The True Messiah Exalted, Or, Jesus Christ Really the Son of God, Vindicated; In Three Letters to a Presbyterian Minister* (Canandaigua, New York: Printed For the Author, By J. D. Bemis, 1818). Described in Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith’s First Vision; Confirming Evidences and Contemporary Accounts . . . Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged*. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, [1980]), 102-4.

<sup>31</sup> Preface to the first edition of the expanded version (Canandaigua [New York]: Printed by J. D. Bemis and Co. for the Author, 1823), as reprinted in the second edition of the expanded version (Union Mills, New York: Christian General Book Association, 1837), iv; see *Mormon Parallels*, 937.

atonement itself? He got busy and published a sober corrective to Worcester's innovations at Boston in 1814 with recommendations from leading conservative figures of his day, including Jedidiah Morse. Its title worked to counteract the notion that Christ could be separate from the Father: *A Treatise on the Character of Jesus Christ, and on the Trinity in Unity of the Godhead; with Quotations from the Primitive Fathers. By Ethan Smith, Pastor of a Church in Hopkinton, N. H. . . .*<sup>32</sup>

Did ordinary people of Joseph Smith's day actually stew over such stuff? The data are too limited to attempt any scientifically quantitative answer, but I love an example which startled an educated Scottish visitor to this region in 1820. John Howison was amused while waiting for his connection at Weedsport, one county east of Palmyra. A friendly shopkeeper offered Howison a dusty glass of bitters to pass the time, but the traveler declined. "There was a long pause," recounted Howison afterward. "'Belike, 'squire,' said he again, 'as you a'[i]nt in drinking trim, you may have a mind to read a bit. Here's my brother's Treatise on the Trinity.' He accordingly presented me with a small volume, which I read until the canal-boat came up."<sup>33</sup>

One of the Trinitarian arguments Ethan Smith advanced to combat Noah Worcester included INFINITE ATONEMENT, which he said was only achievable through a Son who was co-eternal with the Father, and never created. The term "infinite atonement" does not occur in the Bible, but it was used by Jonathan Edwards and others in a handful of publications in the 1700s and early 1800s. The phrase then blossomed a bit during the fifteen years preceding its appearance in the Book of Mormon to mean something quite specific that undergirded the Book of Mormon's original vision of deity in 1829, but which would not remain "Mormon" for very long.

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<sup>32</sup> Boston: Published by R. P. & C. Williams; Printed by N. Willis, 1814. (*Mormon Parallels* entry 397). According to Ethan's son, Dr. Lyndon Arnold Smith, this book was "designed as an answer to Noah Worcester's Bible News . . ."; biographical article based on a manuscript from Dr. Smith (citing Ethan Smith's 1824 second edition, *View of the Trinity*) in William Buell Sprague, ed., *Annals of the American Pulpit; Or Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of Various Denominations, from the Early Settlement of the Country to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Five. With Historical Introductions by William B. Sprague, D.D. . . .*, Volume 2 [Trinitarian Congregational] (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers; 1866), 299.

<sup>33</sup> John Howison, *Sketches of Upper Canada . . .* (Edinburgh, 1822, second ed.) quoted in *Upstate Travels; British Views of Nineteenth-Century New York. Edited, with an Introduction, by Roger Haydon* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 142-43. This occurred in June 1820, and the work mentioned may have been Ethan Smith's 1814 *Treatise . . . on the Trinity . . .* "It seems an inescapable conclusion," wrote Whitney Cross in 1950, "that a considerable proportion even of laymen read and relished the theological treatises." Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District; the Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1950), 109. Howison subsequently visited a cotton factory near Utica, in which many of the predominantly female workers were reading the Bible (Howison in *Upstate Travels*, 143).

“[C]ould any thing be equal to this redemption from hell, and title to heaven” asked Ethan Smith,

short of an *infinite* atonement, and an *infinite* righteousness? A foundation short of this must have been infinitely insufficient . . . To say, that . . . an atonement and righteousness, which a finite Son could effect, should be *declared* and *viewed* as of *infinite avail*, appears preposterous. . . . Can it be admitted as *possible* then, that the sufferings of a Saviour, who is only *derived* and *dependent*, can make an adequate atonement for the sins of the whole world?<sup>34</sup>

As Amulek agreed in the Book of Mormon, “there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.”<sup>35</sup> So Ethan Smith’s Trinitarian and specifically remedial application of the term “infinite atonement” appears to have found its way with similar intent into the 1829 dictation of the Book of Mormon. That intent was to argue that any separately-created, dependent Son of God could not possess the divinity required to atone for the sins of the world.

Today, members of the Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may explain to wicked Zeezrom in the Book of Mormon that Christ is not the very Eternal Father himself, but his Son. But in 1829, Amulek could answer without hesitating: “Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last . . .”<sup>36</sup> And why was the book’s martyr Abinadi burned alive? For testifying . . .

. . . that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, . . . and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth—And now, because he said this, they did put him to death; . . .<sup>37</sup>

**I**F separate personages in the Godhead were important to the Book of Mormon, it certainly went about teaching such doctrine ambiguously, at best. Whatever Latter Day Saints would believe by 1835, or 1844, or would finally codify in Utah<sup>38</sup> a few years after my parents were born, the Book of Mormon’s 1829

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<sup>34</sup> Smith 1814, 89-90 (italics original in the 1814 edition; italics removed in the 1824 edition which was printed by Smith and Shute in Poultney, Vermont between editions of Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews*.)

<sup>35</sup> Alma 34:12.

<sup>36</sup> Alma 11:28-39.

<sup>37</sup> Mosiah 7:27-28, spoken by King Limhi.

<sup>38</sup> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. First Presidency. *The Father and the Son; A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve*. [caption title]. [Salt Lake City, Utah, June 30, 1916]. Eight-page pamphlet; then reproduced in the *Improvement Era* 19 (August 1916), pp. 934-42, and in the missionary journal, *Liahona* 21 (March 25, 1925), pp. 380-84]. This was one of the

understanding of the “eternal God” meant not only that Christ always *will be*, but also, that he *has always been*, divinely co-eternal with the Father - and not physically separate from the Father - or derived, or ever created, or dependent. Differences between Ethan Smith’s Trinitarian views and a more simple Modalism in the 1830 Book of Mormon comprise an important but separate topic.<sup>39</sup> My point here, however, is that once again we see an example of the preceding culture - this time in the case of Noah Worcester and his potential Binitarian views - shifting early Mormonism gradually, at an elemental level.

#### IV. UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

Two parallels stand out particularly in Joseph Smith’s revelation to Martin Harris of 1829 or ’30 about paying the printer, and regarding eternal punishment (now LDS D&C 19). The first of these parallels was the old Universalist explanation that the term “eternal” can relate to eternal *principles* rather than eternal *duration*:

##### JOSEPH SMITH

1829 or 1830

. . . it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written *endless torment*. Again, it is written *eternal damnation*; . . .

. . . . .

. . . behold the mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore— Eternal punishment is God's punishment. Endless punishment is God's punishment.<sup>40</sup>

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most important theological statements or clarifications of the basic concept of the Godhead ever produced by LDS Church authorities. It finally established the basic doctrines of deity which are generally held by Utah-based Mormons today. The Father and the Son made it necessary for Charles W. Penrose to delete and alter portions of Parley P. Pratt's *Key to the Science of Theology* in order to make that work agree with the updated Mormon description of the Godhead. It also caused the Lectures on Faith to be dropped from the Doctrine and Covenants.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of Modalism, see my essay “Deity in the Book of Mormon” in *Mormon Parallels*, 1931-45. Swedenborgian Robert Hindmarsh in Manchester, England offered arguments in 1822 (reprinted in New York in 1823) which were strikingly similar to Book of Mormon views which would be asserted by Amulek and Abinadi in the Book of Mormon. Writing “*On the various NAMES in the WORD terminating with EL, which in the Hebrew language signifies GOD,*” Hindmarsh argued that “as there cannot possibly be more than one God either in essence or in person, it necessarily follows that the Saviour and Redeemer of the world is no other than the Mighty God of heaven and earth, the Everlasting Father of angels and men, Isa. ix, 6.” —*The New-Jerusalem Missionary* [New York: D. Fanshaw, Printer] 1:8 (December 1823), 256, quoting “from the London Intellectual Repository.”

<sup>40</sup> LDS D&C 19:6-7, 10-12.

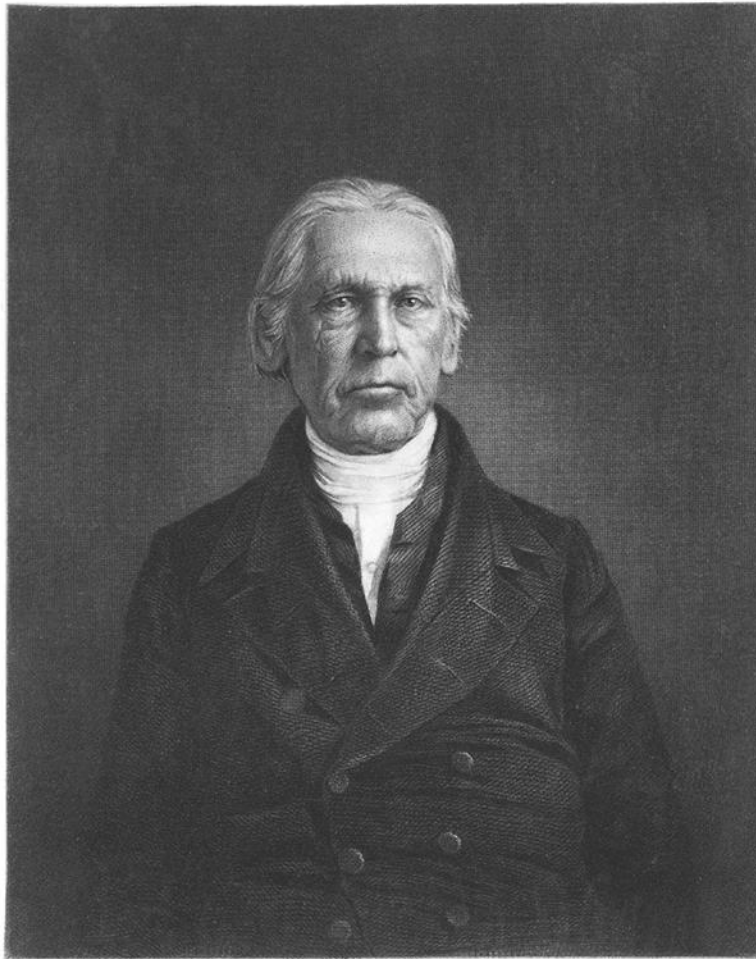


## JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

1947

"Eternal punishment" is God's punishment, since he is Eternal. All the laws of God are eternal, but in meting out punishment to men in mortality he has not declared that there is no opportunity for forgiveness even in the life to come.<sup>41</sup>

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## HOSEA BALLOU

1805

... I say, the word, *eternal*, is not applied to the *duration* of happiness, but to the nature of that life which is brought to light through the gospel; and as that life is of the nature of the unchangeable Deity, we justly believe it to be endless; ...<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation; Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums for the Year 1947*. (Salt Lake City: Council of the Twelve Apostles, 1946), 82.

<sup>42</sup> Hosea Ballou, *A Treatise on Atonement; in Which, the Finite Nature of Sin is Argued, Its Cause and Consequences as Such; The Necessity and Nature of Atonement; And its Glorious Consequences, in the Final Reconciliation of All Men to Holiness and Happiness*. By Hosea Ballou, of Barnard; Ordained

Hosea Ballou's all-important *Treatise on Atonement* thus addressed the positive side of the equation, and it became a classic of American Universalism. It was first published the year Joseph Smith was born, less than twenty miles from his birthplace. Ballou's concept of the finite nature of sin and punishment was a staple of Universalist thought. His book went through four editions before present-day LDS D&C 19 was given - three of those editions published in Vermont or New Hampshire while the Smith family lived there.

The second parallel was the idea that, while sinners will NOT have to burn in a hell without end, this benevolent fact can be God's little secret for awhile, a sort of pastor's fraud to keep people from sinning. Elhanan Winchester, another leading American Universalist, resisted such a concept of his time -that God doesn't tell people they won't really roast forever, because then they might get careless. It went like this:

OBJECTION.—It would not be prudent in God, even if he intended finally to restore the wicked, to let them know his gracious designs beforehand; it is time enough to let them know his gracious purposes towards them, when his former threatenings have failed of their effect, but not before.

—To which Elhanan Winchester . . .

ANSWERED.—God has thought it the abounding of his wisdom and prudence to make known to his saints this mystery of his will, even his purpose to rehead all things in Christ. This discovery is chiefly intended for the comfort and satisfaction of the good, and not for the encouragement of the bad.

God has frequently mixed promises of great mercies with threatenings of terrible judgments; yet his threatenings are not thereby weakened.<sup>43</sup>

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*Pastor of the United Societies of Barnard, Woodstock, Hartland, Bethel and Bridgewater. . . .* (Randolph: [Ver(mont).]: Printed by Sereno Wright, 1805), 162. Portrait of Ballou (1771-1852) from the frontispiece of Maturin M. Ballou, *Biography of Rev. Hosea Ballou. By His Youngest Son . . .* (Boston: Abel Tompkins, 1852), facing the title page.

<sup>43</sup> Elhanan Winchester, *The Universal Restoration, Exhibited in Four Dialogues Between a Minister and His Friend; Comprehending the Substance of Several Real Conversations Which the Author Had with Various Persons, Both in America and Europe, on that Interesting Subject, Chiefly Designed Fully to State, and Fairly to Answer the Most Common Objections that are Brought Against It from the Scriptures. By Elhanan Winchester. To this Edition is Prefixed, a Brief Account of the Means and Manner of the Author's Embracing These Sentiments; Intermixed with Some Sketches of His Life During Four Years.* (Worcester, Massachusetts: Isaiah Thomas, Jun.; Sold Wholesale and Retail by him, at his Printingoffice [sic] in Worcester, and by Thomas & Whipple, in Newburyport, October—1803), xxix. First published at London: Printed for the author and sold by T. Scollick, J. Marsom and the printer, 1788. The first American edition was published at Philadelphia: Printed by T. Dobson, at the stone-house, no. 41, South Second-Street, 1792

This exchange was published in several British and American editions of *The Universal Restoration* from the later seventeen-hundreds until well into the nineteenth century, with editions contemporary to Joseph Smith appearing as far west as Kentucky. Smith's revelation to the same effect, appears in LDS D&C 19:

7 Again, it is written *eternal damnation*; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's glory.

.....

21 And I command you that you preach naught but repentance, and show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me.

22 For they cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish.<sup>44</sup>

Why are the earlier parallels to this revelation which I cite more Mormon than the Mormons - given that this Latter-day Saint doctrine was articulated as early as 1829 or 1830? Because both it and later revelations on degrees of glory were only implemented gradually. As Grant Underwood points out in *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, Joseph Smith only began "publicly and repeatedly to denounce the heaven-hell dichotomy" in 1843. "Toward the close of his life," finally, Joseph ". . . began to emphasize a pluralized rather than a polarized picture of eternity. He interpreted hell symbolically, diminished damnation's domain, and extended the limits of salvation."<sup>45</sup>

## V. PARANOIA AGAINST WORKS OF DARKNESS.

In addressing the loss of the "116 pages" of initial Book of Mormon dictation in 1828, Joseph Smith tapped into a ready and current paranoia that existed in his region against secret collaborators in the theft of manuscripts. Inspiring a sense of persecuted righteousness, such paranoia would become a moveable feast in Mormonism to be transferred as needed from threat to threat throughout Latter-day Saint history.

Rumors of dark conspiracies had clouded American culture from the 1790s, with apprehensions of the Illuminati of Europe creeping westward to our shores, compounded by political intrigues of more specific character, as in the XYZ affair in French-American diplomacy. At a time when Lucy Mack Smith held newborn Alvin in her arms in early 1798, it must have seemed as if ominous, powerful

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<sup>44</sup> LDS D&C 19:7, 21-22.

<sup>45</sup> Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, [1993]), 56.

intrigues at home and abroad were threatening the peace and prosperity that had been established so recently in the new nation.<sup>46</sup>

Thirty years later, the paranoia was transferred to Freemasons and their abduction of one William Morgan from the jail at Canandaigua, New York.<sup>47</sup> Morgan had been preparing a controversial exposé of Masonic rituals, and he would never be seen again. As with Joseph Smith's Book of Lehi two years later, some of Morgan's manuscripts were stolen by conspiring people who did not want to see them published.

The ensuing Book of Mormon text of 1829 would include more than a dozen references to works or workers of darkness, often in conjunction with secret combinations and conspiracy. The immediate precedent for such suspicion was thick and palpable. At an antimasonic rally held fifteen miles from the Smith home in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, Rev. Sela Payne spoke of treachery in the theft of Morgan's manuscripts . . .

**SELA PAYNE**

Susquehanna County, Penn.,

June 2, 1829

describing events of September 1826

**JOSEPH SMITH**

Susquehanna County, Penn.,

April or May 1829

describing events of summer 1828

. . . the masons . . . got a treacherous spy to impose on Col. Miller, the printer of Morgan's book, who got access to the papers and tore off a part of the manuscript, and afterwards the masons got other parts of the manuscript, by imposing on Mrs. Morgan, and finally the band of masons that broke into Mr. Morgan's chest, and ransacked his papers, enabled them to know, perfectly, what he was publishing.—With this knowledge they proceed against him as a

Behold they have sought to destroy you; yea, even the man in whom you have trusted, . . . and because you have delivered the writings into his hands, behold they have taken them from you: . . . they say in their hearts, . . . we will destroy him, and also the work, and we will do this that we may not be ashamed in the end, and that we may get glory of the world. . . . satan . . . stirreth them up to do iniquity against that which is good, that he may lead their souls to destruction, and thus he has laid a cunning plan to

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<sup>46</sup> For elaboration, see *Mormon Parallels* entry 454: Timothy P. Walker, *The Flaming Sword, Or A Sign From Heaven. Being A Remarkable Phenomenon, Seen in the State of Vermont.* (Exeter [New Hampshire]: Printed for J. Richardson, 1814).

<sup>47</sup> As Ethan Smith summed it up at the beginning of 1830, “. . . modern events in our land, and the high degrees of American Masonry, now published and well known, afford a full demonstration that Illuminism has indeed been planted, and has taken deep root in the United States.” Antimasonic State Convention of Massachusetts. 1st, Boston, 1829-1830. *An Abstract of the Proceedings of the Anti-Masonic State Convention of Massachusetts, Held in Faneuil Hall, Boston, Dec. 30 and 31, 1829, and Jan. 1, 1830.* (Boston: John Marsh, No. 96 & 98, State Street. For the Publishing Committee, Jan. 1830), 32 (emphasis in the original). For background, see *Mormon Parallels* entry 22.

revealer of their secrets. . . . Their attempt to burn Col. Miller's office, for the sake of destroying the manuscript, is virtually a declaration on their part that it was a faithful disclosure of masonry.<sup>48</sup>

destroy the work of God; yea, he stirreth up their hearts to anger against this work; yea, he saith unto them, Deceive and lie in wait to catch, that ye may destroy . . .

[Book of Commandments IX:2-4]<sup>49</sup>

Such emphasis on the theft of Morgan manuscripts must have prepared 1830 readers to empathize with Smith's preface in the published Book of Mormon regarding ". . . many unlawful measures taken by evil designing persons to destroy me, and also the work . . . which said account, some person or persons have stolen and kept from me, notwithstanding my utmost exertions to recover it again . . ." <sup>50</sup> In late 1820s America, there was real potential for sympathy for victims of stolen manuscripts of either the Morgan book or the Mormon book.

Members of the Masonic encampment of Knights Templar at LeRoy in western New York felt so disgusted by the Morgan abduction that they abandoned the fraternity nearly *en masse*. Looking for more information, they wrote to citizens in nearby Batavia where portions of Morgan's handwritten work had been stolen. The reply they received was shocking, original, and fresh from the place of beginning. It stirred embers that smolder even today when trying to explain what the Batavia committee characterized as "the dark Mystery that still impends over the abduction of William Morgan . . ."

On the 19<sup>th</sup> day of August 1826 Johnson Goodwill Kelsey Stone and [blank space; (John)] Wilson of Batavia and Daniel H. Daud of Pembroke suddenly entered a chamber in this village where Morgan was writing seized his Person and conducted ~~him~~ to the County Jail – one of them at the same time seized upon all his papers which he tied up in his handkerchief– After putting Morgan in Jail the same Johnson Goodwill went with one Thomas M<sup>c</sup>Cully to the Lodgings of Morgan where under the pretence of searching for Property to satisfy a small execution in favor of M<sup>c</sup>Cully they ransacked the House for his papers some of which they took away. M<sup>c</sup>Cully at the same time declared that although he should be glad to satisfy his debt his principal object was to get away Morgans Papers. These papers we have always distinctly understood were supposed to relate to certain secrets or ceremonies of Free Masonry, and the

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<sup>48</sup> Sela Payne, *The Substance of an Address, Delivered at an Anti-Masonic Meeting, Held in the Township of Gibson, Susquehanna County, Pa., On the 2nd day of June, 1829, By Rev. Sela Payne. And was Copied for publication, by request of the Meeting, and consists principally of the First Twelve Oaths, or Obligations of Masonry, with comments and remarks.* (Towanda, Pa.: Printed at the Bradford Argus Office, 1859), 5. See *Mormon Parallels* entry 309.

<sup>49</sup> Now LDS D&C 10. The dating of this revelation is difficult, and the earliest printings assigned it to May 1829. For discussion, see JSP Documents 1:38-39.

<sup>50</sup> 1830 Book of Mormon, [iii].

Persons who thus unlawfully Pirated them are alledged to be Members of that Institution. The papers were never given up to Morgan

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1826 W. R. Thompson opened a negociation between M<sup>rs</sup> Morgan and Nathan Follett and George Ketchum for the restoration of her husband upon condition of delivering to them a quantity of Manuscript papers which she possessed relating to the secrets of Free Masonry. In pursuance of this negociation Ketchum conducted M<sup>rs</sup> Morgan to Canandaigua where she remained most of one day— During that time Ketchum informed her that he had made enquiries to learn where her Husband was— that the Masons were afraid he had come to get him away from that place He also told her that Morgan would not be killed that he would be kept concealed until they could get the rest of the papers and that it was a secret where he was and he eventually took away the Papers from her under a most solemn promise to use them as the means of finding out the situation of her husband. He also assured her that he had no doubt the Lodge would give her \$100 if she would get the Papers that [Morgan's publisher, David C.] Miller had.— Soon after these Papers were thus obtained from Morgan and his wife a Publication was inserted in two Papers one of them Printed in Boston from which it appeared that a Bundle of papers supposed to be those taken from M<sup>rs</sup> Morgan had been presented to the Grand Lodge had been submitted to a committee and returned to the Person who presented them<sup>51</sup>

It is only natural for a society to imbibe and retain such firmly-fixed wariness, even as circumstances change. “[A]nd their hearts are corrupt,” added Joseph Smith in 1835, “and full of wickedness and abominations, and they love darkness more than light, because their deeds are evil . . .”<sup>52</sup> Recalling this era more than twenty years afterward, Joseph Smith’s mother used language similar to the Book of Mormon in recounting a distressing evening in late 1830 when a crowd showed up at her house looking for Hyrum Smith who “was flying from his home, and why” (as Lucy phrased it), “I knew not; the secret combinations of his enemies were not yet fully developed.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> T. F. Talbot and others, retained manuscript copy of a letter sent by the early antimasonic "Genesee Committee" in Batavia, New York, to the "Encampment" of Knights Templar Masons in nearby LeRoy, New York. Batavia, New York, March 1827. 4 pages on 2 conjugate leaves. Quoting above from pp. 1-2. In my collection, obtained from my long-time friends Frank Wood and Scott DeWolfe.

<sup>52</sup> 1835 Doctrine and Covenants 36:3 (now LDS D&C 10:21). This passage does not appear in the Book of Commandments or earlier surviving manuscript segments/versions of the revelation.

<sup>53</sup> Lucy Mack Smith. *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and his Progenitors for many Generations. By Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet.* (Liverpool: Published for Orson Pratt by S. W. Richards . . . ; London: Sold at the Latter-Day Saints' Book Depôt, . . . and by all booksellers, 1853), 162.

Whether born of subconscious shock or convenient adaptation, one detects a powerful spirit of wounded worthiness persisting indignantly throughout Latter-day Saint history. It has applied itself equally to earliest Mormon tales of mysteriously motivated mobs, to wicked politicians who would not side with the Saints, and to supposed modern sabotage of religious rights. Such sentiments subsist as well in today's culture-wars as they did within the virtual McCarthyism of antimasonry which thrived in the 1820s.

Anti-Mormon "persecution" in New York State; "Vexatious lawsuits" in Ohio; evils of Missouri state government; evils of Illinois state government; evils of Federal Utah Territorial government, followed by wicked anti-polygamy legislation; Communists in our midst; the threat of a "homosexual agenda"; oppression of "religious freedom": the works of darkness which Joseph Smith endured in the 1820s remain adaptable still, ready to explain perplexing Latter-day set-backs.

## VI. STRUGGLES FOR HIGHER GIFTS.

People sometimes wonder where Joseph Smith would have taken Mormonism if he had lived longer than he did. He was always expanding, seeking, climbing. To him, all things were spiritual, and the final category of this paper is a varied sampling of interesting elements Joseph Smith adopted gradually, which had been waiting patiently in his own cultural back yard.

- A. **Urim and Thummim.** This expression from the Old Testament was conspicuous in Joseph Smith's time in popular reference sources, polemics, and at least one colorful sermon published twice in New York.<sup>54</sup> Modern Latter-day Saints might imagine generally that the angel Moroni employed such terminology beginning in 1823. But in fact, "Urim and Thummim" - as used to describe artifacts from the Hill Cumorah - would not appear in surviving records for another ten years.

The earliest accounts of the Book of Mormon dictation mention "interpreters," "spectacles," or "seer stones." Peter Bauder referred to "a glass," based on his October 1830 visit with Joseph Smith - a "glass" then being a generic folk term for such curiosities, whether or not they were actually transparent.<sup>55</sup> By early

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<sup>54</sup> John Stanford, *A Discourse on the Urim and the Thummim, Delivered Before Hiram Lodge, No. 72, at Mount Pleasant, Westchester County, on St. John's Day, Dec. 27, 1800.* By John Stanford, M.A., New-York. *The Second Edition, with Additions.* . . . (New York: Printed by E. Conrad, Frankfort-St., 1820).

<sup>55</sup> Bauder, 37. Court proceedings of March 1826 in Chenango County, New York listed "Joseph Smith, the Glass looker" in Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents. Volume IV.* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 239-66. Universalist minister Nathaniel Stacy recalled a group of treasure seekers ca. 1806 in Otsego County (adjacent to Chenango County) who "engaged the services of one of those impostors who, by looking into a mysterious glass, or rather stone, pretended to be

1833, however, some Mormons had begun to equate Smith's device(s) with ancient biblical objects. The first such reference, evidently by editor W. W. Phelps, reads matter-of-factly thus: "The book of Mormon . . . was translated by the gift and power of God, by an unlearned man, through the aid of a pair of Interpreters, or spectacles—(known, perhaps, in ancient days as Teraphim, or Urim and Thummim) . . ."<sup>56</sup> The term was often applied indiscriminately, in early Mormon lore. In 1840s Nauvoo, the prophet's mother Lucy Smith welcomed their African American housekeeper Jane Manning into her room one day and bid her retrieve something from the dresser . . .

I did as she told me [Manning recalled], she placed the bundle in my hands and said, handle this and after I had done it she said sit down. Do you remember that I told you about the Urim and Thummim when I told you about the book of Mormon, I answered yes mam. She then told me I had just handled it, you are not permitted to see it, but you have been permitted to handle it. You will live long after I am dead and gone and you can tell the Latter-day Saints, that you was permitted to handle the Urim and Thummim.<sup>57</sup>

"Lights and perfections should reside in the conscience," preached Rev. John Stanford in 1800 and republished in 1820,

and shine in the life. A bad man cannot make a good Mason; nor a good man make a bad Mason. As the Urim and the Thummim were placed on the heart of Aaron, at the immediate command of the Almighty, as an act of his sovereign pleasure, so, if any possess the light and perfection of *grace* to constitute a real believer, and a good MASON, it is God that makes him so. And this constitutes that *white stone* which is the *gift* of God, and in which *stone is a new name written, which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it.* Rev. ii. 17.<sup>58</sup>

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able to discover hidden treasures, or lost things, and even foretell future events . . ." Nathaniel Stacy, *Memoirs of the Life of Nathaniel Stacy, Preacher of the Gospel of Universal Grace. Comprising a Brief Circumstantial History of the Rise and Progress of Universalism in the State of New York, As Identified Therewith.* (Columbus, Pa.: Published for the Author, by Abner Vedder. Printed by W. Heughes, Monroe Hall, Rochester. N.Y., 1850), 171-72.

<sup>56</sup> "The Book of Mormon," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1:8 (January 1833), p. [2], column 2.

<sup>57</sup> Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, "Joseph Smith: 'The Gift of Seeing.'" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15:2 (Summer 1982), 60, citing "Jane Manning James Autobiography, p. 19, holograph in LDS Church Archives. Reference courtesy of Linda King Newell." Jane was honored by the Saints until her death in her nineties in Salt Lake City, where she and her brother were always given special seating at church services and in the Mormon Tabernacle. Joseph F. Smith spoke at her funeral.

<sup>58</sup> Stanford, 23.



- B. **Heavenly Mother.** The concept of a mother in heaven was widely available from the Shakers before it was adapted by Latter-day Saints. The doctrine was quite different in the Shaker view, of course, but the language was enticing and can be a bit startling to modern Mormon ears.

"CHILDREN of the heavenly Queen," exulted the first Shaker hymnal in 1812,

Bright and lovely, pure and clean,  
Sent from the celestial band,  
Welcome to this western land!  
Here we see the heavens bend,  
And the elder saints descend,  
Down to souls in nature's gloom,  
Gospel infants in the womb.<sup>59</sup>

Those *Millennial Praises* opened with Hymn I, "*The Testimony of eternal Truth*" declaring in stanza 3:

The Father's high eternal throne  
Was never fill'd by one alone:  
There Wisdom holds the Mother's seat,  
And is the Father's helper-meet.  
This vast creation was not made  
Without the fruitful Mother's aid;  
For by the works of God we know  
The fountain-head from which they flow.<sup>60</sup>

More than thirty years later, W. W. Phelps seems to have said it first in the Mormon context, with his lyrics for the dedication of the Seventies Hall at Nauvoo, sung by a choir on the day after Christmas, 1844.<sup>61</sup> The following year, Eliza Snow recast the doctrine in terms sufficiently sublime to thrive among Saints even now. Her thoughts mirrored perfectly a Shaker pamphlet published ten years earlier in her native Ohio . . .

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<sup>59</sup> [Seth Youngs Wells, compiler], *Millennial Praises, Containing A Collection of Gospel Hymns, in Four Parts; Adapted to the Day of Christ's Second Appearing. Composed for the Use of His People.* (Hancock [Massachusetts]: Printed by Josiah Tallcott, Junior, 1813 [in part with portions printed 1812]), 198, Hymn III:XXV, "The Bread of Life."

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, Hymn I:I, "The Testimony of eternal Truth."

<sup>61</sup> W. W. Phelps, "A Voice From the Prophet. 'Come to Me,'" *Times and Seasons* 6:1; Whole No. 109 (January 15, 1845), p. 783.

**THE ORTHODOX TRINITY**

RICHARD MCNEMAR or RUFUS BISHOP,  
Watervliet, Ohio, 1835

. . . A son implies an offspring male,  
Is born of parents two;  
Can this be done without female?  
It never can, 'tis true.  
.....  
To whom does woman owe her birth?  
Did she originate  
From nothing but her mother earth,  
In her primeval state?  
  
Can any one suppose she was,  
From Adam's rib alone,  
Without a corresponding cause,  
From the eternal throne?<sup>62</sup>

**"MY FATHER IN HEAVEN;**

BY MISS ELIZA R. SNOW"  
"City of Joseph, Oct. 1845."

. . . In thy holy habitation  
Did my spirit once reside?  
In my *first* primeval childhood  
Was I nurtur'd near thy side?  
.....  
In the heav'ns are parents single?  
No, the thought makes reason stare;  
Truth is reason—truth eternal  
Tells me I've a mother there.  
  
When I leave this frail existence—  
When I lay this mortal by,  
Father, mother, may I meet you  
In your royal court on high?<sup>63</sup>

The conception expanded in separate directions among Latter-day Saints, but it continued to resemble in language - if not actual doctrine - its earlier Shaker roots. Frederick W. Evans said it powerfully in 1853 in his classic little pamphlet entitled *A Short Treatise on the Second Appearing of Christ, In and Through the Order of the Female*.<sup>64</sup> Evans spoke of . . .

--a Church standing in the Divine Order having the ark of salvation, containing the Urim and Thummim, [etc., and] . . . a continual Divine revelation from the invisible world, that should unite the Church on earth to the "Church of the first-born," . . . [p. 8]

.....  
The perversion of the *first* Christian Church on earth is complete;—a total apostacy has taken place . . . [p. 9]

.....  
. . . those who reject their *Heavenly Mother*, do thereby reject *true wisdom*. [p. 14]

.....  
. . . the true order of the *Godhead* [is] Male and Female, -an *Eternal Heavenly Father*, and an *Eternal Heavenly Mother*.<sup>65</sup> [p. 15]

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<sup>62</sup> [Richard McNemar or Rufus Bishop)], *The Orthodox Trinity, With a few remarks on certain doctrines therewith connected. As I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: To the Unknown God! whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. -- Paul.* (caption title). (Watervliet, [O(hio)], March 1, 1835), 2-3. Some half-dozen other editions also appeared contemporary to or later than this dated version.

<sup>63</sup> *Times and Seasons* 6:17 (November 15, 1845), 1039 (verses 1, 3-4).

<sup>64</sup> Boston: Bazin & Chandler, Printers, 1853. See *Mormon Parallels* entry 138.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 9, 14, 15.

C. **The apostle John to continue in the flesh, but the hidden manuscript aspect of the revelation only added later - yet always available in *The Christian Economy*.**

One of Joseph Smith's early revelations, dated to April 1829,<sup>66</sup> occurred while dictating the visit of Christ to the New World in the Book of Mormon. The old question came up: was John the Beloved (like the Three Nephites) immortalized to remain in the flesh on Earth until the Second Coming? Joseph got a quick answer, saying yes, quite in harmony with the legend of the Wandering Jew that had just gained new currency in George Croly's extensively-published *Salathiel. A Story of the Past, the Present, and the Future*.<sup>67</sup> But there was another element added to that revelation sometime between 1831 (when it was recorded in Revelation Book I, without any artifact attribution) and 1833 when it was printed in the Book of Commandments, where we read that the text originated from an ancient "parchment, written and hid up" by the apostle John himself.

That was a nice and highly colorful addition during the early 1830s, but it was simply another example of Joseph Smith's earlier culture being more Mormon than the Mormons. The notion of such an artifact of John had already been widely proposed since at least 1760. Published more than thirty times in America alone before 1829, *The Christian Economy: Translated from the Original Greek of an Old Manuscript, Found in the Island of Patmos, Where St. John Wrote his Book of the Revelation*, was a little religious production more characteristic of the eighteenth century than the era of the first Christian apostles. As such, its significance to Mormon thought lies not in its contents, but instead for what it represented: an appetite for new scriptural texts. The anonymous work was taken, ostensibly, from an ancient Greek manuscript found on a ledge cut from the rock wall of a cave on the Isle of Patmos.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> JSP Documents 1:47-48, now LDS D&C 7.

<sup>67</sup> New-York: G. and C. Carvill; W. B. Gilley; Collins and Hannay; E. Bliss; A. T. Goodrich; Collins and Co.; White, Gallaher and White; E. Duyckinck; W. Burgess, Jr.; Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Carey; and R. Small. [Sleight & George, Printers, Jamaica, L. I.], 1828. Two volumes, first American edition. First published London, 1828, and in Paris the same year; again in London, 1829, and in Leipzig. Fictional narrative noted by Latter-day Saint General Authorities B. H. Roberts and Joseph Fielding Smith as a portrayal of the legend of the Wandering Jew, which they viewed as an interesting parallel to the Mormon belief in the earthly immortality of the apostles John and the Three Nephites. See *Mormon Parallels* entry 109.

<sup>68</sup> *The Christian Economy: Translated from the Original Greek of an Old Manuscript, Found in the Island of Patmos, Where St. John Wrote his Book of the Revelation*. (Brattleborough [Vermont]: Published by John Holbrook, 1815). Perhaps first published 1760 at London by T. Waller. The earliest American edition on OCLC was New-York: Printed and sold by Hodge and Shober, at the newest printing-office, in Maiden-Lane, near the head of the Fly-Market, 1773. OCLC shows at least thirty-three editions printed in the United States before 1829 (there were likely more), including five at Windsor, Vermont (1788-1816) within a few miles of the early Joseph Smith

THE CHRISTIAN ECONOMY

1760 – 1832 & beyond

*Translated from the Original Greek of an Old Manuscript, Found in the Island of Patmos, Where St. John Wrote his Book of the Revelation.*

BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS

1833

*Translated from parchment, written and hid up by himself.* <sup>69</sup>

The religious public's fascination for such apparently newly-discovered scripture helps explain the appeal of Joseph Smith's revelatory renderings of previously unheard-of relics.

- D. **Word of Wisdom.** A few years ago, I acquired an amusing piece of paper written in western New York on January 13, 1825. The moon was waning, that Thursday night two centuries ago. 'Twas the dead of winter, and a nice warming brandy might have felt appropriate. But two of Portland, New York's leading citizens there in Chautauqua County had imbibed enough already, apparently, and they decided to put their money where their mouths may have been too often. "We do agree," they promised,

and firmly bind ourselves from this time henceforth to the end of our existance not to drink any spiritous liquor except ordered ^by physicians^[.] We bind our selfs under the penal sum of one hundred dollars payable to the overseers of the poor of the town of portland to be applied for the support of schools of the same Town[,] witness our hands<sup>70</sup>

It was signed by Elizur Talcott and Wilder Emerson in the presence of witnesses. The local schoolmaster may have monitored the town tavern hopefully after that, looking for funds to flow from such a commitment! A hundred dollars then would pay as many days of labor from an unskilled workman, or match the buying power of \$2,500 today.

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family homes. The 1815 Brattleboro example discussed in *Mormon Parallels* entry 97, owned by a fairly young girl, was printed approximately sixty-five miles south of Norwich, Vermont where the Smith family then lived (both towns lying on the Connecticut River).

<sup>69</sup> Book of Commandments Chapter VI, heading preceding the text of the revelation. The phrase does not appear in the heading of the BCR manuscript copy of the revelation (13-14, ca. March 1831).

<sup>70</sup> Wilder Emerson and Elizur Tolcott [*i.e.*, Talcott]. Manuscript agreement signed; also signed by witnesses Samuel Bassett and Wilson Andrews. (Portland [Chautauqua County, New York], January 13, 1825). 16 X 20 cm. One page, verso blank. In my collection.

Joseph Smith's Word of Wisdom (now LDS D&C 89) given on Wednesday, February 27, 1833, fit perfectly in its time –but as a reaction, not an innovation.<sup>71</sup>



And when Sidney Rigdon pushed a resolution through a meeting at the Kirtland Temple on December 4, 1836 for complete abstention from alcohol,<sup>72</sup> it was done against a backdrop of national cries for the same step, highlighted by an illustration reprinted in the widely-disseminated 1836 *Temperance Almanac* which cast a divine aura around the doctrine of “TOTAL ABSTINENCE.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> For exhaustive documentation of Word of Wisdom tenets pre-existing in the background culture of that time, begin with *Mormon Parallels* “General Index” (in the 2014 and 2018 eds.), entry for WORD OF WISDOM, pp. 2304-5. Index separately available for download free of charge at [rickgrunder.com/parallels/IndexMP.pdf](http://rickgrunder.com/parallels/IndexMP.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833-1898. Typescript . . . Edited by Scott G. Kenney*. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85), 1:110-11: “President Rigdon called a vote of the Church to discountenance the use intirely of all liquors from the Church in sickness & in health except wine at the Sacraments & for external Washing the vote was carried eunanimously . . .”

<sup>73</sup> *The Temperance Almanac, For the Year of Our Lord 1836: Adapted to All Parts of the United States and Canada. Prepared and Published under the Direction of the Executive Committee of the New-York State Temperance Society. . . .* (Albany [New York]: From the Steam Press of Packard and Van Benthuyssen, [1835]); *Mormon Parallels* entry 431. Illustration from the title page. In my

Yet despite Rigdon's efforts in 1836, the Word of Wisdom was not fully implemented until well into the twentieth century, even though its concepts had been fully available in the surrounding culture from the 1820s and early 1830s. At a time when Brigham Young was countenancing the production of alcoholic beverages in Utah, stylish circles could be found in the East who toasted only with water,<sup>74</sup> exemplifying a lifestyle which in terms of drink (and diet and tobacco) was at one time even more Mormon than the Mormons.

- E. **Astronomy/Cosmology.** The Book of Mormon will be out of the press and available for us to purchase at Mr. Grandin's bookstore in just six weeks from now, because today is February 13, 1830. Look at today's paper, the *Rochester Daily Advertiser and Telegraph*. It has all the expected content, including ads by Mr. Marshall who would have been happy to print the Book of Mormon himself. There is a lengthy report from the Special Counsel in the case of the 1826 kidnapping and murder of William Morgan. John C. Spencer reports with caution but in detail, concluding that unprecedented obstruction has taken place to hide and obscure facts and witnesses. Not all Freemasons should be blamed, he says, but there was a "concert of so many agents, as to indicate an extensive combination to screen from punishment those charged with a participation in the effences [sic] upon William Morgan."<sup>75</sup>

An ad by merchant Asahel Barber at the multi-story Reynolds Arcade shopping and business structure reminds us of the Book of Mormon's concern over fine clothing and the proud people in that great and spacious building of Lehi's dream. Barber offers fine fabrics for sale, including ". . . extra superfine green worsted Barage, a suitable and fashionable article for Ladies' Veils; also myrtle green 5-4 French Bombazine for Ladies' Habits, and many, very many other *extra superfine* articles for both Ladies and Gentlemen."<sup>76</sup>

And finally in the fifth column of page two of our newspaper, there is something light to suggest another topic that was more Mormon than the Mormons in 1830: *people living on the moon!* Joseph Smith would turn to astronomy years later in his Book of Abraham, but here in a filler article bemoaning the excesses of ladies' oversized Leghorn bonnets, we find a quick reference to a generally-accepted concept of that era. "Our Ladies and their Bonnets" is taken from the *Washington Spectator* newspaper, and it worries that the fair sex might all be swept up in the wind. And then . . .

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collection.

<sup>74</sup> Regarding the cold water temperance culture, see *Mormon Parallels* entry 230.

<sup>75</sup> *Rochester Daily Advertiser and Telegraph* 4; whole no. 1016 (February 13, 1830), 2, column 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, col. 2, with several more Barber ads on the same page. Regarding the Reynolds Arcade, see *Mormon Parallels*, entry 350.

. . . what an ominous aspect would the changed sky present! There would be one cloud of ghastly white, another of fiery redness, another of unbroken blackness—and all heaving into the blue cerulean, like the sheets and shrouds, and palls of the giant dead. Our lunar brethren, as they saw this frightful host sweep past them, might think the tents, and banners, and horse-tails of a Numidian encampment were about to threaten battle with the celestial powers. But the bright eyes, and sweet faces, and sylph-like forms that once enchanted us here, where would they be? Gone! gone forever!!<sup>77</sup>

This is a whimsical taste of Joseph Smith's era, but such cosmic expansiveness was common in that culture well before it reached its most thorough Mormon saturation. Nephi's view of the earth in the Book of Mormon (1829)<sup>78</sup> and Moses' and Enoch's landscapes of the eternities in the Book of Moses (1830)<sup>79</sup> focused on our own planet and its relationship with God. But finally in March 1842,<sup>80</sup> Abraham was shocked by a vision of a cosmos so vast that generations of subsequent Latter-day Saints would point to it as proof of Joseph Smith's prophetic powers.<sup>81</sup> Faced with a full hierarchy of worlds without number, the ancient patriarch found himself jerked suddenly into Nauvoo's modern awareness of concepts which had been taught to kids in America since before Joseph Smith's youth, and in these more elevated lines published in 1785 by a grandson of Jonathan Edwards . . .

Nor shall one world thy bounded view confine;  
But round all being stretch thy flight divine,  
To worlds dispers'd o'er worlds, ambitious rise,  
The golden planets of sublimer skies.  
Far o'er thy little earth, to man's weak eye,  
Encircling roll the glories of the sky.

. . . . .

Around their planets moons refulgent stray;  
Around their suns those planets trace their way;

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 2, col. 5.

<sup>78</sup> 1 Nephi chapters 11-14.

<sup>79</sup> Moses 1:4-8, 27-36 (June 1830) and chapter 7 (ca. late December 1830). The visions of Moses and Enoch each allude majestically to multiple worlds or creations, but without detail or further elaboration.

<sup>80</sup> The bulk of Abraham's cosmology as articulated by Joseph Smith was "translated" in early March 1842 and first published in the *Times and Seasons* 3:10 (March 15, 1842; whole no. 46). For scholarly commentary, see JSP Revelations and Translations 4:285 and elsewhere, and 4:314 showing the first-published text.

<sup>81</sup> The most intensely naive example of such apologia - even for the nineteenth century - may have been George Reynolds' *The Book of Abraham. Its Authenticity Established as a Divine and Ancient Record*. . . . (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1879).

Around your central heaven all systems roll;  
 And one great circling motion rules the whole.  
 O scene divine, on those bright towers to stand,  
 And mark the wonders of th' Eternal hand;  
 To see thro' space unnumber'd systems driven,  
 Worlds round their suns, and suns around the heaven;  
 To see one ordinance worlds and suns obey;  
 Their order, peace, and fair, harmonious way;  
 Their solemn silence: varying pomp divine;  
 Their fair proportions, and their endless shine!  
 Some nearer rolling in celestial light;  
 Some distant glimmering tow'rd the bordering night;  
 'Till far remov'd from thought the regions lie,  
 Where angels never wing'd the lonely, verging sky . . .<sup>82</sup>

There was much more, and it abounded not merely in high-blown epic poetry like that of Timothy Dwight, above, but in common family and children's textbooks, almanacs, and incidental literature and newspapers. I would like to think that in my compilation of *Mormon Parallels*, I have traced in thorough detail the points of Book of Abraham astronomy which thrived in Joseph Smith's ready environment. Much of that original material was simple in word and precise in explanation. It can be beautiful to read. I invite anyone to visit that oft-disparaged table for a surprising and sometimes humbling, proto-Mormon feast.<sup>83</sup>

- F. **Eternal matter.** This leads us to a final example, which I suppose should not surprise, but which may not be familiar to some Latter-day Saints. It is the simple fact that long before Orson Pratt wrote about *Absurdities of Immaterialism*,<sup>84</sup> or before his brother Parley speculated about "The Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter,"<sup>85</sup> or even before Joseph Smith declared that "[t]he elements are eternal,"<sup>86</sup> there was plenty of space in the culture for such doctrine. True, the concept was considered by some Christians of that era as a pillar of atheism,<sup>87</sup> but

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<sup>82</sup> Timothy Dwight, *The Conquest of Canaan; A Poem, In Eleven Books*. . . . (Hartford: Printed by Elisha Babcock, 1785), 268-69; for commentary and additional text, see *Mormon Parallels* entry 126.

<sup>83</sup> See *Mormon Parallels* "General Index" entries for ASTRONOMY AND COSMOLOGY, pp. 2174-76.

<sup>84</sup> Orson Pratt, *Absurdities of Immaterialism; Or, A Reply to T. W. P. Taylder's pamphlet, entitled: "The Materialism of the Mormons or Latter-day Saints, Examined and Exposed."* (Liverpool: R. James, 1849).

<sup>85</sup> Parley Parker Pratt, *The Millennium and other Poems*: . . . (New York: Printed by W. Molineux, 1840).

<sup>86</sup> 1835 Doctrine and Covenants Section 82, p. 212 (modern LDS D&C 93:33).

<sup>87</sup> For background, see *Mormon Parallels* entry 335, Benjamin F. Powell, *The Bible of Reason: Or, Scriptures of Modern Authors. Selected and Written by B. F. Powell*. (New York: George H. Evans, 1828).



this was only a narrow view. John Mason Good, to whose *Book of Nature* Orson himself had recourse, did not personally accept eternal matter, but he respectfully gave the idea space in his widely-published work printed in England and America as early as 1826.<sup>88</sup> Editions which I have owned include one signed by an "Eliza McBuck, June 7th, 1832, Pittsfield Sem[inary], Northampton." Eliza wrote a few appreciative notes in the text, concluding on the final page, "I am Sorry to leave you Dr Good." An 1833 printing bore a light penciled ownership inscription by one Israel Foote, 1840, who exclaimed on the front flyleaf, "This is about the best book that ever was written— The author must have been one of the most learned men of this or any other age . . ."<sup>89</sup>

Even earlier, in 1823, a simple farmer's almanac printed at Canandaigua, a dozen miles from the Smith family home, argued that eternal matter makes the most sense. "If we suppose that matter has been eternal," it suggested,

and still perfectly dependent on the Deity for its existence and its properties, and that, on one side of the finite progressive plane of formation, it is a quiescent aerial state, and on the other side collected into worlds, nature obtains a balance . . . and our minds, instead of being lost in a chaos of conjecture, form the same conceptions of order, through the boundless fields of space, that we derive from observation on the portions which are within our view.<sup>90</sup>

This significant folk-level printing of a Christian appropriation of eternal matter is taken from an article in a science journal submitted by Isaac Orr of Hartford who saw the work of creation as an infinite, ongoing process of collecting eternal matter which would one day be renewed. That same year, the Shakers reiterated a doctrinal expression of their own which was strikingly disposed toward something Joseph Smith would articulate a decade afterward, when they wrote:

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<sup>88</sup> *The Book of Nature. By John Mason Good, M.D. F.R.S. F.R.S.L., Mem. Am. Phil. Soc. and F.L.S. of Philadelphia. From the Last London Edition. To Which is Now Prefixed, a Sketch of the Author's Life. Complete in One Volume.* (New-York: Printed and Published by J. & J. Harper, 1830). Editions appeared as early as 1826 in both London and Boston, accumulating some twenty editions in England and America before 1840.

<sup>89</sup> 1831 and 1833 editions, respectively, which I have owned; for further discussion see *Mormon Parallels* entry 164.

<sup>90</sup> *The Farmer's Diary, Or Beers' Ontario Almanack, For the Year of Our Lord 1824: . . . Calculated for the Latitude and Longitude of Canandaigua, (Ontario county, State of New York,) . . . and will serve for any of the adjacent parts, without any essential difference. . . .* (Canandaigua: Printed and Sold, Wholesale and Retail, by J. D. Bemis & Co. . . . , [1823]), 18. The article, pp. 17-19, is entitled "Formation of the Universe" and explains the theory of Isaac Orr of Hartford, "recently published in Professor Silliman's Journal of Science." See *Mormon Parallels* entry 142. Publisher/bookseller Bemis' premises bordered the lot of Zachariah Seymour, the land agent who sold the Joseph Smith Sr. family their farm in Manchester; see *Mormon Parallels*, 1503, with illustration of Seymour's original lot plat, in my collection.

## SHAKERS

Ohio, 1823

It is certain that the matter, of which the body of man is composed, existed before the human body was formed, and that matter was incapable of comprehending its intermediate state, before it was organized into human form. . . . The Lord God did not form man by or out of nothing. . . .<sup>91</sup>

## JOSEPH SMITH

Ohio, 1833

For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy. The elements are the tabernacle of God; . . . [D&C 93:33]<sup>92</sup>

Here again were concepts more Mormon than the earliest Mormons themselves, offered to farmers and ordinary plain folk of the early 1820s in the same regions where Joseph Smith's Restoration began.

## CONCLUSION

Fun stuff, but what is the moral of this story? It is not to trivialize Mormon origins (as I wrote years ago),<sup>93</sup> or to imagine that one can reduce them to mathematical formulae. There will always be something unreachable in a man like Joseph Smith. "They'll no' get him a' in a book I think," Ezra Pound might have agreed (in his lines on the goodly Companion at Galilee),

Though they write it cunningly;  
No mouse of the scrolls was the Goodly Fere  
But aye loved the open sea.

. . . .

A master of men was the Goodly Fere,  
A mate of the wind and sea,  
If they think they ha' slain our Goodly Fere  
They are fools eternally.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Benjamin Seth Youngs and Richard McNemar, *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing; Containing a General Statement of All Things Pertaining to the Faith and Practice of the Church of God in This Latter Day. Published by Order of the Ministry, in Union with the Church.* (UnionVillage, [Ohio.]: B. Fisher and A. Burnett, Printers, 1823), 3, adding that "The Lord God did not form man by or out of nothing, . . .," 3. Regarding this important Shaker treatise (first published in 1808), see *Mormon Parallels* entries 497-98.

<sup>92</sup> Given May 6, 1833 at Kirtland, Ohio. For background, see JSP Documents 3:83-85.

<sup>93</sup> From my introduction to *Mormon Parallels*, 19.

<sup>94</sup> Ezra Pound, "Ballad of the Goodly Fere; *Simon Zelotes speaketh it somewhile after the Crucifixion*," in Oscar Williams, ed., *The Pocket Book of Modern Verse . . .* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1954), 313. The lines conclude, "I ha' seen him eat o' the honey-comb/ Sin' they nailed him to the tree."

And yet, this is April 6, 2020. If we have learned anything from the viral pandemic presently sweeping the earth, it is that data matter, and we ignore them at our peril. We are safest when we strive to master details and apply their broader implications. The difference between a pre-1830 and a post-1830 Mormon parallel is only a matter of evolution, in my estimation, and evolution widens the tracks of Joseph Smith's work. As I suggested at the top of this paper, the Burned-Over District, considered most broadly, was a perfect setting for the rise of Mormonism. I'll add now that I think Mormonism could have turned into almost anything. Smith partook of whatever bits and pieces of his culture appealed to him, sometimes in self-contradictory manifestations. He and his spiritual descendants then continued to draw from that reservoir in many ways. The process continues still, in certain *unexpected* ways, yesterday and today.

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*Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes.  
Have the Baptists, Methodists, &c., any truth? Yes.  
They all have a little truth mixed with error. We should gather  
all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up,  
or we shall not come out true "Mormons."*<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Discourse by Joseph Smith, July 23, 1843 as edited in the *History of the Church* 5:517. The precise words which Smith spoke are of course unknown, but the concept is strong as it appears in the Joseph Smith journal entry by Willard Richards for that day: "—Presbyteri[a]n ~~or~~ any truth. emb[ra]nce that. Baptist. Methodist. &c—get all the good in the world. come out a pure mormon." JSP Journals 3:66.