

Joseph Smith and his book: Was he a prophet

Kettler

Or a religious charlatan and occult practitioner?

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For the purpose of this presentation the term Mormonism should be understood as the umbrella under which all the followers of Joseph Smith and the *Book of Mormon* can be grouped or classified. Joseph Smith was the founder of the Mormon religion. There are many competing factions within the Mormon religion. The term Mormonism encompasses the Utah Mormon Church as well as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Church of Christ Temple Lot, the polygamous Kingston, and Mexican *Bautista* groups to name a few. Mormonism is a biblical imitation religion. It claims that God gave revelation along with prophecies and miraculous events to authenticate this new revelation.

The first vision:

The Mormon religion stands or falls with Joseph Smith. If Smith was a charlatan, then the Mormon religion is fraudulent and nothing more than an elaborate evil fabrication. The foundation event for Mormonism is its "first vision" story. This is where Smith allegedly encountered a heavenly visitation that would alter his life. First of all, did this happen? What was the message Smith supposedly received during this vision? Smith claimed that God the Father and Jesus Christ both in bodily form appeared to him. This was what the heavenly beings allegedly told him:

I was born in the
year of our Lord one
thousand eight
hundred and five)[in
other words
fourteen] I saw two
personages, whose
brightness and glory
defy all description,
standing above me
in the air. One of

them spake unto me
by name and said,
pointing to the other-
This is My Beloved
Son. Hear Him! My
object in going to
inquire of the Lord
was to know which
of all the sects was
right, that I might
know which to join.
No sooner,
therefore, did I get
possession of
myself, so as to be
able to speak, than I
asked the
Personages who
stood above me in
the light, which of
all the sects was
right-and which I
should join. I was
answered that I must
join none of them,
[all existing
churches] for they
were all wrong; and
the Personage who
addressed me said
that all their creeds
were an abomination
in his sight; that
those professors
were all corrupt;
that: "they draw near
to me with their lips,
but their hearts are
far from me, they
teach for doctrine
the commandments
of men, having a
form of godliness,
but they deny the
power thereof."¹

With one swipe Smith's two deities labeled all Christianity apostate. There are numerous problems with this story.

To begin with, it contradicts Scripture. The gospel in John 1:18, and 1st Timothy 6:16 make it clear that men do not see God the Father, only the Son does.

The setting of this "first vision" story was in Palmyra, New York in 1820. According to Smith, in 1820 there was a great religious revival in the Palmyra area. The events surrounding this revival caused the young fourteen year old Smith to go into the woods and ask God in prayer, which of the churches he should join. He then allegedly encountered a heavenly visitation in answer to his prayer. Smith's alleged 1820 revival supposedly started through the work of Rev. Lane, a Methodist, and Rev. Stockton, a Presbyterian. Is this accurate? However, the records from both denominations make it clear that neither Rev. Lane, nor Rev. Stockton were assigned to the Palmyra area until 1824. Denominational church records actually show membership losses in 1820. See the book *Inventing Mormonism Tradition And The Historical Record*² for an excellent in-depth study of this first vision story.

Another problem with this story was that according to church records from Palmyra there was no revival until 1824, much too late to fit into the official Mormon date scheme for the unfolding of their religion. How does this conflict with the official version of events? This was because on September 21, 1823, Smith was supposedly having another heavenly visit from the angel Nephi. This second vision was to inform Joseph Smith about the existence of golden plates, which allegedly contained the record of people who once lived on this continent. Smith was to eventually gain temporary custody of these plates in order to make a translation of the record contained on them. Regarding the name of the angel a Mormon would say, "The name of the angel is not Nephi, it's Moroni."

According to the original 1851 edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*³ (one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church) Nephi was the name of this angel who appeared to Smith at this time. In the biography by Joseph Smith's mother titled *Biographical sketches of Joseph Smith The Prophet and His Progenitors for many Generations*⁴ we find another source that identifies this angel as Nephi. This belief that Nephi was

the
angel is recorded in her book. Now Moroni is the angel with officially approved status as of 1889.
Moroni will
probably never be debunked, in light of the fact that there are too many golden replicas of the angel
Moroni on
Mormon temples around the world.

Back to the "first vision story." Another insurmountable problem with this story is getting it straight.
One account
as told by Brigham Young was as follows:

The Lord did not
come) But He did
send His angel to
this same obscure
person, Joseph
Smith jun., who
afterwards became a
Prophet, Seer, and
Revelator, and
informed him that he
should not join any
of the religious sects
of the day, for they
were all wrong.⁵

In Young s version only one personage appeared. The message given makes it clear that the "first vision"
account
is being spoken of. Another version of this account goes like this:

the Lord heard my
cry in the wilderness
and while in the
attitude of calling
upon the Lord in the
16th year of my age
a pillar of light
above the brightness
of the sun at noon
day comes down
from above and
rested upon me and I
was filled with the
spirit of god and the

Lord opened the
heavens upon me
and I saw the Lord
and he spake unto
me saying Joseph
my son thy sins are
forgiven thee)⁶

According to this version, Smith was sixteen instead of fourteen, and only one person appeared instead of the two in today's official version. Also, nothing is said about not joining the ostensibly apostate churches. What is significant, this account is the earliest known version of the "first vision" and it is written in Smith's own handwriting.

Surely, Smith could have gotten the details right. There are numerous accounts of this story that are radically different from one another. The accounts vary in regard to who appeared, what the message was, how old Smith was, and the historical setting. Because of these different contradictory accounts it is an inescapable conclusion that this whole story was made up by Smith and evolved into the present official version which has no basis in reality.

Biblically speaking, this first vision account is a violation of the ninth commandment, (Ex. 20:16) because it is a case where an organization is speaking official lies or the bearing of a false witness. The Scriptures clearly say, "You shall not circulate a false report" Ex. 23:1.

Besides these contradictory versions, a more fundamental problem exists for this story. What was Smith doing

after having received these earth-shattering visions? Was he preparing himself by becoming a godly individual to receive the golden plates? You would think that this was what Smith would have or should have been doing. What was he really doing?

Smith and divine gifts:

On March 20, 1826 just three years after his alleged second heavenly visitation Smith was convicted in court in the state of New York, for tricking people into giving him money in exchange for his services to locate

golden treasures that were supposedly buried in the earth. Smith was convicted as a "glass-looker" in the town of South Bainbridge, NY.⁷ Judge Albert Neely presided over this trial. Smith was convicted and fined, and asked to leave the county. It was brought out in the trial that Smith would use a magic peep-stone as a devise to locate buried treasure.

How was this done? Smith would place his peep-stone in his hat and then place his face into the hat blocking out all light. The peep-stone would then show where the buried treasure was located. Unfortunately, for those who paid, when Smith s peep-stone identified the location where the treasure was buried, the diggers could never reach it. Smith would claim that a special magical enchantment would cause the treasure to sink deeper into the earth. Smith s gold treasures hunting never produced anything of lasting interest except a criminal record.

It is interesting to note that Smith also used a peep-stone in his hat when supposedly translating the *Book of Mormon* from the mysterious gold plates. Smith claimed that as a prophet he had the power of revelator and translator. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses listed inside the cover to the *Book of Mormon*, explains the translation method of the *Book of Mormon* like this:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would

appear, and on that
appeared the
writing.⁸

This is not a translation, it is an example of a spiritualist medium, or someone who has a familiar spirit. This activity is expressly forbidden in Leviticus 20:27. Along this same line, consider some additional incriminating evidence about Smith. According to the *Book of Commandments* now called the *Doctrine And Covenants* we learn of another gift that Smith allegedly possessed:

Now this is not all,
for you have another
gift, which is the gift
of working with the
rod: behold it has
told you things:
behold there is no
other power save
God, that can cause
this rod of nature, to
work in your
hands)⁹

This embarrassment of working with a spiritualist divining rod has been deleted from the modern *Doctrine and Covenants*. If these examples of superstitious magic were not bad enough, consider Smith's magic Jupiter's talisman. Dr. Reed Durham, director of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, explains Smith's use of his talisman in a lecture given to the Mormon History Association on April 20, 1974. The information given in this lecture is completely devastating to the adherents of Mormonism. This positively proves that Smith was an occult practitioner. This is a portion of the lecture given by Dr. Reed:

I should like to
initiate all of you
into what is perhaps
the strangest, the
most mysterious,
occult-like esoteric,
and yet Masonically

oriented practice ever adopted by Joseph Smith). All available evidence suggests that Joseph Smith the Prophet possessed a magical Masonic medallion, or talisman, which he worked during his lifetime and which was evidently on his person when he was martyred). His talisman is in the shape of a silver dollar and is probably made of silver or tin).[this talisman] can now be identified as a Jupiter talisman).

When properly invoked, with Jupiter being very powerful and ruling in the heavens, these intelligences-by the power of ancient magic-guaranteed to the possessor of this talisman the gain or riches, and favor, and power, and love and peace; and to confirm honors, and dignities, and councils. Talismatic magic further declared that any one who worked skillfully with this Jupiter Table would obtain the power of stimulating anyone

to offer his love to
the possessor of the
talisman whether
from a friend,
brother, relative, or
even any female.¹⁰

This talisman supposedly gave Smith tremendous influence over people. Perhaps Smith's doctrine of polygamy was an experiment to see if his talisman actually gave him powers over women.

Continuing on in the shock department, the book *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* by former Brigham Young University (BYU) professor Dr. D. Michael Quinn provides evidence that some of Smith's key distinctive doctrinal concepts were plagiarized from the Jewish "Cabala." The Jewish "Cabala" is an occultic system of magic. Smith's King Follett funeral sermon in particular is an example where ideas were borrowed that have become distinctive or defining concepts of Utah Mormonism. Some peculiar concepts that were plagiarized by Smith are, 1. A head God calling a council of the other Gods for the purpose of creating the world, 2. Smith's belief in the plurality of gods, 3. That God is corporeal or has a human form and, 4. Smith's rejection of the Hebrew Christian belief in the creation of the world by God *ex nihilo*. These and other ideas are seemingly taken from Eisenmenger's *Traditions of the Jews* 1748, and John Allen's 1816 *Modern Judaism*.¹¹ The book by Eisenmenger is an example of Jewish cabalistic occultism.

Dr. Quinn provides pictures of some of the Smith family's collection of magic and occultic parchments and artifacts.¹²

For example, Smith's dagger on the blade towards the hilt was inscribed with Scorpio's astrological symbol along with the magic symbol for the "Intelligence of Mars." Astrologically, Mars was the ruling planet of Joseph Smith's father.

Does this use of magic and occultism by Smith account for the fact that many Mormons are involved with the occult?

Mormons are fond of playing with occultic Ouija Boards. When using the Ouija Board a question always asked by

Mormons: "Is Joseph Smith a prophet?" Predictably, the answer is always "yes."

Smith and Masonry:

We must make a necessary digression to set the stage for the further evaluation of Smith and his work. First of all, we should know that the Scriptures forbid us to join secret religious societies where allegiance is pledged to a source other than the God of Holy Scripture. Is it acceptable for Christians to join Freemasonry? Dr. Albert G. Mackey the author of the *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* declares on pages 618 and 619 of this work:

I contend, without any sort of hesitation, that Masonry is, in every sense of the word) an eminently religious institution).

The religion of Masonry is not sectarian. It admits men of every creed within its hospitable bosom, rejecting none and approving none for his peculiar faith. It is not Judaism) it is not Christianity)¹³

Dr. Mackey accuses Christianity of being sectarian in the above quote. It should be noted that Dr. Mackey says that,

1. Masonry is a religion and that, 2. "it is not Christianity." In addition, Dr. Mackey says on page 439 of his encyclopedia that:

If Masonry were simply a Christian institution, the Jew and the Moslem, the Brahman and the Buddhist could not conscientiously partake of its

illumination, but its
universality is its
boast. In its
language, citizens of
every nation may
converse; at its altar
men of all religions
may kneel; to its
creed, disciples of
every faith may
subscribe.¹⁴

We should especially notice that members of Masonry "partake of its illumination," "converse at its altar," and "kneel to its creed." This is clearly religious terminology. It is also noteworthy that this religion boasts of its universality. These ideals of Freemasonry are foreign and completely antithetical to Christianity. The Christian can kneel at no foreign altar and remain faithful to Christ.

Paul in 2nd Corinthians 6:14,15 warns the believer "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" Should Christians be involved in a religion other than Christianity? Of course not! In Galatians 1:8,9 Paul tells us that the curse of God is upon false religions that promote false gospels.

Did Smith regard these teachings of Scripture? No! Smith joined the Masonic Lodge in 1842. Masonic rituals were a major source of influence in the development of Mormon temple ceremony. Mormonism shows unmistakable influence of Masonry in its temple architecture. Some similarities are the sun, moon and stars, the two right hands clasped in fellowship, the All-seeing eye, and the beehive. Mormons use secret handshakes like the Masons. Mormon temple rituals parallel Masonic rites in a number of areas. See Jerald & Sandra Tanner's list of parallels.¹⁵

The capstone for the temple that the Mormons were going to build in Nauvoo, Illinois was a picture of Baal as the

Sun face with its extending rays. When Smith was killed in Illinois, he gave the Masonic signal of distress. Smith raised his hands and arms to the elbows, perpendicularly, one on each side of the head, the elbows, forming a square, The words accompanying this sign, in case of distress, are, "O Lord my God! Is there no help for the widow's son?"¹⁶ This is clear evidence that Smith did not trust in God, but rather the flesh. Considering Smith's heavy involvement with magic, this may have been essentially a magic incantation on his part for deliverance. If so, then this is another example of occultism. Occultism is clearly condemned in Deuteronomy 18:9-14, and Galatians 5:19-21.

Amazingly, the *Book of Mormon* claims to have a familiar spirit:

For those who shall
be destroyed shall
speak unto them out
of the ground, and
their speech shall be
low out of the dust,
and their voice shall
be as one that hath a
familiar spirit). For
thus saith the Lord
God: They shall
write the things
which shall be done
among them, and
they shall be written
and sealed up in a
book.)¹⁷

This speech from the dust will be written in a book. This is supposed to be the *Book of Mormon*. A familiar spirit is a demonic spirit. The Scriptures warn us against familiar spirits in Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; 2 Kings 21:6; 1st Chronicles 10:13,14; 2 Chronicles 33:6; and Isaiah 19:3.

Smith the translator:

In 1835 Joseph Smith acquired some Egyptian papyrus writing from a man named Michael Chandler in Kirtland,

Ohio. To the excitement of the Mormons Smith announced that this Egyptian papyrus contained the writing of Abraham in Egypt. At this time Egyptian as a language was little understood, so Smith was relatively safe in making his outlandish assertions. Who could double-check him? It is interesting to note that with the passage of time men like Smith are exposed. Smith claimed to have translated this papyrus which in reality was an Egyptian funeral document for a man named Hor. In addition to this so-called translation Smith produced his own Egyptian alphabet and grammar. His alphabet and grammar have no relationship to any accepted or known meaning of Egyptian hieroglyphics. This spurious alphabet and grammar are an on going source of embarrassment for members of the various Mormon religious groups. The Mormons lost the original Egyptian papyrus, which Smith had purchased, and claimed to have translated. As a result, Mormons would not accept criticism of Smith's translation, which was published in their *Pearl of Great Price*.

Incredibly, this papyrus turned up in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in 1967. A number of prominent Egyptologists have looked at this document and stated conclusively that it has nothing to do with Abraham in Egypt. The correct English translation of this funeral document yields ninety words. Smith's translation yielded over 2,000 English words about Abraham in Egypt. Smith did not even get one word right in his whole preposterous translation. Charles Larson's book *By his own hand upon papyrus*,¹⁸ is a serious scholarly work in which Smith's fraudulent claim to be a translator of Egyptian hieroglyphics is debunked.

After realizing a golden opportunity, nine citizens of Kinderhook, Illinois certified that a man named R. Wiley had unearthed some mysterious plates with what appeared to be ancient writing on them from a large mound. The plates were brought to Smith in 1843 who announced that he could read the writing on them. He was soon "busy in translating them." Unfortunately for Smith, these plates were a forgery intended to trap him. Smith actually began to translate these plates. This is how he described his work:

I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt)¹⁹

Smith died in a blazing gun battle in June of 1844 so we never will see the completed translation.

Commenting on

Smith's work as a translator, a man named Charles A. Shook observed: "Only a bogus prophet translates bogus plates."²⁰

The Book of Mormon:

Smith said the following:

I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than any other book.²¹

If this was true about *the Book of Mormon*, why have there been over four thousand changes and corrections

made in it since its publication in 1830? As stated earlier the Mormon religion stands or falls with Joseph Smith.

What can be said about the reliability and truthfulness of the *Book of Mormon*? Not anything in the opinion of this

writer! As was seen, Smith's abilities as a translator of ancient documents were duplicitous. If Smith was a fraud,

certainly his book must be called into question. Does the *Book of Mormon* show evidence of divine or human

authorship? These are some questions to keep in mind as we begin to evaluate Joseph Smith's book.

Mormons

reject the idea that Joseph Smith wrote the *Book of Mormon*. Yet, inside the original 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon* Joseph Smith is listed as the author.

In 1831 Alexander Campbell in a publication called the *Millennial Harbinger* on page 93 wrote an assessment of the *Book of Mormon* that is highly perceptive. His assessment, while brief, is devastating.

This prophet Smith through his stone spectacles wrote on the plates of Nephi, in His Book of Mormon every error, and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies;-infant baptism, ordination, the Trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, atonement, fasting, penance, and even the question of Freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man.²²

This makes the *Book of Mormon* more than highly suspect. To believe that an ancient document would examine and decide all the religious controversies in nineteenth century New York is not only laughable it is ludicrous.

The Three Witnesses to the *Book of Mormons* authenticity:

After Smith supposedly translated the golden plates, the angel Moroni or Nephi took the plates back. So there is

really no way to verify if there were any golden plates. Inside the front cover of the *Book of Mormon* there are three witnesses listed, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer. Since there are no golden plates to examine we are left with the word of these three men. Is their word reliable? What did Smith think?

All three of these witnesses fell into apostasy with regards to their membership in the Mormon Church. Smith called David Whitmer "a dumb ass."²³ Smith claimed in a letter, which is recorded in his *History of the Church* that such characters as "David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris are to mean too to mention; and we had liked to have forgotten them."²⁴ That about sums it up for the credibility of the three witnesses.

The Bible and the *Book of Mormon*:

The *Book of Mormon* was published in 1830. This book was supposedly translated from gold plates containing writings in Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics of the Jewish people in the Old World. The *Book of Mormon* record was engraved on golden plates relating events that were suppose to have happened in between 600 BC and 33 AD. It is important to note that the King James Version was published in 1611. There are over four hundred parallels in the *Book of Mormon*'s Old Testament section where verses from the 1611 New Testament King James Version are copied or plagiarized.²⁵ Mark Twain even commented on the *Book of Mormon*'s plagiarism of biblical material on page 110 of his book *Roughing It*. He said that the *Book of Mormon*:

seems to be merely a prosy detail of imaginary history, with the Old Testament for a model; followed by a tedious plagiarism of the New Testament.²⁶

A translation of ancient Egyptian or Semitic writing made during the 1800 s would not translate into and read like seventeenth century Elizabethan English.

In the "Mosiah" chapter fourteen in the *Book of Mormon*, Isaiah chapter fifty-three is copied word for word, including the italicized words that the King James translators added for clarity! There are sixteen italicized words from the King James Bible in "Mosiah" fourteen.²⁷ The list of italicized words are *and* (three times), *there is*, *our*, *was* (twice), *he was*, *was any*, *his* (twice), *a portion* (once). How did these italicized words from a 1611 translation get into a document that was supposedly written before the time of Christ? The answer is obvious: Smith copied them when plagiarizing the King James translation of the prophet Isaiah.

Linguistic and historical problems:

Listed below is a brief summary of some significant problems contained in the *Book of Mormon*. Utah Mormon Apostle B. H. Roberts first discovered a number of serious linguistic, anthropological, cultural, and historical problems in the *Book of Mormon* during the earlier part of this century.²⁸ Since Roberts a Mormon, first identified them, this makes these problems all the more significant. After considering these problems and many others not dealt with below he concluded that the *Book of Mormon* showed evidence in numerous places that it was the product of an underdeveloped mind. I have tried to summarize just a few of the almost innumerable problems that Roberts noticed pertinent to the credibility of the *Book of Mormon*.

1. Supposedly in 600 B.C. you have a small group of Nephites from Jerusalem who come to the New World establishing a colony. Centuries earlier the Jaredites had come from the Old World. This Jaredite civilization left no evidence for their existence aside from twenty-four plates that contained their history.
2. The time frame of *Book of Mormon* peoples in the New World is allegedly from 600 B.C. to 420 A.D.
3. The *Book of Mormon* represents the Nephites and the Lamanites (peoples who broke away from the Nephites and became sinful and subsequently were punished with dark skins) as having written correspondence in the Hebrew language until the time of the Nephite destruction in 420 A.D. by the Lamanites. The Lamanites were supposedly the ancestors of the American Indians.

4. The *Book of Mormon* represents these peoples as inhabiting all of North, Central, and South America. These inhabitants supposedly all spoke and wrote in the Hebrew language, except for the Nephite s religious history.
This was allegedly written in Reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics.
5. The Europeans came to the New World beginning in 1492.
6. This means that all linguistic development, including the primitive forms of language found in the Americas,
must be accounted for between 420 A.D. and the arrival of the Europeans 1000 years later or by assuming
some sort of massive migrations to the New World during this same time period. There is no evidence of
extensive migrations of this nature.
7. In North, Central, and South America by the early 19th century linguists had identified over 169 different
language stocks that show very little common relationship to each other, no more than between
English
and German.
8. The New World languages show no relationship to the Old World languages.
9. The development of the different language stocks and their accompanying dialects could not
possibly have
arisen during this 1000-year period from a single form of Hebrew.
10. How does one derive these 169 language stocks from a single form of Hebrew that existed as late
as 420
A.D.? The Mormon has no answer for this question.

Anthropological and cultural problems:

1. Anthropologists have shown evidence that demands a great antiquity or length of time for man in
America.
The *Book of Mormon* has the Nephites coming fairly recently to the Americas that had never
been inhabited
2. except for the previous Jaredites.
3. The Nephites had an iron and steel age culture.
4. When the Europeans came to the Americas the Indians were no farther developed than the
polished Stone Age.
5. The *Book of Mormon* has a culture of peoples who had wheels, glass windows with glazing, steel
for swords,
and oars for sea going vessels.
6. The *Book of Mormon* has animal husbandry that included elephants, horses, cows, oxen, asses,
and sheep. Agriculturally among the *Book of Mormon* peoples there was ostensibly silk, wheat,
barely, corn, and grapes.
The Europeans introduced the agriculture and animal husbandry that the *Book of Mormon*
assumes to have

existed prior to 1420.

Therefore, the cultural picture given in the *Book of Mormon* is invalidated when compared to known archeological and historical research. In addition, amateur Mormon archeologists have attempted to mislead the public concerning the ruins of the Aztec and Inca civilizations. *Book of Mormon* archeological tours routinely take trips to the Aztec ruins in Mexico and Central America leaving the impression that these were in reality *Book of Mormon* civilizations. "The Smithsonian Institution has never used the *Book of Mormon* in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archeologists see no direct connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book."²⁹

Book of Mormon: Evidence of a human author repetition, contradictions and absurdities

1. There is a lack of coherent perspective regarding the information that the *Book of Mormon* represents as history. This points quite clearly to an uneducated mind as its origin.
2. The book proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness. Numerous parallels and repetitions evidence this. The same stories are told over and over again, the only difference being the characters.
3. This is true of the Nephites and earlier Jaredites colonies. Both colonies came to an uninhabited continent and then populated all of the Americas numbering in the millions. Both colonies ultimately had wars of annihilation at the hill Cummorah (upstate New York). Is this a little incredulous?
4. Both colonies came to the New World on the same types of submerged barges. Could these barges have carried elephants and horses? Both stories stress the smallness and lightness of the barges.
5. There is an utter disregard for consistency in the story of the Nephites building a temple like Solomon's temple (2 Nephi 5:15,16). Verse fifteen says the temple was built with precious metals because there was much to be found in the land. Verse sixteen says the temple did not have all the precious metals because there was none to be found upon the land. The Nephite colony only had one hundred people. How could they build a temple like Solomon's?
6. There are super miraculous events in battles that strain the credibility of the story.

7. Absurdities of expression, lapses of mind and speech lapses, and serious grammatical problems are common.
8. Nephi, a Jew living all his life in Jerusalem keeps a sacred religious record in the Egyptian language
(1 Nephi 1:2). Come on! Nephi's father, Lehi, was a devout Jew who lived in Jerusalem and his spoken language was Egyptian (1 Nephi 1:2). This is utterly ridiculous. In 1 Nephi 7:6 there is an individual named Sam, not Samuel. Is this a Hebrew or Yankee name? Jacob 7:27 ends with the French word *adieu*. In 3 Nephi 9:18 supposedly written in Reformed Egyptian you find the Greek words *Alpha* and *Omega*. Alma 7:10 has Jesus being born in Jerusalem. Ether 7:9 says: "he did molten out of the hill and made swords out of steel." The steel industry would like to find a hill like this. Alma 30:2 says: "it was in the sixteenth year of the reign of the judges)there began a continual peace throughout all the land." But in the eighteenth year "thus commenced a war)" Alma 35:13. So much for the continual peace. This is a real lapse.

As stated, Brigham H. Roberts, editor of *History of the Church* and author of *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* discovered many of the above problems. In light of these and other serious problems he studied, Roberts raised the following question concerning the *Book of Mormon*:

Is all this sober
history inspired,
written and true,
representing things
that actually
happened? Or is it a
wonder-tale of an
immature mind,
unconscious of what
a test he is laying on
human credulity
when asking men to
accept his narrative
as solemn history?³⁰

Roberts also studied the relationship between the nineteenth century book *View of the Hebrews* written by Ethan

Smith in 1825 just a few miles from Smith's home. The *View of the Hebrews* was published five years before the *Book of Mormon*. This work by Ethan Smith attempts to show how the American Indians, allegedly Israelites, migrated to the New World. The parallels between the *Book of Mormon* and the *View of the Hebrews* are astonishing. Did the book *View of the Hebrews* provide the framework and source material for the *Book of Mormon*? Mormon apostle Roberts catalogues numerous significant parallels in a manuscript that he secretly worked on. The following is a brief summary of the parallels in the *Book of Mormon*, which can only be explained by postulating the thesis that Smith used the book the *View of the Hebrews* to provide the framework and source material for his own book. Some of the parallels are:

1. Both books contain the idea that the American Indians are really Israelites.
2. Both works put forth the notion that the Indians were once knowledgeable in writing, culture and religion.
3. There is a similar emphasis on the prophet Isaiah and the restoration of Israel.
4. Both books believe that the European Christians who settled America were called to evangelize the Indians.
5. Both books have the Israelites coming to America and subsequently degenerating into the American Indians.
Both books have the Israelites coming to America from the Old World by following long migration routes.
6. Both books teach that after the Israelites come to the New World they eventually separate into two separate peoples.
7. Both books teach that the American Indians once had an Iron Age culture.
8. Both works assert that all the languages in the New World were corrupted from an original Hebrew.
9. Both books talk about a lost Indian book buried in a hill.
10. Both books set forth the idea that the original inhabitants started off with a Monarchy, which eventually became a Republican form of government.
11. The religious conversions in both books are reminiscent of conversion scenes in nineteenth century New England.

Roberts concludes his shocking and consequential study of the parallels between Ethan Smith's book and the *Book of Mormon* with this question:

Can such numerous

and startling points
of resemblance and
suggestive contact
be merely
coincidence? ³¹

Smith s Inspired Version of the Bible:

The Reorganized Mormon Church uses this version of the Bible. To call it a biblical translation would be worse than a misnomer. This "inspired version" of the Bible is essentially the King James Bible with the verses changed that were in conflict with Smith s new and constantly evolving theology.

For example, the inspired version in John 4:26 reads "For unto such hath God promised his Spirit"³² instead of "God is a Spirit!" John 4:24 KJV. Smith s inspired version changes the wording and inserts into the text material that is not in the Greek manuscript. Smith believed God was an embodied being, which is why he felt compelled to change the text. Smith claimed to have the power of God as Seer and Revelator to interpret foreign languages. There is absolutely no support in the text for the interpretation "Hath God promised his Spirit." He had to make his own translation since there was no way he could twist the original Greek or the English translation into this particular wording. Most heretics will fallaciously appeal to the original language or make some kind of flawed grammatical argument. Not Smith He was a bold heretic. His approach was, if it does not fit, just rewrite it with the help of his seer-stone. To demonstrate how far Smith would go, consider what he did to the book of Genesis:

A Seer shall the
Lord my God raise
up, who shall be a
choice seer unto the
fruit of my loins.
Thus saith the Lord
God of my fathers
unto me, a choice
seer will I raise up
out of the fruit of thy

loins, he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give commandment that he shall do work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren).

And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you, for I will remember you from generation to generation; and His name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be the name of his father...³³

This wording is not in the Hebrew text; Smith just adds numerous words and a prophecy of himself into Scripture.

Mormons believe that this phrase "his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be the name of his father" is a prophecy about Joseph Smith. Mormons do not distance themselves from this rewriting of the Bible. They actually believe this is a prophecy of Smith recorded in Scripture. How convenient, a prophet who rewrites the Bible and adds new verses about himself. The judgement of Rev. 22:18 in respect to adding to Scripture will fall on Smith.

A sampling of prophetic nonsense:

Who is correct? "For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity" (Moroni 8:18).³⁴ Or? "We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see" (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*

Joseph Smith, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith).³⁵

Who is correct? "Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord" (Jacob 2:24).³⁶ Or? "I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David, and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines" (*Doctrines and Covenants* 132:1).³⁷

Members of the Reorganized Mormon Church are offended that Smith has been labeled as a polygamist. They are willing to accept the following statement from Smith as the truth. Was Smith lying when he said the following in 1844?

What a thing it is for
a man to be accused
of committing
adultery , and
having seven wives,
when I can only find
one, I am the same
man, and as
innocent as I was
fourteen years ago;
and I can prove
them all perjurers.³⁸

It is probable that Joseph Smith may have been secretly married to at least 48 different women when making these public statements.³⁹ Some of these women were 1. Louisa Beman in 1841, 2. Fanny Alger, 3. Lucinda Harris, 4. Zina D. Huntington in 1841, 5. Prescindia L. Huntington in 1841, 6. Eliza Roxey Snow in 1842, 7. Sarah Ann Whitney, in 1842, 8. Desdemona W. Fullmer in 1842, 9. Helen Mar Kimball in 1843, 10. Eliza D. Partridge in 1843, 11. Emily D. Partridge in 1843, 12. Lucy Walker in 1843, and 13. Almera W. Johnson also in 1843, 14. Malissa Lott, in 1843, 15. Fanny Young, in 1843, 16. Maria Lawrence, in 1843, 17. Sarah Lawrence, in 1843, 18. Hannah Ells, in 1843, 19. Flora Ann Woodworth, 20. Ruth D. Vose, 21. Mary Elizabeth Rollins, 22. Olive Frost, 23. Rhoda Richards, 24. Sylvia Sessions, 25. Maria Winchester, 26. Elvira A. Cowles, and 27.

Sarah M.
Cleveland.⁴⁰

These women all admitted being married to Smith. Many of these marriages were secret. To members of the Reorganized Mormon Church we must ask, were these women all lying? Smith's public denials, while secretly practicing the very thing he denied is hypocritical. It is clear from Smith's actions that he had no regard for the truth or the people he lied to.

Prophetic Debacles:

In Deuteronomy 18:21,22 we find the standard to judge prophets. One hundred percent accuracy is the standard set forth. Did Smith meet this standard?

In the *Doctrine And Covenants* 104:1 we read about a revelation that was allegedly given to Smith in April 23, 1834. It reads as follows:

Verily I say unto you, my friends, I give unto you counsel, and a commandment, concerning all the properties which belong to the order which I commanded to be organized and established, to be a united order, and an everlasting order for the benefit of my church, and for the salvation of men until I come.⁴¹

This revelation was given to establish the Mormon version of religious communism. This order was to continue until Christ came. The everlasting united order did not last very long, thus showing it to be a false revelation.

In the *Doctrine And Covenants* 111:1-4 we read about Salem, Massachusetts. This alleged prophecy was given August 6, 1836.

I, the Lord your
God, am not
displeased with your
coming this journey,
notwithstanding
your follies. I have
much treasure in this
city for you, for the
benefit of Zion, and
many people in this
city, whom I will
gather out in due
time for the benefit
of Zion through your
instrumentality.
Therefore, it is
expedient that you
should form
acquaintance with
men in this city, as
you shall be led, and
as it shall be given
you. And it shall
come to pass in due
time that I will give
this city into your
hands, that you shall
have power over,
insomuch that they
shall not discover
your secret parts;
and its wealth
pertaining to gold
and silver shall be
yours.⁴²

This revelation says that Smith would obtain the gold and silver in Salem, Massachusetts. Did this ever happen?

Doctrine And Covenants 114:1 is a purported revelation given April 17, 1838. It reads:

Verily thus saith the

Lord: It is wisdom
in my servant David
W. Pattern, that he
settle up all his
business as soon as
he possibly can, and
make a disposition
of his merchandise,
that he may perform
a mission unto me
next spring, in
company with
others, even twelve
including himself, to
testify of my name
and bear glad tidings
unto all the world.⁴³

According to the Mormon work *History of the Church* Vol. 3, page 171 we find that Patten died in the fall of 1838. Therefore, this is a false revelation given by Smith.

Doctrine And Covenants 117:12 a supposed revelation given on July 8, 1838 says:

And again, I say
unto you, I
remember my
servant Oliver
Granger; behold,
verily I say unto him
that his name shall
be had in sacred
remembrance from
generation to
generation, forever
and ever, saith the
Lord.⁴⁴

The problem is, that today Mormons do not remember who he is, let alone keep his name in sacred remembrance.

An interesting prophecy of Smith is mentioned in *History of the Church* Vol. 2. The date of this is February of 1835. In this work we read:

President Smith then stated it was the will of God that those who went to Zion with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh even 56 years should wind up the scene.⁴⁵

According to this prophecy Christ should have come by 1891.

Evidently, Smith also believed and taught that the moon was inhabited. This was recorded in the "Young Women s Journal" by an Oliver B. Huntington. Huntington stated it like this:

As far back as 1837, I know that he [Joseph Smith] said the moon was inhabited by men and women the same as this earth, and that they lived to a greater age than we do, that they live generally to near the age of a 1000 years.⁴⁶

Huntington went on in this article to talk about how the moon men dressed and that Smith told him in his patriarchal blessing that he himself would go to evangelize these moon men. More prophecies of Smith could be looked at.

These, however, should be sufficient to demonstrate that Smith had no prophetic abilities whatsoever. Some of his followers such as Mr. Huntington were extremely gullible. The biblical standard of a prophet requires

one hundred percent accuracy. This standard for prophetic accuracy is set forth in Deuteronomy 18:21,22. Therefore, it is clearly seen that Smith is a false prophet.

Smith s views on the Bible:

Smith, in the work *The Teachings Of The Prophet Joseph Smith*, relates his views concerning the Bible:

From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of men, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled.⁴⁷

In this same work in a small section titled "Errors in the Bible" we find more of Smith's views about the reliability of the Bible:

Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors.⁴⁸

Smith never provides evidence of errors in the Bible. He just asserts it. In light of his own book s numerous mistakes, errors, problems, and absurdities it is more than a little disingenuous for Smith to attack any literature, especially the Bible.

Smith on Salvation:

For we know that it is by grace that we are saved after all

we can do 2 Nephi
25:23⁴⁹

Verily it is a day of
sacrifice, and a day
for the tithing of my
people; for he that is
tithed shall be not be
burned at his
coming. D. & C.
64:23⁵⁰

It is clearly seen that Smith's system of salvation is one of works. In contrast, Ephesians 2:8,9 reads: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man boast."

Smith's views on God:

In the *History of the Church* we learn of Smith's view regarding the Christian God:

Many men say there
is one God; the
Father, the Son, and
the Holy Ghost are
only one God! I say
that is a strange God
anyhow--three in
one, and one in
three! It is a curious
organization.... He
would be a
wonderfully big
God-- he would be a
giant or a monster.⁵¹

Smith's comments are deranged in addition to being offensive mocking statements against God. God is not mocked.

Smith died the very same year he said these things.

Smith's *Book of Mormon* is best described as confused heretical anti-Trinitarian monotheism.

For example, we read:

And he said unto me, Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of flesh). And the angel said unto me, behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father!⁵²

And now Abinadi saith unto them, I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people; and because he dwelleth in flesh, he shall be called the Son of God: and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son; the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and the Son: and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of Heaven and of Earth)⁵³

In the above two quotations, it is clearly seen how Smith confuses the Father and Son. Modern editions of this "most correct book" read entirely different. The first citation now simply reads "yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father." This first citation from 1st Nephi is a significant example of the doctrinal changes made in the

"most correct book on earth." It is interesting that modern editions of this "most correct book" do not inform the reader with a footnote of any kind that changes have been made to the modern editions. There is an ethical necessity to inform the readers of when doctrinal changes of this magnitude are made.

Consider the following example of Smith's polytheistic beliefs:

I will preach on the plurality of Gods. [sic] I have selected this text for that express purpose. I wish to declare I have always and in all congregations when I have preached on the subject of Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached by the Elders for fifteen years.⁵⁴

It should be clear that Smith is promoting a non-biblical religion.

In Smith's King Follett funeral sermon given in 1844 he sets forth a radically bizarre teaching concerning the origins of this world. He states it like this:

In the beginning, the head of the Gods, called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it.⁵⁵

We should not forget, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* mentioned earlier by Dr. Quinn which provides evidence that portions of this sermon are plagiarized from the "Cabala."

Did Smith's god possess omniscience (all-knowledge)?

God himself is
increasing and
progressing in
knowledge, power,
and dominion, and
will do so, worlds
without end. ⁵⁶

If this is true, will the Mormon god ever gain a complete knowledge of things? If so, when?

Is Smith's god the eternal God of Scripture? Consider these teachings by Smith:

God himself was
once as we are now,
and is an exalted
Man, and sits
enthroned in yonder
heavens. That is the
great secret

It is necessary that
we should
understand the
character and being
of God, and how he
came to be so; for I
am going to tell you
how God came to be
God. We have
imagined and
supposed that God
was God from all
eternity. I will refute
that idea⁵⁷

This is a continuation from the King Follett funeral sermon from which Smith stole concepts from the "Cabala."

Not only does the occultic "Cabala" teach that God is corporeal or embodied, so does Greek Stoic philosophy.

Smith on metaphysics:

Smith taught in his *Book of Mormon* an ethical dualism. This is how it is stated:

For it must needs be,
that there is an
opposition in all
things. If not so, my
first-born in the
wilderness,
righteousness could
not be brought to
pass, neither
wickedness, neither
holiness nor misery,
neither good nor
bad. Wherefore, all
things must needs be
a compound in one;
wherefore, if it
should be one body
it must needs remain
as dead, having no
life neither death,
nor corruption nor
incorruption,
happiness nor
misery, neither sense
nor insensibility.⁵⁸

This is not simply saying that there are such things as good and evil. Smith is teaching that there are eternal principles of good and evil, which govern the Universe. Smith believes these principles are equally ultimate.

These principles are supposedly independent of God and above Him. If these principles are independent and above God, would not they be the ultimate source of authority in the Universe? Where does this type of thinking lead? The same chapter in verse twenty-seven concludes with a declaration of man's autonomy or ability, which reads: "free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon)." Thus, Smith is teaching that man not only has the power within himself to determine right from wrong, but also to make choices and act upon them accordingly as his will pleases. This is nothing more than the ancient heresy of Pelagianism.

This ancient heresy says in effect that man can save himself through his own strength.

Smith rejects God creating the world *ex nihilo*, out of nothing:

You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing; and they will answer, "Doesn't the Bible say He created the world?" And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been out of nothing. Now, the word create came from the word baurau which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos-chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end.⁵⁹

As stated previously, Dr. Quinn traces this rejection of creation *ex nihilo* to the influence of the occultic "Cabala" in Smith's thinking.

Was Smith a prophet or an egotistical madman?

Jesus said in Matthew 7:20, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." The following quotations are examples of someone who lacked sober mindedness.

God made Aaron to
be a mouth piece for
the children of
Israel, and He will
make me be god to
you in His stead, and
the Elders to be
mouth for me; if you
don't like it, you
must lump it.⁶⁰

I have more to boast
of than ever any
man had, I am the
only man that has
ever been able to
keep a whole church

together since the
days of Adam. A
large majority of the
whole have stood by
me. Neither Paul,
John, Peter, nor
Jesus ever did it. I
boast, that no man
ever did such a work
as I.⁶¹

The whole earth
shall bear me
witness that I, like
the towering rock in
the midst of the
ocean, which has
withstood the
mighty surges of the
warring waves for
centuries, am
impregnable)I
combat the errors of
ages; I meet the
violence of mobs; I
cope with illegal
proceedings from
executive authority;
I cut the gordian
knot of powers, and
I solve mathematical
problems of
universities, with
truth-diamond truth
and God is my right
hand man.⁶²

I am a lawyer; I am
a big lawyer and
comprehend heaven,
earth and hell, to
bring forth
knowledge that shall
cover up all lawyers,
doctors and other
big bodies.⁶³

Don't employ
lawyers, or pay them
money for their
knowledge, for I
have learned that
they don't know
anything. I know
more than they all.⁶⁴

These quotations are examples of an egotistical deluded heretic. It is appalling that anyone would ever try and justify and defend such contemptible statements. Yet, this is exactly what the followers of Smith do.

In conclusion, we should note some introductory comments from John L. Brooke, Associate Professor of History at Tufts University, in his book *The Refiners Fire The making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*. In his book Professor Brooke makes some perceptive observations, which he thoroughly documents concerning the beginnings of Mormon cosmology. This work by Professor Brooke is profound and significant. Some of Professor Brooke's introductory comments to his important study are as follows:

This book argues that Joseph Smith went through two critical transformations. He began his engagement with the supernatural as a village conjurer but transformed himself into a prophet of the "Word," announcing the opening of a new dispensation. Then, moving beyond his role as prophet and revelator, Smith transformed himself and the Mormon priesthood into Christian-hermetic

magi, a role
previously
manifested in the
medieval alchemist,
the Renaissance
hermetic
philosopher, and the
perfectionist
sectarians of the
Radical
Reformation.⁶⁵

Hermeticism, of which alchemy was involved, taught that man could regain or obtain the supposed divine powers that man lost in the fall of Adam. Magic, Witchcraft, Alchemy, and Freemasonry are manifestations of hermeticism.

It is interesting that Smith was involved with elements of all of these. Smith did not really escape his role as village conjurer; he expanded it into a bogus nationwide seer.

In light of this article's brief look at Smith's character, his distorted theology, including the concepts that were plagiarized from occultic sources, his false revelations, his deluded self image, those who still believe that this man is a prophet of God are clearly outside of the faith. The testimony of Joseph Smith and his work must be completely repudiated. Any testimony that lifts up Joseph Smith is false. For an example of what is involved in a true testimony see this writer's "A Testimony of an Ex-Mormon." This essay can be found online at *Contra Mundum- A Reformed Cultural Review*.

http://www.visi.com/~contra_m//cm/discuss2/cm98_jk_mormon.html

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Note:

I am not claiming originality for the above work. I've tried to summarize the outstanding and ongoing work of Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This material was presented in a series of Sunday school lessons.

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62. *Ibid.*, pp. 408,409.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
64. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 289.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 467.
66. John L. Brooke, *The Refiners Fire The making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 4.