

THE VISION OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

The Mormon Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was founded in 1830 by a man called Joseph Smith who claimed to be a prophet of God. Was this man really a prophet of God? We will soon see that he wasn't.

Smith wrote in his scripture, The Pearl of Great Price (PGP), that in 1820 when he was praying about what Church to join the Father and the Son appeared to him to tell him to join none and that he would become the prophet of a new Church, the true Church of Jesus Christ. It was not recorded in its present form until 1838. This event is known in Mormonism as the First Vision. David O McKay who was a Mormon apostle and leader said that the vision was the foundation of the Church. Mormon apostle John A Widtsoe said that the vision is the most important event in the history of Smith and that everything Smith did after depends on it for validity. If it didn't happen the other claims Smith made are false. Smith didn't get the priesthood until after 1830 and yet he gave a revelation from God in 1832 that can be read in Doctrine and Covenants 84 that claimed that no man could see God unless the man had the priesthood. Smith didn't have the priesthood in 1820 so he did not see God the Father.

This vision is the foundation of Mormonism because it was the first time Smith was told there was no true Church on earth and it was the start of him becoming a prophet. The Church says that it cannot be the true Church if this vision never took place because Smith cannot be trusted in anything if he lied in any way concerning this vision.

Smith gave testimony about a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ. And he reported later visions of the Angel Moroni who led him to the plates that he translated scripture from called the Book of Mormon. Both these vision claims have been disproved by careful research. The official First Vision account is suspicious for it is part of a story that claims Dr Charles Anthon authenticated Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon. Smith wrote that Anthon said the translation was correct. But that was impossible for at that time what Egyptian meant was just anybody's guess. But back to the Father and Son story.

There is no evidence that Smith told the same story from the start and the earliest Mormons never heard of it and there were no witnesses. Mormons reply that they don't care if there were no witnesses because the origin of the Book of Mormon proves that Joseph was blessed by God and trusted to tell the truth. But if the vision was the foundation then it is more important to verify it than even to verify the Book of Mormon and it should be more verifiable. Why was it not recorded in the Book of Commandments? God may have mysterious ways but he can't be in situations like that or every fake prophet will be using the excuse, God has ways that seem strange to us.

Smith said that he had this vision in 1820 when there was a great revival and this has been disproved (page 3, New Light on Mormon Origins, Wesley P Walters page 19 of the booklet shows that Smith was agnostic about the existence of God in 1823 as recorded by his friend Oliver Cowdery which proves there was no vision in 1820). It would have to have happened in 1825 which would involved denying the first vision Smith reported of Moroni to tell him about the gold plates in 1823. His memory of such important events would not be that bad. He was lying. The first stories he told were nothing like what he wrote in The Pearl of Great Price. Mormons say these stories can fit the account.

For example, in the PGP he says he was inspired to pray for the guidance that led to the vision by a quotation from James by a preacher called Lane. In an earlier account he said his Bible reading inspired him. Both could have. He said that he saw angels. In a different account he mentioned that he saw Jesus and that he forgave his sins and did not mention that God was with Jesus. These things could be explained by Smith leaving out details in the PGP. But then one realises that things like that would not have been omitted especially when they were spoken of before. He would have wanted the official account to preserve them if they really happened for they would have been very precious to him. And why does the Father have a body in his PGP vision when the Book of Mormon itself never said that the Father had a body? It makes no sense.

The vision story was written after many Mormon sects claimed he became a fallen prophet. Their claim that he fell away from what he originally taught is certainly true and he started changing what he said was the word of God. The angel told Joseph that the Plates he would receive contained the whole gospel. Believers say that this must be true for Smith could not have made that up for the Book of Mormon does not contain the full gospel. It was so far short that he had to pretend to further revelations in the book of Doctrine and Covenants. In the original Book of Commandments which was Smith's precursor to Doctrine and Covenants God told Smith to write no more scripture once the Book of Mormon was completed (Are the Mormon Scriptures Reliable? page 65).

The Mormon Church admits that the varying accounts of the first vision are real and do refer to the first vision. So what they do is try to reconcile them with the full version which they consider to be sacred scripture in the Pearl of Great Price.

They say that the early accounts which say angels appeared fit Smith's claim in PGP that he saw the Father and the Son for even in the Bible God is sometimes called an angel. Smith would not have deployed that usage.

They say that Smith only reporting one personage in one account appearing does not matter for the Father and the Son did not appear at the one time. But when you read Smith's account he said he saw two personages one of whom pointed to the other and introduced him saying, "Behold my Beloved Son, Hear Him". Why would the Father appear first when the Father and Son were working together? If Smith had cared about the other stories and he was used to getting away with his lies so it comes as no surprise if he didn't care he would have made his PGP version fit the prior stories.

Some Mormons say that the full version of the story was long in coming out for Smith regarded the vision as just something for himself. It was not about his appointment as a prophet or the translator of the Book of Mormon but only about encouraging him and forgiving his sins and directing him to the true Church. The Mormons say that since he did not use this vision at all to blow his trumpet makes it plausible. They say since he chose an unknown angel to be the messenger of his Book of Mormon and not God himself he must have been honest. They say that it was because the vision was his business that he did not have it included in the early histories of the Church. That is deception because Smith said he was told to join none of the existing Churches and when God and Jesus appeared to him it was clear that they had a plan for him so he alone had the chance to form the right faith. There is no greater honour that being told you alone have been chosen to restore the truth. No prophet ever claimed that honour before. Smith had already blown his trumpet by forming what he called the only true Church in 1830 which was quite a staggering claim because there had been Luther and Aquinas and tons of intelligent theologians and experts and he was saying they were all wrong. What business have the Mormons telling us what Smith's motives were for he never said humility was the reason for his silence?

Mormons say that Smith misremembered the date of the revival or just chose 1820 for he thought it was a good compromise when he could not remember exactly when. Another thing they say is that it could have been that since Smith did not say how long after the revival that he decided to pray for guidance and the vision happened that there could have been years between the revival and the vision. The Mormons say the revival that stirred Smith could have happened in 1817 to 1818. Smith would have remembered events adjacent to his first vision and so he could have worked out the dates by asking people when X, Y and Z happened. He didn't because it never happened and one year was as good as another.

The Mormons say that since Smith could not invent a date for the vision but kept contradicting himself on the dates that the vision must have really happened for he was sincerely trying his best to remember when. They say Smith did not keep the date in his mind because it was only later in his life that he decided he would speak about the vision.

The Mormons admit that changes were made by the Church including deletions and alterations in Joseph's account of his first vision but blames the unprofessional editors that were used in the Church until recently for that. In fact it was to make the testimony suit the Church doctrine. When the Mormon Church belittles the vision itself then why should we believe in the vision?

The Mormons say that discrepancies between the accounts means nothing for all reliable testimonies conflict with one another in minor details. The reply to this is that it is not applicable in Smith's case for he wrote all the accounts himself and they do not agree. Moreover, the accounts have been declared to be scripture.

Smith claimed in his history that he was sorely persecuted for his tale about the First Vision. Then why is there such a huge number of early Mormon documents and letters and diaries that never mention it though the Church clutched at every little thing it could get its hands on and used it in its effort to win the argument with the other Churches who all opposed it? That vision would have been the thing that upset the Churches most for it said they were all abominations and false so their silence is telling.

BOOKS CONSULTED

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A MARVELLOUS WORK AND A WONDER, LeGrand Richards, Deseret Books, Utah, 1976

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ARE THE MORMON SCRIPTURES RELIABLE? Harry L Ropp, IVP, Illinois, 1987

ASK YOUR BISHOP, Ira T Ransom, 317 W 7th South, Brigham City, UT 84302

CHANGES IN JOSEPH SMITH'S HISTORY, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1965

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SOME MODERN FAITHS, Maurice C Burrell and J Stafford Wright, IVP, Leics, 1988

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THE FACTS OF MORMONISM ARE STRANGER THAN FICTION, Charles Crane and J Edward Decker, Christian Information Outreach, Kent, 1982

THE HUMAN ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON, Wesley P Walters, Ex-Mormons for Jesus, Florida 1979

WHY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WAS ESTABLISHED ANEW IN 1929?, Church of Christ with the Elijah Message, Independence, Missouri

THE WEB

www.mormonthink.com

FULFILLED PROPHECIES OF JOSEPH SMITH
www.jefflindsay.com/LDSFAQ/FQ_prophecies.shtml

THE BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES

www.exmormon.org/file9.htm

Excellent refutation of the claims of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon

JOSEPH SMITH AS A PROPHET by Richard Packham

www.exmormon.org/prophet.htm

Refutes the Mormon claim that Smith was a real prophet of God. The Mormons accept the validity of Ezekiel 12:21-28 which says that if a prophecy is too long in being fulfilled then it is a false prophecy. A prophecy will come true by chance given long enough. Smith made many prophecies that have not come true yet so he was a false prophet. By the same criteria, the Old Testament prophets failed and the Christian claim that they predicted Jesus and his life by the power of God is false for even if the prophecies did come true it was not God that was behind it. Doctrine and Covenants 1:37 pledges that every word prophesied by Smith will come true for God has spoken. On January 4th 1833 Smith predicted by the authority of Jesus that there were people then living who would see the twelve tribes of Israel gathered to Missouri. This never happened. Slaves did not rise up and cause a war as he predicted in Doctrine and Covenants 87. God told Smith that the communism practiced by his Church would never be done away and would still be done when he comes again (Doctrine and Covenants 104). The Mormon Church dropped the communism causing minor schisms on the basis that the Church could no longer be the true Church for doing that.

JERALD AND SANDRA TANNER'S DISTORTED VIEW OF MORMONISM: A RESPONSE TO MORMONISM, SHADOW OR REALITY?

www.xmission.com/~country/reason/ldshist1.htm This page shows plainly the harm that the Christian Church in general is doing with its rotten Bible for the evil commanded by God in the Bible is defended on the basis that it has a purpose known to God and this is used to justify the terrible doctrines such as polygamy that the Mormons used to live out. The page does what all apologists for religion does, ignore the major problems and nitpicks on rather minor errors in the hope of showing the critics to be not worth listening to. For example, the Tanners believed that Joseph Smith copied his father's story of a dream he had in 1811 into the Book of Mormon as the dream of Lehi because Joseph's mother Lucy wrote about the dream in 1845 and the two were identical in all serious points. The page says that Lucy Smith simply filled in her memory of her husband's dream subconsciously from the Book of Mormon. But she had family and friends to help her remember. The page says that since the Book of Mormon was written first and she was writing 15 years later it is wrong to say that the author of the Book of Mormon was the one doing the copying. But how do you know? It is still most probable that the Tanners are right. If it is not then we still have no reason to take one side or the other. Anyway, what about the more serious objections to the Book of Mormon that the Tanners made? He's nitpicking. The page says that since the Temple ceremony of the Mormons has many elements in it like Masonry that Smith did not borrow from Masonry for Masonry might have been partly divinely inspired. This denies Occam's Razor, stick to the simplest explanation and that is that Smith stole Masonic rites. With the logic of the page you could say the book or song you got caught plagiarising was not copied on purpose but somebody must have telepathically put the words of an existing song and the music into your unsuspecting mind.

BY HIS OWN HAND ON PAPYRUS, Charles Larson
At Mormons in Transition Website www.irr.org

MORE PROBLEMS WITH THE FIRST VISION, ANSWERING DR CLANDESTINE, Jerald and Sandra Tanner
www.xmission.com/~country/reason/clndst10.htm

PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS WITH THE MORMON CONCEPT OF GOD, Francis J Beckwith,
www.equip.org/free/DM410.htm

Barry R Bickmore
www.geocities.com/Athens/parthenon/2671/EC.html

MORMON SCHOLARSHIP, APOLOGETICS AND EVANGELICAL NEGLECT, Carl Mosser and Paul Owen,
www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/cpoint10-2.html#mosserowen

BOOK OF MORMON QUESTIONS
www.lds-mormon.com/bookofmormonquestions.shtml

MORMONISM UNVAILED: MORE EVIDENCE THAT IT IS TRUE. Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry
www.carm.org/lds/unveiled_defended.htm

THE ABRIDGEMENT OF D&C 137
www.saintsalive.com/mormonism/falseprophetjs/htm

THE BOOK OF MORMON: ONE TOO MANY M'S Stephen Van Eck
www.infidels.org/library/modern/stephen_eck/toomany.html

EGYPTIAN CHARACTERS
www.mormonstudies.com/seer2.htm

This shows that when Smith translated the book of Abraham he invented hieroglyphics where there was a piece missing from the papyri. The characters Smith added make no sense to translators. Yet he translated these imaginary hieroglyphics! His mother and close associate David Whitmer spoke of Joseph copying characters of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon before he translated and that like the Book of Abraham Smith often produced two lines in the manuscript with the translation of a single character which shows that the whole Book of Mormon thing was a hoax.

MORMON FARMS

www.xmission.com/~country/reason/farms_1.htm

by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Gathers evidence that indicates that it was possible that Smith was insane and had manic depression.

DR CHARLES ANTHON RE AUTHENTICITY OF WRITING SAMPLES ALLEGEDLY COPIED FROM THE GOLDEN PLATES

www.mormonism-web.com/anthon.htm

INTERVIEW OF MARTIN HARRIS

www.xmission.com/~research/about/docum4.htm

COMMENTS ON THE BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES: A RESPONSE TO JERALD AND SANDRA TANNER

www.mormons.org/response/bom/witnesses_Roper.htm

A ridiculous rebuttal that has been taken into account for this book and refuted.

FACTS ON THE BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES, PART 1

www.irr.org/mit/bomwit1.html

Excellent refutation of the reliability of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon

THE STOLEN MANUSCRIPT

www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bom_early_problems/goldenbible_stolenmanuscript.htm