

All of these doctrines were proclaimed by the reigning prophet to be the Word of God, "eternal," "everlasting," to govern the church "forevermore." All have been abandoned by the present church.

Joseph Smith's early revelations were collected and first published in 1833 in the *Book of Commandments*. God (as recorded in the *Doctrine and Covenants* Sections 1 and 67) supposedly testified by revelation that the revelations as published were true and correct. Because the *Book of Commandments* did not receive wide distribution (most copies were destroyed by angry opponents of the Mormons in Missouri, where it was published), they were republished - with additional revelations - as the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1835 in Kirtland, Ohio. However, many of the revelations as published in Kirtland differed fundamentally from their versions as originally given. The changes generally gave more power and authority to Smith, and justified changes he was making in church organization and theology. The question naturally arises as to why revelations which God had pronounced correct needed to be revised.

Joseph Smith claimed to have received the priesthood (the only valid priesthood recognized by God) directly from resurrected beings (angels): the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist and the Mechizedek (higher) Priesthood from Peter, James and John. However, the accounts of these visitations are contradictory and questionable.

Joseph Smith claimed to be a "translator" by the power of God. In addition to the *Book of Mormon*, he made several other "translations":

- The *Book of Abraham*, from Egyptian papyrus scrolls which came into his possession in 1835. He stated that the scrolls were written by the biblical Abraham "by his own hand." Smith's translation is now accepted as scripture by the LDS church, as part of its *Pearl of Great Price*. Smith also produced an "Egyptian Grammar" based on his translation. Modern scholars of ancient Egyptian agree that the scrolls are common Egyptian funeral scrolls, entirely pagan in nature, having nothing to do with Abraham, and from a period 2000 years later than Abraham. The "Grammar" has been said by Egyptologists to prove that Smith had no notion of the Egyptian language. It is *pure fantasy*: he made it up.

- The "Inspired Revision" of the King James Bible. Smith was commanded by God to retranslate the Bible because the existing translations contained errors. He completed his translation in 1833, but the church still uses the King James Version.

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To Those Who Are Investigating "Mormonism" Part One

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If you are investigating Mormonism (the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" or "LDS Church"), you are probably studying it in private meetings in your home with missionaries from that church. Here are some of the key things that they are probably telling you:

Mormonism began in 1820 when a teen-aged boy in western New York named Joseph Smith was spurred by a Christian revival where he lived to pray to God for guidance as to which church was true. In answer to his prayers he was visited by God the Father and God the Son, two separate beings, who told him to join no church because all the churches at that time were false, and that he, Joseph, would bring forth the true church. This event is called "The First Vision."

In 1823 Joseph had another heavenly visitation, in which an angel named Moroni told him of a sacred history written by ancient Hebrews in America, engraved in an Egyptian dialect on tablets of gold and buried in a nearby hill. Joseph was told it was the history of the ancient peoples of America, and that Joseph would be the instrument for bringing this record to the knowledge of the world. Joseph obtained

these gold plates from the angel in 1827, and translated them into English by the spirit of God and the use of a sacred instrument accompanying the plates called the "Urim and Thummim." The translation was published in 1830 as *The Book of Mormon*, now revered by Mormons as scripture, along with the Bible.

The Book of Mormon is a religious and secular history of the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere from about 2200 BC to about 421 AD. It tells the reader that three groups of immigrants settled the uninhabited Americas. They were led by God from their original homes in the Near East to America. The first group came from the Tower of Babel, about 2200 BC, and two other groups came from Jerusalem just before the Babylonian Captivity, about 600 BC. They had prophets of God who had been inspired with the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is thus preserved in their history, the *Book of Mormon*. Many of the descendants of these immigrants were Christians, even before Christ was born in Palestine, but many were unbelievers. Believers and unbelievers fought many wars, the last of which left only degenerate unbelievers as survivors, who are the ancestors of the American Indians. The most important event during this long history was the visit of Jesus Christ to America, after his crucifixion, when he ministered to (and converted) all the inhabitants.

Joseph Smith was directed by revelation from God to reestablish ("restore") the true church, which he did in 1830. He was

visited several times by heavenly messengers, who ordained him to the true priesthood. He continued to have revelations from God to guide the church and to give more knowledge of the Gospel. Many of these revelations are published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, accepted by Mormons as scripture, along with the Bible and the *Book of Mormon*.

Joseph Smith and his followers were continually persecuted for their religious beliefs, and driven from New York State to Ohio, then to Missouri, then to Illinois, where Joseph Smith was murdered in 1844 by a mob, a martyr to his beliefs. The church was then led by Brigham Young, Joseph's successor, to Utah, where the Mormons settled successfully.

The LDS church is led today by the successors of Joseph Smith. The present president of the church is a "prophet, seer and revelator" just as Joseph Smith was, and guides the members of the church through revelations and guidance from God.

The modern LDS church is the only true church, as restored by God through Joseph Smith. Other churches, derived from the early Christian church, are in apostasy because their leaders corrupted the scriptures, changed the ordinances of the original church, and often led corrupt lives, thus losing their authority.

The most reliable way to determine whether the *Book of Mormon* is true, and whether the

Mormon church is "the only true church" is by sincerely asking God in prayer.

By accepting baptism into the LDS church you take the first step necessary toward your salvation and your ultimate entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven (the "Celestial Kingdom").

Many doctrines which were once taught by the LDS church, and held to be fundamental, essential and "eternal", have been abandoned. Whether we feel that the church was correct in abandoning them is not the point; rather, the point is that a church claiming to be the church of God takes one "everlasting" position at one time and the opposite position at another, all the time claiming to be proclaiming the word of God. Some examples are:

- The Adam-God doctrine (Adam is God the Father);
- the United Order (all property of church members is to be held in common, with title in the church);
- Plural Marriage (polygamy; a man must have more than one wife to attain the highest degree of heaven);
- the Curse of Cain (the black race is not entitled to hold God's priesthood because it is cursed; this doctrine was not abandoned until 1978);
- Blood Atonement (some sins - apostasy, adultery, murder, interracial marriage - must be atoned for by the shedding of the sinner's blood, preferably by someone appointed to do so by church authorities);