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# SAINTLY SCISSORS

## THE CUTTING AWAY OF UNWANTED REVELATION

Just as God spoke to Moses on the mountain, the LDS Church claims that God personally appeared to Joseph Smith and directed him to establish “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 1:30). LDS revelations are usually written with Biblical sounding words like “thus saith the Lord.” However, Brigham Young’s 1847 revelation is the last section added to the *D&C* with that wording.

There have been three additions to the *Doctrine and Covenants* dated after 1847 but they do not include the words “thus saith the Lord.” One was a vision/dream of President Joseph Fielding Smith, dated 1918 (<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/dc/138>). The other two are declarations ending past practices of the LDS Church

(originally claimed to be established by revelation). In 1890 President Woodruff issued the Manifesto to end polygamy (<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/od/1>) and in 1978 President Kimball issued a statement that God had revealed that blacks could now hold the priesthood (<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/od/2>). While each president of the LDS Church is still ordained as a “prophet, seer and revelator,” revelations are no longer issued. Although early Mormon apostles denounced the Christian world for holding to a closed canon of scripture, the LDS Church’s canon is for all intents and purposes closed as well.

Not only are there no new revelations, since 1890 it seems that the LDS Church has retreated from a number of teachings once held as revealed doctrine. The following five examples illustrate this redefining of LDS doctrine.

### I. LAMANITE IDENTITY

On November 9, 2007, Carrie Moore, writing for the LDS-owned *Deseret News*, announced that the year before the LDS Church had quietly made a change in the Introduction to the Doubleday edition of the Book of Mormon. The change is to be incorporated in future church printings of the Book of Mormon. The sentence under discussion reads as follows:

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are <sup>among</sup> the principal ancestors of the American Indians.

Change in Introduction to the Book of Mormon

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the **principal** ancestors of the American Indians.

The Doubleday edition and future LDS editions will read:

After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the ancestors of the American Indians.

While only one word was changed its implications are astounding. This simple word change signals a retreat from past claims that **all** American Indians are descended from the Book of Mormon people. The *Deseret News* article stated:

A one-word change in the introduction to a 2006 edition of the Book of Mormon has reignited discussion among some Latter-day Saints about the book’s historicity, geography and the descendants of those chronicled within its pages (*Deseret Morning News*, November 9, 2007).

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The same article goes on to quote retired BYU professor John L. Sorenson that the change only “eliminates a certain minor embarrassment in the use of language.” However, the change seems to fly in the face of the majority of statements by LDS Church leaders in the past that the descendants of the Book of Mormon people are to be found in the American Indians from Alaska to Chile, from the east coast to the Polynesian islands. This was not just a casual identification, but one made by various LDS Church presidents and apostles for over one hundred and fifty years. President Spencer W. Kimball certainly held such a position. In the *Ensign* magazine we read:

The translation by the Prophet Joseph Smith revealed a running history for one thousand years—six hundred years before Christ until four hundred after Christ—a history of these great people who occupied this land for that thousand years. Then for the next fourteen hundred years, they lost much of their high culture. The **descendants** of this mighty people were called **Indians** by Columbus in 1492 when he found them here.

The term **Lamanite** includes **all** Indians and Indian mixtures, such as the Polynesians, the Guatemalans, the Peruvians, as well as the Sioux, the Apache, the Mohawk, the Navajo, and others. It is a large group of great people (“Of Royal Blood,” *Ensign*, July 1971).

President Hinckley has repeatedly associated the American Indians with the descendants of Lehi. In Hinckley’s October 1997 conference speech he referred to the Navajos as “these sons and daughters of Father Lehi” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1997, p. 67). While attending the 1999 dedication of the new LDS temple in Guayaquil, Ecuador, Hinckley referred to “the descendants of Father Lehi” that were in the congregation and observed: “So very many of these people have the blood of Lehi in their veins” (*Ensign*, Oct. 1999, p. 74). Thus we see that the president of the church was equating Book of Mormon peoples as being in both North and South America as late as 1999.

(For further information on Lamanite identity problems see our newsletter #103 <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no103.htm> and the article “The Use of ‘Lamanite’ in Official LDS Discourse” by John-Charles Duffy, in the *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 34, no. 1, Winter 2008.)

With the Mormons changing who is to be considered a descendent of the Book of Mormon people, how are those who have been told all their lives that they are descended from Father Lehi to think of themselves? Hugo Olaiz, a third-generation Mormon from Argentina, wrote:

I have fond memories of being a Lamanite. As a Mormon boy growing up in Argentina, I often sang a Primary song that went like this:

. . . [I am a young Lamanite of humble birth, but I gratefully carry a song in my heart.]

Social stereotypes aside, the song was intended to tell the members in Latin America that they are a special people with a special racial identity, a once prevalent message from which Church leaders are now retreating. In past years, discourse about “Lamanites” played a key role in the missionary program in Latin America, used both as a proselytizing strategy and as an explanation for missionary success. . . .

The change came only after years of resistance to mounting DNA evidence, including threats of excommunication to those who called attention to the mismatch between LDS claims that Amerindian peoples were of Middle Eastern ancestry and the overwhelming genetic data showing their descent from Asian peoples (“How is it That Ye Could Have Fallen!,” by Hugo Olaiz, *Sunstone*, December 2007, p. 68).

If the Mormons cannot identify who are Lamanites how are they to fulfill the charge to take the Book of Mormon to them? In one of Joseph Smith’s earliest revelations in 1828, God instructed him that

. . . this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the **Lamanites**, . . . for **this very purpose** are these plates preserved, which contain these records . . . that the **Lamanites** might come to the knowledge of **their fathers**, and that they might know the promises of the Lord . . . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 3:18-20).

The blurring of the identity of who is a Lamanite is just another step back from the claims of the founder of Mormonism. In recent years various church writers have been trying to limit the Book of Mormon lands. The Book of Mormon claims that by approximately 49 BC the Nephites and Lamanites

...did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread inasmuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east (Book of Mormon, Helaman 3:8).

Nineteenth and twentieth century church leaders spoke of the Nephites and Lamanites as occupying the whole land mass of North and South America. But now BYU scholars are pushing for a very limited Book of Mormon geography encompassing southern Mexico and Guatemala. This places the story in the same area as the Mayans. However, genetic research of the Mayans has not shown any link to Semetic people, only to Asian ancestry. Cody Clark, writing for the Provo, Utah *Daily Herald* reported:

A primary sticking point for some scientists—namely that DNA profiling of American Indians reveals no signs of

the DNA that Nephite and Lamanite forebear[er]s would have brought with them from Israel—is captured in the 2004 book *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA and the Mormon Church*. The book was written by Simon Southerton, a molecular biologist and former LDS bishop who is no longer a member of the church.

“We are certain that American Indians are essentially all descended from Asian ancestors,” Southerton said via e-mail. “Israelite DNA has escaped detection after tests on more than 12,000 individuals. How could the massive Book of Mormon civilizations not leave a significant genetic trace?” (*Daily Herald*, Nov. 24, 2007)

While there has been extensive research and excavations done in the Mayan area no archaeological sites, writing samples or artifacts have been identified as Nephite, Lamanite, or Jaredite. Also, there is no official LDS Church map designating the location of the Book of Mormon story (see our article at <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/cumorah.htm>).

Another change that is being made in the Book of Mormon Introduction has not received as much attention. Carrie Moore reported:

Another change in the book’s introduction may be of interest to those who question whether Latter-day Saints are Christians, but church officials declined comment about when that change was made.

The second sentence of the introduction in many editions says the book is “a record of God’s dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, **as does the Bible**, the fullness of the everlasting gospel.”

The 2004 edition produced by Doubleday for non-Latter-day Saints omits the phrase, “as does the Bible.” A church spokesman declined comment on when the change was first made or an explanation of why (*Deseret News*, Nov. 9, 2007).

One possible explanation could be that the statement would raise questions in the reader’s mind as to the need for the Book of Mormon if the Bible already contains the “fullness of the everlasting gospel.”

However, the same question could be asked about the need for the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price* if the Book of Mormon contains “the fullness of the everlasting gospel.” For example, neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon contain any teaching on the need for eternal marriage in the LDS temple ceremony in order to inherit eternal life. This doctrine is taught in sections 131 and 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Also, the Book of Mormon has nothing in it about three kingdoms of heaven or about ordinance work for the dead (see our web site, “Contradictions in LDS Scriptures”). Thus it seems that the whole sentence in the Book of Mormon Introduction should

have been removed as neither it nor the Bible contain all necessary components of the LDS gospel.

## 2. THE GATHERING TO ZION

Early Mormonism combined the need for evangelizing the American Indians (considered to be Israelites descending through Manasseh) with the need for all true descendents of Israel to participate in the gathering to Zion.

The Jews were to gather to Jerusalem and the rest of the children of Israel were to gather in Zion, which according to Joseph Smith, is Independence, Missouri. In the LDS Articles of Faith we read:

We believe in the **literal gathering of Israel** and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that **Zion** (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the **American continent**; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory (*Pearl of Great Price*, Articles of Faith, no.10).

Early Mormons believed that God led the scattered descendents of Israel to join the church. Lineage thus became very important to the LDS people.

Joseph Smith introduced the concept of the Patriarchal Blessing where a Mormon’s lineage is given. Usually a person is declared to be a descendent of Ephraim (from the Old Testament) unless he/she is an American Indian. Then they are told they are from Manasseh, Ephraim’s brother.

Originally these designations were taken as literal fact, but now the church says it doesn’t matter if you are truly descended from Israel, you are adopted into the family when you join the LDS Church. The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 3, under the heading **PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS**, explains:

An essential part of a patriarchal blessing is a **declaration of lineage**. The patriarch seeks inspiration to specify **the dominant family line** that leads back to Abraham. The majority of modern blessings have designated **Ephraim or Manasseh** as the main link in this tracing, but others of every tribe of Israel have also been named. Whether this is a pronouncement of blood inheritance or of adoption **does not matter** (see Abr. 2:10). It is seen as the line and legacy through which one’s blessings are transmitted. Thus the blessings “of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” are conferred. (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 3, p. 1066. For more on these blessings see <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/patriarchal blessing.htm>).

The teaching of the gathering was given as a revelation to Joseph Smith in 1831:

Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated **for the gathering of the saints.**

Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the **city of Zion**... which is now called **Independence**... (*D&C 57:1-2*).

Early converts to Mormonism took this very seriously, resulting in the emigration of thousands of Mormons from England and Europe to America during the nineteenth century. This was held to be so important that the church set up the Perpetual Emigration Fund to aid poor families in far off lands to come to America. Professor Dean May reports that

Ultimately some 85,000 British, Scandinavian, and European converts immigrated to Nauvoo and Utah between 1840 and 1890 (“Rites of Passage: The Gathering as Cultural Credo,” by Dean L. May, *Journal of Mormon History*, Spring 2003, p. 4).

Originally the gathering was to be to the center of Zion, Independence, Missouri, but when the Mormons were driven out of both Missouri and Illinois they had to broaden the concept of “Zion.” It changed to mean all of North America. However, in the twentieth century the church de-emphasized the importance of the gathering. Speaking at the October 2006 LDS conference Apostle Russell M. Nelson explained that the Mormons are to gather in their own homelands, not to America:

The choice to come unto Christ is not a matter of physical location; it is a matter of individual commitment. . . . **True, in the early days of the Church, conversion often meant emigration as well. But now the gathering takes place in each nation.** The Lord has decreed the establishment of Zion in each realm where He has given His Saints their birth and nationality. . . . The place of gathering for Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; the place of gathering for Nigerian Saints is in Nigeria; the place of gathering for Korean Saints is in Korea; and so forth (*Ensign*, Nov. 2006).

This led the people at Reachout Trust to observe:

In such circumstances the Church has, over the years, found it helpful to trawl through early Church writings to find alternative definitions of Zion. These include identifying Zion as a cause, a state of being, or “the pure in heart”, the whole of America, and finally wherever Mormons are gathered in the nations of the world. All, in Mormon theology, are legitimate definitions of Zion. This development of the concept of Zion is held up as an example of “continuing revelation in a growing Church”. However, *Doctrine and Covenants* section 84, makes it plain that,

however you identify Zion, the centre place is Independence, Missouri. The problem is that, today, the centre place of the Mormon Zion is Salt Lake City. Revelation? ([www.reachoutrust.org/articles/ldsquest/lds5.htm](http://www.reachoutrust.org/articles/ldsquest/lds5.htm))

### 3. POLYGAMY ESSENTIAL

When Joseph Smith introduced his doctrine of eternal marriage it was directly tied to plural marriage. In the first verse of *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 132 we read that the revelation was given to Smith in answer to his prayer regarding David and Solomon’s plural wives. Verse six goes on to state that “as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof **must** and shall abide the law, or he shall be **dammned**, saith the Lord God.” In verse fifty-two the revelation instructs Emma, Joseph’s wife, to “receive all those [women] that have been given unto my servant Joseph...”

In fact, the very reason there are so many polygamist splinter groups today is due to followers of Joseph Smith taking his revelation seriously—live polygamy or be damned.

The importance of polygamy to the early leaders is seen in the extensive number of marriages they undertook. The first seven presidents of the LDS Church practiced plural marriage. Joseph Smith had at least thirty-four wives, Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church, had over fifty and John Taylor, the third president of the LDS Church, had at least fourteen.

From Joseph Smith’s time until 1890 the practice of plural marriage was considered essential to attain godhood. Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church, declared

The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 11, p. 269, August 19, 1866).

However, in 1890 President Woodruff, himself a polygamist, issued the Manifesto which ended the official practice of polygamy. Today the LDS Church separates the doctrine of eternal marriage from the practice of polygamy even though the two are tied together in *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 132. It should be kept in mind that the LDS Church has not abandoned the doctrine of polygamy, only the current practice. For further information on this topic see <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/ldsleadersbelievepolygamyinheaven.htm>

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#### 4. TEMPLE CEREMONY AND GARMENTS CHANGED

The LDS Church has traditionally stated that its ordinances and rituals are given by revelation and are to remain unchanged. Writing in 1840 Joseph Smith said:

Now the purpose in Himself in the winding up scene of the last dispensation is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted **precisely** in accordance with the preceding dispensations....He set **the ordinances to be the same forever and ever**, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from heaven to man, or to send angels to reveal them (*History of the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 208).

In preparation of the Mormons building the Nauvoo temple Joseph Smith claimed that God revealed to him that he was about to

restore again that which was lost...**that I may reveal mine ordinances**...And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof... (*D&C* 124: 4042).

This was again emphasized in the *Deseret News* in 1882:

As temple work progresses, some members wonder if the ordinances can be changed or adjusted. **These ordinances have been provided by revelation**, and are in the hands of the First Presidency. Thus, the temple is protected from tampering (W. Grant Bangerter, executive director of the Temple Department and a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, *Deseret News*, Church Section, January 16, 1982).

In spite of this many changes have been made through the years.

##### A. Change in Washing and Anointings.

The first time a Mormon goes to the temple he/she will participate in a washing and anointing ceremony conducted by two people of the same sex. This was originally a full bath. Years later it was shortened to a ceremonial touching with water and then oil on various parts of the body as prayers were said. It has now been modified to just having the forehead anointed with water and oil as the prayers are said.

##### B. Garments Abbreviated.

The special undergarment worn daily by those who have participated in the temple endowment ceremony was first made under Joseph Smith's direction. They were one-piece and similar to old-fashioned long johns. However, over the years they have gradually been shortened so that

they no longer go to the wrist or ankle. They are now two-piece, go to the knee and have a short sleeve.

##### C. Changes in the Endowment Ceremony.

After Mormons have their washing and anointings they cover their garments with either white pants and shirt or long white dress. During the Endowment Ceremony they add a robe over one shoulder, a hat or veil, and a green fig-leaf apron. This ceremony was first performed in Nauvoo under Joseph Smith's direction and was claimed to be given to him by revelation. Yet the Endowment part of the ceremony has undergone a number of revisions over the years.

After the turn of the twentieth century the oath of vengeance against anyone responsible for Joseph Smith's death was removed.

By the 1960's the death penalty oaths for revealing the ceremony to outsiders was toned down to make it sound more like agreeing to martyrdom for revealing the ceremony instead of being a penalty inflicted by the church.

In 1990 these penalties were completely removed. Now a member simply agrees not to discuss the specifics of the ceremony outside of the temple. They also switched the chant "Pay Lay Ale" to "Oh God hear the words of my mouth."

Also removed was the portrayal of a minister, wearing a clerical collar, entering into a contract with the devil to teach false doctrine for money. Another change in 1990 was the removal of the embrace on the five points of fellowship at the veil.

Other changes have been made through the years. For more on this see our book, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990*.

#### 5. BLACKS AND THE PRIESTHOOD

Thirty years ago, in June of 1978, the LDS Church announced the end of its priesthood restriction for blacks. Although Joseph Smith allowed a few black men to be ordained elders, that policy was changed under Brigham Young. In 1854 Young taught:

When **all** the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of god, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, **then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity**. He deprived his brother of the privilege of pursuing his journey through life, and of extending his kingdom by multiplying upon the earth; and because he did this, he is the **last** to share the joys of the kingdom of God (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 2, p. 143).

For years the LDS Church leaders taught that the reason people were born black and cursed as to the priesthood was a direct result of their failures in their pre-mortal life.

In a speech given at the church's Brigham Young University, Apostle Mark E. Petersen gave the following information concerning the doctrine of pre-existence and how it affected the various races:

We cannot escape the conclusion that because of **performance in our pre-existence** some of us are born as Chinese, some as Japanese, some as Indians, some as Negroes, some as Americans, some as Latter-day Saints. **These are rewards and punishments.** . . . When He forbade inter-marriages . . . He established segregation. . . . Who placed the Chinese in China? The Lord did. It was an act of segregation . . . in the cases of the Lamanites [Indians] and the Negroes we have the definite word of the Lord Himself that He placed a dark skin upon them as a curse as a punishment and as a sign to all others. He forbade intermarriage with them under threat of extension of the curse (2 Nephi 5:21). . . .

Think of the Negro, cursed as to the Priesthood . . . This Negro, who, in **the pre-existence** lived the type of life which justified the Lord in sending him to the earth in the lineage of Cain with a black skin . . . **In spite of all he did in the pre-existent life**, the Lord is willing, if the Negro accepts the gospel . . . he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there as a **servant**, but he will get celestial glory" ("Race Problems As They Affect The Church," Address by Apostle Mark E. Petersen at the Convention of Teachers of Religion on the College Level, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, August 27, 1954).

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained that one's behavior in the pre-mortal life affects his birth on earth:

Of the two-thirds who followed Christ [in the pre-mortal existence], however, some were more valiant than others. . . . Those who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had **certain spiritual restrictions** imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the **negroes**. Such spirits are sent to earth through the lineage of Cain, the mark put upon him for his rebellion against God and his murder of Abel being a black skin (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. 1966, p. 527).

While the ban has been lifted the LDS Church has yet to clarify its theological view on race or why the ban was ever instituted in the first place. Was the original ban based on revelation or prejudice? If it was only a policy, why did it take a revelation to end it?

If a revelation was received in June of 1978 to end the restriction, why isn't the specifically worded revelation published instead of a statement about a supposed revelation? For more on this see our book *The Curse of Cain? Racism in the Mormon Church*.

## GOD WAS ONCE A MAN?

This was not listed with the previous five examples of revision as it seems to be more a matter of camouflage than change. Although some have thought that the LDS Church is abandoning the doctrine that God was once a human, we find that this teaching is still promoted in their current manuals. Granted, it isn't emphasized as much as in the past, but it is the bedrock of their theology.

Joseph Smith laid out his doctrine of God in his sermon delivered at the LDS Conference on April 7, 1844, often referred to as the King Follett Discourse. While the sermon was printed in its entirety in the 1971 April and May issues of the *Ensign*, quotes since then have been kept to a minimum. In that sermon we read:

My first object is to find out the character of the only wise and true God, and what kind of a being He is . . . **God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man**, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. . . . I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; . . . it is necessary 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 idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. . . . **He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did**; and I will show it from the Bible. . . . Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn **how to be gods yourselves**, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, . . .

Apostle Lorenzo Snow later encapsulated this doctrine in his famous couplet. The 1984 LDS priesthood manual, *Search These Commandments*, referred to Lorenzo Snow's statement:

President Lorenzo Snow recorded this experience that occurred when he was still a young elder:

"The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noon-day, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man." Elder Snow expressed this new found understanding in these words: "**As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.**" Later the Prophet Joseph Smith assured him: "Brother Snow, **that is true gospel doctrine**, and it is a **revelation** from God to you. . ." (*Search These Commandments*, Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide, 1984, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, pp. 151-152)

In the 1989 *Ensign* is an article on the distinctive doctrines of Joseph Smith. In it we read:

Though most people who believe the Bible accept the idea of a Godhead composed of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Joseph Smith revealed an understanding of the Godhead that differed from the views found in the creeds of his day. . . .

The Prophet explained that “God himself was once as we are now, and is an **exalted man**, . . . yea, that **God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth**, the same as Jesus Christ himself did”; and that he “worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling.” . . . As God’s children, **we may become gods** ourselves through Christ’s atonement and the plan of salvation, being joint heirs of Christ of “all that [the] Father hath.” . . . Along with these concepts is the concept of **divine parents**, including an **exalted Mother** who stands beside God the Father.

The LDS doctrine of Heavenly Father has led one recent commentator to write, “The Mormons espouse a radical, anthropomorphic conception of God that sets them far apart from other religions” (*Ensign*, January 1989, p. 27).

However, when Smith’s sermon was referenced in the 2007 manual, *Teachings of the Presidents: Joseph Smith*, it was carefully edited to minimize the teaching that God has not always been God. Here is the part of the sermon that is used:

God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. . . . (*Teachings of the Presidents: Joseph Smith*, 2007, p. 221).

In the chapter heading of *Teachings of the Presidents: Brigham Young* there is another statement of this doctrine:

President Brigham Young taught the Latter-day Saints to worship God the Father and address prayers to Him in the name of Jesus Christ. He taught further that **God the Father was once a man on another planet** who “passed the ordeals we are now passing through; he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, life and death of this mortality” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, 1997, p. 29).

People often read these quotes without seeing the implication of plural gods.

If God was once a mortal on another world then he has not always been God. This would necessitate another God being in charge of that world.

In the current LDS manual *Gospel Principles* we read:

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first,

and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. . . . it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave” . . .

**This is the way our Heavenly Father became God.** Joseph Smith taught: “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God. . . . **He was once a man like us; . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did**” (*Gospel Principles*, 1997, p. 305).

Thus we see that the doctrine is still an integral part of Mormonism even if it is not clearly delineated in all of their doctrinal books.

## APOSTLE DALLIN OAKS ON PBS

When Apostle Dallin Oaks was interviewed on July 20, 2007, for the PBS special *The Mormons*, he candidly spoke of Joseph Smith’s doctrine that God was not always God but progressed from mortality. The following is taken from the LDS web site and is part of his interview with PBS producer Helen Whitney:

**D[allin] H O[aks]**: Before the close of his ministry, in Illinois, **Joseph Smith** put together the significance of what he had taught about the **nature of God** and the nature and destiny of man. He preached a great sermon not long before he was murdered that **God was a glorified Man**, glorified beyond our comprehension, (still incomprehensible in many ways), but a glorified, **resurrected, physical Being**, and it is the destiny of His children upon this earth, upon the conditions He has proscribed, to grow into that status themselves. That was a big idea, a challenging idea. It followed from the First Vision, and it was taught by Joseph Smith, and it is the explanation of many things that Mormons do — **the whole theology of Mormonism**.

**H[elen]W[hitney]**: Is it the core of it?

**D[allin H O[aks]**: That is the purpose of the life of men and women on this earth: to pursue their eternal destiny. Eternal means Godlike and to become like God. One of the succeeding prophets said: “**As man is, God once was. And as God is, man may become.**” That is an extremely challenging idea. We don’t understand, we’re not able to understand, all [about] how it comes to pass or what is at its origin, **but it explains the purpose of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**, which is to put people’s feet on the pathway to a glorified existence in the life to come that is incomprehensible, but far closer to God than the Christian world generally perceives. (<http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/elder-oaks-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary>)

While Oaks was candid about Snow’s couplet, others have deliberately evaded discussion of their doctrine of God with non-members. When Joe J. Christensen, of the Presidency of the Seventy, addressed a Utah audience in

1995 he told of side-stepping the topic with a non-Mormon professor. The *Deseret News* reported on his speech:

He [Christensen] told of speaking to a university class in the Southwest on the Church during a Religion in Life Conference. After the class, the [non-Mormon] professor approached him [Christensen] and asked him if he believed the statement, "As man is God once was, and as God is man may become."

"I had purposely not used that statement during my remarks to the class because I felt that I could raise more dust with that one than I would be able to settle in one class period," he recalled. "After circumlocuting around and around the question, I finally said, 'Yes, we believe that.'" ("Prophet Joseph Taught 'Powerful Ideas'," LDS Church News, *Deseret News*, Feb. 4, 1995.)

Couldn't one simply be honest and answer "yes" to the question? Willful "circumlocution" on doctrinal issues does not lead to clarity.

### HINCKLEY'S "I DON'T KNOW"

For over 150 years the LDS Church has defended the doctrine that God evolved to godhood and that man has the same potential. When President Gordon B. Hinckley was asked in 1997 about their doctrine of God he seemed to be dismissing the doctrine. In the *San Francisco Chronicle* interview, Hinckley was asked,

Q: There are some significant differences in your beliefs. For instance, don't Mormons believe that **God was once a man**?  
A: **I wouldn't say that.** There was a little couplet coined, "As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become." Now that's more of a couplet than anything else. **That gets into some pretty deep theology that we don't know very much about** (*San Francisco Chronicle*, April 13, 1997, p. 3/Z1).

That same year in an interview in *Time* magazine President Hinckley again downplayed the idea of God having once been a man or that man could become a god: "It's of course an ideal. It's a hope for a wishful thing." He later added that "yes, of course they can." Further on in the article we read:

On whether his church still holds that God the Father was once a man, he sounded uncertain, "**I don't know** that we teach it. **I don't know** that we emphasize it . . . I understand the philosophical background behind it, but **I don't know** a lot about it, and I don't think others know a lot about it" (*Time*, Aug. 4, 1997, p. 56).

Joseph Smith seemed to be certain about the doctrine. One wonders why President Hinckley would equivocate on a doctrine that is central to LDS theology? It appears to be a public relations effort to hide true LDS beliefs from the public. (For more examples of Hinckley's "I don't know" statements, see [http://www.i4m.com/think/leaders/Hinckley\\_dontknow.htm](http://www.i4m.com/think/leaders/Hinckley_dontknow.htm))

### HINCKLEY DIES

The *Deseret News* of January 28, 2008, carried the announcement of President Gordon B. Hinckley's death at the age of 97. He had held the position of "prophet, seer and revelator" to his church for thirteen years.

During that time he oversaw the building of the new 21,000-seat Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, the rebuilding of the Nauvoo, Illinois Temple plus dozens of new temples, and established the Perpetual Education Fund to provide loans to returned missionaries to aid them in getting the "training and education necessary for adequate employment in their own countries" (*Ensign*, January 2004, p. 37). Hinckley also announced the church's new project to rejuvenate downtown Salt Lake City. The City Creek Center will cover 25 acres along South Temple at a projected cost of \$1.5 billion ("3 Salt Lake Streets to close for parking-ramp work," *Deseret News*, February 20, 2008).

While Hinckley issued no new revelations, Mormons believe that he guided the affairs of the church through prophetic insight.

### THOMAS S. MONSON NEXT PRESIDENT

On February 4, 2008, senior apostle and native Utahn Thomas S. Monson was announced as Hinckley's successor, with his two counselors Henry B. Eyring and Dieter F. Uchtdorf making up the First Presidency. The *New York Times* wrote:

In a news conference at church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Mr. Monson said he had worked with Mr. Hinckley for more than four decades in various assignments, and hinted at no significant departures. . . .

Mr. Monson's appointment comes at a time of expectation and anxiety in the Mormon world. The number of converts, especially in South America and Africa, rose sharply under Mr. Hinckley as the missionary program—typically young men, working in pairs on two-year assignments—was expanded. But Mr. Hinckley also wrestled with the problem of structure in the far-flung corners of the church, and how to keep converts engaged and active after the missionaries departed. . . .

His career, beginning in the late 1940's in advertising and later as sales manager for the *Deseret News Press*, a commercial printing firm then affiliated with the church, went hand-in-hand with his advancement into bigger and bigger assignments for the church itself ("Former Executive Named to Lead Mormon Church," *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 2008).

President Monson is well-known for his story-telling but not for in-depth doctrinal teaching. How he will present Mormon doctrine remains to be seen.

# Hugh Nibley's Footnotes

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In her book *Leaving the Saints: How I Lost the Mormons and Found My Faith* (2005), Martha Beck describes an encounter she had with a scholarly looking person in a supermarket who accuses her famous father, the quintessential LDS apologist Hugh Winder Nibley, of being a liar. When Martha asks the man (she calls him Tweedy) for an explanation, he says he used to work as “one of the flunkies who checked his footnotes,” and that in the process had discovered that most of them (“conservatively, 90% of them”)<sup>1</sup> were bogus:<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes what he [Nibley] said was exactly the opposite of what the author meant. Sometimes a quotation he'd footnote just wasn't there. My team leader told me your dad's gift was that he could see anything on any page that needed to be there.

This accusation pales in comparison with Beck's much more devastating claim, namely that her father subjected her to ritual sexual abuse when she was a child. Not long after the appearance of *Leaving the Saints*, defensive voices began to be heard trying to exonerate Hugh Nibley of guilt in relation to that charge by pointing to what they imagined to be the easily provable absurdity of “Tweedy's” claim about the footnotes. Thus we find BYU's Robert L. Millet, for example, remarking in a review for the Evangelical magazine *Books & Culture* that the “problem for Beck, of course, is that the books are still in print, still available for examination. . . . Further, I know personally many if not all of the source checkers; they are outstanding academics from such BYU departments as Ancient Scripture, Asian and Near Eastern Languages, Law, the Library, English, and Classics.”<sup>3</sup> Yet if Tweedy was in any sense right about the footnotes the “problem” ceases to be Beck's and becomes Millet's and his learned source checkers.<sup>4</sup> The question then becomes: Why did all those “outstanding academics”

either fail to notice the problems, or (as Tweedy claims) give Nibley a pass on them?

Note that there is also regrettably a bit of what might be considered doublespeak in what Millet says. On the one hand Millet seems to be saying that Nibley's footnotes are all good. He knows all the checkers and they are all “outstanding academics,” and yet he also says about the footnotes “If they weren't properly checked. . . they can be checked today.” But what on earth does that mean? “If they weren't properly checked” by all those “outstanding academics,” then were they really outstanding academics after all? Or perhaps we are to suppose that they have become outstanding in the mean time. Still the issue never had to do with the checking of the footnotes, but with their original production.

In his review of *Leaving the Saints*, Boyd Jay Petersen, Hugh Nibley's son-in-law and biographer, and brother-in-law to Martha Beck, remarks that he has “contacted many of the note checkers and editors of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley” and that “they all confirm that, while Hugh has been sloppy—at times mistranslating a text or overstating his case—he does not make up his sources.”<sup>5</sup> Petersen is right in saying that Nibley does not make up sources. In his review Millet gives the wrong impression when he represents Tweedy as claiming that “a good 90 percent his footnotes are totally made up.”<sup>6</sup> Tweedy never really claimed that. Although Beck does represent Tweedy as saying that Nibley “makes them all up,”<sup>7</sup> when one reads further it becomes clear that Tweedy is not saying Nibley invented his sources, only that he regularly misrepresented them in various ways. And, in fact, that is certainly true.

Did Tweedy exist? Certain Mormon scholars appear very confident in asserting that he did not. Kent P. Jackson

1 Martha Beck, *Leaving the Saints: How I Lost the Mormons and Found My Faith* (New York: Crown, 2005) 165.

2 Ibid., p. 166.

3 Robert L. Millet, “‘They Leave It, But They Can't Leave It Alone’ The Memoir of a Disaffected Mormon,” *Books & Culture* 11.4 (July Aug 2005) 33. The fact that Robert L. Millet was asked to review Martha Beck's book for the Evangelical publication *Books & Culture* was extremely unfortunate. The fact that Martha Beck's chronicle might be true, I say *might be* true, makes it entirely inappropriate for Evangelicals to publish a review by a Mormon apologist who, because of who he is, can only try to discredit Beck's story, even if it happens to be true.

4 Although it is doubtful a case could be made for Nibley's source checkers being responsible for fixing his footnotes.

5 <http://www.fairlds.org/Reviews/Rvw200504.html>.

6 Millet, “‘They Leave It, But They Can't Leave It Alone,’” p. 33.

7 Beck, *Leaving the Saints*, p. 165.

states flatly: “I don’t believe that the man in tweed ever existed,”<sup>8</sup> and John Gee, in an email to me, states: “As I am sure you are aware, Ms. Beck’s account of Tweedy is entirely fictional.”<sup>9</sup>

Whatever Professor Gee may personally believe he is mistaken in attributing to me an awareness that Tweedy is “entirely fictional.” Certainly Tweedy might have been invented, but if so he was well invented. When he recounts how his “team leader” said that Hugh Nibley “could see anything on any page that needed to be there,” I thought that that put the situation rather well, at least as the exasperated overstatement by someone who was constantly having to deal with the kinds of things I describe below.<sup>10</sup> Moreover if Tweedy did not exist, where did Martha Beck learn that there were serious problems with her father’s use of his sources? Still in one sense it really doesn’t matter whether Tweedy existed or not. What matters is whether what Martha Beck reports him saying is in any sense true, which is something that can be tested, as Kent P. Jackson so correctly points out: “Nibley’s books still exist, and thus the notes are available to be examined by anyone who wants to take the time.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1988 this same Kent P. Jackson pointedly criticized Nibley in a review of the latter’s *Old Testament and Related Studies*. In that review Jackson accused Nibley of “selectively including what suits his presuppositions and ignoring what does not,” and for seeing “things in the sources that simply don’t seem to be there.” Jackson further charged that “most puzzling assertions remain undocumented—or unconvincingly documented—even in those articles that are footnoted heavily,” and that Nibley “often uses his secondary sources the same way he uses his primary sources—taking phrases out of context to establish points with which those whom he quotes would likely not agree.”<sup>12</sup> Although Jackson spoke as something of a lone voice at the time, his criticisms of Nibley were no less than just.

Nibley’s misuse of sources goes beyond seeing things in them that aren’t there. He regularly modifies his

quotations to artificially render them more supportive of the arguments he is trying to make. He sometimes mistranslates them, as Petersen notes, or else translates them in very strange and unjustified ways. In defense of these he offers his readers howlingly inadequate justifications for them, when he offers anything at all. In one instance he replaces a line in his source with one he made up himself, and this in a place where his source stood against his argument and what he made up supported it (this, of course, is particularly heinous).<sup>13</sup> He also regularly leaves out words with the result that passages having nothing to do with his point suddenly become supportive of it. None of my examples have to do with legitimate readings of sources that are more congenial to a Mormon worldview than to a traditional Christian worldview. Everyone will, or at least should be willing to admit that scholars of all stripes sometimes choose from a range of possible legitimate translations or interpretations of a given passage the one that is most congenial to their own point of view. But what I am talking about here goes well beyond that.

Often Nibley’s modifications are quite extensive and ingenious; too ingenious in fact for me to feel comfortable attributing them to mere sloppiness as Petersen does. This ingenuity will be evident I think in most of the examples of misquotation that follow. For brevity’s sake I use the term “misquote” to mean *to misrepresent in any way*, e.g., by adding to or taking away from a passage, asserting that it means something other than it does, reading things into it, or mistranslating it.

Before we proceed further it should be stressed that the present work deals with only one aspect of Nibley’s long career. It does not delve into other more positive aspects such as the generations of students inspired by his teaching, many of whom no doubt even went on to pursue post graduate work themselves in hopes of carrying on in his footsteps. In addition to this he was tremendously important in terms of arousing interest in the LDS academic community in the importance of the study of ancient texts and languages. These are entirely positive developments

8 Email from Kent P. Jackson (6 July 2006).

9 Email John Gee (12 July 2006).

10 Martha Beck, *Leaving the Saints*, p. 166.

11 Kent P. Jackson, “Leaving the Facts and the Faith,” *FARMS Review of Books* 17.1 (2005) 119.

12 Kent P. Jackson, “Review of Hugh Nibley, *Old Testament and Related Studies* (The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 1; ed. by John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, and Don E. Norton; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book // Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies, 1986),” *BYU Studies* 28.4 (1988) 115-17 (Infobase edition).

13 See example on page 12 of this newsletter.

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except where Nibley's misuse of sources is emulated as well, as one sometimes finds being done in material produced by certain over-enthusiastic LDS apologists.<sup>14</sup>

Nibley was also a very gifted and inspiring communicator, who, when he was not put in the position of having to defend the indefensible, had a clear and vigorous writing style, a gift we see in evidence as well in more than one of his highly gifted children. By any measure Hugh Nibley stands as a giant in the unfolding story of Utah and Mormonism.

Finally, in his defense, Nibley did not write in a vacuum. All those years he wrote for an audience that must also bear some of the responsibility for the problems I will be discussing. Surely we all have a responsibility within the range of our abilities to test the claims of authors even when (perhaps even especially when) they are saying things we would like to believe, recognizing, of course, that in this particular case Nibley himself made it very difficult for common people to check out his sources by featuring obscure editions in other languages instead of the widely available, and often more up-to-date and authoritative, English ones.

In order to make my examination of Nibley's misquotations easier to follow I will consistently place in **bold** the problematic **words** and **phrases** in the Nibley passages I discuss.

14 See, for example, John Gee's very forced and special-pleading translation of the phrase *tas systaseis tas archontikas* in Ignatius of Antioch's *Trallians* 5 as "the principle revelations" (John Gee, "The Corruption of Scripture in Early Christianity" in *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Great Apostasy* [ed. by Noel B. Reynolds; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies and Brigham Young University Press, 2005] 167), rather than something more like Bart D. Ehrman's "hierarchies of the cosmic rulers" (*The Apostolic Fathers* [Loeb Classical Library 24-25; 2 vols.; Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003] 1:261). I would invite Gee to produce an example of a single non-Mormon scholar or in any language that supports his translation here (including the two scholars he cites for support in a footnote). Perhaps I can help him get started by presenting how several different editions of Ignatius's *Trallians*, that happen to be readily available to me, translate these words—Wake: "the several companies of them, under their respective princes," Kirsopp Lake: "gatherings of principalities," Richardson: "the array of principalities," Roberts-Donaldson: "their gatherings under their respective princes," Kleist: "the hierarchy of principalities," Goodspeed, "the relations of their rulers," Lightfoot: "the assemblages, musterings, of heavenly rulers," Lightfoot/Harmer: "the hierarchy of principalities," Schoedel: "the archontic formations," Staniforth: "dispositions of the heavenly powers." A popular Spanish translation has "los ordenes de los principados," a popular German one, "die Rangordnung der Herrschaften," and a popular French one, "les armées des principautés." *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD 3rd) agrees with all of these by translating *systasis* in Ignatius, *Trallians* 5, "a group with common interests, gathering, union, associations," and *archontikos* "assemblages of the (celestial) commanders," as does G. W. H. Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, which translates *systasis* for the passage, "congregation, company of angelic beings," and *archontikas*, "pertaining to the rulers i.e. angelic hierarchy."

Whether or not Gee was directly inspired in his studies by Hugh Nibley, his strange rendering nevertheless reminds us of what Nibley himself did with that same passage. Nibley translated Ignatius's *tas systaseis tas archontikas* with the very Mormon sounding "councils of the Heavens (*lit.* assemblies or natures of the Rulers *archontikas*)," which, it must be said, is closer to correct than what Gee has. But Nibley also tried to make the subject of Ignatius' discussion the secret ordinances of Christians by translating *ta epourania* as *high things*, rather than the more correct *heavenly things* (Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* [Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 16; 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed.; ed. by John Gee & Michael Rhodes, Illustrations directed by Michael P. Lyon; Provo, Utah: Deseret Book // Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies and Brigham Young University Press, 2005] 522. The same material appeared on p. 283 in the original 1975 edition of this work). Gee translates *ta epourania* as *celestial matters*, which is acceptable so long as he does not attempt to exploit any imagined distinction between the words *heavenly things* and *celestial matters* as a way of artificially smuggling in a reference to current LDS teaching. Both Gee and Nibley did what they did in an attempt at finding in Ignatius a reference to the early existence of some sort of *disciplina arcana*, secret ordinances passed only to those who were worthy, in this case taken to parallel the teachings and rites of the modern LDS Church. Both unfortunately were willing to produce an eccentric, less than adequate translation of their original source in order to make it happen.

15 Hugh W. Nibley, "The Expanding Gospel," in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1978) 37. In this context Nibley does not name the Greek text he is relying on. The same quotation appears, however, in Hugh W. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos* (ed by Don E. Norton; Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret // Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992) 198-199 (Infobase Plus Edition). There the source is given as PG (*Patrologia graeca*) 6:340-341.

16 See also Justin, *1 Apology* 59. Another place where Justin's original passage resonated with LDS teaching is in its emphasis on worthiness.

17 Probably Justin believed God created matter first and then shaped it later. (Could this be the implication, for example, of Justin's words in *2 Apology* 6, when he says that the Father, through Jesus, "created and ordered [*ektise kai ekosmese*] all things"?). Such a view at least would seem to flow from (1) Justin's insistence that God the Father alone is unbegotten (*1 Apology* 14 & *Trypho* 126), (2) his pre-conversion disagreement with Platonists who said "that the world is also unbegotten," (*Trypho* 5) and (3) his seeming affirmation of the statement "that which is unbegotten is similar to equal to, and the same with that which is unbegotten" (*Trypho* 5). See also his remark in *Trypho* 1 where he alludes to those who say "that the soul, in consequence of its immortality, needs nothing from God." In *Trypho* 5, Justin affirms that souls are not in fact immortal. (ET: Ante-Nicene Fathers 1).

### *Nibley Misquotes Justin Martyr's First Apology*

Justin Martyr was a Christian writer and apologist who was active during the middle decades of the second century AD. In his essay "The Expanding Gospel," Nibley quotes the tenth chapter of Justin's *First Apology* as follows:

"We believe that God organized all things in the beginning out of unformed matter," says Justin Martyr to **the Jew Trypho**, "...for the sake of the human race, that they, if they prove themselves by their works to be worthy of His plan, having been judged worthy to **return to his presence** (so we believe), shall reign with him, having been made immortal and incorruptible. **At the creation they themselves made the choice** ... and so were deemed worthy to live with him in immortality."<sup>15</sup>

The original form of this passage contained some things that resonate with current LDS teaching, the creation of everything out of unformed matter being an example.<sup>16</sup> That was a view widely held in the ancient world, not least of all among the Platonists. Given what Justin says elsewhere, however, it is doubtful that he regarded this unformed matter to be in any sense self-existent or eternal.<sup>17</sup>

The one item in the above passage from Nibley that can be chalked up to sloppiness is the mention of Trypho the Jew, who appears in connection with another work by

Justin (*Dialogue with Trypho*) but not this one. In this case Nibley probably just had a lapse of memory. The rest of his changes, however, are obviously intentional.

The most serious change occurs in Nibley’s “quotation” of Justin (the third bolded text) where he inserts a phrase that, in fact, was *not* Justin’s:

At the creation they themselves made the choice.

Not only does Nibley insert these words of his own, but he also withholds from his readers what Justin had actually said there, namely, “For as at the beginning He created us when we were not,”<sup>18</sup> an idea that does not jibe with the LDS doctrine of preexistence. That Nibley knew what the Greek actually said here is clear from the fact that he translated this same passage from Justin more adequately at another place. Nibley’s rendering of Justin’s words there is: “For in the same way in which He created in the beginning those who were not.”<sup>19</sup>

Less radical but still problematic is Nibley’s translation of Justin’s Greek phrase *tēs met’ autou anastrophēs* as *to return to his presence* (the second bolded text), a translation that is reminiscent of the LDS idea of the post-mortal return to Heavenly Father, but that runs counter to Justin’s context. The noun *anastrophē*, which in the New Testament usually means something like *way of life* or *behavior*, has a number of other possible meanings, including *a dwelling* and *a return*. The fact that here in Justin the word is accompanied by the words *met’ autou* (which ought to be translated *with him* rather than *to him*) rules against Nibley’s translation and for the rendering *to dwell with him*, which coincides with both the reading of the Latin text accompanying the Greek text in the edition Nibley used<sup>20</sup> as well as all the English translations I have encountered.<sup>21</sup>

When we combine Nibley’s rendition of *tēs met’ autou anastrophēs*’ (second bolded text) with the phrase he invented to replace one of Justin’s, what emerges is a retelling of familiar Mormon story of choices made in the premortal period in relation to accepting or rejecting the plan of salvation proposed by Jesus and chosen by Heavenly Father in preference to the alternative one put forth by Lucifer (see Abraham 3 and Moses 4). Justin was aware of the idea of the preexistence of souls, but he nowhere endorses it, nor did he ever speculate on what preexistent human souls might have thought, done, or decided. And he clearly rules out the idea that they were either uncreated or unbegotten.<sup>22</sup>

***Hugh Nibley’s Misuse of the Dead Sea Scrolls Book of Giants***

One of the most remarkable examples of Nibley engaging in a complex sequence of carefully worded obfuscations in order to fundamentally misrepresent a text, while obscuring its real meaning, is his attempt to establish a relationship between the *Pearl of Great Price* Book of Moses 6-7 and the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls Book of Giants on the basis of a supposed link between the Mahijah in Moses 6:40 and Mahujah in Moses 7:2 and the character Mahawai in the Book of Giants. In setting up the case here Nibley shows his usual facility at teasing one name out of another as he melds the two distinct Book of Moses and Book of Giants figures into one.<sup>23</sup> Nibley places passages from Moses 6 and 7 in one column and various fragments from the Book of Giants next to them in another, pausing here and there to underscore alleged points of contact. In reality there are no significant points of contact between the stories related in the two works, and Nibley’s clarifications simply impose foreign meanings on texts that

18 ET: Ante-Nicene Fathers 1: “*On tropon gar tēn archēn ouk ontos epoiēse*” (PG 6:341). I place Nibley’s translation in parallel with a popular English translation of the passage:

Nibley, Justin 1 <i>Apology</i> 10	Justin 1 <i>Apology</i> 10 (Ante-Nicene Fathers)
At the creation they themselves made the choice...	<b>For as in the beginning He created us when we were not</b> , so do we consider that, in like manner, those who choose what is pleasing to Him are, on account of their choice,
and so were deemed worthy to live with him in immortality	deemed worthy of incorruption and of fellowship with Him.

Were he here to defend himself, Nibley might say that he was simply distilling what he understood to be the sense of the passage. There are two problems with this: (1) even if that were the case Nibley would not in fact be accurately distilling Justin’s thoughts, and (2) Nibley presents it as straightforward translation. Nibley was fully aware of the proper form used for quotations as opposed to paraphrases, as is made clear by a footnote in his *The World of the Prophets* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1974) 37, which reads: “Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, 2, paraphrased”.

19 Nibley, *World and the Prophets*, p. 206.

20 See PG 6:341-42: *ut cum eo degant* “that they might live with him.” The specific edition is not mentioned in the book I am using, but it is given in the reprint of the same article in *Temple and Cosmos*, pp. 198-99 and note.

21 E.g., Thomas B. Falls translates “to make their abode with Him” (Saint Justin Martyr [The Fathers of the Church 6; Washington D. C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1948]), Edward Rochie Hardy translates “dwelling with him,” (*Early Christian Fathers* [The Library of Christian Classics 1; ed. by Cyril C. Richardson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953]), Leslie William Bernard does not translate it (*St. Justin Martyr: The First and Second Apologies* [Ancient Christian Writers 56; New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1997]).

22 See Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 5 and *1 Apology* 10.

23 Hugh W. Nibley, “Churches in the Wilderness,” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 8; Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book // Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989) 289-90.

are contradicted by what the texts themselves actually say. This despite the fact that he begins by saying “Let me read you some parallel passages, following the translation of Professors Milik and Black, so that you won’t think I have been loading the dice to come out this way.”<sup>24</sup>

In order to understand how seriously Nibley misrepresents his sources here we need to provide a little background. The title of the Book of Giants is derived from its subject, the giants. But who are the giants? The story is based on Genesis 6:2: “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” According to one very prominent ancient stream of interpretation (in whose current the Enoch literature, including the Book of Giants ran) the Sons of God in Genesis 6:2 were fallen ruling angels, called Watchers, and the daughters of men, human women. The giants in turn were the offspring of the illicit coupling of these two. According to this tradition the flood was sent to drown the giants, whose spirits then remained on the earth as the demons. At the same time their angelic fathers (the Watchers) were bound under the earth to await the judgment. The biblical reference in Jude 6, “angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day,” is probably to this story.<sup>25</sup> Fragments of this same story are found in a multiplicity of ancient sources and it is well known to students of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the section of the Book of Giants Nibley refers to, the giant Mahawai (Nibley calls him MHWY) is sent to Enoch to seek the interpretation of a frightening dream that one of the other giants had. Mahawai goes to Enoch, and in response Enoch sends a letter back to the giants and their fallen-angel fathers informing them that there is no escaping the judgment that is about to fall them. Following then are examples of what the fragments of the Book of Giants actually say, followed by what Nibley made of them in the process of trying to “discover” parallels between them and *Pearl of Great Price* Moses.

(1) The Book of Giants tells us that Mahawai is a giant. Nibley describes him as a *man*.<sup>26</sup> In this case he is literally

half right: giants were half human.

(2) The Book of Giants tells us that the giants, frightened by a mysterious dream, send Mahawai to get the interpretation from Enoch, “on the pain of death.” Nibley attempts to inject an additional element into the story: “That *MHWY* was sent ‘under pain of death’ shows that not only the dreams but the presence of Enoch was a cause of dread.”<sup>27</sup> He does this to create a parallel with the fear of Enoch referred to in Moses 6:39. In his Winter 1986 lectures on the *Pearl of Great Price* Nibley went even further with this purpose by falsely restoring a line in this Book of Giants passage making it read: “Thereupon all the giants and nephilim took fright [when they heard about Enoch].”<sup>28</sup>

(3) The Book of Giants tells us that Mahawai journeys to find Enoch.<sup>29</sup> Nibley says that here Enoch’s journey as described in Moses 6:42, 7:2-3 “seems to be transferred to *MHWY* himself.”<sup>30</sup> Actually there is no connection between the two journeys other than the bald fact that they were both journeys.

(4) The Book of Giants tells us that Enoch writes a letter in response to Mahawai’s question.<sup>31</sup> Nibley says that “It is in reply to Mahijah-*MHWY* that Enoch refers the people to an ancient book which he bears with him,” thus trying to force a parallel with the reference to “a book of remembrance” in Moses 6:46. But there is no reference to an “ancient book” in the Book of Giants passage. Another problem here is Nibley’s description of the intended readers of Enoch’s epistle: “Enoch refers the **people** to an ancient book.” Enoch actually addresses the epistle not to “people” but to Shemihazah, a leader among the fallen angels (Watchers), and through him to the rest of the fallen Watchers and giants.

(5) The Book of Giants calls Mahawai’s father *Baraq’el*. Nibley remarks that: “The name Baraq’el is interesting in this context since Joseph Smith was designated in the *Doctrine and Covenants* both as Enoch and as Baurak Ale (e.g., *D&C* 78:9; 103:21-22).” The unusual designation of Joseph as Enoch and Baurak Ale was dropped from the 1981 edition of the *D&C*. In his

24 *Ibid.*, p. 291. Nibley is referring to *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (ed. by J. T. Milik with the collaboration of Matthew Black; Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1976). A less elaborate version of this same presentation appears in Hugh W. Nibley, “A Strange thing in the Land,” in *Enoch the Prophet* (The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 2; ed. by Stephen D. Ricks; Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book // Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies, 1986) 277-81. There Nibley remarks similarly: “The following translation is from Milik and Black, lest the writer be charged with forcing the text” (p. 278).

25 For more on this story in relation to the Book of Giants and other early texts see my “Noah and the Giants: A Response to John C. Reeves,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114.1 (Spring 1995) 103-19.

26 Nibley, “Churches in the Wilderness,” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, p. 291.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price: Transcripts of lectures presented to an Honors Pearl of Great Price Class at Brigham Young University, Winter Semester 1986* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies [FARMS], n.d.) 21:12. In the lecture Nibley refers to the passage as coming from 4QEnoch. The correct reference is 4QEnGiantsb 1.20. It should be kept in mind that this statement was made in the casual context of a lecture rather than the more controlled setting of a piece of published writing. It is very easy when one is casually talking to have something come out in a way that is not exactly how one intended to say it.

29 Milik & Black, *Books of Enoch*, pp. 305-306.

30 Nibley, “Churches in the Wilderness,” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, p. 292.

31 Milik & Black, *Books of Enoch*, pp. 314-16.

1986 *Pearl of Great Price* course Nibley teased this out a bit further: “Baraq’el is interesting too because Baraq’el is supposed to have been the father of Enoch.”<sup>32</sup> The father of Enoch in the Bible and the Book of Moses is Jared (Gen 5:9 and Moses 6:21). Mahawai the giant is not Enoch, nor is Baraq’el, the father of Mahawai in the Book of Giants, by any stretch of the imagination, the father of Enoch. He is an evil figure, one of the chiefs of the fallen angels.<sup>33</sup>

(6) The Book of Giants tells us that the letter of Enoch describes the coupling of fallen angels and human women as “prostitution.”<sup>34</sup> In an attempt to link that passage to the general reference to Adam’s children as being “conceived in sin” in Moses 6:55, Nibley gives this strange description of what is supposedly going on:<sup>35</sup>

Enoch tells how the Lord told Adam of the natural inclination to sin that came with the Fall. This is converted in the Aramaic version to a denunciation of the wicked **people** of Enoch’s day, who did indeed conceive their children in sin, since they **were illegitimate offspring of a totally amoral society.**

Notice the absence of any reference to fallen angels, their human wives, or their gigantic offspring. They are all together described as “people” and “illegitimate offspring of a totally amoral society.” Nibley seems to be trying to obscure the true nature of the story.

(7) The Book of Giants has the giant Ohyah describing (if Milik’s restoration is correct) his attack on “all flesh.” Nibley introduces the passage by referring to Ohyah as “the enemy of Enoch.”<sup>36</sup> He does this to create a parallel between that passage and Moses 7:13. He summarizes what he sees going on in both passages by saying that: “the wicked move against Enoch and his people in force but are themselves forced to acknowledge the superior power supporting the patriarch.” However there is no indication whatever in the passage that Ohyah is acting as “an enemy of Enoch.” Nor is there, so far as Milik and Black reveal, any mention of Enoch at all in that particular fragment.<sup>37</sup> Here Nibley uses ellipsis points to artificially endow the quotation with the desired meaning:

4QEnGiants <sup>c</sup>	4QEnGiants <sup>c</sup> (As quoted by Nibley)
By the strength of my power, [I had attacked] all flesh and I have made war with them. But [I] not [...and] I do not find my support(?) to strengthen (me), for my accusers [...] they dwell in [heaven]s and they live in holy abodes, and [I will] not [win my cause(?)], for they are more powerful than I <sup>38</sup>	By the strength of my power, [I had attacked] all flesh and I have made war <i>with them; . . .</i>  they live in holy abodes, and . . .  they are more powerful than I (Nibley’s italics)



Nibley’s ellipsis points make it appear that Ohyah made war against those living in holy abodes (presumably he wants the reader to think of Enoch). That is not the case. Ohoyah makes war against “all flesh” but his accusers represent another group, a group that lives in heavens and holy abodes. Notice as well that Nibley again calls the giants “people.” The theme of the giants turning bloodthirsty and attacking humanity, and even eating them, was a common one in ancient Jewish literature (cf. 1 Enoch 7:1-6; 9:10; Jubilees 7:21-24).

All the supposed parallels between the Book of Giants and the Book of Moses exist only in Nibley’s mind. And he carefully crafts his language throughout to conceal the true meaning of the Book of Giants fragments from his readers.

The conclusion of *Jerald Tanner’s Quest for Truth* will be in the Fall 2008 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*.

32 Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price*, 21:12.  
 33 Milik & Black, *Books of Enoch*, pp. 153, 311.  
 34 *Ibid.*, p. 315.  
 35 Nibley, “Churches in the Wilderness,” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, pp. 292-93.  
 36 *Ibid.*, p. 294.  
 37 Milik & Black, *Books of Enoch*, pp. 307-308.  
 38 *Ibid.*, p. 308.

**Nibley’s Misquotation of Eusebius’ Preparation for the Gospel**

One of the more complex and interesting examples of Nibley’s misuse of his sources is found in his attempt to make Eusebius of Caesarea, a Christian writer active during the first half of the fourth century, support the identification of Enoch as a Son of Man figure. Writes Nibley:

Eusebius states the case thus: **“The Son of Man and the Son of Adam are the same thing, so that Adam and Enosh are the same; carnal (sarkikon) through Adam, rational (logikon) through Enosh.”** [[*Preparation* 11. 6]] **He also makes it perfectly clear that by Enosh he means Enoch:** “The Hebrews say that Enosh not Adam was the first true man. . . . He ‘was not found’ [said only of Enoch] means that truly wise men are hard to find. He withdrew from the world of affairs and thereby became the Friend of God [cf. Abraham]. The Hebrews call him ‘The Friend,’ signifying thereby the favor (*charin*) of God.” [[*Preparation* 7:8]]. (double brackets mine)<sup>39</sup>

At the center of Nibley’s use of the two passages from Eusebius cited in the above quotation is the assertion that Enosh and Enoch are one and the same. Nibley states this

explicitly when he says it is “perfectly clear that by Enosh he means Enoch.” His apparent reason for saying this is that he wants to transfer what is said about Enosh in Eusebius to Enoch. In order to accomplish this identification, Nibley must misquote the second passage. He does this by misusing ellipsis points to tie together what is said about Enosh in the first passage with what is said about the one “who was not found,” i.e., Enoch (see Gen 5:24), in the second. Contrary to Nibley’s claim, however, Eusebius does not identify Enoch with his twice-great grandfather Enosh (Gen 5). The material passed over by Nibley’s ellipsis points contains a clear transition from the discussion of Enosh to the discussion of Enoch in the words: “But now after him of whom we have spoken there was another.”<sup>40</sup>

Eusebius does link Enos and Adam, based on the fact that these names come from two different Hebrew words meaning *man*.

Nibley significantly modifies the text and in doing so obscures what Eusebius was actually saying. This is perhaps best seen by quoting the passage in context with Nibley’s version in a parallel column:

<i>Preparation</i> 11.6 (Gifford) <sup>41</sup>	<i>Preparation</i> 11.6 (Nibley)
<p>It is written at least in a certain Prophet ‘What is man [Heb: <i>enosh</i>], that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man [Heb: <i>adam</i>], that Thou visitest him?’ [Ps. 8:4] For which the Hebrew, in the first naming of ‘man,’ contains the word ‘Enos’: as if he said more plainly, What is this forgetful one, that Thou, O God, rememberest him, forgetful though he is? And the other clause, ‘Or the son of man that Thou visitest him?’ is read among the Hebrews, ‘Or the son of Adam’: so that the same man is both Adam and Enos; the fleshly nature being represented by Adam, and the rational by Enos.</p>	<p>The Son of Man and the Son of Adam are the same thing, so that Adam and Enosh are the same; carnal through Adam, rational through Enosh.</p>

Nibley’s words “The Son of Man and the Son of Adam are the same thing,” although placed within quotation marks, do not appear in his source. Nibley has apparently made them up in service of his wanting to more clearly secure the identification of Enoch as a Son of Man figure.<sup>42</sup>

39 Hugh w. Nibley, “The Enoch Figure,” in *Enoch the Prophet*, pp. 35-6.

40 ET: Edwin Hamilton Gifford, *Preparation for the Gospel* (2 vols; Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1903) 1:331. PG 21.522: *Alla gar meta ton eiremenon altos*.

41 Gifford, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 2:554.

42 See earlier statements in Nibley “The Enoch Figure,” in *Enoch the Prophet*, p. 35. Nibley appeals to these same two passages from Eusebius’ *Preparation for the Gospel* (7.8 and 11.6) in support of a similar claim about Enoch in his article “A Strange Thing in the Land.” He does so in a passage that also contains a rendering of the Hebrew verb *bara* that is highly problematic as well:

It is implied in Genesis 5:1-2 that the human race was fully launched when the book of the generations of Adam was inaugurated, since Adam and Eve were **set apart (bará)**, and given a name and a blessing. **A very old tradition equates true humanity with Enoch the recordkeeper, a more complete man than Adam himself** (“A Strange Thing in the Land,” in *Enoch the Prophet*, p. 138).

In yet another place Nibley, in the process of “translating” Genesis 5:1-3, renders *bara* the same way again:

It begins, “In the day the **Gods set apart [bara—we are being very literal here] Adam in the likeness of the Gods [bi-dmuth elohim] he made him. Male and female he set them apart, and gave them a blessing, and gave them their names as Adam, in the day he set them apart.**” (See Genesis 5:1-3). (“Before Adam,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, p. 78).

Nibley’s rendering of this passage is highly problematic. In the first place if one wants to be “very literal” in translating *bara* one translates it *create not set apart*. *Set apart* is not listed as a possible translation of *bara* in standard reference works on Biblical Hebrew such as Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* and the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT). Secondly, *elohim* should be translated here not as a plural (*Gods*), as Nibley has done, but as a singular (*God*). This is made clear in the Hebrew by the use of third singular verbs. Hence when Nibley puts *the Gods set apart Adam* he is doubly mistranslating *bara*. Not only does the Hebrew verb not mean *set apart* but it is also cast in 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular in the original (*he set apart Adam*). In order for Nibley’s translation to be legitimate in terms of the grammar of the passage, *bara* would have had to have been cast in the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural. Finally, if Nibley insists on treating *elohim* as plural and is willing to confound the singular verb *bara* by treating it as if it were a 3<sup>rd</sup> plural form with *elohim* (*Gods*) as its plural subject, why does he then fail to confound all of the other singular verbs in the sentence, which also have *elohim* as their subject? Why didn’t he confound them to read as third plurals as follows?:

- in the likeness of the Gods they [the Gods] made him
- Male and female they [the Gods] set them apart and gave them a blessing, and gave them their names, as Adam
- in the day they [the Gods] set them apart.

Instead he translates them using the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular pronoun *he* as their subject. There would, of course, be no virtue in Nibley’s carrying through his illegitimate translation in this manner, but it would have at least made his distortion of the passage consistent all the way through.

*Nibley Misquotes Various Sources in his “The Passing of the Primitive Church”*

Though his literary output was enormous, Hugh Nibley seldom published in scholarly journals outside Utah, and even less in ones dedicated to the study of ancient Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible. Naturally the question arises whether Nibley indulged his propensity for misquotation when writing for non-Mormon scholarly audiences as often and as blatantly as he did when writing for Mormons. The answer is that the same kind of problems *are* found in those articles as in things he wrote for Mormons.

“The Passing of the Primitive Church: Forty Variations on an Unpopular Theme,” was originally published in the prestigious journal *Church History* in 1961. In the communications section of that journal in the final issue of that same year, R. M. Grant, one of the most distinguished historians of early Christianity at the time, complained that Nibley had “not always taken into account the context of the Fathers’ statements or for that matter their use of homiletical rhetoric.”<sup>43</sup> What Grant said was certainly true. But the problems with that article ran far deeper, as I shall now attempt to illustrate by way of two examples. What Nibley set out to prove in that article was that “the church founded by Jesus and the apostles did not survive nor was it expected to.”<sup>44</sup> It is an argument for the great apostasy and the rise of the great and abominable church without using those terms. In order to carry it off Nibley had to marshal evidence showing that the actions of the earliest church indicated that they did not expect the church to continue, and that the idea of the triumph of the church arose only later. Unfortunately Nibley gets where he wants to go by tailoring the evidence.

1. *Nibley Misquotes the Shepherd of Hermas*

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is an important allegorical work dating from the second century AD. In the article we have been discussing Nibley refers to two passages from *Hermas’* well-known book of Vision’s Tower Parable:

The original tower with its perfectly cut and well-fitted stones is soon to be taken from the earth, and **in its place will remain only a second-class tower** of defective stones which could not pass the test. [*Visions* III. 3-7] In the *Visions of the Pastor of Hermas* the church is represented as **an old and failing lady**—“because your spirit is old and already fading away”—**who is carried out of the world; only in the world beyond does she appear as a blooming and ageless maiden.** [*Visions* III, 11-13] (Brackets mine to include references given by Nibley in footnotes).<sup>45</sup>

If the *Shepherd* had actually said what Nibley credited it with saying about the replacement of the tower (which represents Christ’s church) with a “second-class tower of defective stones” it might have been legitimately cited as a possible prediction of the coming replacement of the true church of Christ with the great and abominable church described in 1 Nephi 13. But the *Shepherd* says nothing whatsoever about a second tower. It only mentions that certain stones (people) that delay repentance will not be included in the tower but will go to an inferior place. It does not say that the inferior place is a tower, nor that it replaces the tower that *is* spoken of:

I asked her yet another question, whether these stones that were tossed aside and not fit into the building of the tower could repent and have a place in the tower. “They can repent,” she said, “but they cannot be fit into this tower. They will be fit into a greatly inferior place—and then only after they have been tormented and have completed the days of their sins” (*Visions* III.7.5-6).<sup>46</sup>

The reference Nibley quotes about the Church being represented as an “old and failing lady” who will only appear “as a blooming and ageless maiden” in the world beyond entirely misrepresents the meaning of Hermas’ vision. In reality the condition of the woman representing the church in the vision reflects Hermas’ own spiritual condition. In the course of his vision she appears to him in three different forms, each time with increasing vigor, as Hermas becomes more spiritually vigorous himself. None of this has anything to do with her state in this world as opposed to the world to come. Her three appearances are described in *Visions* III.10.2, and each as it relates to Hermas’ spiritual development in its own chapter in *Visions* III. 11, 12, and 13. That the appearance of the woman relates to Hermas’ spiritual state and not to her (the church’s) condition in this age as opposed to the age to come can be seen very well when the second passage quoted by Nibley is given with its context:

In the first vision, why did she appear to you as an elderly woman, seated on a chair? Because your spirit is elderly and already fading away, having no vigor because you are feeble and of two minds. (*Visions* III.11.2)<sup>47</sup>

In short, Nibley boldly misrepresented the *Shepherd of Hermas’* Vision’s Tower Parable.

43 R. M. Grant, “The Passing of the Church: Comments on Two Comments on a Strange Theme,” *Church History* 30.4 (Dec. 1961) 482.

44 Hugh W. Nibley, “The Passing of the Primitive Church: Forty Variations on an Unpopular Theme,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 4; ed. by Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks; Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book // Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986) 169.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

46 ET: Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Loeb Classical Library 24-25; 2 vols.; Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003) 2.213.

47 *Ibid.*, 2:223.

## 2. Nibley Misquotes Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History

We have already dealt with Nibley's complex misquotation of Eusebius's *Preparation for the Gospel*. The *Ecclesiastical History*, written in stages during the first quarter of the fourth century, is Eusebius's best known work. As part of his argument that the earliest church did not expect to survive, Nibley wants to show that there was a significant shift in attitudes toward martyrdom in the earliest and later Christian Church. He appeals, in defense of this idea, to a letter by Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria (d. c. 265) preserved by Eusebius. Here is what Nibley says:

**This concept of martyrdom** [the one Nibley had been describing as the one held by the early Church] is the **opposite of that which later prevailed**, as Dionysius of Alexandria points out in a letter to Novatus, noting that whereas the early martyr was concerned "for his own soul alone . . . **today** the martyr thinks in terms of the whole Church."<sup>48</sup>

In context, however, the letter has nothing to do with contrasting earlier and later attitudes toward martyrdom. This is clearly seen when some of the original context of the letter is given along with the words Nibley quotes. In his letter Dionysius says to Novatus:

You ought to have been ready to suffer anything whatever rather than split the Church of God, and martyrdom to avoid schism would have brought you as much honour as martyrdom to escape idolatry—I should say, more. For in the latter case a man is martyred to save his own single soul, in the former to save the whole Church.<sup>49</sup>

Nibley creates the temporal/historic element he needs out of thin air by adding a word that is not in the original at all: *today*.<sup>50</sup>

## Nibley Misquotes Two Early Sources in Support of Baptism for the Dead.

### 1. Nibley Misquotes Matthew 16:18

In his article "Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times," Nibley offers a case for an alternative reading of Matthew

16:18, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," that is built upon a combination of mistranslation, misquotation, and the misidentification of sources. Nibley insists that Matthew's famous passage refers to the practice of baptism for the dead:

It is the proper function of a gate to shut creatures in or out of a place; when a gate "prevails," it succeeds in this purpose; when it does not "prevail," someone succeeds in getting past it...the thing which is held back [by the gates of hell], **is not the church, for the object is not in the accusative but in the partitive genitive: it is "hers," part of her, that which belongs to her**, that the gates will not be able to contain. Since all have fallen, all are confined in death which it is the Savior's mission to overcome; their release is to be accomplished through the work of the church, to which the Lord promises that at some future time he will give the apostles the keys."<sup>51</sup>

According to Nibley, then, the *it* in *prevail against it* refers not to the Church but to a portion of the number of the souls who were at one point in hell, but who will later escape from there through proxy baptism. In other words the passage should have been translated something like: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against some of the dead it is holding back getting out finally through baptism for the dead."

Nibley defends this strange rendering by arguing that the object of *prevail against* here "is not in the accusative but in the partitive genitive: it is 'hers,' part of her, that which belongs to her, that the gates will not be able to contain."<sup>52</sup> One need go no further in response to Nibley's argument than to point out the fact that the Greek verb translated *prevail against* in Matthew 16:18 (*katischyō*) almost always takes a genitive object when used to mean *prevail against* or *over*.<sup>53</sup> This being the case there is no reason whatever to suppose that the passage has any other object than the Church. The mere fact that the object of the verb is not an accusative, in no way implies that we must read it as a partitive genitive. What is more there are no other contextual clues which would suggest a partitive genitive with the meaning Nibley gives it here either.

48 Nibley, "Passing of the Primitive Church," in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, p. 179.

49 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.45; ET: G. A. Williamson, *Eusebius: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965).

50 The contrast between martyrdom for self and for whole church is stated using *men* and *de* in two nicely balanced statements:

Ekei men gar hyper mias tis tes heautou psyches,  
*entaitha de hyper holes tes ekklesias martyrei* (PG 20:633)

51 Hugh W. Nibley, "Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times," in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, p. 106.

52 *Ibid.*

53 I had originally written here "the Greek verb translated *prevail against* in Matthew 16:18 (*katischyō*) always takes a genitive object when used to mean *prevail against* or *over*." An early reviewer pointed out that I had missed an example given in the big Liddell & Scott Classical Greek Lexicon (i.e., the Greek Septuagint at 2 *Chronicles* 8:3), where the verb had this same basic meaning but with an accusative rather than a genitive object. In this instance the reviewer was correct and so I replaced the *always* with *almost always*.

## 2. Nibley Misquotes Ignatius of Antioch's Philadelphians

A remarkable example of Nibley's finding things in the ancient sources that simply aren't there is where he argues that the combination of the words "rock" "key," and "gate" is to be understood as a reference to baptism for the dead. And so he writes concerning the ninth chapter of Ignatius of Antioch's letter to the Philadelphians (early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.):

The same idea is even more obviously expressed by Ignatius in what is perhaps the **earliest extant mention of the rock after New Testament** times, making it equivalent to

the high priest . . . to whom alone the secrets of God have been **confided**. . . **This** is the **Way** which leads to the Father, **the Rock . . . the Key . . . the Gate of Knowledge**, through which have entered Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and all the host of prophets.

From which **it is clear that Matthew 16:17-19, with its combination of gates, keys, and rock, definitely hinges on the subject of salvation for the dead, and the work by which they are admitted to the presence of the Father.**<sup>54</sup>

The passage in the form Nibley quotes it, is by no means as explicit as he makes it. As we begin to deconstruct Nibley's argument it will be helpful to restore the words Nibley left out between *have been confided* and *This is the way*:

. . . *have been confided*. The ministering powers of God are good. The Comforter is holy and the Word is holy, the Son of the Father, by whom He made all things, and exercises a providence over them all. *This is the way* . . .<sup>55</sup>

It appears that Nibley removed these in-between words in order to make the words *This is the way* refer back to *secrets of God*. But even if this connection were as clear as Nibley wants to make it, it would still not be clear that we are to find baptism for the dead implied in the words *secrets of God*, and hence Nibley would still not be justified in arguing that the combination of rock, key, and gate should be taken to refer to baptism of the dead.

But in pointing out these problems we have yet only scratched the surface. The even more basic problem is that the text Nibley quotes comes from a version of Ignatius' letter that was expanded by someone writing several

centuries after Ignatius. None of the crucial words, rock, key, and gate, in Nibley's quotation are found in Ignatius's original letter.<sup>56</sup> They were all added later (perhaps in the fourth century) by an unknown writer who tampered with the text. Nibley is remiss in not telling us that he has used the later, longer version of Ignatius' letter and for not providing us with any justification for his having done so. What is more, his claim that the passage contains what "is perhaps the earliest extant mention of the rock after New Testament times" is completely false.<sup>57</sup> Nibley seems to assume that the words originated with Ignatius, in which case that might have been correct. As it is, however, the fact that he assumes *rock* is original to Ignatius raises doubts as to how well he actually knows the Ignatian material. The fact that there is more than one recension of Ignatius' letters and that the longer version, the one appealed to by Nibley, is not the original one is scarcely something known only to experts.

Nibley's quoting material from the late recension of Ignatius' letters but treating it as coming from the time of Ignatius is a problem we find elsewhere in his works as well. In another work he quotes material from the late versions of Ignatius' *Trallians* 4 and *Smyrneans* 6 as examples of the sort of thing that is being said "Already, at the end of the first century."<sup>58</sup> Not only did the material Nibley quotes in that case come from centuries later, but he was also imprecise in his dating of Ignatius' original letters, which date from the early second and not the late first century.

Nibley's argument about the rock, key and gate, collapses completely when we look at the passage as Ignatius originally wrote it in the early second century. In the passage as Nibley quoted it the bolded word *This* was taken to refer to the *secrets of God*, into which Nibley read baptism for the dead. But Ignatius originally wrote not *this* (*houtos*) but *he* (*autos*) referring back not to *the secrets of God* but to the high priest (possibly Jesus or the bishop representing him) mentioned just before, i.e. to a person *not* a practice or teaching. To this both the standard English translations and the critical Greek editions uniformly testify.<sup>59</sup>

In the end Nibley's argument is grounded on arguments and appeals to ancient texts that had absolutely nothing whatever to do with baptism for the dead.

54 Hugh W. Nibley, "Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times," in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, p. 107.

55 Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 9, Long Version (ET: Ante-Nicene Fathers 1)

56 See the original form of this letter, for example, in ET: Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Loeb Classical Library 24-25; 2 vols.; Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003)

57 See, for example, Ignatius, *Polycarp* 1:1; *Epistle of Barnabas* 5:13; 6:3; 11:3, 5; Shepherd of Hermas, *Parables (Similitudes)* 9.2.1-2; 9.3.1; 9.4.2; 9.5.3; 9.9.7; 9.12.1; 9.13,5; 9.14.4.

58 Nibley, *World of the Prophets*, p. 49.

59 See Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers* 1.292-93. Ehrman's edition replaces the older 1912-1913 Loeb Classical Library edition of Kirsopp Lake. Both editions agree that Ignatius wrote *autos* not *houtos* (neither offering *houtos* as a variant reading) and both translate the word *he* not *this*. Edgar J. Goodspeed's *Index Patristicus* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, n.d.) also identifies *autos* and not *houtos* as the reading here (pp. 31 and 178). Although there is really no doubt as to the correct translation I have, by way of illustrating Nibley's difficulty, checked the translations of Wake, Lightfoot, Roberts-Donaldson (Ante-Nicene Fathers 1), Stawley, Hoole, Richardson, Lake, Goodspeed, and Staniforth as well. All of them have *he* referring to the high priest. Finally, the reading in the edition of Ignatius' authentic letters in Jacques-Paul Migne's *Patrologiae cursus completus*, which is likely the edition Nibley himself used, is, again, *autos* not *houtos* in *Philadelphians* 9 (PG 5:704-05).

### *Nibley Misquotes Eight Sources at One Stroke*

One of the most common ways Hugh Nibley misquotes his sources is to make some assertion and then offer a footnote containing several references to ancient texts, some of which might mention the topic he is discussing, but few if any of which provide direct support for the point he is trying to prove. It is impossible to estimate how many of these kind of footnotes exist, but there are so many that it is not difficult to suppose that it is in consideration of these that Tweedy came up with his exaggerated 90% number. A classic case in point is a footnote Nibley offered while trying to prove “the total neglect of education in the early church.”<sup>60</sup> Nibley declared: “Actually the **Apostolic Fathers** were greatly concerned about education, warning their people **against the bad education of the world**, and chiding them for their neglect of the only education that counted—that which prepared the young for the next life.” In ostensible support of this statement Nibley directs his readers to a footnote which in turn refers them to no less than eight different ancient passages, none of which reflect a negative attitude toward formal education as such, and only six of which come from the group of writers known as the Apostolic Fathers.<sup>61</sup> Prominent Church historian Hans J. Hillerbrand pointed to Nibley’s “comment about the absence of educational concern in the early church,” as a prime example of things he considered “highly debatable” in Nibley’s article.<sup>62</sup>

### *Nibley’s Defenders*

Having said all of this, it should be noted that there have been attempts to vindicate Nibley on the question of his footnotes. In a talk titled “Autobiographical Notes on My Testimony,” Daniel C. Peterson tells the following anecdote about his own expert encounter with Nibley’s footnotes:

You may remember, some of you, that Hugh Nibley wrote an article and published it in *Revue de Qumran* a number of years ago called “Qumran and the Companions of the Cave.” And I thought, well, okay, Islamic studies and Arabic was just a sideline for Nibley. I’ve heard for a long

time (and so have you probably) that Nibley’s work really isn’t that good. That if you checked the footnotes it doesn’t hold up, you know. He wasn’t that good a scholar, he’s sloppy, and he’s careless, and you can’t trust him, and he’s just a dishonest Mormon apologist. So I thought (you know, which now I am) (Laughter). So, anyway...

But it seemed to me a good opportunity to look at that passage. There’s a passage in one of the *Surahs of the Qur’an* [sic!], one of the chapters, that talks about the Companions of the Cave and Nibley argued that this was a garbled recollection of the Dead Sea Scrolls community and he had cited a number of Arabic sources.

I thought it would be child’s play for an Arabist to check out Nibley’s footnotes and then expand beyond them to see if his argument really held up. Well, what really struck me about it was, when I started getting into the article, how many Arabic sources he had looked at; how much work he had done and how precisely right it was.<sup>63</sup>

All this is well and good. If Peterson found that a single article by Nibley was impressive then, of course, that is fine. Still how strict an examination did he actually undertake of it? He gives us some sense of this right after what he says above: “Now I can only say that it was right to a certain extent,” he continues, “because I didn’t get through it all.” Not exactly a systematic analysis then, I gather. Even so Peterson goes on to say that he came away feeling that in that article anyway, Nibley’s footnotes were “meticulously accurate, that he had really gotten the Arabic sources down, which really impressed me. And so now when people say, ‘Yeah, well he just misrepresents his sources.’ I suggest they go have a look at the (Inaudible) or something like that if they want to check it. They usually don’t.”

I cannot be certain what word or words stood where “inaudible” now appears in the quote above. Still one could easily imagine that Peterson had said there: “*Revue de Qumran*.” If not, it is still worth asking whether Nibley was in fact “meticulously accurate” in his use of sources there? And the answer is no, he is not. On page 136 of that article Nibley says: “The story of Joseph’s winning of Mary is told in the *Epistle of I Clement*, c. 43.”<sup>64</sup> No actually it

60 The twentieth “variation” in “The Passing of the Primitive Church: Forty Variations on an Unpopular Theme,” in *Early Christianity & Mormonism*, p. 177.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 200, footnote 70. The closest we come to anything like what Nibley is talking about comes from the two writers cited who are not Apostolic Fathers. First, the fourth-century writer Eusebius’s repudiation of the followers of Theodotus the Shoemaker who “corrupt the word of God [which they freely emended],” and “Instead of asking what Holy Scripture says, they strain every nerve to find a syllogistic figure to bolster up their godlessness.” Some of them, Eusebius says “give all their energies to the study of Euclidian geometry, and treat Aristotle and Theophrastus with reverential awe; to some of them Galen is almost an object of worship” (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.28). But even there Eusebius is only speaking of putting worldly education above the word of God. Second the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 1:1-5 (falsely attributed to one of the Apostolic Fathers), which describes the inability of the study of philosophy to provide satisfactory answers to the great issues of life such as whether or not there is life after death.

As an interesting aside, Nibley misrepresents the above Eusebius passage again in his book *The World of the Prophets* (p. 35) by (1) attributing it directly to Eusebius rather than to the source Eusebius was citing, and, (2) more seriously, treating it as generally descriptive of the Christian Church as such during a particular period of history, rather than as what it is: a description of the views and attitudes of a particular heretical sect.

62 Hans J. Hillerbrand, “The Passing of the Church: Two Comments on a Strange Theme,” *Church History* 30.4 (Dec. 1961) 481.

63 [http://www.fairlds.org/FAIR\\_Conferences/2004\\_Autobiographical\\_Notes\\_on\\_My\\_Testimony.html](http://www.fairlds.org/FAIR_Conferences/2004_Autobiographical_Notes_on_My_Testimony.html). (28 February 2006).

64 Hugh W. Nibley, “Qumran and the Companions of the Cave,” *Revue de Qumran* 5 (April, 1965) 186.

is not. A story similar to the one Nibley describes is told in the *Protevangelium of James* 8-9, a story that echoes the story of Aaron's budding rod in the Old Testament book of Numbers, chapter 17. In fact it is this latter story, the story of Aaron's budding rod, that is told in the *Epistle of I Clement*, c. 43.

In his review of Martha Beck's book Boyd Petersen says the following:

John Gee recently completed a statistical analysis of one of Hugh's articles chosen at random to establish the accuracy of the footnotes. In looking at Hugh's essay, "Victoriosa Loquacitas: The Rise of Rhetoric and the Decline of Everything Else" as it appeared in its original form in *Western Speech* 20 (1956): 57-82 (reprinted in *The Ancient State* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1991]: 243-286) Gee discovered that "87% of the footnotes were completely correct, 8% of the footnotes contained typographical errors, 5% were wrong in some other way (e.g. frequently right author, right page, wrong title). In no case could I determine that any of the errors in the footnotes was intentional or that any of the footnotes were fabrications" (personal e-mail, John Gee to Boyd Petersen, 13 January 2005).

In a later study Gee analyzed the footnotes in one of Hugh's Egyptian works, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyrus: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1975). Selecting a chapter from the book at random (Chapter 3, the second-longest chapter in the book), Gee found that "94% of the citations were correct, 4% were typographical errors, and 2% were wrong." It was Gee's determination that "the results seem to show that Nibley was more accurate when dealing with a Mormon topic, that his Egyptian work was more accurate than his classics work, and that his work on Message was better than normal, not worse." Further, Gee stated that "I have never seen any case where Hugh Nibley ever fabricated or made up a source. After looking up thousands of citations, I have seen him make just about every mistake I think one could make, but I have never seen him make up anything" (personal e-mail, John Gee to Boyd Petersen, 14 March 2005).<sup>65</sup>

Gee makes allusion to the analysis of the chapter from Nibley's *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyrus* in his introduction to the new second edition, of which he was one of the editors: "Analysis of a random chapter showed that of its almost seven hundred citations, Nibley was completely accurate 94 percent of the time, and in more than half of these remaining forty cases, one could explain the problem as a typographical error." (p. xx) Petersen cannot be correct in saying that Gee used chapter 3 in his analysis, since that chapter is clearly not the "second-longest chapter

in the book," nor does it contain "almost seven hundred citations." In fact it contains only 60 footnotes, 48 in the original edition. Gee must have based his analysis not on chapter 3, but on Part III. Part III with 616 footnotes in the new edition comes closest to Gee's "almost seven hundred citations," of all the sections in the book. The only section with more footnotes is Part II, with 774 footnotes.

For Gee to merely cite the statistics of his study of course means nothing unless we can actually see what he meant when he says he checked Nibley's footnotes. How rigorous was his checking? The summary statement he makes regarding it, which we have just quoted, does not instill a high level of confidence. (By what measure I wonder do 616 citations count for "almost seven hundred citations"?) Nor does his remarking that "Since Nibley made his own translations from all foreign languages except where noted, we have given him wide latitude in rendering his translations."

Still there is a way to test the rigor of Gee's analysis. Given the fact that Part III served as the basis of Gee's analysis, and therefore that the depth and carefulness of his analysis ought to become evident, to some degree at least, in the kinds of changes he makes in relation to the footnotes for that section in the new edition.

If one were looking for evidence that Gee's analysis dealt primarily with superficial things one would find it in an instance where Nibley very conspicuously misrepresented his source, and where Gee made some minor corrections but overlooked entirely the bigger problem. Such an example conveniently presents itself in a quotation from a book by Yigael Yadin that appears on page 131 in the 1975 edition and page 212 in the 2005 edition.

In the 1975 edition Nibley says that "a fundamental religious activity of the ancient Hebrews was going up to the Temple 'to read the Story of the Creation' (Y. Yadin, *War of the Sons of Light and Darkness*, pp. 202f)." In the second edition the editors have made a few minor changes. Yadin had not capitalized *Story*, and so the new edition changes the quote to read "story of the Creation." It also, for example, changes Nibley's "202f" to "202-203". No notice is taken however of the conspicuous fact that Yadin does not say that it was those going up to the temple that read the story of Creation but those who did not go up. The words "To read the story of [the] Creation," by the way, occur on page 203 twice. I quote the passage so as to include both of them. The first part begins in the midst of a quotation from the Mishnah:

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.fairlds.org/Reviews/Rvw200504.html>

‘When the time was come for a course to go up, the priests and the levites thereof went up to Jerusalem, and the Israelites that were of the selfsame course came together unto their own cities to read the story of the Creation, and the men of the *ma‘amad*, etc.’

The Tosephta, in the corresponding passage (ib. iv, 3) reads: ‘When the time was come for a course, the priests and levites went up to Jerusalem, and the Israelites that were of the self same course and *were unable to go up to Jerusalem* came together into their own cities to read the story of Creation.’ [Yadin’s italics]<sup>66</sup>

The above is an example of a very straightforward misquotation. Yadin said it was those who *did not* go up to Jerusalem that read the story of Creation, Nibley quoted him as saying it was those who *did* go up to Jerusalem. This indicates that Gee in making his corrections for this passage for the new edition was not attending to the question of whether Nibley was accurately representing his sources, even on a relatively basic level, but was attending only to superficial matters of spelling, capitalization, and so on.

If then Gee missed so straightforward an example of Nibley’s misuse of his sources as this, how can we expect that he would not also have missed ones that were less straightforward and harder to detect? In addition, when Gee says he gave Nibley, “wide latitude in rendering his translations,” does that mean that he did not check his translations or simply decided to accept without question whatever Nibley chose to do in them? And are all of Gee’s statistics as inexact as his using “almost seven hundred”

as just another way of saying “616”? Such considerations cast a certain shadow of doubt over Gee’s statistics. It will be interesting to see whether he will be able to do anything to make the shadow go away.

### Summing Up

I have offered here only a few examples of what I believe to represent a common phenomenon in the works of Hugh Nibley. I could have easily multiplied the number of examples dealt with, but I feel the ones I have chosen illustrate the situation well enough. Quite often Nibley will multiply misrepresentations by piling them up one upon the other all in a very short space as for example when he claims on page 248 of *Old Testament and Related Studies* that scholars are “generally agreed,” that the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed “for the first time” such things as “. . . the exact date of Easter. . . the nature and origin of the organization of the Primitive Church. . . the origin of Gnosticism.”<sup>67</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls are Jewish texts. They include no Christian texts at all. In addition their perspective is quite different from that of Gnosticism. To put it quite simply they do not reveal “for the first time” nor for any time the things Nibley claims they do. And since Nibley’s statements weren’t true, scholars obviously weren’t/aren’t “generally agreed” in supporting them. Nibley is a very untrustworthy guide for Mormons wanting to follow in his footsteps by becoming scholars. His information is simply too often inaccurate and his way of using it too often dubious to serve as any sort of credible model.<sup>68</sup>

66 Yagael Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light* (n.p.:Oxford University Press, 1962) 203.

67 Nibley, “The Dead Sea Scrolls: Some Questions and Answers,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, p. 248

68 Should anyone wish to pursue this matter a bit further they might begin by seeking answers to the following questions:

Was Nibley correct when he claimed that:

1) The texts found at the site of ancient Chenoboskia near the modern Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi in 1954 had originally been “buried by a little Christian church before the apostasy hit it, before Gnosticism hit it. They represent the earliest level, the earliest teachings of the church, a totally different picture from what anybody had imagined it would be like. And the extent of these things is remarkable.” (Nibley, “Apocryphal Writings and the Teachings of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Temple and Cosmos*, pp. 198-99.)

(2) “The *Epistle to Diognetus* 10 tells us not to marvel at this—man must become the heir of divinity in the fullest sense,” (Nibley, “Treasures in the Heavens,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, p. 206, nt. 89.)

(3) It was Christians being referred to when he writes: “‘O miserable Aristotle!’ cried Tertullian shortly after, ‘who taught them (the Christians) dialectic, the art of proving and disproving, the cunning turns of sentences, forced conjectures, tough arguments, contrary even to itself.’” (Nibley, *World of the Prophets*, pp. 35-36.)

(4) The *Gospel of Philip* “is strictly orthodox, and very strongly anti-gnostic, although some people try to explain it away by saying it is gnostic.” (Nibley, “Rediscovery of the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon,” in *Temple and Cosmos*, p. 225, Infobase edition.)

(5) Justin Martyr “knows of no certain norm for distinguishing true Christians from false, and Irenaeus struggles manfully but vainly to discover one. (Nibley, “Passing of the Primitive Church,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, p. 182.)

(6) The community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls that “their book of doctrine and covenants (now called the Manual of Discipline) is surprisingly like our own, as are their ideas of priesthood, prophecy, heaven and earth, marriage and eternal progeny, and so on.” (Nibley, “More Voices from the Dust,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, p. 240.)

(7) Jesus is presented as performing baptisms for the dead, and the spirits are described as joining “his church exactly like their mortal descendants, and by the same ordinances” in chapter 42 of the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century work, the *Odes of Solomon*. (Nibley, “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, p. 119.)

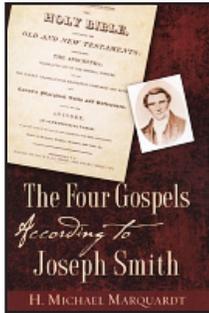
(8) Concerning the baptism performed by the Apostles upon the dead in *Shepherd of Hermas*, Similitudes (Parables) IX.16.2, “That it was an earthly baptism which could only be performed with water is emphatically stated.” (Ibid., p. 122.)

(9) The *Shepherd of Hermas* is “one of the most trustworthy guides to the established beliefs of the early church.” (Ibid., p. 121.)

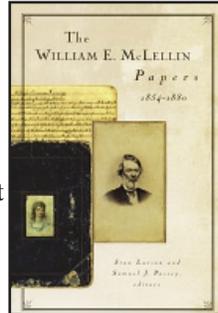
(10) Origen (d. c. 251) “can report no clear official teaching in his day not only regarding minor matters, but on the very first principles of the gospel.” (Nibley “Passing of the Primitive Church,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, p. 175. Nibley’s misquotation of Origen’s *First Principles* in this case is a good example of what Tweedy described when he says: “Sometimes what he [Nibley] said was exactly the opposite of what the author meant” [Beck, *Leaving the Saints*, p. 16].)

(11) “The *Confessions* [of Augustine] is the story of a man who sought for revelation in the church, failed to find it, and so with great reluctance turned to philosophy as a poor second best.” (Hugh Nibley, “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times, Part II,” *Improvement Era* (Jan 1949) 60 nt. 60.)

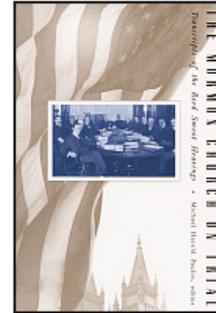
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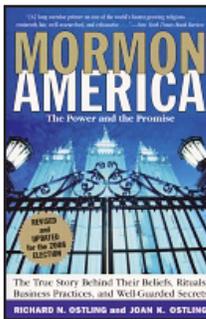
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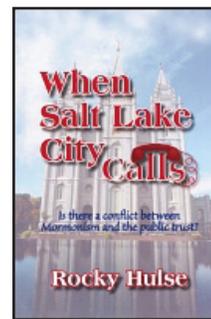
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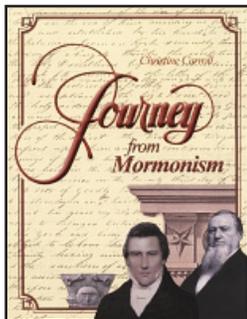
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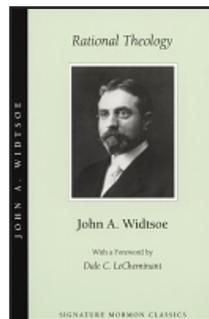
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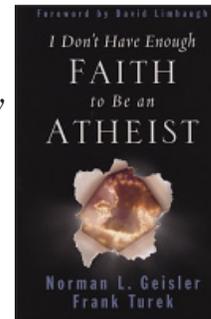
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It has sometimes been a cause of wonder why, given his enormous literary output, and his great interest in writing about the Old and New Testament and early Church texts and history that Nibley published so infrequently in the standard non-Mormon scholarly journals dedicated to these subjects, especially given the fact that his writing career spanned more than half a century. (The actual scholarly articles that I am aware of are these: "Christian Envy of the Temple," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50.2 (October 1959) 97-123 and 50.3 (Jan 1960) 229-40 (two parts); "The Passing of the Church: Forty Variations on a Dierum Theme," *Church History* 30.2 (June 1961) 131-54; "Qumran and the Companions of the Cave," *Revue de Qumran* 5.2 (1965) 177-98; and "Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum," *Vigiliae Christianae* 20.1 (1966) 1-24.) His own account of it is given in his "An Intellectual Autobiography," where, speaking of his activities in the 1950s, Nibley writes:

[T]o be taken seriously one must publish, and I soon found that getting published in the journals is as easy and mechanical as getting grades: I sent out articles to a wide variety of prestigious journals and they were all printed. So I lost interest. (Hugh W. Nibley, "An Intellectual Autobiography," in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless*, p. xxv.)

And yet he does not cease writing in regional journals like the *Western Political Quarterly*. Is it possible that a cautioning word got round the scholarly guild after someone decided to look up a few of Nibley's footnotes and discovered the kinds of problems we have been discussing in this article? That such might have been the case is clear from the fact, as we have seen, that Nibley did not hesitate to misquote his sources even in the non-Mormon scholarly journals. Were I an editor and an article containing the kinds of things I have described in the present work, I should have certainly deemed it unsuitable for publication. I cannot imagine that editors more expert than I would do anything less.

This takes us back to a point raised at the beginning. If what Tweedy said was true, then the "problem" reverts to those many "outstanding academics from such BYU departments as Ancient Scripture, Asian and Near Eastern Languages, Law, the Library, English, and Classics," mentioned by Robert Millet as having worked on Nibley's footnotes. What are we to make of them now that we have seen how things really are?

Here I must to some degree rise in their defense. I can easily imagine myself in their position, first becoming disturbed that the footnotes in the section assigned to me do not match what the sources say, and perhaps trying to correct one or two or more of them. Then I begin to realize the true depth of the problem, and finally coming to terms with the fact that so many footnotes are wrong, that if I were to begin monkeying with them, Nibley's basic arguments might well begin to collapse all around me, and I would be faced with the fact that I really couldn't fix things without thoroughly revising or even rewriting Nibley's articles. Thus coming full circle I would finally have to surrender to the fact that the safest course for me would be to leave everything just as it was.

## EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND EMAILS

**Oct. 2007.** Thank you for being there when the church had NO answers! I just wish I could get my husband to even LOOK at any of the info, let alone listen to me at all on this subject! I just don't know how to de-program him after our 25+ yrs in the church. My biggest fear is that the church will demand that he divorce me as an apostate.

**Nov. 2007.** What is your purpose? To sell books? To start your own religion? If you're wrong, you'll have a lot of explaining to do to God.

**Dec. 2007.** Just a note to thank you for your site. My Granddaughter joined the mormon church last Christmas. Thanks to you and your informative site I was able with Gods leading to show her of her mistake. Long story short she has since come out of their church and received a letter that her name has been removed from the rolls. Thank you again.

**Dec. 2007.** I was raised in the Presbyterian Church and was born again at age 16. I had many friends in high school that were Mormon. When I was in college I met a Mormon guy who gave me a Book of Mormon and sent missionaries to my door. I went through the lessons and was baptized a Mormon in 1978. I had a great time at the dances and met a guy who I became engaged to be married.

Two months before the wedding I found out what the Mormon Church really believes. My future husband had gone to Salt Lake to visit his parents over spring break ... When he came back to California his parents had bought my temple robes for the wedding and endowment. When I opened the box and saw the green apron I thought the leaves looked like a Van Gogh painting and Van Gogh was crazy (I was an art major). I remember thinking that this looks crazy, but then dismissed the thought. [My boyfriend] and I then went back to church.

My parents come home from the Presbyterian Church and my mom sees the box on the coffee table. She opens it and the Holy Spirit speaks to her heart and says this "church" is not Christian. Later in the evening my mom and I are drying the dishes and she has a funny look on her face. I asked her what was wrong and she says that [my boyfriend] is a good guy and she doesn't want to interfere.

Well, you can't let that go, so I continued to ask what was wrong. My mom said that when she looked at those temple clothes all she thought was that the Mormon Church is not Christian. She also said that Christ came for everyone not just the "perfect" people, and your father and I can't go into the temple to see you get married.

As soon as she said that Christ came for everyone not just the "perfect" people I could feel my heart sink because I knew she was right. It was like a flood of Bible verses came flooding into my head. I then didn't know what to do if I should marry [my boyfriend]. If I would marry him would I be denying God? If I had children and we went to the Mormon Church would they go to hell? I couldn't knowingly take my children to a church that was not Christian. I felt like I was being torn in two.

The verse about not loving two masters came alive for me. I spoke to a Christian pastor at my Presbyterian Church and he told me to go into my room and pray and I would know what to do (he said more that this, but this email will get too long). I did and I knew I had to break up with [my boyfriend]. When I told him I had lost my testimony, that Joseph Smith was not a prophet and that he was not going to be a god. That there is only one god and I didn't want to be a god. [My boyfriend] asked me why I didn't want to be a god? I was really stunned. As you know, Mormons use the same words that Christians use. When I would hear Father, Son, and Holy Spirit I would think of the Trinity (one God) I didn't realize that they (Mormons) were thinking one in thought and purpose. Anyway, this is a very short version of what happened to me.

I have been married to a Christian man for 27 years and we have a 17 year old son. I am so thankful that the Lord never lets us go.

Thank you for your ministry. You have helped many people find the truth and peace that only the Jesus of the Bible can give.

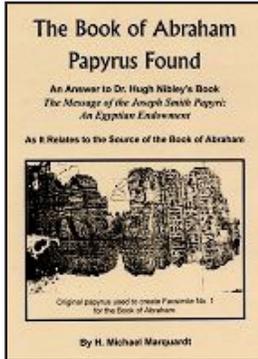
**Jan. 2008.** I am LDS but I'm having a difficult time. I did not research this religion before I joined it. I have felt uneasy for quite some time. As I've been researching I'm finding out things that have made me back away.

**Feb. 2008.** Well as always when people try and disprove the only true Church left on the face of the earth, I suggest that you would think long and hard before soliciting bias against God's kingdom. All I can say to you at this moment is either stop insulting God or be prepared to face Him at the judgment seat or at the great and dreadful day of the Lord,...

**Feb. 2008.** Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today during my lunch hour. I've done a tremendous amount of research into my faith these past five months,... Thank you for your kind words and understanding. Sometimes it gets to be a bit lonely with a complete True Blue Mormon family, especially when I live in a neighborhood that is nearly 100% mormon as well.

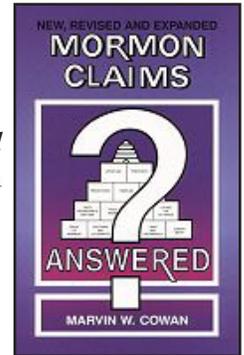
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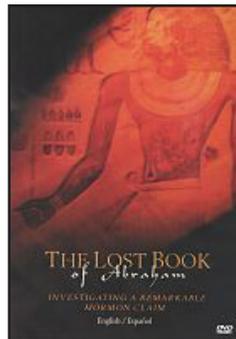
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