

A DIALOGUE IN MORMONISM

THE MORMON FAITH UNDECKERATED

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A Mormon response to the booklet "To Moroni, With Love!"

THE MORMON FAITH REDECKERATED

**By J. Edward Decker
Saints Alive In Jesus ~ 1982**

A Christian Author's response to Mr. Carver's work.

Both works are printed in their entirety.

To gather the entire scope of this interaction between Carver and Decker,
we suggest you first go to the actual booklet, To Moroni, With Love, Included on this CD.

The Mormon Faith UnDeckerated

by. James A. Carver

A Reply to Ed Decker's "To Moroni With Love"

To most people, religion is primarily a matter of faith and doing, that is perceived in light of one's experience and needs. Intellectual and empirical studies don't occupy much of the average church members time. As a result, anti-Mormon pamphlets such as Ed Decker's, "To Moroni With Love," will generally have little effect on Latter-day Saints. But for the very same reason, a few will be critically affected; the reason for this being that most people don't have the time or inclination to do the necessary research to prove or disprove certain conclusions. As a result, some, both LDS and non-LDS will ignore a Decker type pamphlet while others will accept its conclusions as true, both LDS and non-LDS; but neither will take the time to verify their conclusions. As would be expected, the non-LDS would be more inclined to accept an anti-Mormon work. An auxiliary problem is the difficulty in using the scientific method or scholarly approach to matters of faith. Religious truth is spiritually discerned and the "scholarly" game is always suspect. (1 Cor. 2:11-16)

I have spiritual feelings about Ed Decker's, "Too Moroni With Love," but that is an individual matter. My purpose in writing this reply to Mr. Decker's pamphlet is to point out its weakness as a scholarly work. From the spiritual aspect I can only say that the pamphlet is false, subjective, and non-productive, either for the Latter-day Saint or other Christians.

As a scholarly work it is superficial and cursory; and it is an oversimplification as an explanation of a religious faith that has survived persecution and religious intolerance unknown by most religious denominations in the United States and possibly only equaled among a people by the Negro race and the native Americans.

Evangelical Christianity has much more to offer the world than this type of anti-Mormonism. But since Mr. Decker has challenged the Latter-day Saint faith as being non-Christian and false, and his colleagues have seen fit to distribute his literature to thousands, perhaps a reply is in order.

To begin with, I find that the conclusions and judgments of "To Moroni With Love" are by no means decisive, and for those who will prove no further it will provide nothing for them but delusions. Not everyone when presented with the same information will reach the same conclusions, but Decker's pamphlet leaves one with only selected data. This results in distortion and make-believe. If you are interested in knowing the residue of facts not mentioned by "To Moroni With Love," read on and may the Spirit bear witness to the truth, which is the goal of all true Christians. Intellectual honesty is definitely a prerequisite.

After having read many anti-Mormon pamphlets and books, I have observed that a common failing exists -- Joseph Smith is judged by a different set of rules than the Biblical prophets. Those who have studied early Christian history know that anti-Christian writings were as prevalent in the days of the apostles as anti-Mormon articles are today. It is always easier to write anti-literature than a defense since deception has no bounds and truth is precise and exact. Christianity faced the same dilemma as Mormonism does today. It was a living, vibrant religion. Those who claimed inspiration and prophetic callings were also human and subject to the judgments of their contemporaries. Also, there was an enormous amount of current literature for the skeptics to use in their anti-crusade. Today, modern Christianity still has its critics, but it is not longer the vibrant, living religion it was originally. The literature that remains is limited, and most important, selected. This fact limits much of the opportunity for negative response. Even the Bible itself testifies that the living prophets are much harder to accept than dead prophets.

Mormonism is much akin to original Christianity (in fact it is original Christianity restored) by the fact that it too has living prophets and living scriptures, as well as the personal statements and teaching of its prophets

published from all types of settings. historically early Christianity did not survive as well as its LDS counterpart today.

In the first place, Mr. Decker overestimates the value of his pamphlet. The reason for this is because a superficial study never leaves an either/or decision as he claims his pamphlet will do. Unless all of the facts are observed, superficiality only renders premature verdicts that may require frequent alterations as additional information is examined. Let us now consider Decker's pamphlet page by page.

FIRST VISION and THE NATURE OF GOD

It appears that Decker's intention in his account of the First Vision is to polarize Latter-day Saints and other Christians by antagonizing them. According to Decker's interpretation, Mormons consider Christianity to be "totally lost," (p.4), "Christian worship is unacceptable and even loathsome." (p.5). I have read all of the historical accounts of the First Vision and I have never been able to make that kind of conclusion. Granted that the Lord told Joseph to join no church, that they were all wrong -- meaning none were organized by the Lord, nor authorized by Him -- "their creeds were an abomination in His sight, that those professors were all corrupt." However, this does not mean that Christian worship is loathsome. Worship is individual and is as precious and sincere from other Christians as it is from the LDS or non-Christians. Instead, what was meant was that the creeds of Christianity that teach that God is a Spirit without body, parts, or passions, and incomprehensible and a great mystery are incorrect, and that those who originated them, their professors, or founders, who in the debate of councils won the vote, but didn't know the true God of Israel. Their lips may have professed, but their hearts were far from Him. It is a fact that God is taught in such a manner that He cannot be comprehended, when in fact John said that is was "life eternal to know God." (John 17:3). The God of the Latter-day Saints is neither incomprehensible nor without body, parts, or passions. The LDS believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate Beings but one in purpose and truth, and that their oneness is comprehensible.

In addition, where did modern Christianity get the idea that man's progressing to be like God is a pagan concept; that a literal Father-son relationship is inharmonious with scripture? Paul said that we are children of God and if children, then heirs, even joint-heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:14-19). Since both the Father and the Son are Gods and we are heirs, what does an heir receive?

The LDS teaching of God is more scriptural than the Christian creeds and is certainly more understandable. Most LDS are familiar with how the Christian concept of God came about. They have also read of the many attempts by the scholars and clergy to explain God. I would much rather follow the claims of one who has seen God than to follow the verdict of debates, councils, and votes.

As far as the scriptures used by Decker to support his concept of God are concerned, they disprove his own concept as much as the LDS concept. The three-in-one teaching of Christianity is as difficult to support by Isaiah 44:6 as is the one-in-three concept of Mormonism. John 4:24 restricts Christ from being God since God is a spirit and Christ has a body, and Malachi 3:6 surely can't support Decker's concept since it requires three changes into one, and God does not change.

Decker says that Christians worship an entirely different God than the LDS. That may be true since I have never been able to discover the real nature of Decker's God. Decker says that either Mormonism is correct or the Bible is correct, meaning his interpretation; yet as great a mind as St. Thomas Aquinas was unable to harmonize a Christian concept with the Bible in a comprehensible manner.

SALVATION

After listening to Mr. Decker attempt to explain the LDS belief in grace and works at one of his "How To Witness To Mormons" sessions, I am convinced that he has a false concept of the Latter-day Saint belief. Even though he was a Mormon for twenty years he is confused about LDS doctrine. This makes it difficult to communicate with Mr. Decker on this subject. I have taught in the Educational System of the LDS Church for eighteen years and I have studied religion all my life. The LDS Church does not teach what Mr. Decker claims it does.

The LDS, contrary to what Mr. Decker says, believe in salvation by grace. No man is capable of saving himself. If it wasn't for the saving atonement of Jesus Christ all mankind would be lost. However, to declare that grace is devoid of any relationship with works is to contradict the scriptures. Even Decker admits that there are some prerequisites for grace. Paul said that we must do "works meet for repentance." (Acts 26:20). The LDS believe that the prerequisites for grace are faith, repentance, baptism, and the Gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:37-39). Don't confuse Paul's "works of the Law of Moses" with his "works of the Gospel;" they are two separate principles. Paul considered faith to be a work but not a work of the law. (I Thess. 1:3; II Thess. 1:11). The Lord said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:15-16). The author of Hebrews says that perfection comes by works. (Heb. 13:21). Paul also taught that what a man sows is what he will reap, and not to be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap. (Gal. 6:7, 9).

This is precisely what the LDS believe-- that one will reap as one sows, that man will be saved by grace, through faith, but God will render to every man according to his deeds, (Rom. 2:6; Rev. 20:13) and he that "overcometh shall inherit all things." (Rev. 21:7) It seems that Decker is "knit-picking" when he speaks of grace and works. Apparently the Apostle James met some "knit-pickers" in his day when he said:

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being along. Yea, a man may say, Thou has faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:17-26)

Luther called the epistle of James an epistle of straw because he didn't like works, but it appears also to be a straw that breaks Decker's argument.

Latter-day Saints do not confuse grace and works, but I often wonder why some Christians get so uptight about works. See the appendix for a more complete study of the subject of grace and works.

On page 12, Decker indicates that the LDS do not believe that hell is a "place of destination." This is incorrect. Mormons believe just what the Bible teaches about hell. There are three concepts taught about hell in the Bible by the Greek words used in the New Testament for hell. These three words are Hades, Gehenna, and tartarus. Hades is the abode of the dead and is equivalent to the Hebrew word Sheol. Sheol is translated 32 times in the King James Bible as "the grave". Gehenna is a word taken from the Hebrew word Hinnom which was the name of the valley which was located outside Jerusalem where rubbish was burned and where anciently, children had been sacrificed to Molech. This is metaphorical and depicts the suffering of the wicked. Tartarus, or "outer darkness" as it is translated, is used only once in II Peter 2:4; it is the abode of Satan and those who follow after him.

I do not understand why Mr. Decker says that "hell, as a place of destination is not a part of present-day Mormon theology," except that he just doesn't understand LDS doctrine.

"NEW SCRIPTURE"

Mr. Decker objects to new scripture in our day and quotes Deut. 4:2; 12:32; and Prov. 30:6 to assert that fact that God does not speak today. But notice that this edict of not adding to the word of God came long before the New Testament was written. Does Decker's logic, that anything added be considered false, include the New Testament? The answer is simple: God can add to his word but man is forbidden to do so. This then in

no way restricts latter-day revelations and scripture, unless it is not of God. This restriction is just as applicable to all Bible commentary that is in error with the truth. It is as restrictive of Mr. Decker, and myself, as it is of any other person.

The problem is that the only authoritative basis for most Christians is the Bible, and the "Battle for the Bible" (see the evangelical scholar, Harold Lindell's book by the same title) has bothered Christians ever since. Latter-day saints claim that the source of truth is not the Bible, but Jesus, and that the same source that gave us the Bible can give us revelation today, which becomes new scripture. Latter-day Saints drink from the source, not just from the residue.

Both Latter-day Saints and other Christians accept the Bible as God's word but the LDS are often criticized for adding the phrase, "as far as it is translated correctly." That shouldn't bother Christians too much since much of their time is spent in producing new translations. I have one Bible with eight translations and another one with twenty-six, which indicates that Christians, as well as Latter-day Saints have some concerns about translation.

TESTS OF A TRUE PROPHET

Decker's Test No. 1 of a true prophet tries to depict Joseph Smith as being confused about the number of persons in the Godhead. He quotes an apparent conflicting account of Joseph Smith's First Vision that mentions only one God, while a different account mentions both the Father and the Son. It is interesting that Decker cannot accept any variance in Joseph Smith's account -- even though the one account does not rule out the possibility of a second character -- but accepts readily the conflicting statements of the Apostle Paul in the three accounts of his vision. See Acts, chapters, 9, 22, and 26. There are more major discrepancies in Paul's accounts than in Joseph Smith's. Contrary to what Ed Decker will tell you, Joseph Smith declared:

"I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit; and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. . ." D.H.C. 6:474-475

Test No. 2 is a case of suicidal literalism. By interpreting Deut. 18:20-22 in a very literal and all inclusive way, Decker concludes:

"A true prophet of God cannot utter a single false prophecy, no one! At no time can he give out a 'Thus saith the Lord' and have it not come to pass. . . If even one single one of these prophecies failed to come to pass, the scriptures call Joseph Smith a false prophet." p.30

Likewise, this would also be true if Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, John, or any other person claiming to be a prophet makes a statement or prophecy that does not come to pass.

By this rigid, unyielding, and illogical criterion I will demonstrate from the Bible that Moses, Jeremiah, Jesus, and Paul all fail in their attempts to measure up to Decker's great expectations.

First we will consider Moses, the great law giver who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament.

Moses in Gen. 17:1-14 states that God gave Abraham an everlasting covenant and that the token of that covenant was circumcision; which was also to be everlasting. Verse 14 indicates that any "man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

This is perfectly clear, but Paul rejects the everlasting quality of this covenant and indicates in Romans, chapter four and Galatians, chapter five, that circumcision availeth nothing. The covenant was not to be everlasting as predicted by Moses in his writings about Abraham. Moses said it was an everlasting covenant, Paul said it was not. Who was right?

Moses also predicted that the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood was to be an everlasting priesthood. (Numbers 25:10-14 and Exodus 40:12-15). Yet Paul says that the priesthood was changed. (Hebrews 7:12) If the Levitical Priesthood was to be everlasting, why was the priesthood changed? Where is the Levitical

Priesthood today? In Judaism or Christianity? If one is locked into Decker's literalism and private interpretation, then Paul or Moses must be denounced as a false prophet.

According to Decker's "rule of thumb", Jeremiah also fails as a prophet. Jeremiah was so upset that his predictions weren't coming to pass that he called God a liar. (Jer. 15:18). If one is an extreme literalist, Jeremiah's prediction of the seventy years of captivity did not come to pass. It was less than seventy years. Jeremiah also predicted that King Zedekiah would die in peace and that odours would be burned for him. (Jer. 34:4-5). Instead, Zedekiah had his eyes put out, his children slaughtered, and he died in a Babylonian prison. On another occasion Jeremiah prophesied that King Jehoiakim "shall have none to sit upon the throne of David," (Jer. 36:30), and yet the very next king was Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim. See 1 Chron. 3:16 and Jer. 37:1. There are others, but according to Decker, one mistake and you are out, so Jeremiah is out.

Jesus prophesied that the only sign he would give the Pharisees concerning his resurrection would be the sign of Jonah, "for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. 12:39-40). If Christians can make this prophecy work, the Good Friday has to be changed to Good Thursday, however, since the Jewish day begins at sundown, make that Good Wednesday Evening.

It seems that Decker's literalism could leave us with very few prophets to worry about. I don't mind valid criticism of Joseph Smith, but I do dislike double standards. If Joseph Smith was human, and I believe he was, he was in good company. Lest someone misunderstand, I accept Moses and Jeremiah as prophets, and Jesus as the Christ; however, I do not accept the idea that prophets cannot make mistakes. Even Paul admitted to uncertainty at times when after giving counsel to prospective missionaries on the subject of marriage he said, "I think also that I have the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 7:40). And yet, I believe that most prophecies, if properly understood, are supportive of the above prophets we have considered.

Next, Decker takes Joseph Smith to task on four prophecies which he claims are false:

In the first two, as if he had never read Biblical prophecy, Decker insists upon an immediate fulfillment. Unless Joseph Smith's prophecies are immediately fulfilled, they are considered false. Yet there is Biblical precedent to show that some prophecies require more time than was expected to receive fulfillment. Isaiah's prophecy about a virgin conceiving and giving birth to a son whose name would be Immanuel was not completely fulfilled until approximately 700 years had passed away. (Isa. 7:14). It was given to be a sign to King Ahaz, but its fulfillment would not take place until the birth of Christ. Isaiah would not last long with Decker.

A time lag is noticeable in Jeremiah, who prophesied that the sins of King Manasseh would result in the destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was not destroyed for a number of years after the death of King Manasseh and his people. (Jer. 15:4).

Decker's interpretation of Joseph Smith's prophecy on war is forced and allows for little time interval. If we forced Biblical prophecy in a similar manner to Decker's handling of Section 87, it would prove to be false also. Take for example, Jacob's prophecy about the sceptre of Judah. He said that "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. 49:10). Interpreting this prophecy in Decker's manner, Shiloh, which is Christ, came approximately 4 B.C. Zedekiah was the last King of Judah holding the sceptre. He died about 575 B.C. Thus, the lawgiver departed from Judah about 600 years before the coming of Shiloh. Conclusion -- Jacob is a false prophet. Wrong! The interpretation is incorrect as is the interpretation Decker places on the prophecy on war. Now let us look at this prophecy on war with the same kind of justice we give the Bible.

War did begin in South Carolina and many lives were lost. Other nations did become involved in war and as time passed, many more nations became engaged until Great Britain did call upon other nations in World War I, and then war was poured out upon all nations. World War II followed closely upon the heels of World War I, and today the nations of the earth are preparing on a greater scale than ever before for World War III. Then, "after many days," (an expression in scripture to represent an undetermined amount of time), slaves shall rise up against their masters. This does not refer to the Negro slaves of the South during the Civil War, but to

oppressed peoples from all over the world. These are those who are in political and economic slavery. It does not take a great deal of imagination in our own day to recognize the reality of this. Then the Lord will do what he has prophesied from the beginning. He will gather his remnant of Israel, Babylon shall marshal her forces, and then the last great battles will be fought as prophesied by John, Ezekiel, the Lord and many other Biblical prophets; until the "consumption decreed has made a full end of all nations." See also Jer. 47:28 and 51:20. The prophecy concludes with the coming of the Lord, and the justice the earth deserves is meted out.

The flow of this prophecy on war is broken by Decker's interpretation, but the fulfillment is remarkable when it is observed as a general prophecy on war and not just a Civil War prophecy, as Decker attempts to make us believe. In its total perspective, this prophecy is equal in dimension and spirit to any of the Bible.

"THE GREASE SPOT PROPHECY"

Mr. Decker would profit greatly from Peter's advice that prophecy is not of private interpretation. (II Peter 1:20). If I were to use Decker's tactics on Christianity I can honestly say I would not be a Christian.

Let's analyze the prophecy. Joseph Smith said, if Congress does not bring justice to the Saints, "they shall be broken up as a government." "They" refers to Congress. Congress would be broken up as a government. In other words, those in office not voting in favor of the Saints would be broken up, or removed from office; not that the government of the United States, which Joseph considered to be inspired of God, would cease to exist. When Joseph says there won't be so much as a grease spot left, he does not mean the government of the United States; the "them" refers to the individual congressmen who will be removed from power.

B. H. Roberts, a Latter-day Saint historian, made this comment in reference to this prophecy:

"This prediction doubtless has reference to the party in power; to the 'government' considered as the administration; not to the 'government' considered as the country; but the administration party, the Democratic Party, which had controlled the destiny of the country for forty years. It is a matter of history that a few years later the party then in power lost control of the national government, followed by the terrible conflict of the Civil War. The party against which the above prediction was made so far lost its influence that it did not again return to power to a quarter of a century; and when it did return to power it was with such modified views as to many great questions of government, that it could scarcely be regarded as the same party except in name." D.H.C. 6:116

I might add that it was the 28th Congress that was in office when Joseph Smith made this prophecy. Of the 296 that served during this Congress, 177 were Democrats and 111 were Whigs. The 28th Congress ended on March 3, 1845. 86 Democrats lost their seat in government and 59 Whigs, plus 6 others, for a total of 151 Congressmen that did not return to government for the 29th Congress. At the end of the 29th Congress, 50 Democrats, 27 Whigs, and 2 others that were in office during the 28th and 29th Congress lost their seats in Congress. Thus, at the beginning of the 30th Congress in March of 1847, 230 of the original 296 were no longer in power. This amounts to 78 percent of Congress. By 1849, 88 percent of the 28th Congress were no longer in office and by 1851, just 8 years after Joseph's prophecy, 94 percent were gone.

It becomes apparent that the grease spot that was left was not very big. The 6 percent that remained in office may not have voted against the Saints anyway. Nonetheless, as the sins of Manasseh were slow in bringing justice, the Civil War may have been punishment enough for a modern day Israel.

The Lord has said, "And behold, I, the Lord declare unto you, and my words are sure and shall not fail . . . all things must come to pass *in their time*." (Doctrine & Covenants 64:31-32)

JESUS' RETURN

Once again it is the same tune, only the lyrics are again a verse or two short. It is true that Joseph Smith did lean towards 1890 -- the prophecy quoted by Decker was given in 1834 -- as a possible date for the return of the Lord, but he did not consider this to be infallible. As a matter of fact he was quite confused about the date, as he relates, but Decker forgets. Joseph Smith received the revelation pertaining to the 56 years, or 1890, in the following manner:

"I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice repeat the following, 'Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; therefore let this suffice, and trouble me no more on this matter.'

I was left thus, without being able to decide whether this coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing, or whether I should die and thus see his face. I believe the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time." Doctrine & Covenants 130:14-17

Since Joseph was born in 1805, this would have made the year when he would see the Savior as 1890, the same year as his 56 years prophecy. In his Journal History, Joseph commented on this revelation as follows:

"I was left to draw my own conclusions concerning this; and I took the liberty to conclude that if I did live to that time, He would make His appearance. But I do not say whether He will make His appearance or I shall go where He is." D.H.C. 5:336

Decker calls this an "exact prophecy." Who is he trying to fool? Joseph Smith never considered it to be such; why should Mr. Decker?

"WHO IS OLIVER GRANGER?"

Decker calls this prophecy silly, of no importance, and false, unless three out of four Mormons can have a fond remembrance of Oliver Granger. He seems to think importance is determined by publicity.

"Oliver Granger was a man of faith and business ability -- two qualities which form a rare combination. He characterized the Kirtland Camp as the greatest undertaking since the organization of the Church, and he firmly believed that God would bless that endeavor. When the prophet fled from Kirtland, he appointed Granger his business agent, and so well did he perform this duty that he was commended by businessmen. At a conference held at Quincy, May 4th to 6th, 1839, he was appointed to return to Kirtland and take charge of the Temple and Church there. This makes the concluding verses of the Revelation perfectly clear. His is to be held in remembrance for his faithful services as a man of business, having sanctified his talent to the service of the Lord." Smith and Sjodahl, Doctrine and Covenant Commentary, p. 746

If, however, Oliver Granger is suffering from lack of recognition, the prophecy has now been fulfilled by the wide distribution of "To Moroni With Love". Oliver Granger should become a household name, not only among the Latter-day Saints, but other Christians as well.

In spite of Decker's nonsense, Oliver Granger's name has been held in sacred remembrance. LDS historians and Granger's descendants have held his name sacred, if other Latter-day Saints have not. Oliver Granger died in 1841 in the service of the Lord. But most important is the fact that his name has been held in sacred remembrance by the Lord. That is more important than a great number of mortals remembering his works.

Historically, Squanto's name has been held in sacred honor also, but can three out of four Americans tell you who he is? His befriending of the Pilgrims will always be remembered, but probably not by great numbers. How many Christians can identify Lebbeus Thaddeus, yet his name is held in sacred remembrance as an apostle of the Lord. It seems that Decker is trying to squeeze the Lord's word so much that he is strangling the truth and straining at a gnat.

By the way, my scriptures do have a little note I had written in them extolling the virtues of Oliver Granger. This was before any comment from Decker. Perhaps I am one of the four who remember Oliver Granger, but at least his name is held in sacred remembrance.

"THE MORMON APOSTASY NOT SCRIPTURAL"

Latter-day Saints believe that the Church was built upon the Petra and not the Petros, and that the gates of hell -- Hades, meaning the grave -- shall not prevail against it, but that belief does not preclude an apostasy, and certainly the scriptures do in fact speak of an apostasy.

The Apostle Paul said, that day -- Second Coming -- shall not come, except there be a falling away first. (II Thess. 2:3) The Greek word for "falling away" is apostasia, which is the same word used by the Savior in Matt. 5:31 for "bill of divorce." To translate "apostasia" as "falling away" is a little weak. What Paul was saying was that before the Second Coming a divorce would take place with the Church and the people and the Church would be taken away. That this was already happening in Paul's day is clear from the fact that he says, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work", verse 7; and by the time of John's epistle, the last hour for the Church to be upon the earth had arrived:

"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the anti-christ is coming even now many anti-christs have come. This is how we know it is the last hour." (1 John 2:18, New International Version)

The Epistles of Peter indicates the great trials that faced the Church and the short time there was left to perform their work. With the anti-christ prevailing, the Church did not survive long upon the earth. Thus the restoration spoken of by Paul was necessary before the earth would be ready for the return of Christ.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21).

"THE MORMON PRIESTHOOD NOT SCRIPTURAL."

I am certain that Mr. Decker would rather that we not read and understand the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament. Chapter Seven of that Book explains the superiority of the gospel law over the law of Moses and the superiority of the Melchizedek Priesthood to the Levitical Priesthood. Notice chapter seven, verses eleven and twelve.

Christ was after the Order of Melchizedek. Observe that he was after the Order of Melchizedek. For there to be an order, a group of people must belong. The Greek word for "order" is taxis -- which means, "a fixed succession" or "manner". If Christ belonged to an "order" then Jesus was not the only one to hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. He established an order of that priesthood in his day. It must be remembered that the New Testament is primarily a missionary tract and not a manual of discipline. Hence, there would be few occasions for the priesthood to be mentioned. The Book of Hebrews is one of those occasions.

Acts 1:3 indicates that during the 40 Day Ministry of Jesus, he taught his disciples those "things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Anyone who has studied the Apocryphal New Testament writings knows that Jesus taught his disciples sacred truths that they were forbidden to teach openly during this time period. These were, in addition to other doctrines, the sacred things pertaining to the priesthood and temples.

Tertullian, an ancient Christian father, said the apostle "had not revealed everything to everyone. That is to say they had entrusted some things publicly to all, but some in secret to a few." Hennecke, The New Testament Apocrypha, Vol. 2, p. 76.

In the Epistle of Peter to James, Peter says, "I earnestly beseech you not to pass on to any one of the Gentiles the books of my preaching which I forward to you, nor to any one of our own tribe before probation." Op. cit., p.111.

The Nag Hammadi Library, discovered about the same time as the Dead Sea Scrolls, mentions ordinances that are in perfect agreement with ordinances performed in Mormon temples.

"JOSEPH THE POLYGAMIST"

Polygamy has always been a much maligned and misunderstood principle practiced by prophets of God besides Joseph Smith. Christians accept the polygamist Abraham, revere the polygamist Jacob, but condemn the polygamist Joseph Smith.

Polygamy was practiced anciently by those under the gospel law -- Abraham, (Gal. 3) -- as well as those under Mosaic Law -- Solomon and David, etc. Some practiced it righteously -- Abraham and Jacob -- and some practiced it not so righteously -- Solomon. But that did not make the principle wrong. If Abraham had lived in the days of Joseph Smith he would have faced the same ridicule from his fellow Christians.

Before Christians condemn Joseph Smith they had better examine their own heritage. Jesus is a result of polygamy as is the entire House of Israel, God's covenant people. God established his covenant with polygamist Abraham and said that all nations of the earth would be blessed through him and his seed. Even Gentiles who accept the gospel and are baptized become the seed of Abraham by adoption. (Gal. 3:20). So all Christians claim lineage from a polygamist family.

It is true that the Church denied the practicing of polygamy before they came to Utah, but I also remember Abraham and Isaac denied that Sarah and Rebecca were their wives when they went into foreign lands for fear of the Kings. History has recorded what modern day Pharaohs did to Mormons who practiced polygamy. Had Abraham lived in the days of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, he would have found it necessary to deny that Sarah, or Hagar, or Keturah, was his wife in order not to be persecuted again.

However, at the time the Church denied practicing polygamy, the Church, as such, was indeed not practicing plural marriage since only a few of the leaders at that time were commanded to live the principle. The commandment to practice plural marriage had not come to the general body of the Church. That did not take place until later.

"A LIE IS A LIE"

Neither Joseph Smith nor Abraham were liars, but they were wise enough to protect themselves and others.

Decker says that "a lie is a lie is a lie, and when it comes out of the mouth of a man proclaimed to be a prophet of God, that man is sent not of God, neither has God command him." (p.43)

"Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

But he denied them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee.

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him. Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly." (Matt. 26:69-75).

"A LIE IS A LIE IS A LIE AND WHEN IT COMES OUT OF THE MOUTH OF A MAN PROCLAIMED TO BE A PROPHET OF GOD, THAT MAN IS SENT NOT OF GOD, NEITHER HAS GOD COMMANDED HIM."

It is unfortunate that Peter, the man Jesus commissioned to "feed his sheep," who was compared to the Petra as a Petros, cannot be accepted as a prophet. But, a lie is a lie is a lie. Thus by Decker's own standards we must reject both Christianity and the Latter-day Saints. But neither Christianity nor the Latter-day Saints are at fault, only Decker's basis for judgment.

Decker concludes his pamphlet by stating that the LDS Church must be either totally correct or totally wrong. It is his belief that we are totally wrong. If that is the case then the fruits of Mormonism must be evil, since an

evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. (Matt. 7:15-19). This is the test the Savior recommends in the New Testament. Then why is it that the Mormons do so well in so many areas? Compared to other Christians they certainly love the Lord as much, give of their time and talents as much, take care of their own and others as much, love their families as much, they are as honest and humble, and have as much faith, they study the scriptures as much, but they don't spend as much time writing anti-Protestant and Catholic articles. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has produced a virtuous, wholesome, and honest people that are as comparable as any other Christian group, or better. If they are evil, then why are their fruits good?

Regardless of the above, I disagree with Decker's conclusion. The gospel is totally true, but Latter-day Saints are human, as are other Christians. Being human, they are subject to error just as Peter was in error when he denied Christ; or Moses when the Lord sought to kill him for not circumcising his son; or Jonah, who didn't want to preach to Nineveh, or Aaron, who built the golden calf; or the disciples of the Lord who disputed over which of them was the greatest; or as Peter and Paul when they disputed over circumcision. Yet their human qualities did not contradict their prophetic callings, not their righteous deeds.

Being challenged by other Christians is not a new experience for the LDS people. Perhaps it makes us stronger. It was said best by a Church leader who said, "A stately horse, when stung by a fly is still a stately horse and the fly is still a fly. . ."

Where are the prophets today? Jesus cautioned those of the last days to beware of false prophets, yet with this caution is the implication that there would be true prophets. Where are they? Who are they? Despite what anti-Mormon articles claim, an objective study of the life of Joseph Smith indicates that he has accomplished the same things the prophets of old accomplished. Unfortunately, if we can accept only Ed Decker's "perfect" prophets, the only hope would be Jesus. We believe in that hope as much as he does, but the Church was built upon the foundation of Apostles and prophets -- Eph. 2:19-22 -- and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims to be that Church. The challenge of the LDS Church is that prophets do live in our day. If one is to know that Joseph Smith was a prophet they had better do more than just listen to the Ed Deckers who seemingly reject all prophets. Jesus and his disciples had opposition also. They had their Deckers and Tanners and Frasers and Martins. And those who listened to their arguments and accusations also rejected Jesus and his apostles and prophets. This is not a new phenomenon. Remember that false prophets will always condemn the true ones.

I bear you my witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I believe this witness, or the witness of any other sincere Latter-day Saint, deserves an objective study. Those who choose to ignore this witness may be as foolish as those who chose to listen to the anti-Christ but rejected the ancient apostles and prophets.

What do you really know about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? It isn't so much what we don't know that hurts us as what we know that "ain't" so.

APPENDIX

GRACE AND WORKS:

Historically Roman Catholicism has considered grace to be a power conveyed through the sacraments by which justification and sanctification are achieved. Thus faith and works go hand in hand.

The Protestants have more or less believed that the sinner upon belief in Christ activates grace, his sins are forgiven and he is justified. Works then follows the believer as a natural result of his redemption. Although I can't speak authoritatively for the LDS Church, my understanding is as follows:

Salvation, in any of its capacities or levels, comes by grace, but judgment comes by works. These two principles are harmonious and complement each other. Judgment is not robbed by grace and grace is not nullified by judgment. The two go hand in hand. Grace is an important to the Latter-day Saint as it is to the Protestant or Catholic and it is certainly harmonious with what is taught in the scriptures.

Listed below are a number of scriptures that will help you understand this much-debated subject. It would become apparent that the LDS understanding of the relationship between grace and works is not heretical.

Matt. 5:48	Luke 18:28-30	I Cor. 3:8	II Tim. 3:15-17
Matt. 6:33	John 3:3-5	I Cor. 6:9	Titus 3:8
Matt. 7:13-27	John 3:19-21	I Cor. 9:24-27	Heb. 6:1-6
Matt. 10:28	John 7:16-17	I Cor. 11:2, 29-30	Heb. 10:38
Matt. 12:36	John 8:34	I Cor. 15:58	James 1:22-23
Matt. 13:3-23	John 14:15,21,23	II Cor. 5:10	James 2:17-26
Matt. 16:27	Acts 5:32	Gal. 2:16-17	James 4:17
Matt. 19:16-17	Acts 11:18	Gal. 5:18-26	I Peter 4:17-18
Matt. 28:19-20	Rom. 2:6-7	Gal. 6:7-9	II Peter 2:20-21
Mark 16:15-16	Rom. 3:28	Eph. 2:8-10	I John 2:4, 6, 29
Luke 7:50	Rom. 6:14-16	Eph. 4:11-14	Rev. 2:7, 11, 17
Luke 9:23-26	Rom. 8:1, 5-10, 12-19	Philip. 2:12	Rev. 14:13
Luke 12:48	Rom. 11:22	II Thess. 1:11	Rev. 20:12-15
Luke 14:26-27	Rom. 13:11	I Tim. 6:18-20	Rev. 21:7

Mormonism ReDeckerated (Or Christianity UnCarvered)

**J. Edward Decker
Saints Alive In Jesus 1982**

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

In January 1980, Life Messengers, Inc published my pamphlet, "To Moroni, With Love". It deals with the basic differences between the theology of the Mormon Church and that of traditional Christianity. It was written from the perspective of a former Mormon converted to Christianity through the simple born-again experience.

Many thousands of such former Mormons presently exist, fellowshipping in various Christian groups or denominations, yet united in an evangelical ministry of sharing Jesus with the Mormon people, our people! The simple differences discussed in TMWL are those generally accepted by these former Mormons and those hundreds of Christian churches with whom they now congregate.

In late April, a Mormon response appeared, "***THE MORMON FAITH UNDECKERATED***", by James Carver, a Seattle LDS Institute teacher. While this is a reply to his response, it is not meant to be a laborious work of scholastic vindication. *In my mind, TMWL has already achieved it's purpose.* My work is now in other areas of this ministry, and my schedule only allows me a few hours of time to pen this answer.

James Carver has really done about as fine a work of apologetics as is possible with the LDS Church. I am greatly stimulated by much of what he has had to say, mostly in that it has required me to re-evaluate and re-affirm some of the doctrinal grounds upon which TMWL was written.

Quite frankly, I talk easier than I write. I spoke to 'Brother Carver' and suggested that I visit the LDS Institute for whatever time they would allow, under any conditions they would impose for the purpose of discussing the Biblical evidences of the LDS theology and establishing the doctrinal differences that separate Mormonism and Christianity. However, Mr. Carver could not do this, for that type of openness is not acceptable to the Mormon Church in any manner whatsoever. It surely is too bad! It would have been much more interesting.

EVALUATING "TO MORONI WITH LOVE"

While I do agree that James Carver has done a fine job of Mormon apologetics, I am not prone to repent and return to the fold, based on his treatise. Mr. Carver leaps into the fray by first stating that TMWL is a minor work, mostly ignored both by LDS and non-LDS alike. Then he says it is folly to *play "The Scholarly Game"* and continues in the very next paragraph to state that "My purpose in writing this reply to Mr. Decker's pamphlet is to point out its weakness as a scholarly work".

The facts, though, are that TMWL will probably exceeded one million copies in its first year of publication, not exactly a minor work! *However, it really is a minor work!* It was never written as a "scholarly", major work, such as had been done by the Tanner's, Frazier, Cowan, Heokema, Martin, Brodie, McElveen, and others. It was written as a small work, a simple tract.

It contains nothing remotely new on the subject, no heretofore unknown original document ripping through the LDS doctrine, nothing that has not been said with better skill and more documentation by many others. *It*

is what it is! An informational tract to be used by the reader as a stimulant to further investigation. The many letters we receive regarding TMWL show that it has that effect. It has done what I had hoped it would. It has been highly stimulating to the inquiring Mormon and the investigator, highly useful as a tool for Christian witness.

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT OR THE BURNING BOSOM TEST

Yes, it has also been called a filthy, vile, Satanic work by those few Mormons who rely heavily upon what Mr. Carver refers to when he says "Religious truth is spiritually discerned and the "scholarly" game is always suspect."

I agree that we must rely upon the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual discernment:

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." (I Cor. 2:11-16)

However, it is not illogical or unscriptural to test religious teachings in accordance with God's Word. Jesus said,

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17)

The burning bosom test of Joseph Smith's 1829 revelation ...

"But, behold I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that poor bosom shall bum within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me. " (D&C 9:8&9)

... is a poor substitute for wisdom, which, in spite of Joseph Smith's misinterpretation of James 1:5, is the APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. This same lack of regard for fact in favor of feeling is a continual amazement to me.

I recently read in the October 1979 Ensign, an article by Asst. Editor, Lavina F. Anderson. It was titled "CHURCH PUBLISHES FIRST LDS EDITION OF BIBLE": On page 18, she states

"Broth & Rasmussen (Ellis T.) added "sometimes, Brother Patch (Robert C.) and I would be discussing a matter of Linguistics and as we concluded, one of us would remark, 'that feels good!' I suppose to some people this might seem like a slip-shod way to be scholars, but we could tell when we were moving in the proper direction and we could certainly identify the stupor of thought that came over us when we weren't. He paused, then added quickly . . . 'In some ways, scholarship was the least important part of our work' ".

Mr. Carver says that:

"from the spiritual aspect I can only say that the pamphlet is *False, Subjective* and *non-productive* either for the Latter-day Saints or other Christians."

That is James Carver's burning bosom spiritual conclusion. Yet so many other Christians and I have the very opposite spiritual experience and conclusion.

How can Mr. Carver claim HIS burning bosom is a more correct burning than yours or mine? He can't, and that is where we follow Brigham Young's advice, and,

“ take up the Bible, compare the religion of the Latter-day Saints with it and see if it will stand the test. ”
(Journal of Discourses, Vol. 16, pg. 46, 1873)

THE ART OF LITERARY LICENSE

Still, before Mr. Carver begins to deal with issues, he again complains that TMWL is superficial and cursory and an oversimplification. He then talks about the great persecution of the LDS church as though *THAT* gives the LDS church its credentials of correct theology. Were that so, certainly the Jewish religion would be far truer than Mormonism, since they suffered more and for a far longer period.

Mr. Carver speaks of distortion and make believe and the use of selected data, yet continually amplifies his text with unsupported and highly challengeable statements such as:

- ❑ ❑ "Joseph Smith is judged by a different set of rules than Biblical prophets"
- ❑ ❑ "It is always easier to write anti- literature"
- ❑ ❑ "Christianity faced the same dilemma as Mormonism does today" "Mormonism is much more akin to original Christianity (in fact it is original Christianity restored)"
- ❑ ❑ "Historically, early Christianity did not survive as well as its LDS counterpart today"
- ❑ ❑ "The LDS teaching of God is more spiritual than the Christian creeds"
- ❑ ❑ "St Aquinas was unable to harmonize a Christian concept with the Bible in a comprehensible manner.

ARE CHRISTIANS MORMON?

First, let's deal with Mr. Carver's statement that I intend to polarize Latter-day Saints and other Christians by antagonizing them. (JAC pg. 2).

He chooses as his focal point the First Vision statement (by Christ) to Joseph Smith, "Their creeds were an abomination in His sight, that those professors were all corrupt",

Mr. Carver goes on to say that " all worship is precious. It's not the Christians, but the founders of the religions who did not know the true God of Israel, etc." Mr. Carver misses the 19th century definition of 'professors', which is simply, those who profess. He was speaking of the Christians themselves, not just their leaders! Mr. Carver wants to parrot the LDS position that I'm OK, you're OK, but I'm a lot more OK than you!

Yet LDS scripture says it the way I interpreted the First Vision, as found in the following scripture of I Nephi 14: 10:

"And he said unto me.- Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abomination; and she is the whore of all the earth. "

And in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 29, verse 21 we read: *"And the great and abominable church, which is the whore o all the earth, shall be cast down b ' y devouring fire, according as it is spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet, who spoke of these things, which have not come to pass but surely must, as I live for abominations shall not reign".*

Apostle Orson Pratt, in The Seer, page 255, summed it up this way:

"Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the 'whore of Babylon' whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornications and wickedness".

Play with the words anyway you want, it still comes up with the same contempt for Christianity as we see in the little melodrama between Adam, Lucifer and the Christian Minister played out during the Temple Ceremony, TODAY, (not just in 1850)! [ed: until it was recently removed from the ritual. I wonder why?]

Mr. Carver's problem here is a simple one to identify and difficult as all get-out to deal with. The Mormon sociology is to show abounding love and peace to everyone. Yet the Mormon theology holds Christianity and the Christian believer in some limbo between outright contempt [for those who actively profess it], to tongue clicking pity [for those lured into such false teaching]. What we end up with is a classic case of double-think! Mormons FEEL in one sphere and KNOW in another!

THE QUESTION OF GOD

Mr. Carver's problem with the Christian concept of the Three-In One God is not just a question of interpretation. It is one of questionable LDS scholarship.

The testimony of The Three Witnesses found in the preface to every Book of Mormon being distributed by the LDS Church concludes with the claim:

"and the honor be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God, Amen"

The Three-In-One doctrine is one that is throughout the Book of Mormon:

"And now, behold my beloved brethren, this is the way- and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen." (2 Nephi 31:2 1)

"And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son - The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth. And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God. . (Mosiah 15:1-5)

... and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil" (Alma 11:44)

There are just a few of the many such 'scriptures'. Yet, I cannot find a single book of Mormon scripture that plainly states that God was once a man and is today an exalted man, a God who served and worshipped his own God before Him. And that is where the real separation of theology exists!

OOPS, YOUR DIVISION IS SHOWING

It is at this point where Mr. Carver stops referring to "Latter-day Saints and other Christians" and begins to divide the doctrine himself.

In dealing with Christ, and salvation, Mr. Carver confuses grace with faith, and feels that Acts 26:20 says that "works meet for repentance" is somehow a prerequisite for grace. He misinterprets Hebrews 13:21 and says that it states that perfection comes by (our) works when in context it deals with the perfecting of God's will which He (God) is working in you!

He gives us Galations 6:7,9 and drops verse 8 which gives the perspective of *spiritual* action and reaction, which ties to chapter 5:16-18. In fact, all of chapters 5&6 instruct us in the *spiritual* freedom in Christ Jesus.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Gal. 6: verse 7)

***Carver left this out:** For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (verse 8)*

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (verse 9)

Compare that to the context of the previous chapter, Gal. 5:16-18

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Again, Mr. Carver gives us Rev. 21:7 without verses 6&8 that give the verse its depth. And Mr. Carver calls TMWL selective data?!!!!

Rev. 21:6 "And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Rev 21: 7 "He that overcometh shall all things, and I will be his God, things, and I will be his God, and and he shall be my son.

Rev 21: 8. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. "

He even missed this very clear scripture on the subject of grace and works, which really is the summation of the LDS concept.

"For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. "(2 Nephi 25:23)

As I said in TMWL, it just isn't Biblical, Christian doctrine.

ETERNAL NATURE OF THE GODHEAD

In skipping through the nature of God and salvation, Mr. Carver slipped past a very key area of doctrinal separation, the eternal nature of God and Christ.

For God to be the Mormon God, he could not be God eternally (God from beginning to end). The LDS God was once *not* God, in fact, He was once not even a god. The LDS Jesus was not eternally God either. He and Lucifer were both created through an act of sex between God and one of his celestial wives in our Pre-existence. Hence he and Satan are our elder brothers. Yet these concepts cannot be even remotely evidenced in the Bible, or The Book of Mormon, either.

The very title page of the Book of Mormon states boldly,

"...and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE ETERNAL GOD"
(Caps are BOM emphasis).

Other Book of Mormon scriptures in the matter teach the same eternal nature of Christ' s Godhood

"And as I spoke concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God. " (2 Nephi 26:12)

"And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man. . . " (Mosiah 7:27)

"Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father. " (Mosiah 16:15)

"And Zeezrom said unto him: Thou sayest there is a true and living God? And A mulek said: Yea, there is a true and living God Now Zeezrom said unto him again: How knowest thou these things? And he said- An angel hath made them known unto me. And Zeezrom said again: Who is he that shall come? Is it the Son of God?... Now Zeezrom saith again unto him: Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father? And Amulek said unto him: Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last". (Alma 11:26-32; 38 &39)

Joseph Smith himself, in the 1835 Doctrine & Covenants, Section 5, described the very nature of the Godhead in complete detail. He said that God is a spirit, Christ is God Himself, called the Son because of the flesh, and the Holy Spirit was the mind of the two. Today that whole section and others like it have been deleted from the LDS scripture. *Do you wonder why?*

Beloved, God has always been God, and Jesus has always been God. If it were not true God would have had to pre-exist Jesus, which isn't true. The Bible, God's Holy Word, gives testimony of what I say.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1: 1-5)

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

And Jesus is the *entire* fullness of the Godhead bodily, as we read:

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. " (Col. 2:8&9)

REGARDING NEW SCRIPTURE

Regarding new scripture, Mr. Carver is playing with words. The referenced scripture clearly states that man is not to add or subtract words by his own merit, but only as God commands! The Old Testament continually looks ahead for the material contained in the New Testament. Yet the New Testament tells us to contend for that which had already been given to the Saints:

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. " (Jude 3)

Paul emphasizes this same exact doctrine:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you; which also ye have received and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all; that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.-

After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of Jesus; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed " (1 Cor. 15: 1 -11)

"And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. .Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall received remission of sins " (Acts 10:3 9-43)

It's simple! Jesus did not fail to establish the kingdom forever. The gates of Hell did not prevail against it!

"Thou shalt not add unto the word. - Rev. 3:18-19 not only speaks the same thought as Deut 4:2; and 12:32 but also condemns both Joseph Smith and Mr. Carver's logic in the very literal sense. For in his "Inspired Version" of the Bible, Joseph Smith both added to and subtracted from "the Book of Revelations" itself.' By even the most generous interpretation, Smith stands cursed of God!

DRINKING FROM THE SOURCE

Mr. Carver makes a fair shot at total separation between the Mormon and Christian himself with the comment on page 5 that "Latter-day Saints drink from the source, not from the residue". (Which I suppose means the Holy Bible). He says that the source of truth is not the Bible, but Jesus. Yet if Jesus is the LDS source, why does he keep contradicting himself?

The LDS Jesus first claims that all are alike to God (Jacob 2:21 BOM). Then allows that the blacks are a cursed people (Brigham Young: *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 7, pages 290, 291) and now all are alike to God again (June 1978 revelation).

In the 1835 D&C, the LDS Jesus specifically places polygamy as a crime equal to fornication and prohibits it. (D&C 101, 1835). Then, in 1843, He proclaims it *"a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned"* (D&C 132:4). He later allowed that the Saints should not practice it (withdrew it in 1890).

The Mormon Jesus passed the word to Brigham Young that His (Jesus') literal flesh father was Adam, yet Spencer W. Kimball, a later living 'prophet of the Lord' stated that these who taught this, taught false doctrine!

Apostle, Ezra Taft Benson said (Feb. 26, 1980, B.Y.U.) that the living prophet is above ALL scripture and all past prophets, and if there is conflict, the present prophet is right!

And in June, 1980 - another Apostle, Bruce R. McConkie told a B.Y.U. audience that "*He (the Lord) never will reveal anything which is contrary to what is in them (the Standard Works - Scripture). No person, speaking by the Spirit of inspiration, will ever teach doctrine that is out of harmony with the truths God has already revealed.*"

Joseph Smith said of a certain ministering angel:

"Many true things were spoken by this personage, and many things that were false How, it may be asked, was this known to be a bad angel? By the color of his hair: that is one of the signs he can be known by, and by his contradicting a former revelation." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pg. 214, 215.)

A little later on, (page 215) he talks of a Mr. Oliver Olney who was excommunicated "Because he would not have his writings tested by the Word of God"!

THE FIRST VISION

In the area of testing a prophet, test # I deals with the First Vision account. Mr. Carver talks about my use of an "apparent conflicting account" and goes on to discuss Paul's account of his vision on the road to Damascus. First, Paul did not have a vision, he had a personal *experience* with God. Second, Acts 9:7; 22:9; 26:13,14 deal with the same story, and give the same description. In Acts 22:9 (KJV) Paul says: "*but they heard not*" which even in my weak knowledge of Greek is "but they comprehended not".

While it's nice to know this about Paul, it hardly explains how Joseph Smith, the only man ever to live on the earth who claimed to have seen God, the Father in the flesh, forgot to write it in his own diary, but missed that point entirely. In fact, there are several totally separate first vision stories from Joseph Smith, hardly ones that vary over the slight interpretation differences of one Greek word!

Mr. Carver continues, "Contrary to what Ed Decker will tell you, Joseph Smith declared":

"I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods ..." (D.H.C. 6:474-475)

Maybe he did say that, Mr. Carver, but he *also made the following true' statements:*

"All things are delivered to me of my Father- and no man knoweth that the Son is the Father, and the Father is the Son, but him to whom the Son will reveal it. " (Luke 10:23, Inspired Version)

"But these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them. Which Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end, Amen." (D&C 20:17,28)

"The offering of sacrifice has ever been connected and forms apart of the duties of the Priesthood. It began with the Priesthood, and will be continued until after the coming of Christ from generation to generation." (T. P.J. S. page 172)

Where is *this doctrine* practiced today? Another Joseph Smith 'truth' was:

"Salvation is nothing more nor less than to triumph overall our enemies and put them under our feet and, when we have power to put all enemies under our feet in the world to come, then are we saved, as, in the case of Jesus . . . " (T.P.J.S. page 297)

Where is this doctrine taught in the Missionary lessons?

Joseph Smith also said:

"In the former ages of the world, before the Saviour came in the flesh, "The Saints" were baptised in the name of Jesus Christ to come, because there never was any other name whereby men could be saved" (T.P.J.S. pg. 266)

Would Mr. Carver like to evidence that in any LDS doctrine today? Support it in LDS scripture? I wonder what color hair Joseph Smith had?

ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES OF THE BIBLE

Mr. Carver seems quite upset in my use of Deut. 18:20 in its simple understanding. He calls it "Suicidal Literalism" (JAC pg. 5). For all his many years of LDS Institute teaching, it would appear that his studies have been somewhat selective.

From this point on, Mr. Carver begins a hack job on Moses, Jeremiah, Jesus and Paul, digging up "problems" that have been used by many over the years to try to discredit the Bible. I refer the reader to the classic work "Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible" by John Haley, Baker Book House, 1977, for a most able handling of the questions raised and many more like them.

For example, Jeremiah did not fail as a prophet. He did not call God a liar.

"Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" (Jeremiah 15:18)

In the referenced scripture, he asked a question of God in a complaint of suffering. Further, Mr. Carver's statement that 70 years did not come to pass is simply inaccurate. The first deportation (Daniel) was in 606, the second deportation (Ezekiel) was in 596, the third deportation (Jeremiah) was in 586. The first return (Zerubbabel) was in 536. That is 70 years! The temple was destroyed in 586 and rebuilt in 516; again 70 years!

Mr. Carver references Jeremiah's prophecy that King Jehoiakim shall have none to sit upon the throne of David" (Jer. 36:30). Yet it appears he was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (II Kings 24:6). However, if you continue reading a bit further in II Kings 24, you find that:

- Jehoiachin was under age and probably, as was the custom, sat under his mother, Nehushta.
- His ascension lasted less than 100 days.
- He surrendered the throne to the King of Babylon who was laying siege to Jerusalem during that time.
- He was carried off into captivity.
- The Hebrew word for sit in Jer. 36:30 is a term carrying with it the implication of endurance or permanence.

And so it goes with each of Mr. Carver's demonstrations of the failure of Biblical prophecy. Interesting stand for a man who professes to be a Christian.

DID MOSES LOSE THE PRIESTHOOD?

In another example of Biblical failure, Mr. Carver 'wisely' states that Moses should be denounced as a false prophet because he states that the Levitical priesthood was to be an everlasting priesthood. ". . . and where is it today? In Judaism or Christianity?" (JAC pg. 6).

Well, I'm sorry to break the news to him, but it isn't in the Mormon Church. It is an Eternal Priesthood in Jesus and the Word of God tell us that it was fulfilled forever in Him! Just read Hebrews 7,8,9, & 10. Our High Priest is forever after the order of Melchizedek

"For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 7:17)

He is able to save from the very "uttermost" who come through Him for he ever liveth to make intercession for us:

"Wherefore he able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. " (Heb. 7:25)

The LDS theology agrees that the Melchizedek Priesthood power was given to Jesus and yet, they assume it as their own rightful, exclusive property, to share with Him. Yet, Jewish law has only ONE high priest at a time. And our High Priest lives forever.

Mr. Carver has entirely missed the Spirit of the Word of God. Paul, in his letter to the Romans has one prophetic pronouncement that has present day application in his logic.

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. " (Romans 1:21-25)

TESTING THE PROPHECIES

The tests of Joseph Smith's prophecies are simply handled. The frustrating part to deal with is getting Mr. Carver to agree that black means black and white means white.

The Civil War. Stretching out the time span of the prophesy is a good argument, except for two problems, it doesn't fit the text and it ignores a specific time table set up by Joseph Smith.

That timetable was fully understood by the very next prophet, Brigham Young and the saints of that day. They waited anxiously for the prophesied destruction of the United States DURING the Civil War, "when," Brigham Young said, "Utah will be able to assume its rightful place amongst the family of nations" (Klaus Hansen, Quest For Empire, 1974, pages 165-171)

The Grease Spot Prophecy. Mr. Carver begins by stating that prophecy is not subject to private interpretation and immediately begins his own.

- ❑ ❑ *"they" refers to Congress only ...*
- ❑ ❑ *"in other words" those in office not voting in favor of the Saints would be broken up, or removed from office ...*
- ❑ ❑ *"When Joseph says there won't be so much as a grease spot left, HE DOES NOT MEAN... " etc...*

It is just amazing how Mr. Carver knows exactly what Joseph Smith meant, even though it's quite different from the plain sense of the sentence. I wonder if it caused his bosom to burn within him?

THE MORMON PRIESTHOOD

First, Mr. Carver refers to the "GOSPEL LAW" in Heb. 7:11-12 and it isn't there.

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called the

order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.
"(Heb. 7:11-12)

The 'Law of the Gospel' is defined in the LDS Temple Ceremony as:

"avoiding light mindedness, loud laughter, evil speaking of the 'Lord's' anointed and every other unholy or impure practice. (Bob Witte, What's Going on Here, pg. 24)

The Bible says, Jesus was the end of the law! We are either under the law or under grace, not both, either with the Lord or by ourselves.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." (Rom. 6:14-15)

SECRET TEACHINGS OF JESUS?

Mr. Carver refers to the Apocryphal New Testament writings to prove that Jesus taught "*sacred* truth that they were forbidden to teach openly ... sacred things about the priesthood and Temples".

Where? What exact LDS specifics? First, are we to believe that the New Testament Apocryphi are accepted LDS scripture? If so, why are they not included in the authorized LDS edition of the Bible? If not, why is Mr. Carver referring to them?

The same logic goes for his use of the Nag Hammadi Library in reinforcing LDS Temple rites. If you use the part you like, Mr. Carver, you have to accept the rest you don't talk about, the stuff that is filthy and vile before God. If you want the association, you are welcome to it!

The gnostic authors of the Nag Hammadi papers were deeply involved in Witchcraft and Satanism and their writings clearly reveal it. (The truth about the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Writings: M. Layton)

A LIE IS A LIE

First, Peter never claimed to be a prophet, merely an apostle (kind of like Orson Pratt). It is Mormon theology that must require that he be a prophet/president of the Church. He himself defers to James at the Council of Jerusalem, (Acts 15) and calls Jesus, not himself, the foundation rock, the Petra (I Peter 2) and the lie itself is not of the same order. Peter lied about who he was in relation to the Lord.

Joseph Smith lied as a prophet about a command given by the Lord. The curse referred to in Jeremiah 14:14,

"Then the Lord said to me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name. I sent them not, neither have I commanded them; neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought and the deceit of their heart " (Jeremiah 14:14)

is an exact fit to the lies told by the prophet Joseph Smith. Peter sinned when he lied and he had to reckon with Jesus over it, as we all do when we lie. But a lying prophet is a matter of far greater magnitude, and Mr. Carver unfortunately knows that.

FRUITS OF MORMONISM

In his closing comments, Mr. Carver falls back on the old Mormon cry, "How can we be wrong?. Look at our good fruit!"

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth

evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Matt. 7:15-19)

"We spend our time doing good for mankind, we are loving, honest, humble, we don't pick on other churches, etc."

If I had a nickel for every time I heard these same exact words, I could hire someone far more competent than me to write this.

First, the 50,000 full time, proselytizing missionaries with cherub faces are not out there trying to help us strengthen our present walks with the Lord where we worship. They are there to take us from the "hireling of Satan" pastor of our church and bring us into their *only true church*.

Mr. Carver, we would really rather you show your true feelings to our faces! There is something called truth in advertising, even in religious proselytizing. Beware of the words of Christ:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. " (Matt 23:15)

Regarding 'good fruit', there once was a group who did much, much more than even Mormons. They were spic and span! They were virtuous, wholesome, honest, broke no laws, fasted often, prayed daily for hours, diligently studied the word, gave much more than 10% tithe, did good for others, took in the poor and needy of their faith, no public doles! They were extremely careful about dietary laws and followed them intensely. The men of the faith would not even look upon a woman in the street for fear of lusting! Yet, John the Baptist called these people a brood of vipers:

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt 3:7)

And Jesus condemned them soundly (all of Matt. 23). They were Pharisees, a word, today, that is synonymous with hypocrisy. But if their deeds were so good, why did Jesus say their fruit was evil? Because the fruit is spelled out as follows:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. against such there is no law. - (Gal. 5:22-23)

Do not live like the fool described in Luke, puffed up with the goodness of your great works, Mr. Carver.

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust adulterers, or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to this house justified rather than the other. for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased- and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. " (Luke 18:9-14)

In Hosea, the Lord God pronounces a reproof and a dire consequence for the goodly image you project!

"Israel [and maybe Mormonism] is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images...

They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant.- thus judgement springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field... Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies.- because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of they mighty men " (Hosea 10: 1-2,4,13)

Yes, Mr. Carver, there are those who have the gift of prophecy according to God's Word

"And he gave some, apostle; and some, prophets,- and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers," (Eph. 4:11)

They are there for the edifying of the body of Christ, in every part of the body! But Jesus did warn us about false ones and had already set up very good means to determine true from false, and Joseph Smith comes up false by every test we try including the burning in our bosoms.

TMWL STILL STANDS

For all your scholarship and spiritual feeling, TMWL still stands as a divider between our theologies. You have failed to break its basic premise, that we worship separate Gods at separate altars and serve separate Christs. One is right and one is wrong, Mr. Carver. Don't place your eternal soul in the hands of a man!

Apostle Bruce McConkie was WRONG when he said, "If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation." (Mormon Doctrine, pg. 670)

Our only hope is JESUS, not a system of prophets, priesthoods, temple ordinances, blood oaths and the like! Just JESUS! He is the truth and the light! No man comes to the Father but by (through) Him. Not by any works of righteousness or a set of laws and ordinances of a latter-day gospel.

In Col. 2:14-15 it is summed up pretty nicely!

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. . . and having spoiled principalities and powers; he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it "

As I said in TMWL, the real Jesus is waiting to love you and lead you into the safety of His Word. Jesus is everything that God could give. In Gal. 2:20 we read:

"I am crucified with Christ,- nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ 33 liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself to me. "

Brother Carver, in accordance with God's Holy Word, I stand on the scripture in Ezk. 33:6&7 as God's calling on my life.

"But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand So thou; O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn there from me. "

I have divided the Word of God to you in the matter of Mormon Doctrine. It is between you and the Lord, in accordance with Ezk. 33:4&5:

"Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head He heard the sound of the trumpet and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him, But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul."

May God bless you as you pray over this exchange!

J. Edward Decker

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