

Are Mormon Revelations From God?

Bible Answers About Denominations

Since most Mormon doctrine comes from books (other than the Bible) that Mormons consider inspired by God, the entire Mormon system stands or falls on the validity of their claim of Mormon inspiration.

Mormons attribute inspiration to their prophets and the prophets claim they were inspired by God. By way of example, Brigham Young stated, "I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call scripture." Mormonism accepts four books as inspired. Three of those books have been produced within Mormonism.

First, is the Book of Mormon. This was the first book and was produced by Joseph Smith. This book is basically the story of two waves of migration to the American continents from Palestine. The American Indians are asserted to be the result of these migrations. The claim is made that the American Indians are actually Israelites of the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Notice the quote from Joseph Smith in the introduction to this book. "I told the brethren that the book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." It is very clear that Joseph Smith considered the Book of Mormon as being superior to the Bible. The Book of Mormon has been accused of having been largely plagiarized from an unpublished manuscript by Solomon Spaulding. There are approximately two dozen similarities between the two works. There are hundreds of identical phrases contained in both works. Please request the tract, "What Is Mormonism?" to see some of the prophetic failures of Joseph Smith. Since he was wrong so many times then he could not have been inspired.

Second, is the Doctrine and Covenants. Even though the Book of Mormon gets most of the attention, most Mormon doctrine is derived from the book, Doctrine and Covenants. It was originally published in 1833 under the title, Book of Commandments. In 1835 it was reprinted under the title Doctrine and Covenants. In this edition not only were new revelations added but former ones were revised. It is a collection of "revelations" largely attributed to Joseph Smith, though a few "revelations" contained in the book are given to other presidents of the LDS Church. Many of these "revelations" are condemnations of specific individuals, or for the personal gain of "the Prophet" (see Doctrines and Covenants 10:1ff; 41:7; 132:5156). Of all Mormon books of scripture, this book should have remained pure and unchanged since it claims to be the printed record of revelations given directly from God without the added difficulty of translation. Not only that, but the book has God saying: "Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful.... What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken,.... And though the heavens and earth pass away, my word shall not pass away" (Doctrine and Covenants 1:37-38; Book of Commandments 1:7). The original revelations of the book of Commandments cannot, therefore, be changed without destroying God's word (if such were true).

Not wanting to admit that changes have taken place, a number of Mormon leaders have claimed that those revelations have remained unchanged. "There has been no tampering with God's word" (Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth, p. 119, cited by Tanner, *Changing World*, pp. 39). Also, Joseph Fielding Smith said that "there was no need for eliminating, changing, or adjusting any part to make it fit" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, p. 170, cited by Tanner, *Ibid.*, p. 39). However, the Mormon historian, B. H. Roberts, and at least two writers of theses at Brigham Young University have admitted that Doctrine and Covenants has indeed been changed (*Doctrines of Salvation*, p. 170, cited by Tanner, *Changing World*, p. 38). Yet, God has said: "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6). So where does this leave this so called inspired book, since it claims to be scripture revealed directly from God himself to Joseph Smith?

Third, is the Pearl of Great Price. This work contains two books which claim to be translations of ancient Egyptian papyrus documents written by the hand of Moses and Abraham, called the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham. This book occupies a middle ground between the Book of Mormon and Doctrine of Covenants. On the title page it is styled "a selection from the revelations, translations, and narrations of Joseph Smith." It was canonized as scripture by the Mormon Church in 1880. As far back as 1912 non-Mormon Egyptologists examined Smith's translation of the "Book of Abraham" by comparing it to facsimiles of the original manuscript included in its published pages and pronounced the book "an impudent fraud," "pure fabrication" and "the work of pure imagination" (Latayne Colvett Scott, *The Mormon Mirage*, pp. 127, 128). Mormons did not give much credence to these findings. But now a prominent Mormon examined it and the conclusion of this scholar of recognized ability (as stated in open letters to the Mormon Church) is that the "Book of Abraham - and therefore the entire Pearl of Great Price - is "fraudulent," "untrue" and "an insult to intelligence," whereupon Nelson resigned his membership in the Mormon Church (Photocopies of these letters are reproduced by Howard A. Davis, Donald R. Scales and Wayne L. Cowdrey, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* Pp. 93-96).

Fourth, is the Bible. Mormons also consider "The Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly" (*Pearl of Great Price, The Articles of Faith*, Joseph Smith, p. 8). However, the Bible is not given the esteem those works peculiar to Mormonism receive. The above statement by Joseph Smith is an obvious attempt to destroy confidence in the Bible by referring to translation errors. It is asserted that The Book of Mormon, being "translated by the gift and power of God," (*Book of Mormon, Testimony of Three Witnesses* that appears in the front of every edition of the Book of Mormon) is superior to the Bible as the Bible was translated by uninspired men. It should be noted that The Book of Mormon has undergone thousands of corrections throughout the years in order to (1) bring it into line with current LDS doctrine and, (2) to correct grammatical errors. It seems strange that an inspired translation of an inspired document should need correcting.

We can know the writings of Joseph Smith are not inspired because (1) the Bible being the verbally inspired, inerrant word of God rejects all claims of divine inspiration subsequent to itself (Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-9). (2) Joseph Smith was a false prophet—the Bible states, "when a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken" (Deut. 18:22). Joseph Smith made a number of false prophecies (see the tract, *What Is Mormonism?*). The only possible conclusion an honest mind can come to is that the so called inspired writings of the Mormon Church are not inspired at all and that the Mormon leaders who foisted them off on a gullible public are simply "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Cor. 11:13).

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