

Section 1

Beginnings

From the outset, Joseph Smith declared all churches corrupt and an abomination to God, and today Mormons still believe that:

This is ‘the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth’ (Doctrine and Covenants 1:30), the only organization authorized by the Almighty to preach his gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation, the only church which has power to save and exalt men in the hereafter... There is no salvation outside this one true church, the church of Jesus Christ (p. 11)

Nowhere in the First Vision or in D&C 1 was the Prophet told that all *Churches* were false, but, in the instance of the former, their *creeds* (JS-H 1:19). A *creed* is a concise version of the chief points of faith, as answers to questions about the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In LDS belief, due to the influences and inter-culturation of Hellenism, etc., on Jewish Christianity, the philosophy of man came to corrupt the Jewish Christian understanding of God, and so forth. “Creeds” are more along the lines of dogmatic proclamations, such as the formulations of Orthodoxy, such as HOW God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost are “one,” with which Latter-day Saints disagree upon with Catholics, Protestants, and so forth. Furthermore, *never* in the First Vision was Joseph Smith told that he would bring forth the truth Church.

Furthermore, contra the authors, the Prophet did on occasion refer to the truthfulness contained within other religious denominations:

I see no faults in the church. Let me be resurrected with the Saints, whether to heaven or hell or any other good place—good society. What do we care if the society is good? Don't care what a character is if he's my friend. A friend, a true friend, and I will be a friend to him. Friendship is the grand fundamental principle of Mormonism, to revolution[ize and] civilize the world, [to] pour forth love. Friendship [is] like [the metals bonded in] Bro[ther] Turly['s] Blacksmith {page 13} shop. I do not dwell upon your faults. You shall not upon mine. After you have covered up all the faults among you the prettiest thing is [to] have no faults at all. Meek, quiet, &c. [If] Presbyterians [have] any truth, embrace that. Baptist, Methodist, &c. Get all the good in the world. Come out a pure Mormon.¹

Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verses 8-14 [contains] false doctrine. In this passage, Jesus is demoted to second place as the Son of God because he did not receive of the fullness at first. This is contrary to Jesus' claim to be equal with

¹ Scott H. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1989), 398-99

God. (p. 14)

The authors' propensity to wrench Mormon scripture out of context is amazing. The pericope from the Doctrine and Covenants focuses on the Christ's *mortal* period, evident by segments of the text such as "who came into the world, because the world was made by him" and "which came and dwelt in the flesh and dwelt among us."

That Jesus, while on earth, "received not of the fulness at first, but received grace for grace" is consistent with the New Testament. For example, in Luke 2:52, we read: And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. In John 17:1, 5 we read the following:

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee... And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Why would Jesus need to be glorified using the authors' theological views? The answer is quite simple – Jesus emptied Himself to become a man, and took on the form of a slave (the Greek reads "slave" notwithstanding translations render it "servant"), as we read in Philippians 2:7.

The authors then discuss alleged characteristics of "counterfeit" religions and cults (p. 15-16). How many of these would early Christianity fall under?

Origin:

Most counterfeits originate with someone appointed by God as a special saint, guru, or messiah who represents divine authority. (p. 15)

In Christianity, Jesus was a special messenger from God the Father, being God incarnate, being both man and divine who took away the sins of the world conditioned upon people accepting Him as the anointed one ("Messiah"). If not, one is doomed for all eternity.

Claim of special discoveries: mysterious, otherwise unavailable information.

The Mormon Church has three extra books of scripture revealing many beliefs additional to traditional Christian beliefs in the Bible and sometimes contradicting them. In addition, there are secret ceremonies which reveal signs and passwords for entrance to heaven...

Bible

Most counterfeits have additions to the Bible...[counterfeits abuse biblical texts] (p. 15)

Early Christians added to the scriptures that Jews contemporary with their time accepted as God's Word (i.e., The New Testament). Further, many of the "proofs" offered in support of the Messianic expectation that Jesus fulfilled are often wrenched out of

context. For example, the Micah 5:2 verses cited is wrenched out of context in Matthew 2.

Depending on the verse invoked, Bethlehem could be either a man/clan or a town. According to 1 Chronicles 4:4, Bethlehem is the son of a man named Ephrath. Since it says “Bethlehem Ephrath” rather than “Bethlehem,” the man rather than the town is intended.

Further, thousands of children have been born in Bethlehem but that doesn’t give each of them the right to claim to be the Messiah

Contextually, the person/clan discussed in this pericope would devlie Israel from the Assyrians (Micah 5:6). However, the Assyrian empire ceased to exist six hundred years before Jesus lived.²

<The Priesthood of all believers> (p. 16)

There is no sound biblical evidence for a “priesthood of all believers” when the commonly cited “proof-texts” are exegeted soundly.

The commonly cited pericope in the Book of Revelations does seem to lend itself to a priesthood of all believers. However, the context is *eschatological*, therefore, it cannot be used for the modern day-to-day events of our time. 1 Peter is based on the verbiage contemporary with the Decalogue in Exodus 20. Indeed, only one tribe actually received the priesthood, those of the line of Levi.

In the Book of Acts, chapter 8, Simeon is baptised and confirmed, making him a member of the Church, and, therefore, a holder of the priesthood according to Evangelicals. However, reading of the context shows he could not lay his hands and confirm anyone, forcing him to try to purchase the apostles’ authority. Such would never have been the case if Evangelicals were correct in this regard.

All counterfeits believe in salvation by works, and do not have a certain hope for salvation. Mormons are no exception (p. 16).

This alone shows how little the authors know about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mormon soteriology is not legalistic (i.e., salvation by works), but *covenantal nomism*, the belief that upon entering a covenant with God (which is offered by grace), one must properly respond with obedience to remain in the covenant relationship.³

² C. Dennis McKinsey, *The encyclopedia of Biblical errancy* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Press, 1992), 165

³ Critics who know more about Mormon theology than the authors seem to even admit that Mormons do *not* believe in salvation by works and that Latter-day Saints teach that one will enter a kingdom of glory through grace by faith alone (e.g., James Patrick Holding, *The Mormon defenders: how Latter-day Saint apologists*

<Latter-day Saints holding an errant understanding of James 1:5> (p. 27-28)

Commenting on James 1:5-8, Bo Reicke wrote the following:⁴

It is likely that James seems to have had such sources of “wisdom” [i.e., books of worldly knowledge] in mind when he advises his readers to strive after the true wisdom that comes only through prayer.

Once you believe the Mormon church is true, then all else follows, even if you don't understand it. The church teaches that ‘when the prophet speaks, all debate is ended.’ If he really is a prophet of God, you should not doubt or question. You are asked to accept things blindly. (p. 28)

Such nonsense. LDS leaders have always recognised their fallibility. For example –

It is your privilege and duty to live so that you know when the word of the Lord is spoken to you and when the mind of the Lord is revealed to you . . . Suppose I were to teach you a false doctrine, how are you to know it if you do not possess the Spirit of God? (Journal of Discourses 18:72)

Live so that you will know whether I teach you truth or not. Suppose you are careless and unconcerned, and give way to the spirit of the world, and I am led, likewise, to preach the things of this world and accept things that are not of God, how easy it would be for me to lead you astray! But I say to you, live so that you will know for yourselves whether I tell the truth or not. That is the way we want all Saints to live. Will you do it? Yes, I hope you will, every one of you." (Journal of Discourses 18:248)

The First Presidency have of right a great influence over this people; and if we should get out of the way and lead this people to destruction, what a pity it would be! How can you know whether we lead you correctly or not? Can you know by any other power than that of the Holy Ghost? I have uniformly exhorted the people to obtain this living witness each for themselves; then no man on earth can lead them astray. (Journal of Discourses 6:100)

I will come now to my text again, and will ask the Latter-day Saints, Do you know that Joseph Smith was a prophet? Yes. How do you know it? Why, father and mother says it is so; Elder such-a-one says it is so, and I believe it. They prove

misinterpret the Bible [self-published, 2001], 101-102).

⁴ Bo Reicke, *The Anchor Bible: the epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1964), 14

their doctrine by the Bible, and I am forced to believe the Bible through the traditions of the fathers; and these Elders establish the truth of their doctrines beyond all controversy from Scripture, and I cannot deny it, hence I believe Mormonism, or the Gospel . . . Now, the question is, how much good will it do me to believe the Gospel on the evidence of others, without possessing the spirit of the Gospel? This is a question that I can answer very readily. There is no man or woman on the earth that will live according to the laws of God, but will possess the Spirit of God. This answers the question . . . Now, let me ask the Latter-day Saints, you who are here in this house this day, how do you know that your humble servant is really, honestly, guiding and counselling you aright, and directing the affairs of the kingdom aright? Let you be ever so true and faithful to your friends and never forsake them, never turn traitor to the Gospel which you have espoused, but live on in neglect of your duty, how do you know but I am teaching false doctrine? How do you know that I am not counselling you wrong? How do you know but I will lead you to destruction? And this is what I wish to urge upon you-live so that you can discern between the truth and error, between light and darkness, between the things of God and those not of God, for by the revelations of the Lord, and these alone, can you and I understand the things of God . . . But to return to my question to the Saints, "How are you going to know about the will and commands of heaven?" By the Spirit of revelation; that is the only way you can know. How do I know but what I am doing wrong? How do I know but what we will take a course for our utter ruin? I sometimes say to my brethren, "I have been your dictator for twenty-seven years"-over a quarter of a century I have dictated this people; that ought to be some evidence that my course is onward and upward. But how do you know that I may not yet do wrong? How do you know but I will bring in false doctrine and teach the people lies that they may be damned? (Journal of Discourses 14:203-205)

When are we to take, at face value, the proclamations of LDS leaders? When the Holy Ghost inspires the words of leaders. However, when it is only one's opinion, and leaders have disagreements with one another, which is only human and to be expected, especially pertinent to areas where not everything has been revealed, something which has always been acknowledged by Church leaders (e.g, Journal of Discourses 9:90-92). One modern prophet, Joseph Fielding Smith, wrote:

It makes no difference what is written or what anyone has said, if what has been said is in conflict with what the Lord has revealed, we can set it aside. My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them. Let us have this matter clear. We have accepted the four standard works as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we measure every man's doctrine. You cannot accept the books written by the authorities of the Church as standards in doctrine, only in so far as they accord with the revealed word in the standard works. (*Doctrines of Salvation* 3:203)

President Harold B. Lee expressed a similar idea in a European area conference:

If anyone, regardless of his position in the Church, were to advance a doctrine that is not substantiated by the standard Church works, meaning the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, you may know that his statement is merely his private opinion. The only one authorized to bring forth any new doctrine is the President of the Church, who, when he does, will declare it as revelation from God, and it will be so accepted by the Council of the Twelve and sustained by the body of the Church. And if any man speak a doctrine which contradicts what is in the standard Church works, you may know by that same token that it is false and you are not bound to accept it as truth.

<The Mormon testimony being based on a feeling> (P. 28)

2 Timothy 3:15-16 and Acts 17:11 are often cited by critics, show that the Bible states that one must determine truth by examining the scriptures. However, this begs the question as to whether or not this is consistent with Moroni 10:3-5? And the answer is “yes.” Indeed, we are advised by the Book of Mormon to ponder and study the Book of Mormon, not just pray about it, something that the Bereans engaged in in Acts 17:11. Furthermore, pray is essential in determining truth from God. After all, it is the teaching of scripture that God hears and answers prayers (Matthew 21:22; John 11:22), even prayers for guidance (James 1:5). The individual believer is both instructed to ask (Matthew 7:7-8; Luke 11:9; James 1:5) and promised an answer (Matthew 21:22; Luke 11:10, 13; John 14:13-17; James 1:5).⁵ Furthermore, as Paul noted, it is only through the Spirit of the Lord that one can know the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

Jeremiah 17:9 is cited against the allegedly emotional experience Mormons are said to experience when they receive their answer about the Book of Mormon. However, this is a gross inaccuracy. From my own personal experience of the Spirit, my answer about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon was a powerful spiritual and intellectual experience that transcended mere emotion, where I knew, beyond doubt, the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, in the same way I already knew, beyond doubt, of the divine Sonship and atonement of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the Hebrew for “heart” is *leb* which refers to inner man and his thoughts, and so forth. Would the critics of the Church use this against the practice of the Bareans in Acts 17:11? Taking an absolutist view, yes. However, this is a flawed methodology in biblical exegesis, something that Mike and Ann Thomas, however, engages in quite frequently. Furthermore, if their interpretation of determining truthfulness of something from God, what are we to make of Luke 24:32, where we read that the apostles’ hearts burned when Christ had expounded the scriptures to them, an experience attesting to the

⁵ Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How wide the divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in conversation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 73

truthfulness of what they had heard.

While much more could be said, praying about the Book of Mormon, contra the authors,⁶ is a practice that is consistent with the prerequisites of determining truth as contained in the Bible.

[Joseph Smith] was convicted on 20 March 1826 of being ‘a disorderly person and an imposter’. (p. 39)

Records indicate that Joseph Smith, after an initial rejection, accepted the request of Josiah Stowell (also spelled “Stoal”) for \$14 a month, alongside room and board, due to the financial situation of his family. This was done two months before the family would lose their Manchester farm because they could not make the annual \$100 payment. Smith’s self-admitted employment by Stoal resulted in the youth being brought to trial in 1826, charged with either vagrancy or disorderly conduct. Bills drawn up by one of the local judge and constable refer to Smith as a “glass looker” (one who, by peering through a glass stone, could see things not discernible by the natural eye). The bills class the offence as a misdemeanour and indicate that at least twelve witnesses were served with subpoenas. Summaries of the trial contain many contradictions but agree on the essential point that Smith was brought to court by Stoal’s relatives to prevent the old man from squandering more money on the work of the youthful visionary. Several neighbours testified against Smith, but Stoal stood fast by his employee. Some accounts have Smith being acquitted by reason of Stoal’s testimony.⁷ Others, such as the Tanners, claim that Smith took leg-bail. However, this fails to explain why Smith would be married by a justice of the law to his first wife, Emma Hale, just a year later in the state.

Joseph’s record claims that it was a revival in 1820 that drove him to seek God. However, no revival is recorded for that area between 1817 and 1824 (p. 40)

This is absolutely false. The whole vicinity of Joseph Smith’s area was indeed racked by religious excitement during 1819 and 1820. Contemporary accounts state that the religious enthusiasms subsequent to the War of 1812 died down “after 1820” adds credence to 1820 as the probable date of the First Vision.⁸

Like many of Joseph’s visions and evelations, this amazing experience was only recorded many years afterwards. It is not even mentioned for twelve years, and there are four different versions (p. 40)

There are so many mistakes in the above, it is evident that the authors have read too much anti-Mormon material.

⁶ Such an argument are found again in chapter 8, “Blinded by faith” (pp. 107-12).

⁷ Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon experience: a history of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd edition (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 10-11

⁸ Ibid., 7

There are nine different versions of the First Vision, something the Church has been open about and has discussed in Church literature.

The fact that the First Vision was not recorded until a few years later is not evidence against its authenticity. Indeed, the canonical gospels, for example, were written decades after Christ's death and resurrection.

There are many allusions to the First Vision pre-dating 1832. For example, the 1833 *Book of Commandments* has a verse contained therein that mentions Joseph being redeemed of his sins by God, a strong allusion to the First Vision where this occurred –

For, after that it truly was manifested unto this first elder, that he had received a remission of his sins; he was entangled again in the vanities of the world; But after truly repenting, God ministered unto him by an holy angel, whose countenance was as lightning, and whose garments were pure and white above all whiteness, and gave unto him commandments which inspired him from on high, and gave unto him power, by the means which were before prepared, that he should translate a book [i.e., the Book of Mormon] (*Book of Commandments* XXIV:6-7).

This revelation is dated June **1830**, eight years before the First Vision account that is canonised in the *Pearl of Great Price* and two years before the first version of the First Vision.

Furthermore, the gospels of the New Testament would not fare well with this criticism. After all, most scholars believe that both Matthew and Luke were written after 70 CE, about four decades after the events they describe occurred.

Joseph's second vision came on 23 December 1823 when an angel named Moroni appeared three times in one night. (p. 40)

Moroni appeared to the Prophet on the 23rd of *September*, not December as the authors claim. This is basic Mormonism 101, which the authors fail miserably in.

The [three] witnesses [to Moroni and the Book of Mormon], however, proved to be unreliable. (p. 42)

This is false. *None* of these witnesses ever denied what they experienced. For example, in David Whitmer's case, although he never returned to the Church after his excommunication after 1838, he always testified to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, his bitterness towards Joseph Smith notwithstanding (e.g., see David Whitmer, *An Address to All believers in Christ*, [Richmond, MO: 1887], 17-24). Further, he had his testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon inscribed on his gravestone. It simply makes no sense that these people would all continue in the fraud, if there had been one, even after their humiliation due to excommunication, Smith on one occasion calling

Whitmer a “dumb ass,” and the fact they got nothing out of their testifying to the Book of Mormon’s authenticity and the reality of their experience except for hardships and persecution by mobs. For more information, peruse the works for the following footnote.⁹ In addition, as for the character of these witnesses, even some of the more informed critics of the Book of Mormon admit to their honesty and good character.¹⁰

While the History of the Church does say that Smith “finished” the translation, evidence chews at the notion that this meant that the whole JST was completed. What probably was meant that they were finished at a certain section or temporarily finished. In addressing the Saints Joseph Smith occasionally explained the need for the correction of passages found in the KJV. Some of these are contained in the manuscripts, but many are not. Following are a number of such passages, spoken by the prophet in public but not found in the manuscript itself. They were all spoken of after the “completion” date of 1833.

Revelation 14:13

In his personal journal Edward Stevenson reported that in the fall of 1839 he heard the Prophet explain a correction of Revelation 14:13. The prophet reported to have said that the King James rendering which now reads, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord...that they may rest from labours, and their works do follow them,” would be more correct if it concluded, “they shall continue their work.” Neither the manuscript nor the marked Bible has an entry for this passage.

Genesis 1:1-2

On January 5, 1841, the Prophet is reported to have given this instruction: “In the translation ‘without form and void’ it should read, empty and desolate. The word created should be formed, or organised.

Revelation 13:2

On April 8, 1843, the Prophet delivered a discourse about the beasts of the Book of Revelation. Referring to chapter 13 he said: “There is a mistranslation of the word dragon in the second verse. The original word signifies devil, and not dragon, as translated.”

⁹ Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Books, 1981); Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Personal Writings of the Book of Mormon Witnesses,” in Noel Reynolds (editor), *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: the evidence for ancient origins* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1997), 39-60; Daniel C. Peterson, “Not Joseph’s, and not modern” in Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (editors) *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies), 203-210

¹⁰ See, for example, Dan Vogel, “The Validity of the Witnesses’ Testimonies,” in Brent Lee Metcalfe and Dan Vogel (editors), *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2002), 79-121, where Vogel concedes the witness’ honesty and sincerity.

Then he added, “In chapter 12, verse 9, it reads, “That old serpent, called the devil,” and it ought to be translated devil in this case [i.e., in chapter 13, verse 2], and not dragon.” Neither the manuscript nor the marked bible contains this correction.¹¹

[The Book of Commandments] was later revised and enlarged with further revelations, and became the Doctrine and Covenants. (P.43)

Many critics criticise Joseph Smith for changes he made to his revelations, as a comparison of the 1833 *A Book of Commandments* and 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* and subsequent editions of this text reveal. However, such critics reveal their Biblical illiteracy. There are many instances where prophets have changed their revelations and the revelations of other prophets. For example, in the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 36, we read how, angered at the words on the scroll Jeremiah dictated to his scribe, the king burned the scroll, resulting in Jeremiah having to dictate, again, his original words. However, the new text was not a 100% photographic re-production of the original text, but one with *additional* information.

28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.

29 And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

30 Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

31 And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

32 Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: **and there were added besides unto them many like words.** (*Emphasis added*)

Other examples include Moses’ altering the wording of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments), as seen when one compares Exodus 20 with Deuteronomy 5. Furthermore, a reading of Isaiah 36-39 reveals that Isaiah edited 2 Kings 18:13 – 20:19 to come up with those four chapters in the text, and that Jeremiah edited, to produce Jeremiah 52, 2 Kings 24-25. Such examples clearly support Joseph Smith’s revision to the Bible *and* his revisions to his revelations as contained in the 1833 *Book of Commandments* and subsequent editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants* from 1835

¹¹ Robert J. Matthews, “A plainer translation” *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A history and commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 210-11

onwards. If critics such as Mike and Ann Thomas wish to ill malign the Prophet Joseph Smith for doing such, they must also criticise Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

Many of the secret ceremonies in Mormon temples are based on the Masonic traditions of ritual and symbolism...The first endowments were given on 4 May 1842, less than two months after Joseph became a Mason (p. 45)

A number of Mormon Freemasons would dispute this. D. Charles Pyle sent me the following information on the topic of the relationship between the LDS temple and Freemasonry:¹²

Chapter 32 [of *Mormonism: Shadow or reality?*] discusses the temple ceremony and Masonry. Chapter 32 uses Morgan's exposure of what he remembered of New York based Masonic ritual (he gets a number of points wrong), and uses Richardson's 1860 Monitor of Freemasonry to construct their parallels list. The immediate problems with using these are that 1860 is too late to be of use to Joseph Smith (Masonic ritual has been modified extensively from time to time in order to keep people from getting it right should the older rituals fall into others' hands, and while the lessons remain the same the wording of the ritual is modified so as to detect imposters). Additionally, the Masonic work Joseph Smith witnessed was from Illinois, the workings of which differed quite extensively at places from what Morgan published. They are from somewhat differing types of ritual originating from before the Union of 1813 and the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England. In addition, most of the parallels are contrived. Joseph Smith was not a Royal Arch Mason and was not a member of either the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite or its predecessor, the Rite of Perfection. Neither of these latter related Rites existed in Illinois until 1859. This is why the fact that the Tanners quote from them is a laugh-getter for me. Further problematic for the Tanners is that the veils that are used in Royal Arch Masonry differ so extensively in use, form and function, that they cannot form the source for the use of a veil in the temple by Joseph Smith--never mind that Joseph Smith was not a Royal Arch Mason. :-)

In my experience, I have seen that the temple endowment ceremony is composed of two parts, the endowment itself and the *presentation of* the endowment, which contains the endowment and by which the endowment is presented to the candidate. The temple ceremony itself, in fact, uses the precise term "presentation of the endowment". The *presentation of* the endowment has received a number of modifications over the years, mostly tending toward shortening the ordinance and modification of the covenants in order to prevent abuse by husbands looking for loopholes to exploit their wives. The endowment itself, so far as I have witnessed for myself, has never really been changed. The endowment is the signs, tokens, and keywords, and nothing more. The temple ceremony is itself the manner of

¹² D. Charles Pyle to Robert Boylan, 28 March, 2005

presenting the endowment. There was a slight modification of the manner in which one of the signs is given because of extensive misunderstanding. Critics of the Church would take the three-word phrase originally used there and make it into something evil. Because few understood what the words meant, most members felt very uncomfortable with it and the Church leaders, after extensive prayer and preliminary study, dispensed with the three words and put in their place the translation of the words in each of the languages of people in the Church. This, of course, made things more difficult for the critics of the Church. The sign itself remained the same however, notwithstanding the wording accompanying it was modified. Aside from this, the endowment itself was left untouched while the *presentation* of the endowment was modified.

A newspaper, The Nauvoo Expositor, was set up by apostate members. It condemned the prophet's sexual license and false doctrines, so Joseph had the printing office burned down and the editor run out of town (p. 46)

In regard to the *Nauvoo Expositor* press, the following should be considered which critics do not mention: the Nauvoo city council declared the *Nauvoo Expositor* libellous and a public nuisance endangering the civil order. The council, composed of at least one non-Mormon, directed the city marshal to destroy that issue of the paper and the press itself, and not the printing office, as is often alleged. The city council, which included at least one non-Mormon, concurred that the paper was encouraging mobocracy.¹³ At that time, there were many vigilante groups dedicated to the destruction of "Mormonism," and looking for excuses to carry out their violent intentions, a fact that should weigh heavily in any judgment about this act of the council. Under the circumstances, it appears that this action would more accurately be characterised as self-defence than "treason" as many critics allege.¹⁴

[L]ate in the afternoon of 27 July 1844, Joseph and his brother died in a gunfight at the hands of a mob who burst into the jail and shot him (p. 47)

To call the Prophet and his brother's death a "gunfight" due to the former's use of a six-shooter in self-defence reflects nothing more than the disdain critics of the LDS Church have for truth. Does this, and Joseph's desperate attempt to go through a window after signalling for help really depreciate the fact he gave he was murdered in cold blood? They were attacked by a mob of **150-200 armed men!** This surely cannot constitute a "gunfight." Do 200 men armed with rifles vs. two unarmed men and two others with a pistol each (one a six-shooter, the other a one-shot pistol) really constitute "a gun battle"? Do critics of the Church really expect for Joseph Smith to have just allowed a mob hell-bent on murdering him, his brother and two close friends without any resistance?

¹³ Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 78

¹⁴ Michael W. Hickentboham, *Answering challenging Mormon Questions* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers and Distributors, 1994), 39

In 1890 the president of the day, Wilford Woodruff, bowed to public pressure and issued a statement bringing the practice of polygamy to an end (p. 48 [similar charges appear pp. 94-96])

The Lord showed President Wilford Woodruff what would occur, in vision, if the Church were to continue practicing polygamy, with the cessation of such yielding a growth in the Church, with the continuation of the practice leading to stagnation in the growth of the Church, alongside other calamities due to the continuation of polygamy, forcing him to choose between the better of two goods, in this case, the growth of the Church (see Official Declaration 1). This is consistent with D&C 124:48-52, where God expects us to do a commandment to the best we can, with it no longer being binding if opposition forces us to cease obeying the commandment, in this case, polygamy, and is further consistent with Jeremiah 18:7-10 and other passages of scripture.

It is always possible that polygamy will be reinstated into the Church. While some critics claim this will occur if it is legalised in America and other nations. I doubt this, as it will only be brought back as a practice via revelation.

The Lord reveals different principles to his people based on their needs and abilities to live those principles. Higher laws may be revealed to those who are worthy but “unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:3; see also D&C 58:21-22; 124:49). Plural marriage is not a product of man’s sinful nature. It is a higher law of marriage that was practiced by prophets and other worthy men (e.g., Moses and Abraham in the Old Testament) when directed by the Lord

<The Mormon rejection of Sola Scriptura> (e.g., P. 12)

Many times throughout *Mormonism a gold plated religion*, the Bible is often referred to as the only book of scripture inspired by God.

Evangelicals are fond of citing 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and similar verses in the Bible, such as John 20:31 as conducive to the Bible being the sole authority from God. Notwithstanding, there are problems with this view.

The verse from John’s gospel tells us that the Bible was composed so we can be helped to believe Jesus is the Messiah. It does not say the Bible is all we need for salvation, nor does it say that Bible is actually needed to believe in Christ. After all, the earliest Christians had no New Testament to appeal to; they learned from oral, not written, instruction.

Much the same can be said about 2 Timothy 3:16-17. To say that all inspired writing (in this case, the Bible) has its uses is one thing; to say that such a remark made by the author

of this letter¹⁵ means that only the authority from God are the 66 books of the Bible need to be followed is something else.¹⁶ Further, Ephesians 4:11-15 refutes this popular proof-text. If 2 Timothy 3 proves the sole sufficiency of Scripture, then, by analogy, Ephesians 4 would likewise prove the sufficiency of pastors and teachers for the attainment of Christian perfection. In Ephesians 4, the Christian believer is equipped, built up, brought into unity and mature manhood, and even preserved from doctrinal confusion by means of the teaching function of the Church. This is a far stronger statement of the perfecting of the saints than 2 Timothy 3, yet it does not even mention Scripture.

So if all non-Biblical elements were excluded in 2 Timothy, then, by analogy, the Bible would logically have to be excluded in Ephesians. It is far more reasonable to recognize that the absence of one or more elements in one passage does not mean that they are nonexistent. The Church and Scripture are both equally necessary and important for teaching.

¹⁵ Most scholars believe that Paul did not author this letter, but is a pseudepigraphic text. For more, see Bart D. Ehrman, *A brief introduction to the New Testament* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 275-94

¹⁶ Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: the attack on "Romanism" by "Bible Christians"* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 135. Many Protestant commentators have commented that "Sola Scriptura" has no support from the Bible nor early Christianity. For more, see David W. Bercot, *Common Sense: A New approach to understanding scripture* (Tyler, Texas: Scroll Publishing, 1992)