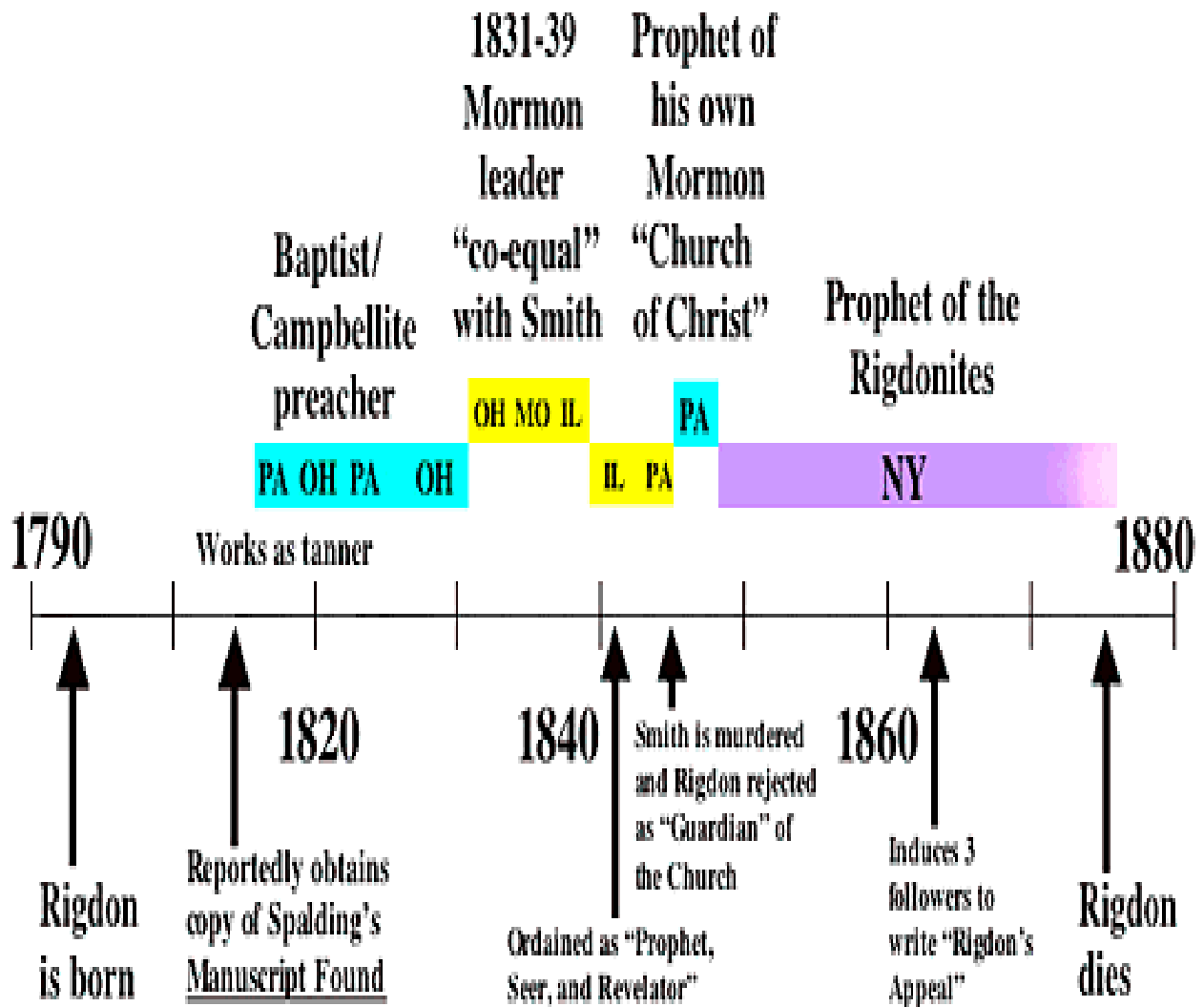
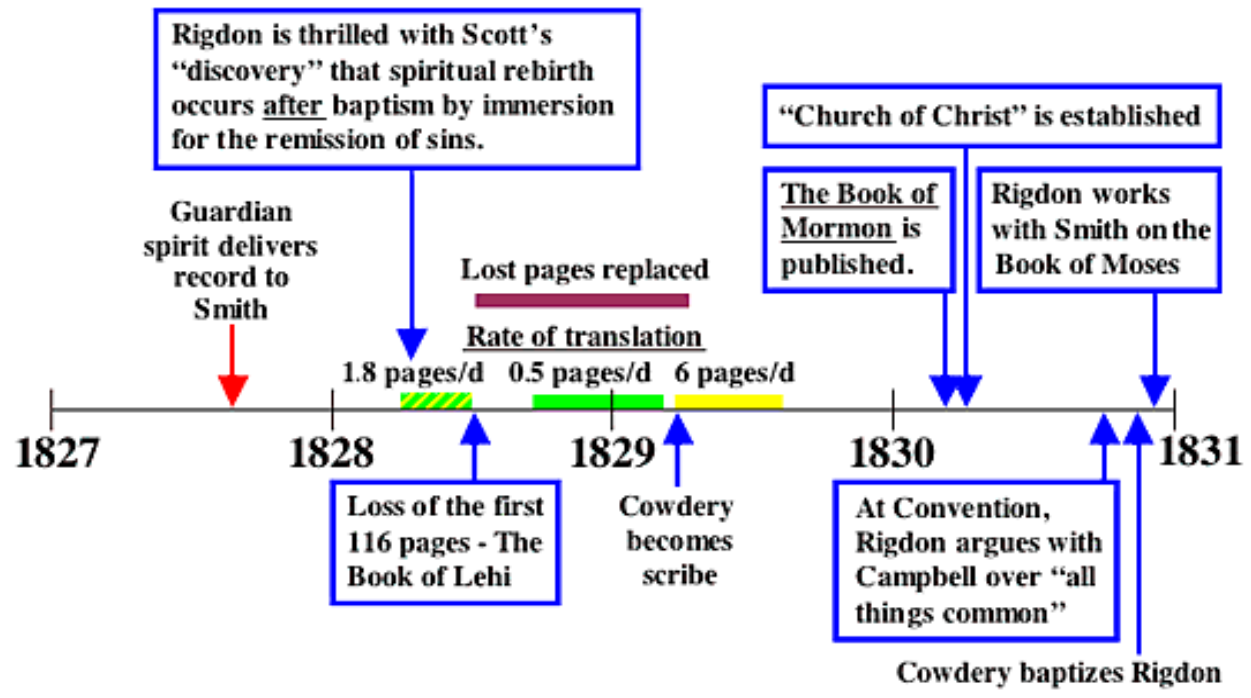
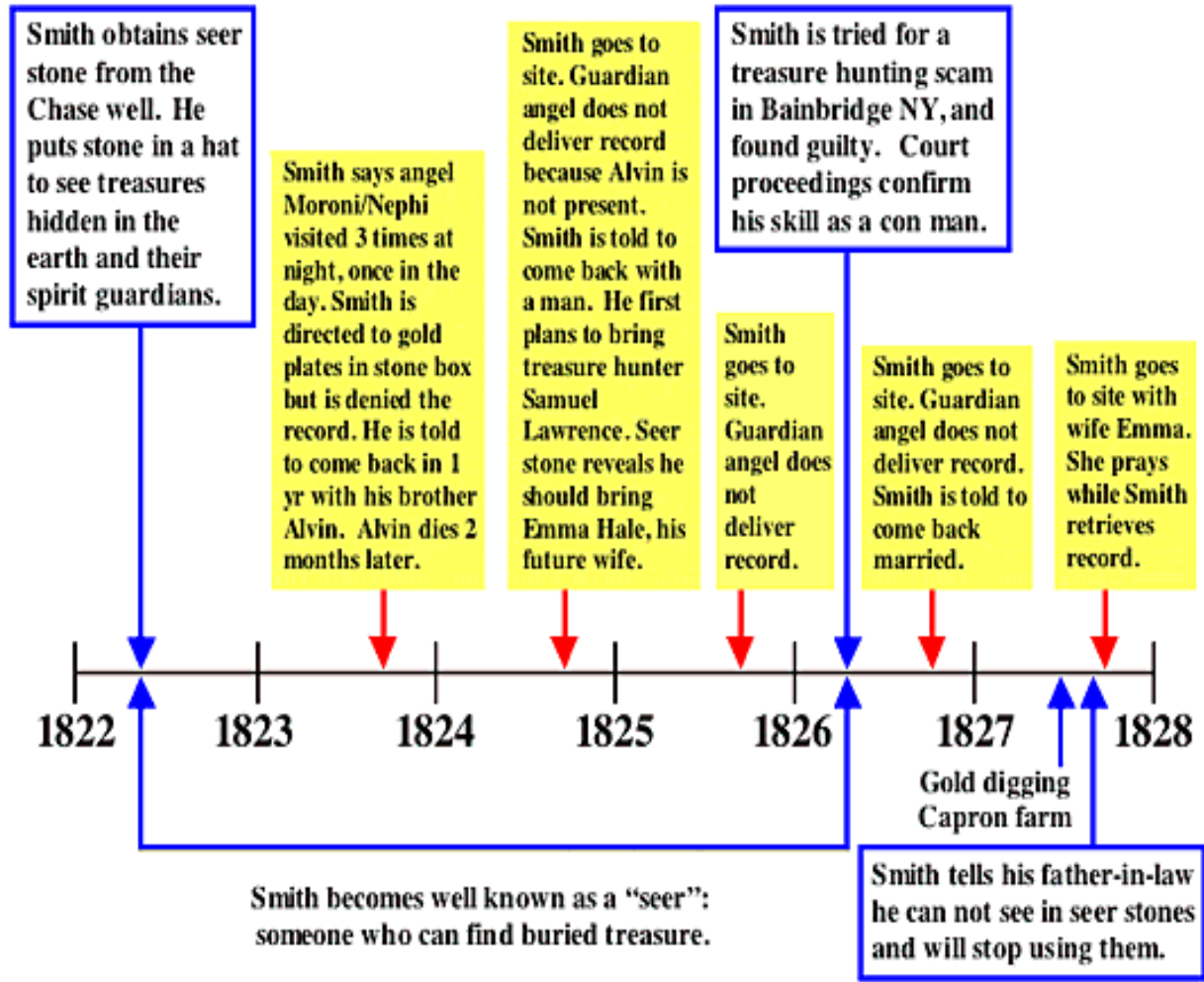


By David Lee Burris





## Biography

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Rigdon was born in [St. Clair Township, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania](#), about 10 miles south of [Pittsburgh](#). (The area today is known as Library.) He was the youngest of four children of William and Nancy Rigdon. Rigdon's father was a farmer and a native of [Harford County, Maryland](#).

### Early life

Sidney's father William Rigdon died in 1810.

According to an 1875 account attributed to Sidney Rigdon's elder brother, as a child Rigdon had suffered an accident that caused a "**contusion of the brain**". His brother reportedly claimed that he "always considered Sidney a little deranged in his mind by that accident. His mental powers did not seem to be impaired, but the equilibrium in his intellectual exertions seemed thereby to have been sadly affected. He still manifested great mental activity and power, but he was to an equal degree inclined to run into wild and visionary views on almost every question." This account was not published until more than 60 years after the accident.

According to an account by his son John M. Rigdon, young Rigdon "borrowed all the histories he could get and began to read them. ... In this way he became a great historian, the best I ever saw. He seemed to have the history of the world on his tongue's end and he got to be a great biblical scholar as well. He was as familiar with the Bible as a child was with his spelling book. He was never known to play with the boys; reading books was the greatest pleasure he could get. He studied English Grammar alone and became a very fine grammarian. He was very precise in his language."<sup>[3]</sup>

Rigdon remained on the farm until his mother sold it in 1818.

### Baptist ministry

On May 31, 1817, Rigdon was baptized by Rev. Phillips and he became a member of the Peter's Creek Baptist Church of Library, Pennsylvania.<sup>[4]</sup>

In 1818, Rigdon moved to North Sewickley to become an apprentice to Baptist minister Rev. Andrew Clark. Rigdon received his license to preach for the [Regular Baptists](#) in March 1819.

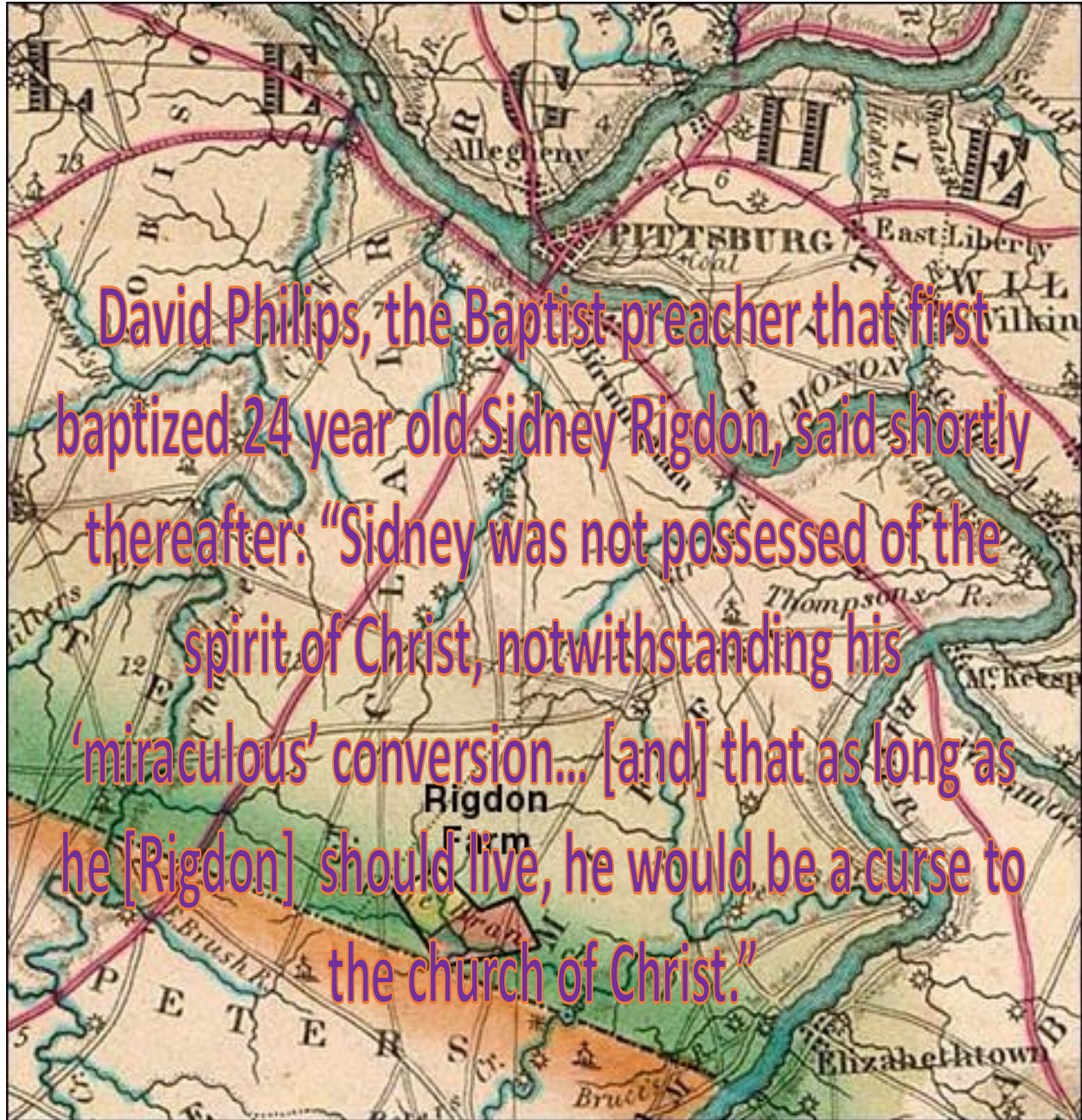
Rigdon moved in May to [Trumbull County, Ohio](#), where he jointly preached with Adamson Bentley from July 1819. He married Bentley's wife's sister, Phoebe Brooks in June 1820, and remained in Ohio until February 1822, when he returned to Pittsburgh to accept the pastorate of the First Baptist Church there under the recommendation of [Alexander Campbell](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

Rigdon and Bentley had journeyed to meet Campbell in the summer of 1821, to learn more about the Baptist who was encountering opposition to his idea that the [New Testament](#) should hold priority over the [Old Testament](#) in the Christian church. They engaged in lengthy discussions, with both men joining the [Disciples of Christ movement](#) associated with Campbell.

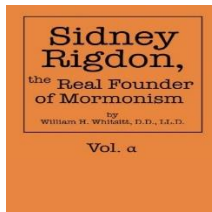
On January 28, 1822, Rigdon arrived in Pittsburgh to become minister at the First Baptist Church.<sup>[4]</sup> Rigdon's ministry met with opposition from member Rev. John Winter, and on July 11, 1823, a schism split the congregation, with each side disfellowshipping the other. On October 11, Rigdon was "excluded from the [Redstone Association Baptist Denomination](#)", of which the First Baptist Church was a member.<sup>[4]</sup>

From 1824 to 1826, Rigdon worked as a [journeyman tanner](#) in Pittsburgh, while preaching Campbell's [Restorationism](#) on Sundays in the courthouse. **He also worked as a journeyman printer for the Philadelphia publisher Paterson.**<sup>[6]</sup> - WIKIPEDIA

**Note to Reader:** There is only one primary source covering the Baptist Reform period that gives balanced treatment to Sidney Rigdon – a book by Amos Hayden published in 1875 entitled *Early History of the Disciples of the Western Reserve, Ohio*.



## **The Setting: 1826-1829**



**“Both Mr. Sidney Rigdon and Mr. Joseph Smith looked upon the Disciples as the harbingers of the Mormons; the Disciples of Christ [Restorationists] represented in their minds a condition of twilight, Mormons were such an improvement upon their predecessors as to be regarded as ushering in a state of meridian sunlight. With reference to his agency in founding the sect of the Disciples, Joseph above remarks to Sidney, that in the period of his earliest labors towards that end he was unconscious, ‘he knew not’ - the great business the Lord was employing himself & Mr. Campbell to perform. They were doing nothing less than to ‘prepare the way before Mr. Smith, and before Elijah which should come,’ and who actually did come at the dedication of the ‘House of the Lord’ in Kirtland (D&C 110:13).”**

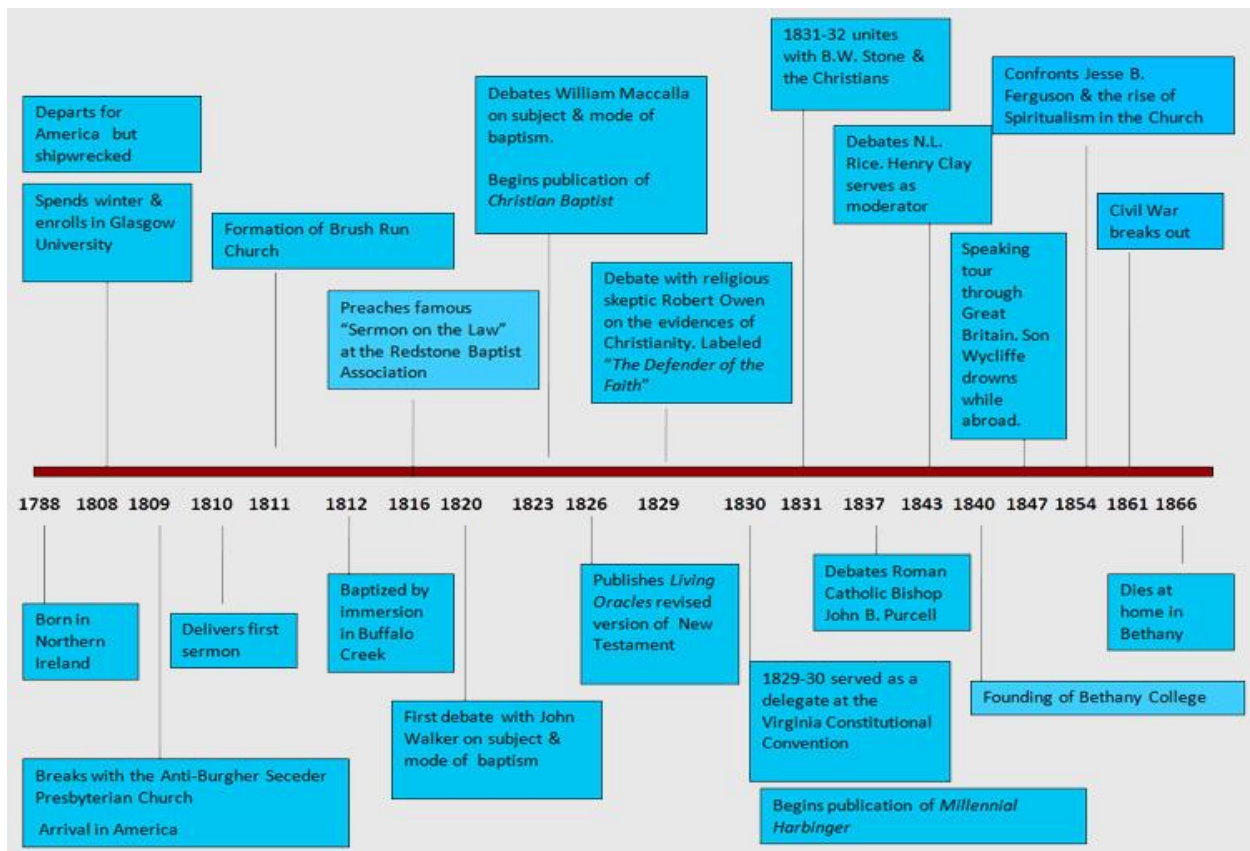
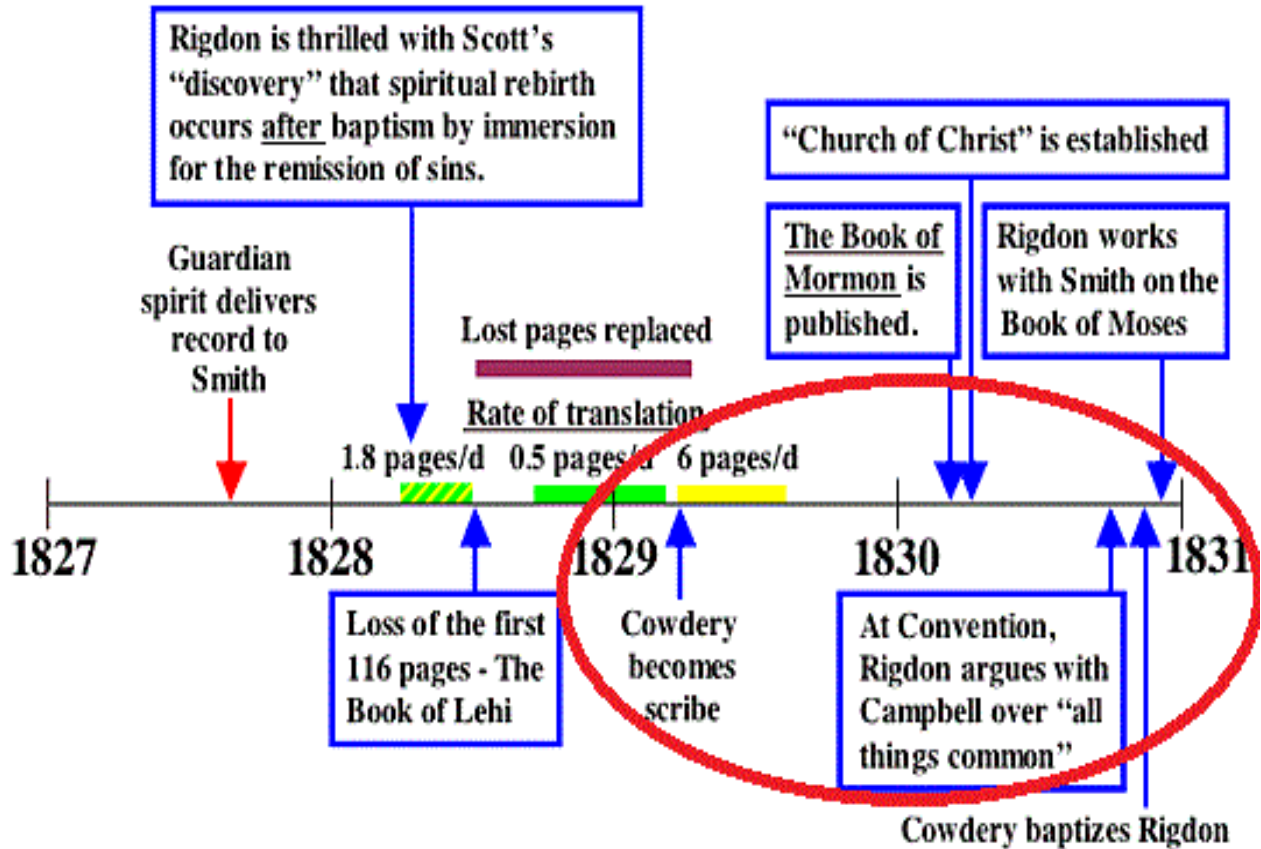
**" ‘Sidney Rigdon preached for us (at Mantua), and notwithstanding his extravagantly wild freaks, he was held in high repute by many’ (Hayden, p. 239). These extravagant proceedings on the part of Rigdon were, possibly, entirely in order & seldom the topic of criticism, as long as he was a member of the Disciple community. In brief words, the praise of Rigdon was in all the churches of his sect. Besides preaching at Mentor, Rigdon was called in January 1827 to serve the church at Mantua, whose members resided in townships of Hiram, Nelson and Mantua, in Portage county (Hayden, [p.237-8](#)). In August 1827 he attended the Mahoning Association, according to his custom for many years (Hayden, [p.57](#)). In the following October he was one of the ordaining council who laid their holy hands upon the subsequently distinguished Marcus Bosworth at Bracevill (Hayden, p.137). The foundations of the Shalersville (Disciple) church were established by Thomas Campbell and himself in the month of May 1828 (Hayden, pp. 155-6, cf. p. 334).”**

**“When the Mahoning Association was convened at Warren in the last days of August 1823, Mr. Rigdon was recognized as one of its shining heroes. Hayden gives him a place among the honored seniors, along with such names as Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander, and Walter Scott (p.163). Although the last-named worthy had been denouncing throughout the previous year in many portions of the Western Reserve the "hireling clergy" of the other denominations (Debate Between Campbell & Obediah Jennings, p.252), he was himself during that entire period the ‘hireling’ of the Mahoning Association, and the body was now engaged in the transaction of ‘hiring’ him a second time.**

**Threesome.** During the progress of the next year Rigdon labored with almost as much diligence as Scott or any other ‘proclaimer’ in advancing the interests of the Disciples. The foundations of the church at Waite Hill in the vicinity of Willoughby were laid by his hands at this time (Hayden, p.204). Likewise, ‘the church of Christ in Perry was organized by S. Rigdon, August 7th, 1829’ (Hayden, p.346). In the Autumn of that year he established the church at Euclid (Hayden, p.409). The church at Birmingham in Erie county (Hayden, p.465k); Elyria in Loraine county (Hayden, p.467); and the church at Hamden in Geauga county, were each originated through his labors in the year 1829. It was no idle boast on his part when halting at Warren in September 1830 he remarked to a brother whom he encountered there: ‘I have done as much in this reformation as Campbell or Scott.’ He was looking only on the dark side of things when to the above he added: ‘and yet they get all the honor of it’ (Hayden, p.299). In point of fact, it would appear that Rigdon was by his sect esteemed among the foremost. There was not a breath of suspicion or of reproach against him in any quarter.”

**“THE REASON THEY WERE CALLED CAMPBELLITES, WAS IN CONSEQUENCE OF MR. CAMPBELL’S PUBLISHING THE *CHRISTIAN BAPTIST*, AND IT BEING THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH THEY COMMUNICATED THEIR SENTIMENTS TO THE WORLD; OTHER THAN THIS, MR. CAMPBELL WAS NO MORE THE ORIGINATOR OF THAT SECT THAN ELDER RIGDON.”**

**- AUTOBIOGRAPHY**





# **Disagreement:** **Ancient Order**

**GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT AND MIRACLES:** In 1824, writing again under the pen name "Theophilus", Rigdon declared:

Here [in the Primitive Christian Church] all was evident, certain, and satisfactory; founded upon a divine testimony, divinely attested; God himself, by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness to the truth and certainty of every item of the faith and obedience inculcated. Here was nothing of human authority -- nothing of the opinions or inventions of men. No contested propositions to be first proved by human reasonings, and then to be believed or practiced by the disciples who acknowledged apostolic authority. But how is it now! Surely the very reverse. Alas! when will it be so again? Never, surely, until the professors of Christianity return to the original standard of Christianity. (*The Christian Baptist*, Vol II (No. 5), Dec 6, 1824. See: [Link is here.](#))

As noted by Whitsitt,

**Mr. Rigdon confidently affirmed that Christianity would never be "restored" until the power of speaking with tongues and working all kinds of miracles was also restored.** (See: [Link is here.](#))



The above differences between Rigdon and Campbell were publicly debated, but the following less public differences on authority and the Old Testament are also noteworthy because they distinguish Rigdon's views from those of Campbell prior to 1830.

**AUTHORITY:** Like other Protestants, Campbell saw religious authority as derived from the Bible. There was no need for a special call from God. Rigdon believed that authority came via a revelation from God.

Under the pen name "Theophilus" in *The Christian Baptist*, he argued:

Here [in the Primitive Church] all was evident, certain, and satisfactory; founded upon a divine testimony, divinely attested; God himself, by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness to the truth and certainty of every item of the faith and obedience inculcated. Here was nothing of human authority -- nothing of the opinions or inventions of men. No contested propositions to be first proved by human reasonings, and then to be believed or practiced by the disciples who acknowledged apostolic authority. But how is it now! Surely the very reverse. (See: [Link is here.](#))

**RELEVANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:** To Campbell, the Old Testament was the scripture of the Mosaic Dispensation, and was not relevant to the Christian Dispensation, except as referenced in the New Testament.

Prior to 1830, Rigdon viewed the gospel of the New Testament as a continuation of the gospel of the Old Testament. Speaking in the third person, Rigdon described his own preaching in Mentor, OH, around 1826:

Not only did the writings of the New Testament occupy his [Rigdon's] attention, but those of the ancient prophets, particularly those prophecies which had reference to the present and to the future, were brought up to review and threw new light on the sacred volume, particularly those prophecies which so deeply interest this generation and which had been entirely overlooked, or mystified by the religious world -- cleared up scriptures which had heretofore appeared inexplicable, and delighted his astonished audience with things "new and old" -- literal fulfillment of prophecy, the gathering of Israel in the last days, the situation of the world at the coming of the Son of Man. (*Times and Seasons*, Vol IV, No. 12, May 1, 1843. See: [Link is here.](#)) - *Craig Criddle*

**He could not perceive any reason why the "ancient order of things" in respect to spiritual gifts and miracles should not be restored** as well in respect to the weekly observance of the supper, the plurality of elders, and the keeping of Sunday not as a Sabbath but merely as the Lord's Day.

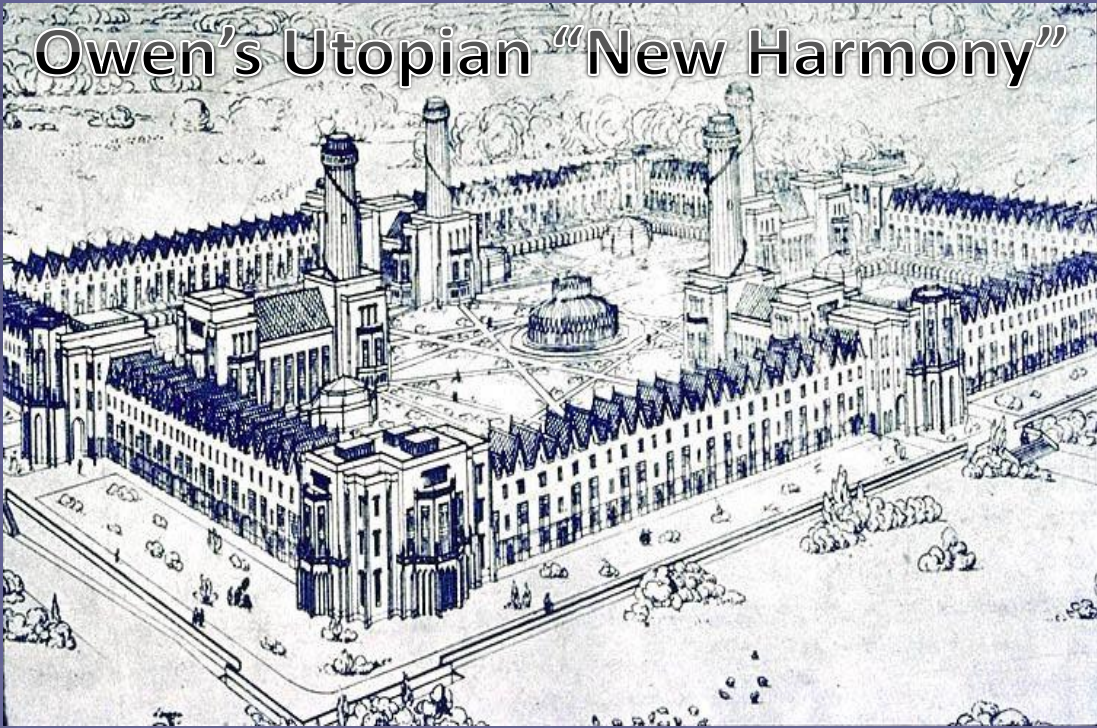
These supernatural gifts had ceased, **but the fault lay solely at the door of the Christian community** who had lost the strength and fervor of the primitive faith. If this fervor were once restored it would be perfectly in order for men of modern days to perform miracles. In that case the dissimilarity then existing between the "Former Day Saints" on the one part and the "Latter Day Saints" on the other, would be completely obviated. The "ancient order" will never be renewed in the earth until these phenomena of the apostolic age should become as common among us as in the earlier portions of the Christian era. — *Craig Criddle*

**MAJOR DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT ON WHETHER RESTORING THE ANCIENT ORDER INCLUDED THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS DID NOT ACTUALLY DIVIDE UNTIL THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.**

**WHAT FIRST DIVIDED THE MOVEMENT IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WAS WHETHER THE ACTS 2: 45 CONGREGATIONAL COLLECTIVISM WAS CATEGORICALLY OF A CIRCUMSTANTIAL EXCEPTION OR AN ASPIRATIONAL EXAMPLE.**

**THUS, IT WAS REASONABLE IN THE MIND OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL TO THINK WHEN HE ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE TO DEBATE THE FAMOUS UTOPIAN HUMANIST ROBERT OWEN IN 1829 THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO PUT THIS CONTROVERSY TO REST.**

**EVEN THOUGH THIS FRONTPAGE DEBATE PROVIDED CAMPBELL CELEBRITY STATUS NATIONALLY – INTERNALLY IT ONLY MADE MATTERS WORSE. SADLY, SIDNEY RIGDON ESSENTIALLY AGREED WITH ROBERT OWEN.**



THE  
**EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY**  
A DEBATE  
BETWEEN  
ROBERT OWEN, OF NEW LANARK, SCOTLAND  
AND  
ALEXANDER CAMPBELL, PRESIDENT OF BETHANY  
COLLEGE, VA.  
CONTAINING AN  
**EXAMINATION OF THE "SOCIAL SYSTEM"**  
AND ALL THE SYSTEMS OF SKEPTICISM OF  
ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES

**Held in the City of Cincinnati, Ohio, in April, 1829**

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COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME

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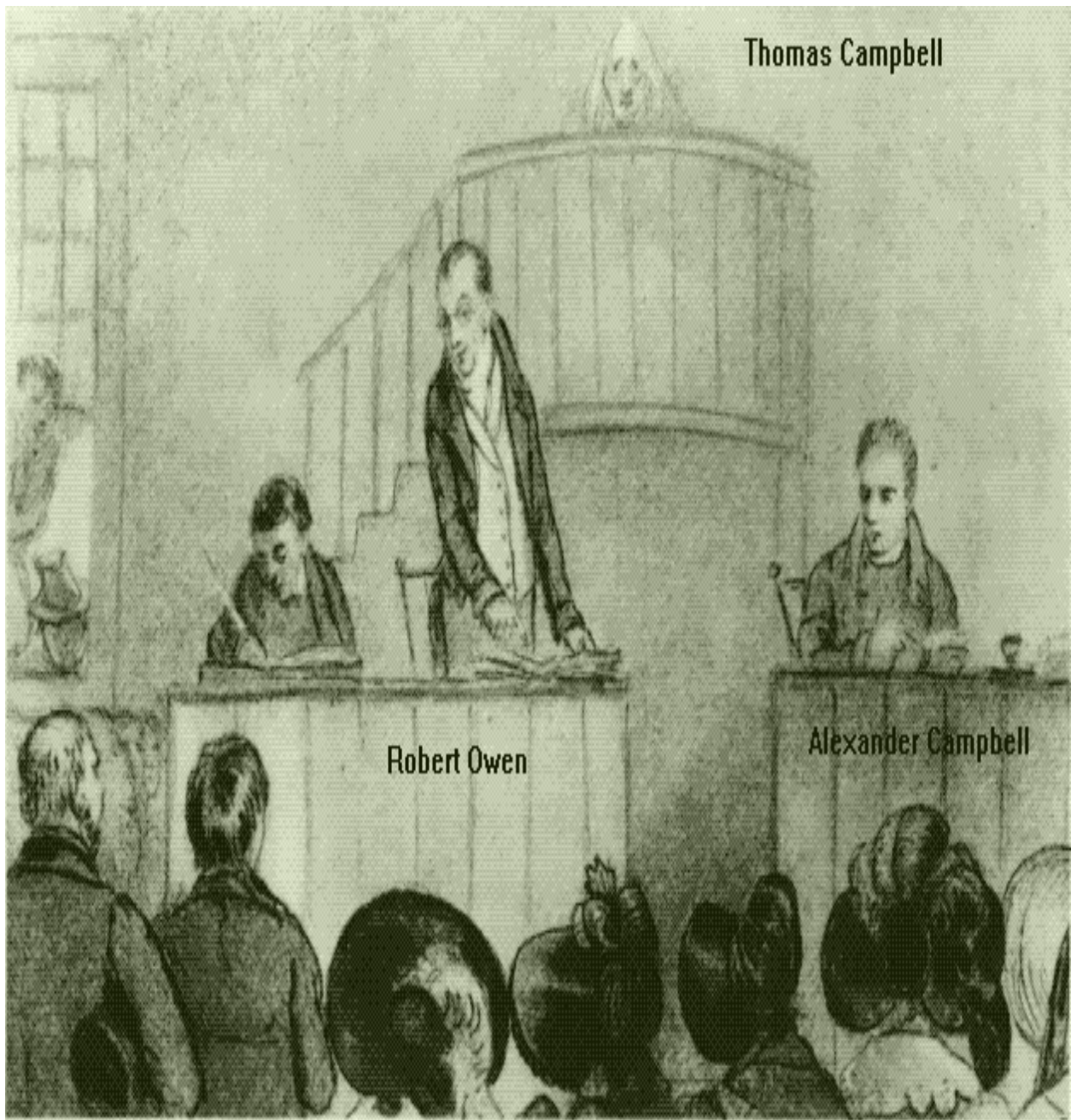
What then is unbelief? 'Tis an exploit,  
A strenuous enterprise. To gain it, man  
Must burst through every bar of common sense,  
Of common shame magnanimously wrong!  
-----Who most examine, most believe;  
Parts, like half sentences, confound,  
Read His whole volume, Skeptic, then reply!--YOUNG

O Lord of Hosts ! blessed is the man that trusteth in thee!--DAVID

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## **Campbell Accepts Owen Debate Challenge:**

**The Methodist Hall was chosen as the venue and by 9 a.m. on Monday the 13<sup>th</sup> of April over one thousand people had packed in, no doubt hoping for fireworks. Owen spoke gently and calmly, smiling charmingly at the audience. Campbell was made of sterner stuff. He punched relentlessly at Owen's theories of human nature and his plans for utopian settlements, then he hammered home his message of the Gospel Truth, all backed up with a barrage of Bible references. The debate resumed next morning, and for six more days after that. At one point Campbell was on his feet for 12 hours. Even Owen had met his match. After the final points had been made, the audience – all 1,000 apparently still present – were invited to vote on whether they would continue in their Christian support: 997 of 1,000 went with Campbell. - p.177ff, Paradise, K. Rushby**



VIII DEBATE BETWEEN OWEN AND CAMPBELL



In the Robert Owen debate, Mr. Campbell felt that he had met a worthy opponent. Mr. Owen was a Scotch freethinker, who came to America to establish a community in accordance with his social views; all religion was to be excluded. He preached a crusade against Christianity. He challenged any clergyman to meet him in debate, and was [449] about to sail for Europe announcing that no minister in the New World dared to meet him in debate. The challenge fell under the eye of Alexander Campbell, and he promptly accepted it.

The debate was held at Cincinnati. Men went hundreds of miles to attend it. The debate was afterwards published. While it was being prepared for publication, Mr. Owen was the guest of Mr. Campbell at Bethany. One day, while walking in the fields together, Mr. Owen turned and said to Mr. Campbell: "I have one advantage over the Christian." "What is that?" "I am not afraid of death," responded Mr. Owen; "Once I had a few business affairs arranged, I could lie down and die without a fear." "Have you any hope in death?" asked Mr. Campbell. "No, sir; I think that death is the end & I am without hope or fear in death." "Do you see that ox?" said Mr. Campbell. "It has filled itself with the grass of the meadow, and now stands in the shade of the tree, without fear and without hope in death. Tell me, what does infidelity do to elevate a man above the beasts?"

During the debate Mr. Owen read his theses, nearly two hundred pages of folio. To this manuscript he adhered through the discussion. He laid down twelve laws of human nature, upon which he built a "Social System." Nothing Mr. Campbell could say could divert him from his manuscript, and his twelve laws of human nature. He had his say; the "gems" from "his casket" were shown for the eight days of this debate.

The debate seemed to be proceeding upon parallel lines which never would meet. When Mr. Owen had finished his manuscript, he sat down and gave the time to Mr. Campbell. He, without an opponent to reply, spoke for twelve hours on Christian evidences, the longest speech on record.

- Benjamin Smith, *The Millennial Harbinger Abridged*, (1902) pages 447-450

Alexander Campbell to Robert Owen:

*“No social compact has yet existed nor will one succeed without the principle of individual responsibility, obligation, and accountability...”*

*Pure Christianity aims not to reform the world by a system of legal restraint, however excellent. But its immediate object is to implant in the human heart a principle of love.*

*Here is the grand secret...  
The religion of Jesus Christ melts the hearts of men into pure philanthropy.”*

**“The Communal theories of Robert Owen, a wealthy Scottish reformer & industrialist, profoundly affected Sidney Rigdon. Owen was known throughout Europe and America as a philanthropist and humanitarian, a radical social reformer, and militant atheist. [After the debate] Rigdon, taken with Owen’s system of ‘family commonwealths,’ returned to Mentor, convinced that a ‘common-stock’ society as outlined in Acts 2: 44-45, should be implemented among parishioners. The two leaders he convinced in February 1830 to put his communitarian ideas in motion were future Mormons Lyman Wight and Isaac Morley. Morley, who owned a large farm near Kirkland, three miles from Mentor, offered his farm for the collective experiment. Morley and Wight, along with Titus Billings and three other families, covenanted with each other to renounce private property & share all goods. They called their order the ‘Family’ or the ‘Big Family’ after Owen’s concept of ‘family commonwealth.’ By October 1830 the group numbered more than 100 individuals.”**

**– Richard Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess***

# **Disagreement:** **Communalism**

His heart's delight moreover, was fixed upon the church at Kirtland; apparently Disciples of that band were obedient to his slightest wish, and exhibited in many regards a kind of model of his ideas respecting the organization and the life of a Christian church.

The date is uncertain, but it was possibly during the year 1828 that he concluded to restore the "ancient order" in the matter of a community of goods [also known as the *common stock system*]. The Kirtland church were ready to try the experiment under his direction. Mr. Isaac Morley, who figures many years later in the capacity of a "Patriarch" in Salt Lake City (Burton, *City of the Saints*, N.Y. 1862, p.303 & 307) became the head of the family, which was composed of seventeen persons (Hayden, p.211).

It is believed that everywhere he went Rigdon was swift to defend and to commend this venture on the part of his brethren at Kirtland. When the Mahoning Association convened at Austintown in August 1830, he went before the assembly on the Saturday of its session with a formal address to show that it was not merely the privilege but also the duty of Disciples to observe the "ancient order" "laying all one's possessions down at the Apostle's feet." The situation of affairs was evidently serious.

**In a new religious community, where the formative state was not get completed, one of the foremost teachers had allowed himself to advocate the custom of common life and property as apostolical; and in one of the most flourishing churches of the fraternity it was already introduced to supply example and a temptation for all the other churches. Campbell, who was present, perceived the peril which threatened himself & his cause. Rising up promptly in the midst of the company, he resisted with decision the propositions of Rigdon, and strove to show that community of goods was not a feature of the Christian life of the first church that was established at Jerusalem. Rigdon was not contented; a debate ensued in which Campbell conceived to secure the applause of the multitude, whether by just arguments or by the artifices of rhetoric, in which he was a far more practiced adept than his opponent chanced to be. Rigdon turned away crestfallen but not convinced, and never came again to visit the public assemblies of his brethren. – *Craig Criddle***

**“But even the more stable Campbell, convinced the Millennium was in dawning, had during the Cincinnati debate connected Owen’s social ideal with his own concept of Millennium. He suggested that God was using the British philanthropist to hasten that glorious day. In anticipation, in 1830 he [Campbell] changed the name of his periodical from *Christian Baptist* to the *Millennial Harbinger*.”**

– Richard Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*

## **Was Sidney Rigdon Grooming The Restoration Movement For Joseph Smith & Mormonism?**

### **Rigdon Preached "Gathering of Israel" America Fulfilled:**

**Millennial Harbinger Quote:** "Chap. xvi. verse 16. 'Behold I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.' From this last expression it is possible the ten tribes are now in some of the high and yet unexplored table lands of central and northern Asia, or they may be the American Indians; at all events, there are many portions of this globe the geography of which is but inadequately understood. Let Infidelity look to this, and be afraid; let Scepticism and Atheism hide their diminished heads when the Lord does this great miracle before men." (June, 1830)

**"This millennial craze did the Disciples much injury, especially in the circumstance that it prepared the minds of numbers of their communicants to give a favorable reception to Joseph Smith, and to think with more regard than was becoming upon the literal "gathering" of the faithful to Zion, an idea with which the Book of Mormon, and all other Mormon literature is crowded to repletion. Hayden says concerning this subject that "Rigdon, who always caught and proclaimed the last word that fell from the lips of Scott or Campbell, seized these views and with the wildness of his extravagant nature, heralded them everywhere (p.186). But from the extensive place occupied by the topic in the Book of Mormon as edited by Sidney Rigdon, we are bound to conclude that he was inoculated with this unhappy madness at the time when himself & Scott were fellow elders of the Sandemanian church in Pittsburgh. The fact that the latter was already at this early period infected with a millennial malady may be concluded from the circumstance that upon his removal to Steubenville he had made all his preparations to issue the "Millennial Herald," when he was unexpectedly called away to serve the Mahoning Association as their missionary" (Rich., [II:173](#)). – William Whitsitt**

## Rigdon Carried Advance Copies of the Book of Mormon:

Sidney Rigdon, a wolf in Campbellite preacher's clothing, already had the Spaulding manuscript (future Book of Mormonism) in 1823 when he offered to ride 300 miles on horseback with Alexander Campbell to the Campbell-McCalla debates in Kentucky, where he also served as the debate's "recorder". He was a mole from the start. He wanted to pick Alexander Campbell's brain! This explains many Restoration-themed similarities between the two great American religious movements of the time. He had already been hinting in his sermons to get ready for some exciting new "direct revelations" from God... *CH Presentation*

Said Darwin Atwater, a Patriarch in the Disciples Church at Mantua:  
That he [Rigdon] knew before of the coming of The Book of Mormon is to me certain, from what he said the first of his visits to my father's some years before [at about the close of January 1827]." "He gave a wonderful description of the mounds and other antiquities found in some parts of America, and said they must have been made by the aborigines. He said there was a book to be published containing an account of those things. He spoke of these in his eloquent, enthusiastic style as being a thing most extraordinary.

Thomas Clapp said: Elder Adamson Bentley told me that as he was one day riding with Sidney Rigdon and conversing upon the Bible, Mr. Rigdon told him that another book of equal authority with the bible, as well authenticated and as ancient, which would give an account of the history of the Indian tribes on this continent, with many other things of great importance to the world, would soon be published. This was [two years] before Mormonism was ever heard of in Ohio, and when it appeared, the avidity with which Rigdon received it convinced him that if Rigdon was not the author of it he was at least acquainted with the whole matter some time before it was published to the world.

Samuel F. Whitney said:  
I heard Sidney Rigdon preach in Squire Sawyers' orchard in 1827 or '28. He said how desirable it would be to know who built the forts and mounds about the country. Soon it would all be revealed. He undoubtedly referred to the "Book of Mormon" which was published in 1830.

John Rudolph stated:  
For two years before The Book of Mormon appeared Rigdon's sermons were full of declarations and prophecies that the age of miracles would be restored, and more complete revelations, than those in the Bible, would be given. When The Book of Mormon appeared, all who heard him were satisfied that he referred to it.

Reuben P. Harmon said:  
I resided in Kirtland when the Mormons first arrived. I was personally acquainted with Rigdon... I heard [him] several times say in his sermons that before long the Indian mounds and forts about there would all be explained. **He caused a row of log houses to be built on Isaac Morley's farm and established a Communistic Society.** I heard Rigdon preach his first sermon at Kirtland Flats, and after he embraced Mormonism. He said that he had been preaching wrong doctrine and asked their forgiveness...



Was this “Grooming Interval” simply an applying of Alexander Campbell’s own advice from their first meeting?

Campbell added that ‘on parting next day, Sidney Rigdon, with all apparent candor, said, if he had within the last year taught and promulgated from the pulpit one error, he had a thousand,’ But Campbell warned them...

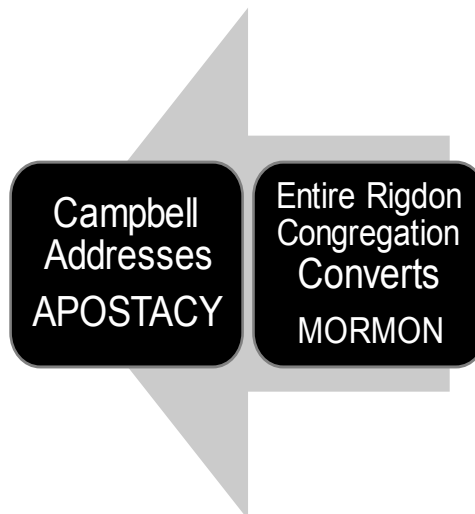
‘not to pull down anything they had built... fearing they might undo their influence with the people.’

– **Richard Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess***

**WITHIN MONTHS OF HIS LOSS OF LEADERSHIP STATUS WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN BAPTIST REFORM MOVEMENT HE OUTED HIMSELF WITH JOSEPH SMITH & BROUGHT ENTIRE CONGREGATIONS WITH HIM TO EARLY MORMONISM!**

“On their way to Missouri, Cowdery’s *New Jerusalem* party passed through northeastern Ohio, where Sidney Rigdon and over a hundred followers of his variety of Campbellite Restorationism converted to Mormonism, more than doubling the size of the *Mormon* church. Rigdon soon visited New York and quickly became Smith’s primary assistant.” - Wiki

1830



THE

## MILLENNIAL HARBINGER.

"MORMONISM -- *The Means by which it stole the True Gospel.*

"IT is well known that the Mormons preach the true gospel and plead for immediate obedience to it on the part of the hearers, as the advocates of original Christianity do. This was not an original measure of Mormonism; for, indeed, baptism for the remission of sins is a phrase not found in their book. A few of their leaders took it from Rigdon, at Euclid, on the Western Reserve, as may be learned from brother Jones' account of their first visit to Kirtland, published in a preceding volume of the *Evangelist*. Rigdon, we were perfectly aware, had possessed himself of our analysis of the gospel and the plea for obedience raised thereupon; but not, choosing to rely on my own recollection of the means by, and the times at, which they were imparted to him, we wrote to Mr. Bentley, who is his brother -in-law, for the necessary information. Mr. Bentley's letter shows not only whence he received his knowledge of the true gospel; but also that, coward that he was, he had not the independence necessary to preach it in his own vicinity after he had received it. Thus, knowledge of ordering and pleading the elements of the true gospel by that people, is seen to arise near the same time and from the same source as that of our own reformation."

THE

## MILLENNIAL HARBINGER.

Men remember what they *hear*, as well as what they *see*. Again, if men are said to "steal" what they see, may they not be said to "steal" what they hear? And if nothing short of seeing an action performed could explain this mystery, how comes the good Baptist Taylor to insert in his history of churches in Kentucky, writing about the time of the aforesaid conversation, the same views on this subject which are contained in the Book of Mormon? It is, therefore, no disparagement of these views of baptism that they are found in the Book of Mormon, more than that they are found in Taylor's History of Ten Baptist Churches in Kentucky, published three years before the Book of Mormon. But that **Sidney Rigdon** had a hand in the manufacture of the religious part of the Book of Mormon is clearly established from this fact, and from other expressions in that book, as certainly "stolen" from our brethren as that he once was amongst them. Our brother of the Evangelist seems on other occasions, as well as this, to draw conclusions.

## *Rigdon adopted much of Campbell's Theology:*

*(All of these ideas are found in the Book of Mormon.)*

- Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins
- Rejection of infant baptism and original sin
- The Great Apostacy
- Need for a restoration of the "ancient order of things"
- Restoration of Israel and conversion of the Jews
- Imminent millennial reign of Christ
- Spiritual rebirth comes from hearing God's word
- Sacrament meetings
- Self-supporting missionaries
- Elders set apart by the laying on of hands
- Speaking as if commissioned by Jesus Christ

S., A. "The Golden Bible, or, Campbellism Improved." *Observer and Telegraph* (Hudson, Ohio) (18 November 1830).

THE GOLDEN BIBLE, or, *Campbellism Improved*.

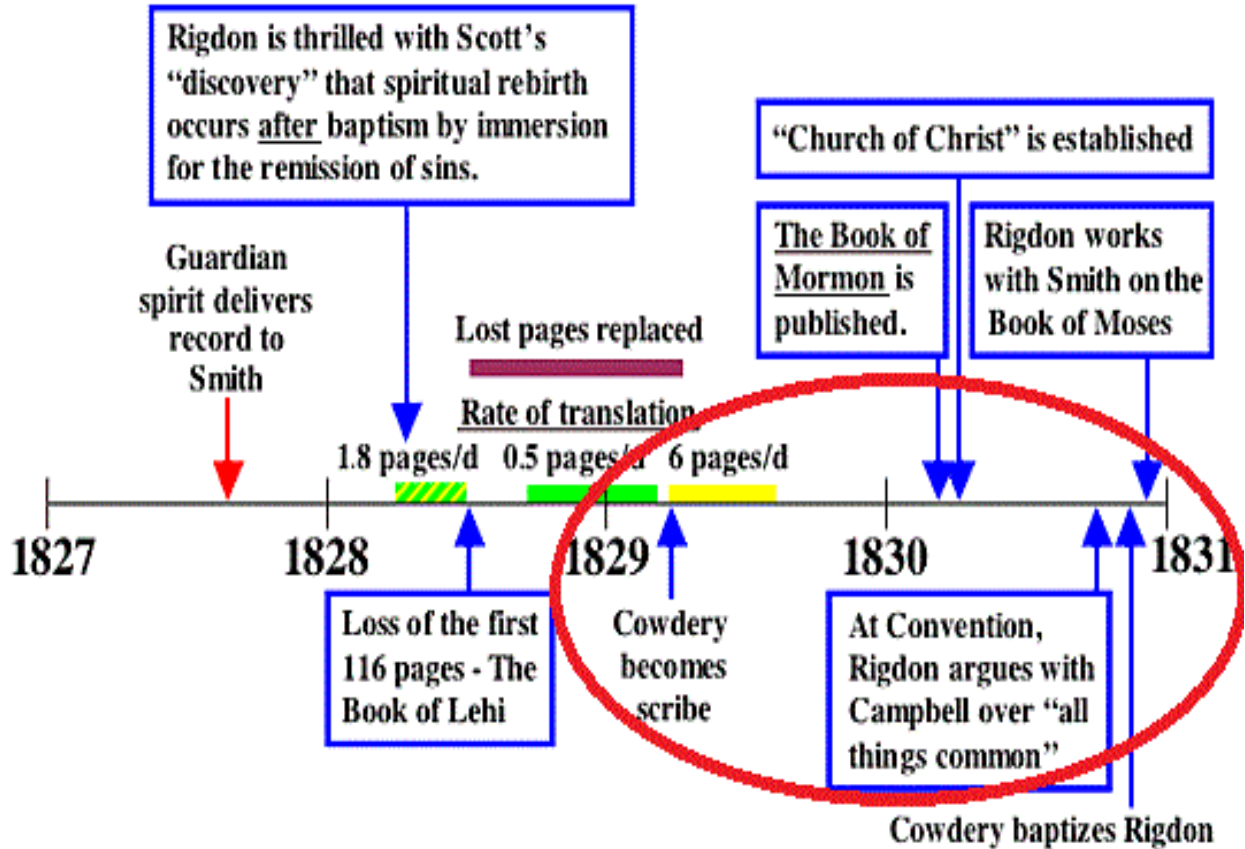
Mr. Isham. — For several days past, four individuals, said to have formerly resided in the State of New-York, have appeared in the northern part of Geauga County, assuming the appellation of Disciples, Prophets, and Angels. Some among us, however, are led to believe that they are nothing more than men, and impostors. They are preaching and teaching a species of Religion we are not all prepared to embrace; for we are convinced it does not accord with our old-fashioned Bible.

These men have brought with them copies of a Book, known in this region by the name of the "Golden Bible," or, as it is learned on its title-page, "The Book of Mormon." They solemnly affirm, that its contents were given by Divine inspiration; was written by prophets of the Most High from a period of 600 years before, to that of some hundred years after our blessed Saviour's advent; was deposited by Divine command below the surface of the ground, in or near the township of Palmyra, Ontario Co. N. Y.; that an Angel appeared to a certain Joseph Smith residing in that place, who, they say, was a poor, ignorant, illiterate man, and made no pretensions to religion of any kind; — [original text illegible] . . . of this sacred deposit, and directed him forthwith to dig up and bring to light this precious record and prophecy. They affirm that the said Smith obeyed the heavenly messenger, when lo! a new Revelation—the Golden Bible was discovered!

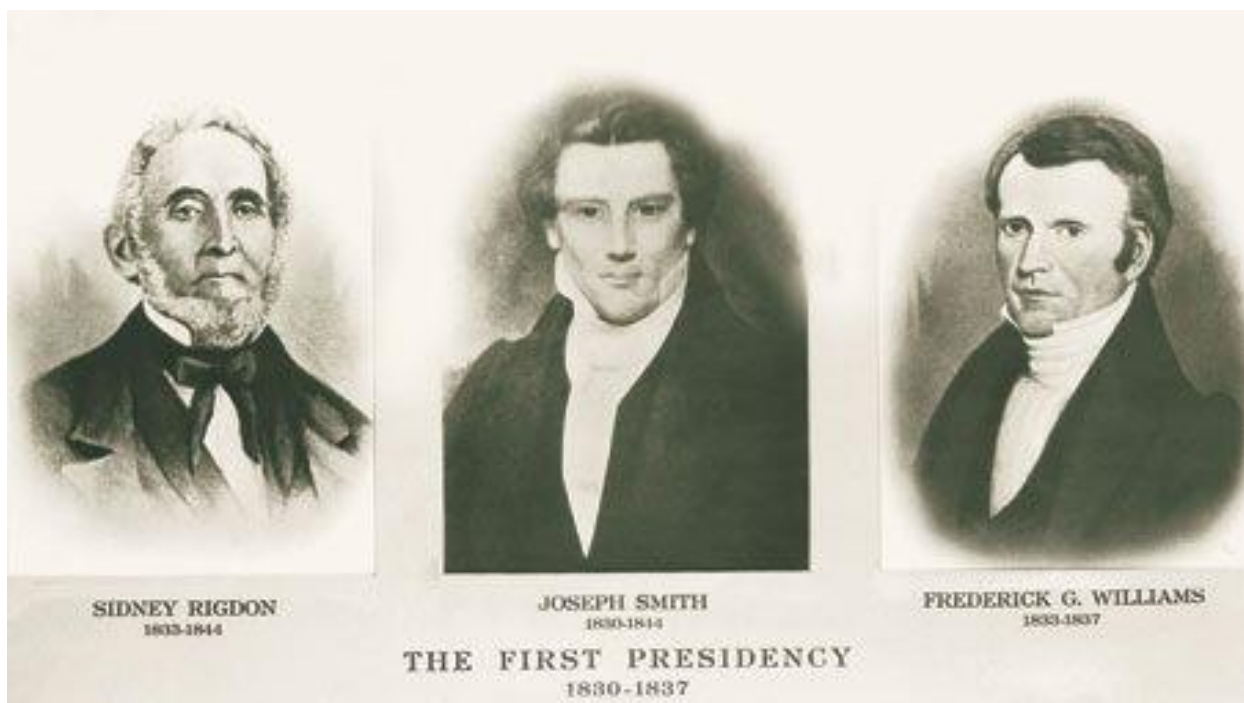
According to the narrative given by one of these disciples—Oliver Cowdery—at their late exhibition in Kirtland, this pretended Revelation was written on golden plates, or something resembling golden plates, of the thickness of tin—7 inches in length, 6 inches in breadth, and a pile about 6 inches deep. None among the most learned in the United States could read, and interpret the hand-writing, (save one, and he could decipher but a few lines correctly,) excepting this ignoramus, Joseph Smith, Jr. To him, they say, was given the spirit of interpretation; but he was ignorant of the art of writing, he employed this Oliver Cowdery and others to write, while he read, interpreted, and translated this mighty Revelation.

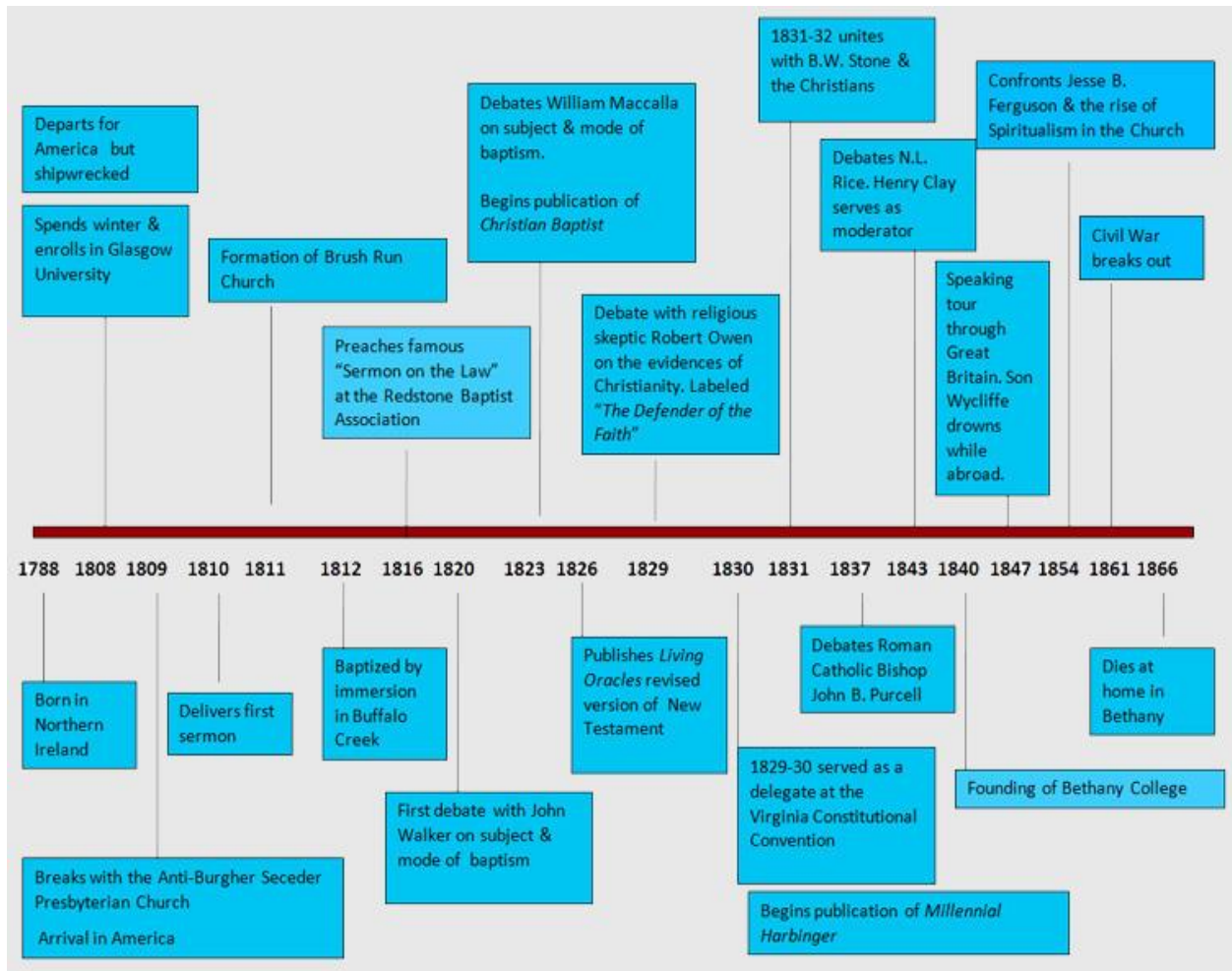
It appears from the testimony of these men, that while this process was going on, some of their mischievous, meddling neighbors, having a miserly disposition, stole some of their plates of gold before they gave them sufficient time to translate them, and as they have not yet been recovered, they fear a part of this great Revelation will be lost to our race. There were other plates among them, they say, which contained secrets which are not yet to be revealed. These escaped from them by some mysterious dispensation of Providence, they know not how, or in what region they are secreted, but as they are to be forthcoming at the proper time, to some future generation, they appear to manifest no particular uneasiness with regard to them.

To convince the world that this record and prophecy is a Divine Revelation, three men, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, have subscribed their names to an article in this "Book of Mormon," solemnly declaring that they saw an Angel come down from heaven, who showed them those plates, and made known to them it was given by inspiration, and "they



## THE NEW MORMON THREESOME:





## *Presbyterian Seceders Intermediate Affiliation*

**Baptists**

**AD 1830**

**Churches of Christ**

Mahoning Association Expels  
Thomas & Alexander Campbell.

This was one of two historical marks that  
began the American Churches of Christ.

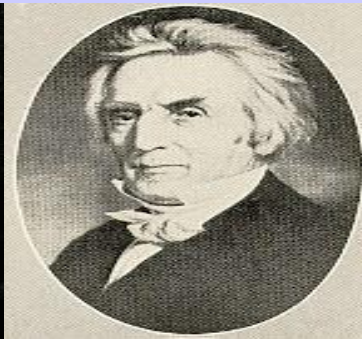
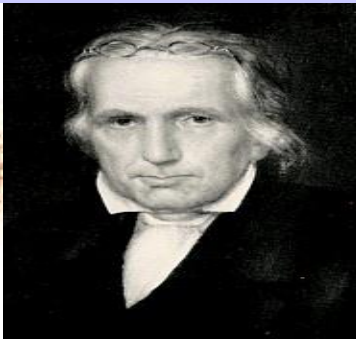
# REVIVALISM JOINS WITH RATIONALISM

## 1831 RESTORATION MOVEMENT MERGE:

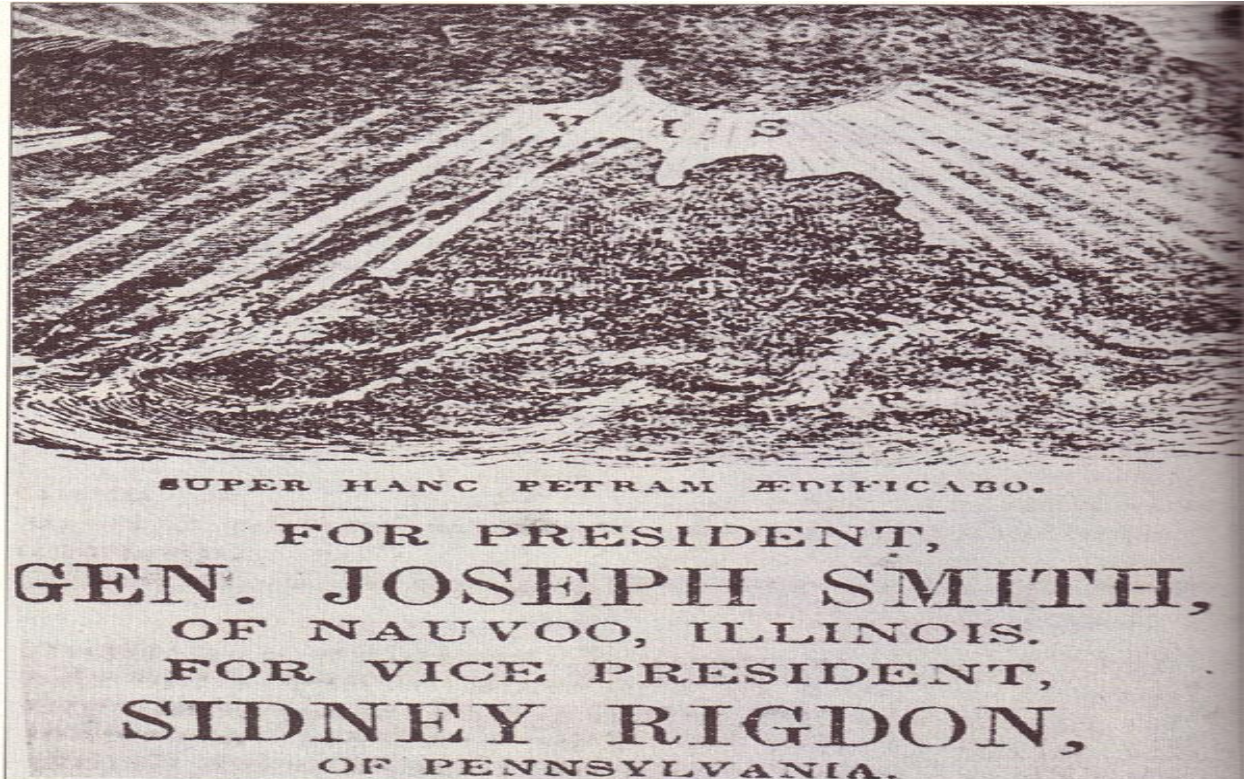


## THE NEW RESTORATION THREESOME:

STONE – CAMPBELLS  
RESTORATION MOVEMENT







## **1844 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOSEPH SMITH THE FIRST ASSASSINATED U.S.A.POTUS CANDIDATE**

“1844 presidential election was a very close race. Illinois could very well have held the balance of power in the electoral college to determine whether the Whigs or the Democrats won. It was a very close race in Illinois with a balance of power resting squarely in the hands of Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints.

There was friction between both major political parties and the Latter-day Saints. When Joseph Smith decided to run for the presidency, he did so primarily to make his views known and to bring the plight of the Latter-day Saints, particularly as to the state confiscation of the Saints property in Missouri, to the public spotlight. Both the Democrats and the Whigs feared that he would sway the electoral votes in Illinois, and perhaps other states. Probably no one since Joseph Smith up until the candidacy of Ross Perot did any thirdparty candidate hold so much power. All of that may be very interesting, but the bottom line is that Joseph Smith was, indeed, the first presidential candidate assassinated while running for office.”

**POSTSCRIPT: WHEN JOSEPH SMITH DIED - SIDNEY RIGDON LOST TO BRIGHAM YOUNG IN A POWER STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS; AFTERWARDS, RIGDON, ONCE DESIGNATED "JOHN THE BAPTIST" TO THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH - LEFT WITH THOUSANDS OF MORMONS TO ESTABLISH HIS OWN CONCEPT OF THE ANCIENT ORDER CHURCH OF CHRIST.**

**THE**  
**MILLENNIAL HARBINGER.**

**DEATH OF J. SMITH, THE MORMON IMPOSTOR.**

JOSEPH SMITH and his brother HIRAM have been providentially cut off in the midst of their diabolical career. They were most lawlessly and mobocratically put to death. One of the antediluvian signs of the times was, that "the earth was filled with violence." From Boston and Philadelphia to New Orleans this land is filled with violence; and, analogically reasoning, some great catastrophe is coming upon the world. There is no law of sufficient authority in the hands of this government to preserve peace and safety in this country. The sword of the magistrate is worn in vain.

But the money-digger, the juggler, and the founder of the Golden Bible delusion, has been hurried away in the midst of his madness to his final account. 'He died not as a righteous man dieth.' The hand of the Lord was heavy upon him. An outlaw himself, God cut him off by outlaws. He requited him according to his works. He was not *persecuted*, unless to punish a traitor, a public plunderer, a marauder, be persecution! The killing of Robespierre was not murder. It was the outrages of the Mormons that brought upon the head of their leader the arm of justice. The phrenzy of a fanatic cannot make out of the affair persecution, Religion or religious opinions had nothing to do with it. It was neither more nor less than the assassination of one whose career was in open rebellion against God and man. Still the guilt of his death lies upon those who, in violation of the laws both of God and their country, dispatched him without even the form of a trial.

A. C.

**THE**  
**MILLENNIAL HARBINGER.**

**MORMON CHURCH EXTINCT.**

The melancholy catastrophe of the murder of Joseph Smith, the presiding President, and Hyrum his brother, resulted in leaving one individual only known to the church as pointed out by repeated revelations, as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator for the Church -- viz. Sidney Rigdon. President Rigdon, who was then in Pittsburg, received instruction from the Lord to repair to this place, and present himself to the church for their acceptance or rejection; which actually did result in his rejection, and the appointment of the Twelve (by a large majority of the church) to the presidency of the whole church and its entire control. Verily believing as we do, that this was a vital departure from the order of Heaven, and a rejection of the only man who sustained the legal relation of a Revelator to the Church, and who was competent to reorganize the first Presidency, we dissented and lifted our voices against such proceedings, and manifested our adherence to President Rigdon.

In consequence of this rejection, President Rigdon has received a commandment to reorganize the church; and for this reason the Twelve and their adherents have assiduously studied and striven to misrepresent the character and designs of President Rigdon and his friends, and have not scrupled to ascribe to them motives and designs the most base and dishonorable. We do declare that President Rigdon is above all malevolent aspersions of his reputation, and is known to us as a worthy law abiding citizen, and a gentleman of unblemished character.

We do, moreover, declare our sincere conviction, that, in rejecting Sidney Rigdon, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints does no longer exist, except in connexion with him; and that God has given no authority for an organization of the church, differing from that contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. Heretofore the accused has had the privilege of a trial and an opportunity to reply to the charges brought against them; but on the memorable 8th of September, 1844, this privilege was denied in open and flagrant violation of all the laws and rules of the church; thus manifesting clearly that the course they pursued towards us is one unsanctioned by law and unallowed by justice.

## PART 2: BOOK OF MORMON AUTHORSHIP

### To the Public.

**T**HE undersigned Committee appointed by a public meeting held in Kirtland, Geauga co. Ohio, for the purpose of ascertaining the origin of the Book of MORMON, would say to the Public, that when met as directed by said meeting, it became a subject of deliberation whether the committee without violating the spirit of that instrument which declares that "no human authority can in any case whatever control or interfere with the rights of conscience" could take measures to avert the evils which threaten the Public by the location in this vicinity, of Joseph Smith Jun. otherwise known as the Mormon Prophet—and who is now, under pretence of Divine Authority, collecting about him an impoverished population, alienated in feeling from other portions of the community, thereby threatening us with an insupportable weight of pauperism. The committee were of opinion that the force of truth ought without delay to be applied to the Book of Mormon, and the character of Joseph Smith, Jun. With this object in view, the Committee employed D. P. Hurlbut to ascertain the real origin of the Book of Mormon, and to examine the validity of Joseph Smith's claims to the character of a Prophet. The result of this enquiry so far as it has proceeded has been partially laid before the public in this vicinity by Mr. Hurlbut—and the Committee are now making arrangements for the *Publication and extensive circulation* of a work which will prove the "*Book of Mormon*" to be a work of *fiction and imagination*, and written more than twenty years ago, in Salem, Ashtabusia County, Ohio, by Solomon Spalding, Esq. and completely divest Joseph Smith of all claims to the character of an honest man, and place him at an immeasurable distance from the high station which he pretends to occupy.

O. A. CRARY	JOSIAH JONES.
AMOS DANIELS.	WARREN CORNING Jr.
JOHN F. MORSE.	JAMES H. PAINE.
SAMUEL WILSON.	JOS. H. WAKEFIELD.
SYLVESTER CORNWELL.	
TIMOTHY D. MARTINDALE.	

Kirtland, Geauga Co. Ohio.

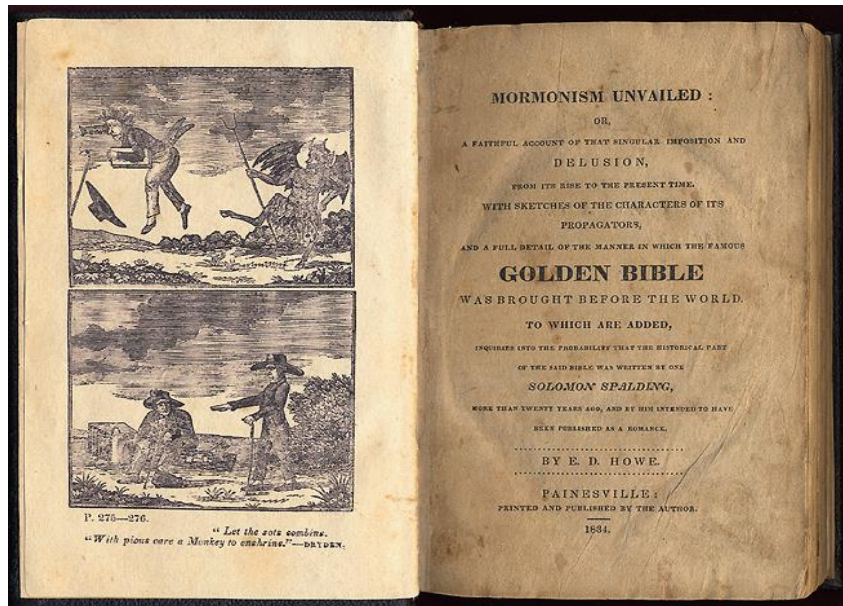
“The only diversity that appeared was a difference of opinion as to how far it might be wise to apply this principle. Rigdon was clear in the judgment that they should "speak where the scriptures speak" in respect to the matter of "spiritual gifts," while Mr. Campbell was of the opinion that this task should not be attempted, Another point may be cited in which the influence of Mr. Campbell upon Rigdon was very manifest. During the month of March 1825, when Campbell had already become inflated with the idea that he was a Reformer, it occurred to his mind that it would be seemly for him to follow the fashion of other great Reformers in respect to the business of translating the Scriptures. He says (C.B., p. 136).

Two remarkable facts in the history of the first translators of the scriptures are worthy of particular notice. The first is that all who attained to the honor of first reformers attempted to give a translation of the scriptures in the vulgar tongue of the people they (led) to reform. Peter Waldus, A.D. 1160, attempted a translation of the four Gospels into the French language. John Wickliffe, A.D. 1367, translated the New Testament into English, Martin Luther gave a translation of the Bible into German. Olivetan translated into French, and Buza, the friend and companion of Calvin, rendered the New Testament into Latin."

In order that he might stand with honor in the ranks of these men he shortly afterwards sent forth a translation of the New Testament, but as his own "erudition" was not equal to the task he was content with the ridiculous spectacle of republishing the translations which George Campbell of Edinburgh, and Doddridge and Macknight had made of separate portions of the book which were merely combined by himself into one whole.

Immediately after the date when Rigdon had publicly signified his adhesion to the Mormon movement, he too aspired like his old Master to stand in the ranks of the mighty Reformers, and it was one of the earliest cares of his new estate to produce a translation of the Bible. In company with Joseph Smith he submitted himself with the liveliest devotion to the task, which in due course of time and struggle was completed, but the work was not published in full until a period of years had elapsed. No *Reformer* could afford to pass away without leaving a legacy of this sort for the benefit of mankind.” - W. Whitsitt

**Concluding Chapter of “Mormonism Unveiled” published in 1834:**



“Here, then, our enquiries after facts partially cease, on this subject. We have fully shown the Book of Mormon is joint production of Solomon

Spalding and **some other designing knave**, or if it is what it purports to be, the Lord God has graciously condescended, in revealing to Smith his will, through spectacles, to place before him and appropriate to his own use, the writings and names of men which had been invented by a person long before in the grave.

**MORMONISM.****289**

Having established the fact, therefore, that most of the names and leading incidents contained in the Mormon bible, originated with Solomon Spalding, it is not very material, as we conceive, to show the way and manner by which they fell into the hands of the Smith family. To do this, however, we have made some enquiries.

It was inferred at once that some light might be shed upon this subject, and the mystery revealed, by applying to Patterson & Lambdin, in Pittsburgh. But here again death had interposed a barrier. That establishment was dissolved and broken up many years since, and Lambdin died about eight years ago. Mr. Patterson says he has no recollection of any such manuscript being brought there for publication, neither would he have been likely to have seen it, as the business of printing was conducted wholly by Lambdin at that time. He says, however, that many M. S. books and pamphlets were brought to the office about that time, which remained upon their shelves for years, without being printed or even examined. Now, as Spalding's book can nowhere be found, or anything heard of it after being carried to this establishment, there is the strongest presumption that it remained there in seclusion, till about the year 1823 or '24, at which time *Sidney Rigdon* located himself in

that city. We have been credibly informed that he was on terms of intimacy with Lambdin, being seen frequently in his shop. **Rigdon resided in Pittsburgh** about three years, and during the whole of that time, as he has since frequently asserted, abandoned preaching and all other employment, for the purpose of *studying the bible*. He left there and came into the county where he now resides, about the time Lambdin died, and commenced preaching some new points of doctrine, which were afterwards found to be inculcated in the Mormon Bible. He resided in this vicinity about four years previous to the appearance of the book, during which time he made several long visits to Pittsburgh, and perhaps to the Susquehannah, where Smith was then digging for money, or pretending to be translating plates. It may be observed also, that about the time **Rigdon** left Pittsburgh, the Smith family began to tell about finding a book that would contain a history of the first



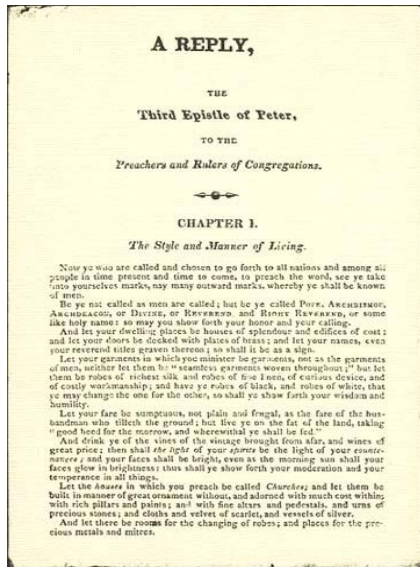
inhabitants of America, and that two years elapsed before they finally got possession of it.

We are, then, irresistibly led to this conclusion: -- that Lambdin, after having failed in business, had recourse to the old manuscripts then in his possession, in order to *raise the wind*, by a book speculation, and placed the "Manuscript Found," of Spalding, **in the hands of Rigdon**, to be embellished, altered, and added to, as he might think expedient; and three years' study of the bible we should deem little time enough to garble it, as it is transferred to the Mormon book. The former dying, left the latter the sole proprietor, who was obliged to resort to his wits, and in a miraculous [sic] way to bring it before the world; for in no other manner could such a book be published without great sacrifice. And where could a more suitable character be found than Jo Smith, whose necromantic fame and arts of deception, had already extended to a considerable distance? That Lambdin was a person every way qualified and fitted for such an enterprise, we have the testimony of his partner in business, and others of his acquaintance. Add to all these circumstances, the facts, that **Rigdon had prepared the minds** in a great measure, of nearly a hundred of those who had attended his ministration to be in readiness to embrace the first mysterious *ism* that should be presented -- the appearance of Cowdery at his

residence as soon as the Book was printed -- his sudden conversion, after many pretensions to disbelieve it -- his immediately repairing to the residence of Smith, 300 miles distant, where he was forthwith appointed an elder, high priest, and a scribe to the prophet -- the pretended vision that his residence in Ohio was the "promised land," the immediate removal of the whole Smith family thither, where they were soon raised from a state of poverty to comparative affluence. We therefore, **must hold out Sidney Rigdon to the world** as being the original "author and proprietor" of the whole Mormon conspiracy, until further light is elicited upon the lost writings of Solomon Spalding.

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*In 1888, Walter Sidney Rigdon -  
Sidney Rigdon's grandson - said that  
his grandfather's role in fabrication of  
The Book of Mormon was a family secret.*



## Rigdon gains scripture-writing experience.

In 1824, Rigdon penned a faux-scripture entitled "The Third Epistle of Peter," a small sarcastic piece published by the Pittsburgh "Church of Christ" as a supplement to a Campbellite pamphlet. In this first experiment with scripture composition, Rigdon followed in Spalding's footsteps, imitating the King James Bible. He also made use of a literary device employed by Spalding in his known writing and found in the Book of Mormon: the introduction of a character who claims to have discovered and translated lost records from the Biblical era.

Like the Book of Mormon, The Third Epistle presents itself as the translation of an ancient record containing "prophecies" that foresee and decry the corrupt state of 19th century Christianity. That these purportedly ancient prophecies have been fulfilled is presented as evidence of authenticity for the scripture, ignoring the likelihood that such prophecy was fulfilled when the scripture was written. Similar already-fulfilled prophecies are common in the Book of Mormon. Examples include purportedly ancient prophecies of the forthcoming Jesus Christ; a choice seer named Joseph in the latter days; a spokesman for that seer (later identified as Sidney Rigdon himself); and learned men unable to read characters from the Book of Mormon. As with the later Book of Mormon, Lectures on Faith, etc., the identity of Rigdon as the text's true author is not disclosed.

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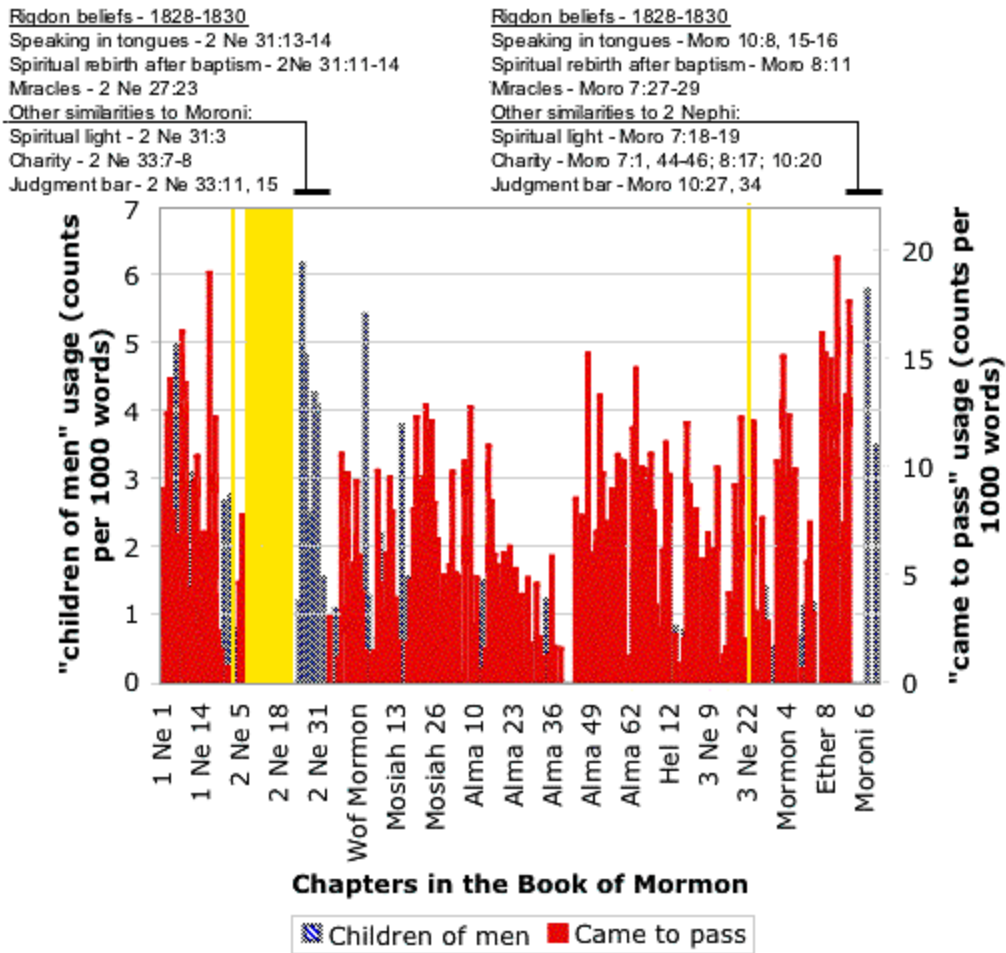
## **TRANSLATION OF THE "SMALL PLATES"** **SIGNAL RIGDON AS AUTHOR NOT EDITOR**

Those sections of The Book of Mormon that espouse Rigdon's pre-1830 theological views are connected by more than shared theology. They also share word usage patterns. As just noted, Walter Scott's phrase "Jesus is the Christ" appears in the same locations within The Book of Mormon as the doctrines that Scott espoused and Rigdon adopted in 1828. Another example is the phrase "children of men", which is used with exceptional frequency in parts of The Book of Mormon that advocate Rigdon's pre-1830 views, such as his beliefs in a divine calling, miracles, gifts of spirit - such as the gift of tongues - and spiritual rebirth after baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. This particular phrase does not appear in the New Testament, but does appear in the Old Testament, especially in Psalms, where it appears 14 times. Rigdon frequently preached from the Old Testament, and he gave sermons based on Psalms. The phrase "children of men" also appears in Rigdon's autobiography and in the biography of Joseph Smith, which was apparently also written by Rigdon.

In the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon, the phrase "children of men" appears 130 times. Excluding passages copied from the Bible, there are 251,204 words in The Book of Mormon, so the frequency of appearance of this phrase within these sections is  $130 \div 251,204 \times 1000 = 0.52$  per 1,000 words. In those sections of The Book of Mormon that have theological content reflecting Rigdon's pre-1830 views, the frequency of occurrence is considerably higher. For example, 2 Nephi 25-33 endorses spiritual rebirth after baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, as well as other beliefs that Rigdon is known to have held prior to 1830. Within these chapters, the phrase "children of men" appears at a frequency of 3.45 per 1,000 words (26 times out of 7,530 words total) - nearly seven times the average rate for The Book of Mormon overall (excluding sections copied from the Bible).

Many witnesses reported that, in writing Manuscript Found, Spalding made frequent use of the phrase "came to pass". It is useful to compare the frequency of the phrase "children of men" to the frequency of the phrase "came to pass". In the 1830 version of The Book of Mormon, the phrase "came to pass" appears at an average frequency of 5.6 times per 1000 words (1,402 appearances in 251,204 words, excluding those chapters copied from the Bible in which it appears just once). 2 Nephi 25-33 contains 7,530 words, so the phrase "came to pass" would be expected to appear  $7,530 \times 5.6 \div 1000 = 42$  times if it occurred at the same average frequency in these chapters as it does in The Book of Mormon overall. But in these chapters, the phrase "came to pass" does not appear even once. This is evidence against Spalding authorship of 2 Nephi 25-33. Conversely, the high frequency of appearance of the "children of men" phrase is evidence of Rigdon authorship or authorship of someone who shared Rigdon's theological views.

**Figure 4** shows how the frequency of usage of "came to pass" and "children of men" vary throughout The Book of Mormon. The Book of Moroni is similar to 2 Ne 25-33. In the Book of Moroni, the phrase "children of men" appears at a frequency of 2.5 per 1000 words - 5 times the average for The Book of Mormon overall. Again, this section contains not a single instance of "came to pass." Yet it contains 6,100 words, so we would expect this phrase to appear  $6100 \times 5.6 \div 1000 = 34$  times if it appeared at the same average frequency as it does in The Book of Mormon overall. In addition to this distinctive word usage pattern, the Book of Moroni shares numerous themes with 2 Nephi 25-33.



As noted in **Figure 4**, final chapters of 2 Nephi and Moroni have many other similarities besides shared word usage patterns. Both rely on the literary device of an editor and narrator, Nephi or Moroni, respectively, who summarizes a purportedly much larger record and speaks directly to the reader, using language similar to that which a 19th century preacher would be expected to use in addressing an audience. The final chapters of 2 Nephi and Moroni deal with the same themes, including spiritual gifts (such as the gift of tongues), spiritual rebirth after baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, miracles, spiritual light, charity, and both use phrases from the Apostle Paul. Both end with a promise to meet the reader at the judgment bar of God. All these commonalities indicate a high probability of near simultaneous composition by a single mind.

Also, relevant here are the word usage patterns and themes of The Book of Commandments (BC). This book contained early revelations that Smith claimed to have received, including many revelations that were purportedly received prior to 1830. The BC was published in 1833, but a mob destroyed the printing press. Loose pages were salvaged for reprinting in 1835 as The Doctrine and Covenants (D&C). Key phrases (including the phrase "children of men") and themes (revelatory process, authority, and church organization) that are found in 2 Nephi and Moroni are also found in BC Sections 10-11 and 14-15, or, equivalently, D&C sections 11-12 and 14-18. The dates recorded for these latter scriptures are May-June of 1829. This would be near the completion of the translation process for The Book of Mormon (Figure 3). The correspondence in theme and word usage patterns between these passages suggests a correspondence in authorship and time of composition.

The phrase "children of men" actually appears 39 times in the Doctrine and Covenants (sections 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 29, 35, 38, 39, 43, 45, 46, 58, 63, 64, 66, 93, 96, 101, 104, 109, 112, 121, 128, 135), but especially in sections 11, 17, 18 and 19. It occurs the most number of times (four) in Section 18. In this same section, Jesus Christ speaks of authority of the 12 apostles:

And, behold, you are they who are ordained of me to ordain priests and teachers; to declare my gospel, according to the power of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and according to the callings and gifts of God unto men. (D&C 18:32)

Moroni 3:4 reports on the visit of the resurrected Christ to America and describes the authority of his 12 Nephite disciples:

And after this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men; and they ordained them by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them.

The similarities in the above passages are obvious. These and other similarities suggest that the same mind was at work on the end of The Book of Mormon and The Book of Commandments. – *Craig Criddle*



**As a traveling preacher in Ohio, Rigdon meets peddlers Parley P. Pratt and Oliver Cowdery. These assistants help connect Rigdon with the charismatic young con man, Joseph Smith, Jr.**

**While extending his ministry as a traveling preacher, Rigdon encountered previous neighbors and associates of Joseph Smith, who were continually migrating into Ohio's Western Reserve. At about this time he made confidants of Parley P. Pratt and Oliver Cowdery.**

**In his Bainbridge cabin, Rigdon transcribed his visions and religious insights, grafting in his personal theology and occasional autobiographical passages, but leaving unchanged Spalding's geographic setting and cast of characters. Channeling the ancient prophets, Rigdon assumed the role of medium. Dictating new texts, he convinced the young Parley P. Pratt (age 18), of his supernatural connection to the world of spirits and to his vision for the restoration of the ancient order of things.**

**For Rigdon, distribution this new book of scripture would be the opening act in an epic drama, bringing to light the Biblical origin of Native Americans, setting the stage for the establishment of an American Zion -- the descent from heaven of a New Jerusalem --and preparing the world for the gathering of all the "lost" Israelite tribes as the human activity necessary in order to usher in the Christian Millennium. To realize this vision, however, he knew that the new scriptures would have to be revealed to the public through means that would appear miraculous.**



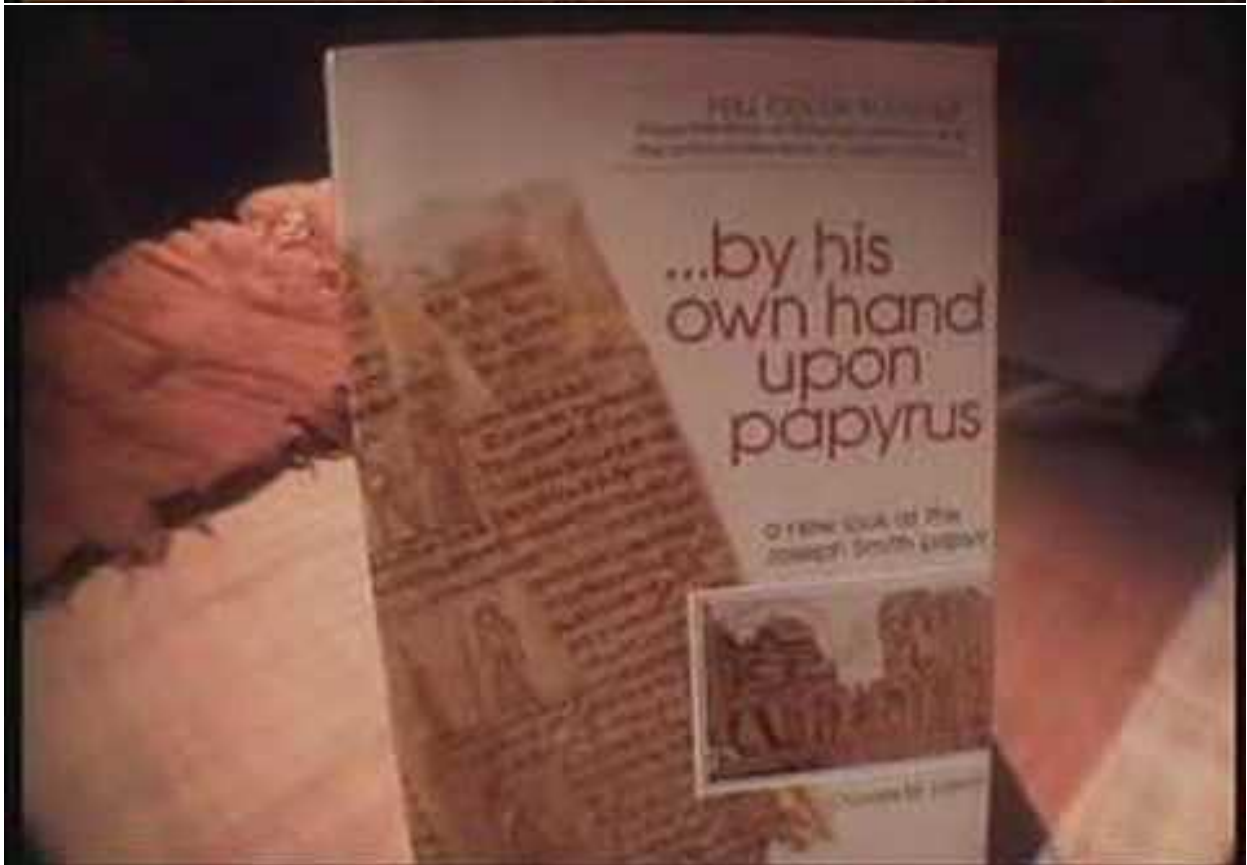
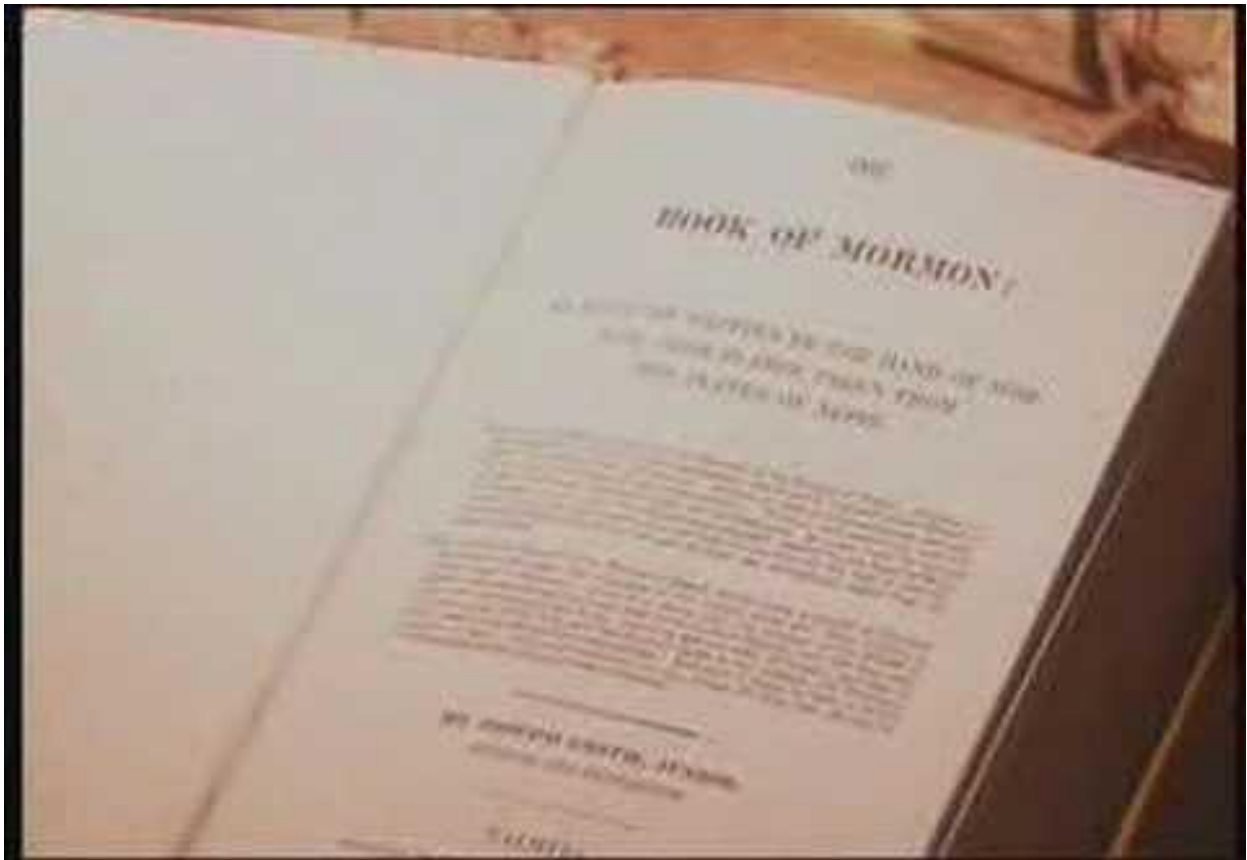
**Rigdon conceives of a Church guided by continuous revelation and reserves some Spalding materials for future revelations, referring to the reserved materials as "sealed plates."**

**The prospect of a church guided by continuous revelation excited Rigdon. He would initially remain in the background, allowing Smith to reveal his work, but once the new Church was officially organized, he would join and emerge as its rightful leader. He would then guide the restored Church through revelation as in ancient times, bringing in converts from the Reformation movement.**

**To facilitate future revelations, Rigdon held some Spalding material in reserve, referring to these materials within the text of the Book of Mormon as "sealed plates" "to come forth" "in the own due time of the Lord." By holding these materials in reserve for revelation after he had openly joined the new Church, he would be able to rapidly ascend to a position of leadership.**

**The sealed records included tales of the Old World patriarchs Abraham, Moses, and Joseph. Two of these tales would become the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham, now part of the Pearl of Great Price, a second major Mormon scripture. While Smith would die before the Book of Joseph could be published, Rigdon would later assert that it too was a part of the sealed plates, and he would claim to know its contents. Cowdery would also claim to know its contents. Cowdery would also claim to know its contents, asserting that the subject matter of the Book of Joseph would help convince "the rational mind of the correctness and divine authority of the holy scriptures." - *The Spaulding Studies Homepage***





Mormons often refer to the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Most of these men left the Church, but claims are also made that even though they did, they never denied that they had seen an angel who showed them "the plates of the Book of Mormon." However, in the *Journal of Discourses*, (7:164 ), **Brigham Young stated that:**

**...witnesses of the Book of Mormon who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel.**

Joseph Smith himself called these men wicked and liars, and by many other demeaning names. In the *Journal of Discourses*, 7: 114-115, George A. Smith lists those who have left the Church and mentions specifically, among others, "the witnesses of the Book of Mormon." Martin Harris later claimed that he had a *better* testimony of the "Shakers Book" than he ever had of the Book of Mormon. Reading about these witnesses, one is drawn to the conclusion that they were unstable men and easily convinced; for example, Martin Harris changed his religion at least eight times. Some of the others started their own religions later. -*The Truth About Mormonism (Website)*

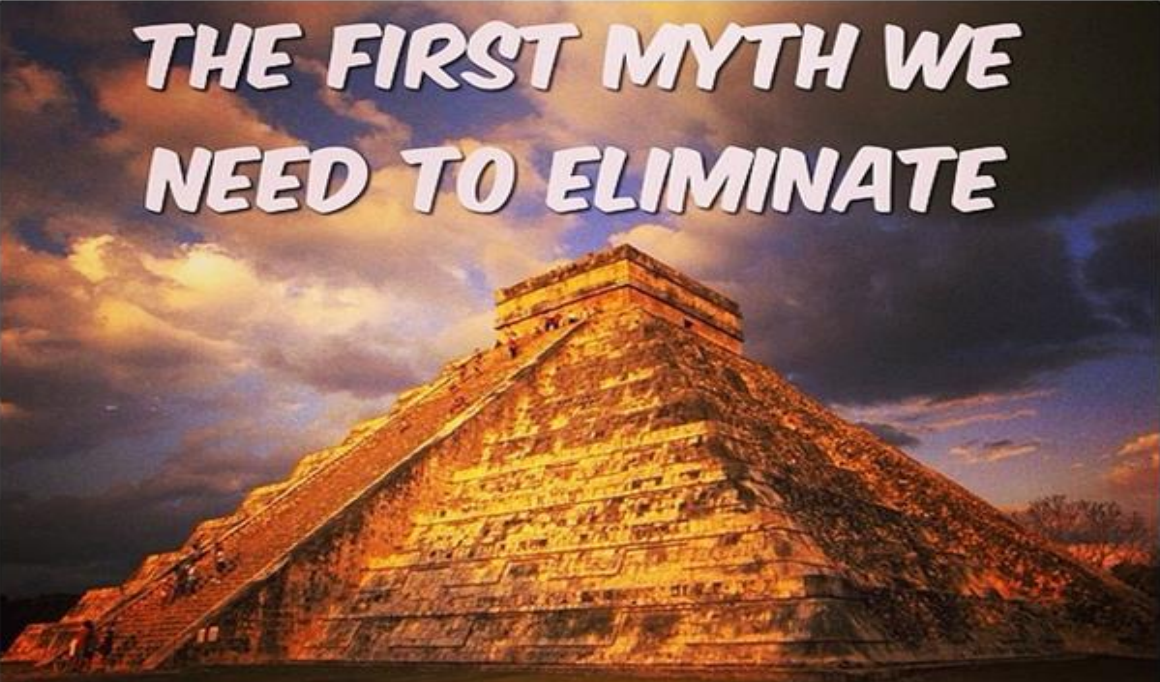
CARACTERS DOCUMENT - COPIED BY JOHN WHITMER, CIRCA 1829-1831  
REPRESENTING CHARACTERS TAKEN FROM THE BOOK OF MORMON GOLDEN PLATES

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
U	V	W	X	Y	Z				

**“Instead of ‘Re-formed Egyptian’ many of the ‘Caractors’ are deformed English, as any one will observe who will compare them with English letters, figures and signs.”**

EXCERPT FROM "CUMORAH REVISITED", CHARLES A. SHOOK, 1910

\* MISSEDINSUNDAY.COM



**THE FIRST MYTH WE  
NEED TO ELIMINATE**

**IS THAT BOOK OF MORMON ARCHAEOLOGY EXISTS**

If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not. The Book of Mormon is really there so one can have Book of Mormon studies, and archaeology is really there so one can study archaeology, but the two are not wed. At least they are not wed in reality since no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography.

-Dee F. Green, Mormon archaeologist

- **Statements by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Geographic Society:**
- **"The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archaeologists see no connection between the archaeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book."  
Official Statement, 1979**
- **"Neither representatives of the Nat'l Geographic Society nor, to my knowledge, archaeologists connected with any other institution or equal prestige have ever used the Book of Mormon in locating historic ruins in Middle America or elsewhere."**

# RESULTS OF SPOOFING

Although he had written a paper criticizing Book of Mormon archaeology, Tom Stuart Ferguson felt that it was generally best for those who doubted the faith to keep their "mouth shut." In a letter written Feb. 9, 1976, he gave this advice:

"...Mormonism is probably the best conceived myth-fraternity to which one can belong... Joseph Smith tried so hard he put himself out on a limb with the Book of Abraham, and also with the Book of Mormon. He can be refuted--but why bother... It would be like wiping out placebos in medicine & that would make no sense when they do lots of good....

Perhaps you and I have been spoofed by Joseph Smith. Now that we have the inside dope-- why not spoof a little back and stay aboard? Please consider this letter confidential -- for obvious reasons. I want to stay aboard the good ship, Mormonism..." Salt Lake City Messenger

**[Descendant of Sidney Rigdon With Access to Oral Histories & Family Diaries Offers An Informed Opinion As Author of the Expose' - I Wrote The Book Of Mormon: The Confession Of An Apostate:](#)**

**“And so you have it. We’ll probably never know the full truth. There were several extended times when Sidney was apart from his family, including a stretch of some six months when he went on a ‘mission trip’ with Joseph Smith to the Indians and Joseph became extremely distressed at Sidney’s preaching that the Indians were heathen & destined for Hell. My personal conclusion (not original with me, but documented by many researchers outside Mormonism) is that Sidney and Joseph concocted the whole story, copying Spaulding’s earlier novel (with or without his permission) and proceeded to perpetrate the story. Once the lie was started, it then grew far beyond their control.” – John Rigdon**

# APPENDIX: SAINTLY SCISSORS

## 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 [\[link\]](#). 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 [\[link\]](#) and in 1978 President Kimball issued a statement that God had revealed that blacks could now hold the priesthood [\[link\]](#). 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.

#### 1. 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.

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

#### Change in Introduction to 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 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 [\[link\]](#)).

President Hinckley has repeatedly associated the American Indians with the descendents 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 [#103 Messenger](#) 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 [\[link\]](#)).

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 insomuch 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

### 3

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 [\[link\]](#))

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, [Where is Cumorah?](#)).

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. 8, 2007 [\[link\]](#)).

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 article, [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 **LDS Patriarchal Blessings**).

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

4

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? ([link](#))

### **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 **damned**, 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 [LDS Leaders Still Believe There Will Be Polygamy in Heaven](#).

## 5

### 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 1982:

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).

### 6

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 intermarriages . . . 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 [\[link\]](#). 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)

## 7

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 [\[link\]](#)).

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. ([link](#))

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

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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 [\[link\]](#).)

## The Book of Mormon and the Ancient Evidence

by Dewayne Bryant, Ph.D.



Mormonism began in 1820, when Joseph Smith, Jr. purportedly received a vision of two heavenly beings claiming that all churches had become corrupted and that their creeds were abominations. Smith's divinely ordained duty was to restore the one true church. He claimed three years later an angel, named Moroni, paid him a visit, showing him the location of gold plates containing the true, eternal gospel. Written in "reformed Egyptian" hieroglyphs, this golden book contained the *Book of Mormon*, which Smith translated with a pair of magic spectacles. Seven years later in 1830, the Mormon church became a recognized entity for the first time.

The Mormons are a growing group which many people have labeled a "Christian denomination." This is the longstanding position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), and continues to be promoted today (Hickenbotham, 1995, p. 5). Unfortunately, Mormonism bears the hallmarks of a manmade religion, one of which is the reinvention and reinterpretation of an existing religion. Mormonism takes Christianity and reinterprets it. Mormonism's divergences from true Christianity include: Jesus being Lucifer's spiritual brother, the denial of the Trinity, and the belief that the faithful will one day become gods. The God of Mormonism is not the one true god of the Universe, but merely one god among many.

Smith once called the *Book of Mormon* "the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion" (Smith, 1902, 4:461). In the introduction of the *Book of Mormon*, Smith states that it is "the record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas," which also contains "the fullness of the everlasting gospel." Any religion centered on a scriptural foundation stands or falls on the accuracy of its sacred text. While the Bible has a wealth of evidence supporting its historical, chronological, and geographical accuracy, the *Book of Mormon* has been heavily criticized for its inaccuracies. Is the *Book of Mormon* divine revelation, or is it simply the invention of a gifted storyteller?

One of the problems that plagues the Mormon scriptures is the anachronistic portrayal of various animals in the New World. The most problematic is the portrayal of horses in the Americas in the *Book of Mormon*, where they appear frequently prior to the age of exploration (1 Nephi 18:25, et al.). Anthropologists are in near-universal agreement that horses had become extinct in the Americas until European explorers reintroduced them to the continent. Scientists have found evidence of horses in the Americas prior to and after the period of time covered by the *Book of Mormon*, but not during. In addition to a lack of fossil evidence, Bruce MacFaden says, "Their extinction is...suggested by the fact that no horses are known to have been depicted in pre-Columbian art.... Horses were reintroduced into the New World by the Spanish explorers during the sixteenth century" (MacFaden, 1992, p. 3).

Janey Dohner notes that the horse was reintroduced to North America by Columbus on his second voyage, while Hernando de Soto reintroduced them to South America in 1539 (Dohner, 2001, p. 313).

Mormon author Diane Wirth dismisses this criticism and points to what she considers evidence of the presence of horses, although her best examples consist of a handful of poorly executed relief carvings and petroglyphs (Wirth, 1986, pp. 52-55). Wirth defends her point by drawing a parallel between the lack of evidence, particularly bone evidence, of horses in the Americas with the lack of evidence of lions in Palestine. She notes: "Today there are no so-called archaeological remains of lions in the land of Israel. Apparently not a bone has been left. Therefore, a lack of skeletal remains of an animal in a particular area does not necessarily mean that the animal was never there" (p. 56). Wirth is correct. If one were to rely purely on skeletal evidence, the existence of lions in Palestine would be nearly impossible to prove. But archaeologists have also discovered numerous reliefs depicting kings hunting lions, lion-shaped artifacts, and numerous references to lions in ancient texts. There is a wealth of evidence attesting to the existence of lions in ancient Israel. There is absolutely no parallel for the existence of horses in America prior to European exploration. This is not to say that the *Book of Mormon* is wrong because of a lack of evidence--which would be an argument from silence. Rather, it is simply to note that there is an inexplicable lack of evidence where it would be **reasonably expected**.

The lack of evidence of horses has prompted a shift in tactics on the part of Mormon apologists, who claim that the settlers in the New World would have called some other animal a "horse," most likely the tapir. Tapirs have toes rather than hoofs and are pig-like in appearance, including a short, thick neck and stubby tail. They are also smaller than horses. It is highly unlikely that one could have been mistaken for the other--and if the *Book of Mormon* was inspired, such mistakes would not have been made.

Steel was also unknown in the New World prior to the arrival of European explorers, yet the *Book of Mormon* mentions the use of both iron and steel (2 Nephi 5:15; Ether 7:9). A particularly noteworthy reference concerns a military leader named Laban, who is described as having a steel sword with a gold hilt (1 Nephi 4:9). While New World peoples did have metallurgy, it lagged behind the technological developments in the ancient Near East. Studying evidence from South America, Purdue University archaeologist Kevin J. Vaughn notes: "Even though ancient Andean people smelted some metals, such as copper, they never smelted iron like they did in the Old World.... Metals were used for a variety of tools in the Old World, such as weapons, while in the Americas, metals were used as prestige goods for the wealthy elite" (Purdue University, 2008). People in the New World did make use of copper and precious metals like gold and silver, but scientists believe ironworking did not emerge until about A.D. 800.

Moroni supposedly showed Smith the location of gold plates, upon which were written the text of the *Book of Mormon*. Smith claimed it was written in "Reformed Egyptian." The only problem here is that this language does not exist. "Reformed Egyptian" is not a language found in the ancient world. Ancient Egyptian had numerous dialects (Archaic, Old, Middle, Late, Demotic, and Coptic), but a "reformed" dialect was not one of them. Smith may have chosen Egyptian as his text because he was unaware that French scholar Jean Francois Champollion had recently deciphered the language (the first translation of the Rosetta Stone was not published until 1822). Until that time, hieroglyphs were mysterious and unknown. Although it is speculative to say, Smith may have thought that the language was unreadable and would remain so, and therefore believed his grand story would never be proven false.



Modern Egyptology has discredited Mormon scriptures such as the *Book of Abraham*, which depicts the patriarch's journey to Egypt. His travels include nearly being sacrificed by an evil priest and later being honored by the pharaoh. The book was published with three facsimiles taken from an ancient papyrus, which was lost. Far from being inspired scripture, the *Book of Abraham* was shown to be a fraud years later when the papyrus was rediscovered. The book is based on a funerary papyrus depicting several scenes from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. In Facsimiles Nos. 1 and 3, Smith misidentifies virtually everything depicted in these scenes, demonstrating his attempts were nothing more than uneducated guesswork. He had virtually no familiarity with Hebrew or Egyptian names, and seemed to have made up names that sounded sufficiently biblical to be believable (although many of his spellings are impossible in biblical Hebrew, which exposes them as inventions as well). He guessed at the names of the pagan deities, getting every one of them incorrect. For instance, in Facsimile 1 he misidentified the deities on the canopic jars (which held the internal organs of the deceased) in the scene (from left to right) as Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, and Korash. The gods should have been identified as Qebesenuf, Duamutef, Hapi, and Imseti. It is not likely that he even knew that the objects depicted were canopic jars. He likely thought of them as idols, since he misidentified the scene as sacrificial rather than funerary in nature.

Why do so many Mormons maintain belief in these scriptures when they are so obviously false? As Charles Larson notes in his book *...By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, "[M]any Mormons are relatively uninformed of any controversy concerning the validity of the Book of Abraham; or if they become aware controversy exists, will tend to fall back on the trust they have in their system, and avoid further investigation" (Larsen, 1985, p. 161). The real problem is that the Mormon faith stresses belief even in the face of contradictory evidence. Some have advised their fellow Mormons to simply fall back on their faith. This is a key part of the Mormon belief system: believe in the Mormon scriptures and you will know them to be true—the sheep will recognize the voice of the shepherd. [NOTE: Of course, such an anti-logic stance contradicts the nature of God; see Miller, 2011.]

In addition to linguistic and historical evidence, the sciences have not been kind to Mormon beliefs. From the field of archaeology, nothing in the *Book of Mormon* has ever been discovered, though Smith painted a picture of vast civilizations with major urban centers and populations ranging in the millions (the Jaredites are a people group who lost two million soldiers in one war). At one point, some members of the LDS church claimed that the Smithsonian Institute had used the *Book of Mormon* as a scientific guide for locating archaeological sites. The Smithsonian adamantly denied this was the case in 1986. The National Geographic Society did the same in 1982. Similar claims issued by the LDS church prompted Mormon anthropologist Dee Green to say, "The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists," even conceding that 20 years of research "left us empty-handed" (Green, 1969, pp. 77-78).

Another area of concern is the origin story of the Native American Indians, who are claimed to be descendants of the Lamanites. According to Mormon doctrine, these Jewish migrants supposedly traveled to the Americas in ancient times. These travelers "are the principal ancestors of the American Indians," according to the introduction to the *Book of Mormon*.

In an essay titled, "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics," anthropologist Thomas Murphy challenges this idea, stating:

So far, DNA research lends no support to the traditional Mormon beliefs about the origins of Native Americans. Instead, genetic data have confirmed that migrations from Asia are the primary source of American Indian origins. This research has substantiated already-existing archaeological, cultural, linguistic, and biological evidence (Murphy, 2002, p. 48).

Murphy was nearly excommunicated in 2003 by the president of the Lynwood LDS Stake for his work [NOTE: a stake is the rough equivalent of a diocese in the Roman Catholic Church.] Only popular support for Murphy prevented Latimer from following through with the excommunication (Kennedy, 2003). Latimer postponed the disciplinary hearing indefinitely, in part, for fear of negative publicity.

Murphy is not alone. Two Mormon biologists, D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens of Idaho State University, agree with Murphy's conclusions. In the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, both men agreed in the article "Who are the Children of Lehi?" that

the data accumulated to date indicate that 99.6 percent of Native American genetic markers studied so far exhibit Siberian connections.... There has been little if any evidence seriously considered by the mainstream, scientific community that would indicate a Middle East origin, or any other source of origin, for the majority of contemporary Native Americans (Meldrum and Stephens, 2003, p. 41).

In an issue of *Dialogue*, the oldest independent journal for Mormon studies (that is, not owned or operated by the LDS Church), Yale anthropologist Michael D. Coe, who specializes in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica studies, summarizes some of the most troubling issues:

There is an inherent improbability in specific items that are mentioned in the Book of Mormon as having been brought to the New World by Jaredites and/or Nephites. Among these are the horse...the chariot, wheat, barley, and metallurgy (true metallurgy based upon smelting and casting being no earlier in Mesoamerica than about 800 A.D.). The picture of this hemisphere between 2,000 B.C. and A.D. 421 presented in the book has little to do with the early Indian cultures as we know them, in spite of much wishful thinking.

There is also little doubt in the minds of non-Mormon scholars that Joseph Smith had no ability whatsoever to read "Reformed Egyptian" or any other kind of hieroglyphs. The papyri translated as the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price are, in the opinion of qualified Egyptologists, a series of fragments of the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," something which Smith could not have known since Champollion's decipherment of the Egyptian script had not yet been published (Coe, 1973, p. 42).

These are just a few problems besetting the Mormon church. If the *Book of Mormon* is the "most correct" book ever written, why does it contain so many mistakes? Why so many contradictions with history, archaeology, and ancient languages? Scientists, historians, archaeologists, and linguists have exposed the Mormon scriptures as the invention of a marvelously fertile imagination. So marvelous, in fact, that it has taken a century and a half to prove it conclusively false. Convincing though it was to Smith's contemporaries, this grand old story has proven to be no match for scientific investigation. [For additional analysis of the *Book of Mormon*, see Miller, 2009.]

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# Is the Mormon Church the Restored Church?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

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The Mormon doctrine concerning the church is a maze of confusion and contradiction. According to Mormon teaching: “When Jesus Christ lived in mortality he established a Church” (Petersen 1974, 1).

It is contended, however:

[W]ith the passing of the so-called apostolic age the Church gradually drifted into a condition of apostasy, whereby succession in the priesthood was broken; and that the Church, as an earthly organization operating under divine direction and having authority to officiate in spiritual ordinances, ceased to exist (Talmage 1968, 18).

Accordingly, to remedy this situation Joseph Smith was raised up by God to bring “forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 1:30).

## The Establishment of the Church

Mormons claim the church was established by Christ when he lived “in mortality” (see above). This assertion is erroneous, however, for the church was not established until Pentecost, ten days after the Lord’s ascension to Heaven from the realm of mortality (Matthew 16:18; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:4).

On the other hand, *The Book of Mormon* has “the church of God,” in existence some seventy-three years before Christ was even born (Alma 46:13-16). Contrast this with Luke’s affirmation that “disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).

## The Perpetuity of the Church

Though Mormonism asserts that the church “ceased to exist” after the apostolic age, the Bible teaches otherwise.

1. When Daniel foretold the establishment of the kingdom (church) in the days of the Roman Empire, he declared that it would “never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44).
2. In the first century Paul announced that God would be glorified “in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Ephesians 3:21).
3. Those early recipients of God’s grace were in the process of receiving a kingdom “that cannot be shaken” (Hebrews 12:28).
4. Wherever the gospel exists, the church can exist, for the Word is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11). But the gospel is “eternal” (Revelation 14:6): “[T]he word of the Lord abides forever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25).
5. Certainly, it was prophesied that “some” would depart from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1), but this does not indicate that all would.
6. The persecuted church of the post-apostolic era did not cease to exist; rather, she “fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God” (Revelation 12:6). Remember, in the days of Elijah, Jehovah had seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal, though the prophet knew not of them. A studious examination of historical documents reveals various bands of genuine Christians in the dimness of antiquity (see Grimm n.d.).

## The So-called Restored Church

Joseph Smith restored nothing. He founded the Mormon Church. “On April 6, 1830, six men met in the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr., in Fayette, New York, and formally established The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (*Temple Square in Salt Lake* n.d., 17). Prior to this time, the Mormon religion is a perfect stranger to all literature, both sacred and profane.

Since it is an undisputed principle that no structure is stronger than its foundation, an examination of the faulty base of the Latter-day Saint movement is a commentary upon the corrupt system as a whole.

Mormon writers concede: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has its foundation in the revelations he [Joseph Smith] received, the sacred truths he taught, and the authority of the Priesthood restored through him” (*Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story* n.d., 24).

## Joseph Smith’s “Revelations”

If the restoration of the L. D. S. Church is based upon Joseph Smith’s revelations, it is in deep trouble. For instance:

1. Smith prophesied that the Civil War conflict between northern and southern states would be so intense that “war shall be poured out upon all nations” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 87:1-3). It wasn’t!
2. On February 14, 1835 he foretold, concerning “the coming of the Lord,” that “fifty-six years should wind up the scene” (Roberts 1902, 182). It didn’t!
3. He suggested that the Mormon Temple would be erected in Independence, Missouri (*Doctrine and Covenants* 57:1-3). That “prophecy” failed also.

By the criterion of Deuteronomy 18:21-22, Joseph Smith Jr. was a false prophet.

## Smith’s Teachings

Many of Joseph Smith’s teachings were both morally and religiously corrupt. In *The Pearl of Great Price*, Smith has Adam and Eve exultant over the fact that they fell into transgression that they might know the joy of redemption (Moses 5:10-11).

Too, while *The Book of Mormon* affirms that God approves of only “one wife,” and polygamy is characterized as whoredom, sin, etc. (Jacob 2:27; 3:5; 1:15; 2:23-24; Mosiah 11:2), Joseph Smith received the “revelation” of plural marriage as “a new and everlasting covenant” which could not be rejected without the penalty of damnation (*Doctrine & Covenants* 132:3-4).

These are but a sampling of the degenerate teachings of Mormonism’s “prophet.”

## **A Restored Priesthood?**

The significance of the priesthood to Mormons is revealed in the words of Mormon writer Mark E. Petersen: “Without a divinely approved ministry there can be no Church of God on earth” (Ibid., 15). There are two priesthoods in the L. D. S. Church from which all authority results—the Melchizedek and the Aaronic (*Doctrine and Covenants* 107:1-3, 5). Concepts regarding both are entirely false.

### **No Aaronic Priesthood Today**

There can be no Aaronic priesthood today for:

1. That priesthood was a part of the law of Moses, which was permanently “taken” away by Christ’s death (Colossians 2:14). (Note: the Greek, *erken*, in the perfect tense denotes permanent abolition of the law of Moses [Robertson 1930, 494].)
2. Only descendants from Levi could administer those Aaronic priestly functions (Hebrews 7:5), and, as all tribal records were destroyed in A.D. 70, a lineage determination is impossible.

### **Christ’s Priesthood**

The priesthood of Christ “after the order of Melchizedek” was an anti-typical “likeness” (Hebrews 7:15) of the former. It is heavenly, not earthly, in its nature (6:20). And it is “unchangeable” (7:24), the meaning of which is “perpetual, spoken of Christ’s priesthood as ever remaining to him inviolate, never passing from him to another” (Robinson 1855, 68).

That genuine Christians are “priests” in a spiritual sense, we do not deny (1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6), but there is no earthly, **physical** priesthood authorized by God today.

## **Conclusion**

**From the foregoing it is patently evident that the Mormon Church is not “The Church of Jesus Christ,” nor is it composed of “saints.” Rather, it is a cult founded in the delusions of Joseph Smith and others.**

**It is our devout prayer that sincere Mormons would candidly examine the evidence, renounce this false system, and in true obedience, turn to the Lord.**