

A profile portrait of Joseph Smith, facing left. He has dark hair and is wearing a dark blue coat over a light-colored waistcoat and a white cravat. The background is dark and textured.

Understanding Joseph Smith

by Dr. D. Michael Hentrich

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All referenced passages of Scripture from the Joseph Smith Translation (Inspired Version) of the Holy Bible, unless otherwise specified.

Credits

With deepest appreciation to the late Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon for bringing a new expression and deeper understanding and clarity of God's eternal and unchanging truth for the purpose of empowering all people to truly become brothers and sisters under the one living God, our common Heavenly Parent. The perspectives offered in some sections of this book have their roots in new understandings given to us through Rev. Moon and explained in *The Divine Principle*.

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Preface

Month-after-month, week-after-week, faithful believers have proclaimed they know the teachings of Joseph Smith “to be true.” “Trueness” is a very sobering and serious claim. For many, it means they are staking their eternal lives on what they believe.

The concept of ‘trueness’ in a moral and ethical sense must ultimately find its basis in God. Without God in the equation, something might be viewed as morally or ethically right or wrong in a humanistic and relative sense; perhaps culturally. But, without God, we just cannot conclude that something is morally or ethically ‘true.’

Even in a scientific or natural context, truth ultimately hinges on the existence of God. The laws of nature are not material and therefore couldn’t have evolved in the sense that we think of it. Furthermore, while few will admit it, the intelligent laws of nature somehow existed prior to the Big Bang itself and the formation of even the first atoms.

The ‘trueness’ of a faith tradition such as Joseph Smith’s can be known on different levels. It’s ‘trueness’ might be known logically, scripturally, emotionally, intuitively and/or pragmatically. Ultimately, the truth of any faith tradition is seen when it not only makes consistent and logical sense, but when the ‘walk’ matches the ‘talk.’

I believe heaven gave a revelation to Joseph Smith and he obediently followed his calling and created the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and its basic beliefs. I think it was the will of God that this happened, when and where it did. It has played and continues to play a critically important role in American history and God’s unfolding providence. The evidence of God’s hand is all over it: the holiness of the family; the sanctity of human life; the eternal nature of love and marriage; virtue and love of Country based on God; service and sacrifice and investment in one’s fellow man. It’s all holiness. It’s all Godliness. That’s why I love and respect the community and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Jesus said you will know a tree by its fruits. Of course, he wasn’t talking about trees or edible fruit. His words naturally apply to any faith tradition. With such an abundance of good fruits, one

can easily see that Joseph Smith's calling must have had its roots in heaven, in line with Jesus' words.

But, this doesn't mean it's flawless or perfect, either in understanding or practice. Since human beings are flawed and imperfect, and their fingerprints are found on virtually everything in this earthly world, the evidence of imperfection is visible everywhere. There's no haven from error and imperfection wherever humans have been involved.

While the good fruits may be evident for everyone to see, one who hasn't personally practiced a particular faith tradition can't claim to fully understand it. A person who has studied about Judaism but not actually practiced it could hardly be able to fully know its 'trueness.' Therefore, I must acknowledge that I cannot fully understand nor fully appreciate the teachings of Joseph Smith because I haven't been a practicing member of his faith tradition.

So you may say, "*Then who are you to say anything? What can you possibly offer?*" With a perspective from *outside* the community but rooted in scriptures *of* the community (albeit an imperfect or incomplete perspective) it's my hope that I can shed valuable and helpful new light on certain aspects in ways that perhaps those within it might find difficult – beyond the unavoidable and natural biases of the faithful.

No matter how many good fruits there may be, every faith tradition sprang from within the environment of the fallen world because God had to use a fallen person(s) to initiate that faith. Unfortunately, it's more than common for believers to think that somehow their own faith tradition is an exception. It's wishful thinking, at best.

The unintended influences of the fallen environment should be evaluated and weeded out, as much as possible. That's where we might discover ways to elevate any faith tradition, in this case Joseph Smith's, even further than where it has already risen to. We'll examine things from that perspective.

What'll we be looking for? We're NOT here to compare and declare one faith's understanding to be better than another's. We'll be looking for consistency since God is considered by most believers to be good, loving, eternal and unchanging. Also, 'trueness' would require that the rational framework of a faith should be consistent with the rational framework of the greater universe which this same God also designed and created. It would be nonsensical for a good, loving, eternal and unchanging God to create a logical, rational universe and then give us an illogical and inconsistent belief system with which to guide our lives. In such a case, we can assume that something must be wrong, somewhere.

In the bigger picture, there can only be one creator, God, and all major faith traditions should embody some aspect of his character and perspective. He must be beyond any single faith tradition. Therefore, we should all assume that there is a Divine perspective greater than our own. With Godly virtues of appreciation, respect, tolerance, kindness, etc., a sincere and prayerful person should be able to catch a glimpse of at least a piece of that 'Divine perspective.' It's this author's conviction that all of humanity should all be able to someday become as one family because our root source is one and the same; a singular parent/creator, God.

How can each faith's share of Godliness affect the greatest number of people in the world? Well, the answer that some faiths have is: *"We will convert everyone to our faith because we have the greatest truth or even all the truth that God has given man."* We will make everyone a ___ (Muslim, Roman Catholic, Baptist, etc.)

Even God may not want it to unfold that way. He invested some of himself into each of the major faiths. I believe he wants the members of all faith traditions to recognize the Godliness in each other and, as brothers-in-faith (and sisters, of course), pour the love, wisdom and virtues they have each been blessed with into one

common bowl from which all of God's children can drink. How incredibly rich and delicious would that be!

But such a recipe requires one ingredient that is sorely lacking – humility. Many, if not most, adherents of each of these ‘We-have-it-all’ faiths will probably close this book right now if they haven’t already. Perhaps God will shed another tear. As for the rest of us, let’s proceed.

I hope to see Joseph Smith’s beautiful culture integrate into the fabric of God’s larger family, thereby infusing their benefits for the greater good. I hope to see their goodness and virtue become contagious and adopted more freely by other communities of faith. Everyone will surely benefit from such a communion, most especially God himself.

“Well,” you might ask, “*How might this happen?*” Of course the answer is: *Something has to change.*

“NO!” I can hear the screams and moans already. Change is always so threatening and difficult. **“*How dare you rock the boat. We’re just fine the way we are. Who are you, anyway?*”**

But, if we let our emotions subside we can hopefully recognize that if we continue the same way we’ve gone before, we’ll never

break out of the limitations we all face and God's kingdom on earth will remain a distant dream.

This book is the result of an effort to understand Joseph Smith. It's not about understanding The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Brigham Young, Church leadership, or the evolution of the faith. My sincere hope is that the issues raised in this book can help Joseph Smith's community and others of the Body of Christ to become more of a communion of saints under the parenthood of the One Living God.

[NOTE: All references to scripture in this book are taken from the Joseph Smith Translation (JST JST/IV) aka Inspired Version of the Bible, published by World Heritage Encyclopedia, unless otherwise specified]

1. Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith grew up in Vermont and later moved to upstate New York. He was exposed to some of the traditional doctrinal views of Methodism, living in an environment where that faith tradition was prominent. The young Smith attended a Methodist probationary class and several revivals after his family relocated to Manchester, New York in 1817. He may have experienced preaching greats like Rev. George Lane and other Methodist evangelists whose fiery sermons inspired the locals during those years.¹ No one really knows who Smith actually listened to in his experiences with Methodism and/or other Christian churches.

‘Methodist practice and ideas had a profound influence on Mormonism throughout Joseph Smith’s lifetime and later...’²

Whether Joseph Smith joined or renounced the Methodist faith, as some allege, is not of importance here. Rather, we want to consider the theological environment of the day.

It was said that he had a strong interest in the Bible. William Clayton, an early immigrant to Nauvoo, Illinois, described Smith to friends back in England as being “*exceedingly well-versed in the scripture.*”³

To quote what Jesus once said, “*But new wine must be put into new bottles (or wineskins), and both are preserved.*” (Lk 5:38 JST/IV) In this case, God chose Joseph Smith to be his revelatory instrument to bring a new message and enhanced form of Christianity to the people of America and the world.

As mentioned before, the issue which God must always deal with when he reveals himself to mortal humans is that people are imperfect and flawed. No one’s mind is a pure blank slate, or perfectly synchronized with God’s own. Our thinking is not the same. Whatever we may believe or have believed is not 100% correct or complete. Our bottles (or wineskins) are not the new kind Jesus was talking about. Therefore, God has no choice but to pour his new revelations of truth into old human containers. The Bible is replete with examples of God’s frustrations at having to work with flawed and imperfect human beings, every step of the way. (ex: God’s work with the murderer and hot-blooded Moses, king Saul, the disbelieving priest Zechariah, among many others)

While Joseph Smith himself acknowledged, as do some modern Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' scholars, that imperfect humans are used by God to convey his word to mankind, they also believe that God somehow makes sure no errors are made in the transmission of his word.

*'there is a widespread sense among believers in divine revelation that God guarantees the veridical reliability of scripture. This is a perspective shared by Latter-day Saints then and now. Joseph Smith himself declared, "I never told you I was perfect – but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught."'*⁴

But, our search for consistency requires us to ponder: If God guarantees the correctness of scripture, then Joseph Smith would not need to bring a new revelation to man revising our past understandings. Jesus would not have had to repeatedly revise the Jewish perspective to a new and more correct understanding. The prophet Jeremiah would not need to castigate past prophets for misrepresenting what God had tried to give the chosen people through them. Every Christian preacher claims to hear clearly from God, Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit and yet they often disagree with one another on a variety of important issues. Prophets of other faith traditions outside of Judeo-Christianity even sometimes claim to have all the perfect truth without the need for God's son, Jesus. The list goes on and on.

Another related perspective offered by Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints scholar Thomas A. Wayment is that:

*Joseph Smith seems to have viewed all revelation, prophetic writing, and scripture – both ancient and modern – as consistent manifestations of the eternal and divine gospel of Jesus Christ. Smith therefore edited the Bible to make it conform to his own revelations and to give it greater internal consistency.*⁵

Wayment must have been referring to ‘greater internal consistency’ within Joseph Smith’s own revelation and views of scripture since Smith introduced significant revisions to the historical Biblical texts, as we will see in later chapters..

So, back to the bottles (or wineskins). Joseph Smith was chosen and used by God even though he had no formal schooling in Biblical studies, as attested to by some Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints scholars.⁶ It is therefore left to faith in almighty God that He will take full responsibility for any inaccuracies and make sure every human error is corrected. Some would say: *‘God takes that into account and makes provision for it. So, He corrected any errors in **our** understanding and **our** revelation is correct; OR God will see to it that any errors in **our** understanding are corrected.’*

As comforting and reassuring as that may sound, we will have a hard time squaring that wishful thinking with the history of revelation and scriptures. Of course, there are those who will say, *'This time is different.'* If that is your final conviction, then again, you may want to put this book down and find something else to read. This book is for those of us wanting a better understanding of Joseph Smith amidst the theological confusion and disagreement, suffering, religious conflict and even wars that have gone on for thousands of years. All the while, God has repeatedly tried to speak to us through one divinely-called prophet after another to lead us to eventual salvation.

Let's look at the environment and circumstances which surrounded Joseph Smith and may have influenced how he understood the divine revelations given to him.

As I said earlier, he had no formal theological training before receiving his revelations from Moroni. Other historical prophets chosen by God shared that lack of formal training. It was perhaps a good thing since theological scholars of all ages could not completely set aside their own personalities and their own spiritual experiences while evaluating and interpreting God's word as given to them. Thus, they sometimes led people down the wrong theological path because the pure wine was deposited into their

imperfect bottles (or wineskins). All fallen human beings are compromised in one way or another.

With Joseph Smith in mind, let's probe a number of theological areas and the prevalent thinking of that period of time. Let's put ourselves in young Joseph Smith's shoes and mindset and look for positive new insights and opportunities for enhanced consistency.

2. Joseph Smith and the Bible

The contemporary leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has decided that the full volume of the Joseph Smith Translation (Inspired Version) of the Bible may not be ready for official recognition since there remains some controversy as to whether it is a finished work or not. Joseph Smith said it was completed 12 years before he was martyred, but he later indicated that maybe it needed more work.

Smith: *“We this day finished the translating of the Scriptures, for which we return gratitude to our Heavenly Father.”*⁷

The Church: *“The reason why the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has not published the entire manuscript is not due to any lack of confidence in the integrity of Joseph Smith, or doubt as to the correctness of the numerous additions and changes which are not in the Authorized Version of the Bible. The members of the Church do accept fully all of these (changes) as having come by divine revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith.*

*The reason that it has not been published by the Church is due to the fact that **this revision was not completed**. It was the intention of Joseph Smith, while at Nauvoo, to take the scriptures up again and complete his labors, making numerous corrections which had not been made by him in the earlier revision. Due to persecution and mobbing this opportunity never came, so that the manuscript was left with only a partial revision”⁸*

Still this interpretation of the Bible is the product of Joseph Smith himself. It speaks volumes about his beliefs, concepts and way of thinking after he received his revelations. Thus, it is perhaps one of the most valuable sources of information that we can explore to better understand him.

According to comments by Church Apostle Bruce R. McConkie:

*“**The Joseph Smith Translation, or Inspired Version, is a thousand times over the best Bible now existing on earth.** It contains all that the King James Version does, plus pages of additions and corrections and an occasional deletion. It was made by the spirit of revelation, and the changes and additions are the equivalent of the revealed word in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. For historical and other reasons, there has been among some members of the Church in times past some prejudice and misunderstanding of the place of the Joseph Smith Translation. I hope this has now all vanished away. Our new Church*

Bible footnotes many of the major changes made in the Inspired Version and has a seventeen-page section which sets forth excerpts that are too lengthy for inclusion in the footnotes. Reference to this section and to the footnotes themselves will give anyone who has spiritual insight a deep appreciation of this revelatory work of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is one of the great evidences of his prophetic call”⁹

It reportedly bears many similarities to a well-known Methodist Bible Commentary by Adam Clarke. BYU professor Thomas A. Wayment and Haley Wilson-Lemmón suggested that *“direct parallels between Smith's translation and Adam Clarke's biblical commentary are **simply too numerous and explicit to posit happenstance or coincidental overlap.**”*¹⁰ further advancing the idea that the theological environment must be factored in when trying to understand Joseph Smith and his legacy.

Some of the Church’s scholars openly discuss the fact that not only did Joseph Smith create his own version of the Holy Bible, but in doing so he made changes to the narratives whenever and wherever he felt it was needed. Some scholars have suggested that he may have done so to make the Bible fit his own understanding of his revelations.¹¹ Many of these changes were relatively minor, but some were very momentous indeed. Most notably, the first few

chapters of Genesis were dramatically rewritten, significantly altering some aspects of the message found in other Bibles.

We will not challenge the mega-revision of Smith wherein he places Jesus in the book of Genesis in continuous consultation with the Father as the world is created. Rather we will focus on the activities of the first humans in the Garden of Eden and on God's explicit reaction, as rendered by Joseph Smith.

The Genesis story in the Bible is considered by many people to be just folk lore and irrelevant to their modern lives. However, it actually contains profound information which we all need to restore ourselves and fulfill both God's and our own dreams for happy, love-filled lives.

To begin with, as was the custom at that time in protestant Christian culture, Joseph Smith takes literally everything related by the King James Version in these chapters of the book of Genesis. Fruit is fruit, trees are trees, and serpents are snakes. But, metaphorical language is more than obvious here with a bit of Biblical cross-reference.

For example, Joseph Smith seems not to pick up on Job's explicit indication (Job 31:33 JST/IV) that when Adam covered his sexual area with an apron, this was actually Adam's effort to hide

his sin. Eve did the same. They had lost their innocence and become shameful of their naked bodies.

But, you might say, isn't this story about disobediently eating a forbidden fruit?

Again, another relevant scriptural hint can be found in Jesus' own words in the book of Matthew where he said:

*Do ye not yet understand, that **whatsoever entereth in at the mouth** goeth into the belly, and is cast into the draught? But those **things which proceed out of the mouth**, come forth from the heart; and **they defile the man**. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; **These are things which defile a man**. But to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. (Mt 15:16-19 JST/IV)*

Granted, Jesus is addressing the topic of not washing one's hands, but he answered this question within a larger context: namely that eating something cannot make one sinful. Thus, this strong hint could have prompted Joseph Smith to look instead for metaphor in terms of the eating of a forbidden fruit in the Garden.

Even "to eat" finds allegorical meaning in God's word. The connection jumps out when reading Proverbs:

*Such is the way of an **adulterous woman**; she **eateth**, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. (Prov 30:20 JST/IV)*

What does it mean that the adulterous woman “*eateth*?” It means she had sex, and herein illicit sex at that. To “*eat*” sometimes metaphorically has the same meaning in the Bible as to “*know*.”

*“And Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain,...” (Gen 5:4 JST/IV)*

A doctrinal stumbling block here common to the environment in which Joseph Smith lived is the perception that the fundamental problem of humanity is lack of obedience to God’s word. In fact, disobedience is a secondary problem of man and a symptom of something deeper. It is the absence of fully-matured, divine, selfless love for God and for one another which Jesus spoke to us at length about and modeled for us his entire life. Connected to this is the degradation of the sexual union between man and woman - husband and wife - which has ruined individuals, marriages, families, societies and the whole world. Disobedience is simply one symptom or result of this lack of divine, fully-matured love for God in fallen human beings. This doctrinal environment and perception most certainly affected Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the revelations given to him.

But why should we question the forbidden fruit? Can't it just be what it says, a fruit? Is there a scriptural reason to do so? Yes, there definitely is. As we can read in the Song of Solomon, the term "fruit" certainly can have more tantalizing meanings than apples and pears. The Joseph Smith Bible somehow totally omits the Song of Solomon, but the King James Version reads:

*A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. **Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.** (Song of Solomon 4:12-16 KJV)*

Herein, fruit certainly does not refer to an apple or pear. It has clear sexual connotations.

Another tip can be seen in the creation narrative wherein the scriptures repeatedly mention the 'seeds' of each kind of living thing. Any 'fruit,' by definition, contains the seeds for reproduction of the species. Men's and women's sexual organs, likewise, contain the 'seeds' for the reproduction of the species; thus the metaphor

of *'eating the fruit.'*

These are not giant leaps of interpretation or metaphor. It all brings this down to a simple story of the abuse of love and sexuality, which became the very essence of humanity's perpetual problems, far more than can be explained by a single act of simple disobedience. Love, which in its fully-matured state was to be the very fabric of God's kingdom on earth, was spoiled in the first family.

Then, there is the serpent. Rather than being a *representative* of the devil, as Joseph Smith explicitly defines him to be, it should be noted that the serpent's identity was already made clear in the book of Revelation and elsewhere in scripture.

*Neither was there place found in heaven for the great dragon, who was cast out; **that old serpent** called the **devil**, and also called **Satan**, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth; and **his angels** were cast out with him. (Rev 12:8 JST/IV)*

Here we see the serpent is identified as Satan himself, rather than a literal snake *representing* him or being used as a mouthpiece for him. This 'serpent' was not only an angel, but he was a leader of angels ("**his angels** were cast out with him." JST/IV) While we can learn several things from this key passage of scripture, perhaps

the most important point is that Satan is an angel, a servant of God, and not a mortal.

If we dare go one more step we will notice that an oracle addressed to the king of Babylon in the book of Isaiah further identifies this wayward angel by name. In Joseph Smith's Bible, we read:

*How art thou fallen from heaven, O **Lucifer**, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, **I will exalt my throne above the stars of God**; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the Most High**. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Is 14:12-15 JST/IV)*

We also find in these passages Satan's motivation for tempting and seducing Eve. He wanted to put himself above the children of God and make himself like "*the Most High*." Therefore, in Joseph Smith's Bible, Satan not only tells humans that he too is a son of God, but he wants to be elevated to the position of God, himself.

Another oracle in the book of Ezekiel, while addressing the King of Tyrus, reinforces these passages with additional details:

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold; the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so; thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned; therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God; and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness; I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. (Ez 28:13-18 JST/IV)

It should be clear by now that the term “serpent” was not referring to a snake or even a representative of Satan but rather to Lucifer, a leader of angels and a proud one who got lost in his own beauty and ego.

Not only that, but it seems that the angels who sided with Lucifer also suffered from sexual problems:

*And the **angels** which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them **in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh**, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*
(Jude 6,7 JST/IV)

It would be logical to infer a relationship between the apparent sexual aberrations going on in the Garden with the problem of the fallen angels, especially since it was the archangel Lucifer who started it all with Eve.

Now you may say this is all esoteric and unimportant. However, with Joseph Smith's Bible having left all of this critical metaphorical meaning by the curbside, another equally troublesome problem unfortunately arose; that of consequence.

Having not connected the dots to lay bare the devastating destruction of God's maturing love in his first two children by the selfish advances of the wayward angel Lucifer, Joseph Smith saw no reason not to diminish and even erase God's extreme disappointment and anger at what had just transpired. Indeed, he

uniquely rewrites the dialogue of Adam and Eve after the Fall to indicate that they felt they had actually done a good thing by violating God's commandment and instead obeying the words of the serpent (Satan or Lucifer) so that they might bear offspring.

*And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying, **Were it not for our transgression, we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.** (Gen 4:11 JST/IV)*

This is also an obvious indication here that their sexual life has now begun. That seems normal and natural, but why would God's first children have to defy His commandment to them in order for them to have sex and "*multiply*" as he had previously told them to? We are seeking consistency.

Consider that all living beings created by God reproduce naturally and within God's grace and plan. Adam and Eve obviously were created with sexual organs. Thus, God intended for them to use them and "*multiply.*" Oddly, these same sexual organs became a source of shame for them once they disobeyed God's word and fell. It would seem inconsistent that the first son and daughter of God would have to rebel against God in sin and break his commandment in order to fulfill his direction to them to

multiply. No other creature God made needs to sin in order to fulfill its purpose of creation. And, if Adam and Eve were to simply live forever without reproducing, then why would he give them sexual organs and why would he give them the direction to multiply? Wouldn't this also imply that God was effectively trapping Adam and Eve in a corner, rather than empowering them?

Indeed, God seemed to be intent upon embracing Adam and Eve's sinless children and descendants, and without them ever falling into sin. We read in the book of Malachi that God sought a "godly seed."

*And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? **That he might seek a godly seed...** (Mal 2:15 JST/IV)*

More revealing than that, we read in chapter 8 of the book of John, where Jesus very emotionally and emphatically declares that Satan is absolutely not on God's side and that fallen people are indeed Satan's children and not God's:

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

*Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham. **Ye do the deeds of your father.** Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, **If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot bear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.** (Jn 8:31-44 JST/IV)*

All human beings are God's children from the perspective of being created by him. However, Jesus is saying that all people who sin (all people are fallen in sin and are sinners) are children of Satan in a spiritual sense. That is why Jesus came to bring salvation to all mankind, not just a limited few. Only by engrafting onto Jesus as

the new vine (Tree of Life) can they be redeemed and again become children of God instead of remaining children of Satan.

From this we see that Jesus, whom Joseph Smith placed with God in intimate consultation throughout the entire creation and Garden scene, was absolutely opposed to Satan and his works. There was no redeeming value in Satan's deeds, according to Jesus. Jesus said we sinners are descendants of OUR father, the devil, and our will is to do our father's bidding. And in Jesus' specific circumstance, during his life, Satan was also pushing people to murder him, the son of God.

Thus, to portray the Fall of Adam and Eve, an event prompted by Satan himself, as a good incident enabling the propagation of children (children of Satan) would seem to be a significant inconsistency. The incident in the Garden resulted in the suffering of God and of mankind for all of history. To turn the incident in the Garden totally upside down into a good thing is to negate the entire Biblical and historical record of God's unending frustrations with man which began in the Garden. No other creature in God's wondrous creation needs to go through a life of trials, torment and suffering in order earn the right to be happy. Man's Christ-like love is the missing ingredient and has been since day-one.

In the end, because of the cognitive dissonance which all of

this created, it seems that Joseph Smith felt it better to remove a key passage of scripture which no longer fit with his rendering. In all traditional Bible translations, Genesis 6:6 recounts that:

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. (Gen 6:6 KJV)

For obvious reasons, this passage was omitted entirely from Joseph Smith's Bible. It nails the coffin on the idea that God could be even complacent with the events which had transpired in the Garden. God was "***grieving***". There is no stronger word in the English language for his emotions. He was anything but happy about the Fall. His entire plan of creation had been destroyed in a moment before his very eyes. God's daughter was seduced and both she and his son were spiritually killed by his servant.

*For in the day thou eatest thereof ***thou shalt surely die***. (Gen 2:22 JST/IV)*

*Nevertheless, ***death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. For I say, that through the offense, death reigned over all.*** (Rom 5:14 JST/IV)*

Why did this happen? It is because the requisite obedience of

Adam and Eve was meant to facilitate their growth to full maturity, to the perfection commanded us by Jesus. (Matt 5:50 JST/IV) Upon that foundation, Adam and Eve would be qualified to become parents and raise children of God who could inherit God's divine love through them. As it turned out, without that qualification of God's mature parental love, they raised the first murderer, Cain.

Jesus said:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
(Matt 23:36-38 JST/IV)

So what was missed here? What was missed here was the **first** of the three Blessings of God to Adam and Eve. There were actually *three* great blessings to them: Be Fruitful and Multiply (this was actually two blessings) and have dominion. Multiply we did. Have dominion we did. But be fruitful (embody God's mature, divine love) we did not.

Is this simply my own opinion as to what it means to "be fruitful?" Once again, Jesus described it in the Beatitudes:

Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. (Matt 5:50 JST/IV)

It is this which we did not do. Because we failed to do this, and mature to become Christlike and in the image and likeness of God in our hearts, as Jesus later commanded us, then we have struggled to even be obedient.

If we are looking for consistency, which is the very purpose of this book, then these issues need to be reconciled. We cannot be comfortable with such major revisions and still believe we are being consistent with God's word.

It was clearly the theological environment of Joseph Smith which resulted in it being difficult for him to see these scriptural guideposts. All but two of these citations were taken from Joseph Smith's own version of the Holy Bible. No one was connecting these dots at that time in history. Christianity, and Methodism in particular, were simply shadowing the understanding handed down centuries earlier from the Church fathers in the Councils of Nicaea and others. In certain key areas, their deliberations and conclusions distracted traditional Christians of all subsequent denominations from the essence of what the Holy Bible was actually telling them. This, tragically, was one of those areas.

3. “I am also a son”

Angels have the same image and likeness of God as mortal sons do. Thus, as Paul warned us, we sometimes mistake them for people.

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (Heb 13:2 JST/IV)

But, angels are not the same creature as humans. They were created by God with a different purpose. As Joseph Smith repeatedly makes very clear in his Bible, they are servants and messengers.

According to God’s description of his creation process, we normal humans can certainly claim to be “sons of God” in his image and likeness. But Joseph Smith uniquely quotes Satan, an angel, as allegedly saying to man, “*I am also a son of God.*” (Gen 4:13 JST/IV) While both humans and angels in some sense might be justified claiming to be “*sons*” of God, certainly neither are “THE SON” of God, or Christ. No one would argue with that. “A”

son is not the same as “THE” son. But according to God’s word in the Bible, an angelic son such as the angel Lucifer, is also not the same as a human son.

Reading Joseph Smith’s Bible in the book of Hebrews, Paul says:

*For unto which of the angels said he at any time, **Thou art my Son**, this day have I begotten thee? And again, **I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?** And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, **And let all the angels of God worship him, who maketh his ministers as a flame of fire.** And of the angels he saith, **Angels are ministering spirits.** (Heb 1:5-7 JST/IV)*

An angelic son cannot have the three great blessings given to Adam. Only a human son can multiply and have dominion over the physical world and all living things in it. Angels do not have chemistry; no blood, no sperm, no children, no family, no brothers or sisters, no cousins, etc. Only a human son like Adam can mature to become fully “fruitful” in the image of “THE” Son, or God. Lucifer was jealous of the new human son and wanted to enjoy the three great blessings for himself.

Lucifer wanted the same rights and privileges as the human son, so out of his immature jealousy he sexually seduced Eve. His

seductive, selfish and immature heart was thereafter conveyed through Eve and Adam to all of mankind. Thus, sexual love has become seductive, selfish, and immature and virtually everything aside from what God originally intended it to be. Joseph Smith's Bible reads:

*And Satan came among them, saying, I am also a son of God, and he commanded them, saying, Believe it not. And they believed it not; and they loved Satan more than God. **And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual and devilish.***
(Gen 4:13 JST/IV)

However, in declaring himself to be also a son of God, Satan opens the door for people to view him as Jesus' brother. That would mean that either Satan is not the angel Lucifer but rather a son of God just like Adam and Eve and Jesus, or that Jesus is also an angel and all angels are also son's of God. The third possibility would be that there is no distinction between angels and human spirits or some variation of that. This third option appears to have become a pillar of Joseph Smith's revelation or at least of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' teachings; angels become humans and then become angels again.

While some might accept the inference that Jesus and Lucifer are brothers in some sense, both being created in God's image and likeness, an angel son cannot be the same as a human "son".

Reading once more from the book of John, Jesus alluded to this when he spoke of those who are even just spiritually *related* to Satan, let alone Satan himself:

*They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with **my Father**; and ye do that which ye have seen with **your father**. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, **If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham**. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham. **Ye do the deeds of your father**. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, **If God were your Father, ye would love me**; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot bear my word. **Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do**; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it. (Jn 8:33-44 JST/IV)*

Clearly angels and humans are not the same creature, but in this way the distinction became blurred and confused. For angels to be born on earth and have mortal bodies so they can enjoy God's three blessings is their dream and wish. However, it is not theirs to have. Angels cannot have it. It was Lucifer's original motivation in the Garden when he seduced God's daughter. It was this act of rebellion which turned him from being a trusted servant into the enemy of God, or "Satan." This angelic desire still persists today. It is elaborately expressed in this entire misunderstanding. Indeed, Satan is "*a liar and the father of lies.*" (Jn 8:44 JST/IV)

4. Jesus came to die on the cross

If there is one universal doctrine that is preached throughout Christendom, it's that Jesus' singular purpose in coming 2000 years ago was to die on the cross. It's so fundamental of a tenet that if you fail to believe it, you could be excommunicated from some churches. However, Joseph Smith added even more emphasis to this belief by taking it one step further beyond traditional Bibles, placing Jesus in the Garden with the Father, planning the salvation of mankind from the time of the Fall. While not explicitly stated, it could easily be taken to mean that Jesus planned his crucifixion on Calvary at that time.

There must be Scriptural evidence to suggest this, and of course there is. But, as you will soon see, this is far from the end of the story. Let us look:

*And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, **Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?** And Adam said unto him, *I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then**

*the angel spake, saying, **This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth; Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest, in the name of the Son. And thou shalt repent, and call upon God, in the name of the Son for evermore. And in that day, the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying, I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever; that, as thou hast fallen, thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.*** (Gen 4:6-9 JST/IV)

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence,

neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Is 53:3-12 JST/IV)

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be done unto thee. But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (Mt 16:22-24 JST/IV)

...Even as the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mt 20:25-28 JST/IV)

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that

*same hour said Jesus unto the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, for to take me? I sat daily with you in the temple, teaching, and ye laid no hold on me. **But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.** Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. (Mt 26:51-55 JST/IV)*

***And Jesus said, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death; and shall deliver him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him; and the third day he shall rise again.** (Mk 10:33-34 JST/IV)*

*I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not; but **the scriptures must be fulfilled.** (Mk 14:55 JST/IV)*

*Saying, **the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes; and be slain, and be raised the third day.** (Lk 9:22 JST/IV)*

***But first he must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.** (Lk 17:25 JST/IV)*

*Then he took the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and **all things which are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man, shall be accomplished.** For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on. And they shall*

scourge and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. (Lk 18:31-33 JST/IV)

For I say unto you, That this is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors; for the things concerning me have an end. (Lk 22:37 JST/IV)

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?... And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; (Lk 24:24-25, 46 JST/IV)

I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. (Jn 17:4-5 JST/IV)

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; (Acts 2:23 JST/IV)

Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. (Acts 17:3 JST/IV)

The case is made; the evidence is in. It seems the conclusion is clear. It 's black and white. But now, for the rest of the story. The

passages of scripture which follow tell a very different story; that Jesus came with a very different intention and purpose. After reviewing them, we will address the critical issue of reconciling these two groups of passages in our quest for consistency in God and in his word.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Is 2:4 JST/IV)

How wonderful. This is obviously what God wants, but the traditional doctrinal environment of Joseph Smith's day said that this could not have happened 2000 years ago because Jesus had to be rejected and die for our sins.

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and **the government shall be upon his shoulder**; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. **Of the increase of his government and peace there is no end**, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and **to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever**. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.* (Is 9:6-7 JST/IV)

Wow! Jesus is coming to be King of Israel. The kingdom of God is certainly coming.

But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. (Is 45:17 JST/IV)

Isaiah chapter 60

This prophetic chapter describes how Israel will become the kingdom of God and prosper forever. This did not happen, but it could have if Jesus had been received by John the Baptist and his father and the rest of the priests and leaders.

*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord; **But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel;** After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. **And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.** (Jer 31:31-34 JST/IV)*

God is prophesying here about the people of Israel, not today's Christians.

We might look in the rear-view mirror of history and choose to believe that God was talking about a "*New Jerusalem*," perhaps Salt Lake City and the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' culture but these, plus the following texts, seem to indicate that God wanted to establish the kingdom of heaven in Israel 2000 years ago.

*Therefore say I unto you, **The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*** (Mt. 21:45 JST/IV)

In other words, Jesus intended the kingdom of God to be established THERE.

*The word of the Lord came unto us, saying, And thou **Bethlehem, which lieth in the land of Judea,** in thee shall be born a prince, which art not the least among the princes of Judea; for out of thee shall come the Messiah, who shall save my people Israel.* (Mt 2:6 JST/IV)

Jesus the prince. Princes become Kings!

*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye **shut up the kingdom of heaven***

against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. (Mt 23:10 JST/IV)

And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.... But the Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. (Mt 26:17, 20 JST/IV)

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mk 1:13 JST/IV)

And he shall go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Lk 1:17 JST/IV)

Prepared for what? Prepared to receive Jesus as the Messiah and have faith and obedience before him. God's kingdom was "at hand."

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou who killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen her brood under her wings, and ye would not. (Lk 13:35 JST/IV)

*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee, one stone upon another; **because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.** (Lk 19:41-43 JST/IV)*

Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. (Lk 22:3 JST/IV)

Is Satan helping God to carry out his plans?

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (Meaning the soldiers who crucified him,) and they parted his raiment and cast lots. (Lk 23:35 JST/IV)

Who decided that Jesus was referring to the soldiers? It is pure speculation presented as fact.

*That all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. **He who honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father** who hath sent him. (Jn 5:23 JST/IV)*

And the Father himself who hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. And verily I testify unto you, that ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor

*seen his shape; For ye have not his word abiding in you; and him whom he hath sent, ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life, lest ye should honor me. I receive not honor from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. **I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not**; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, who seek honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is Moses who accuseth you, in whom ye trust. For **had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me**; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? (Jn 5:38-48 JST/IV)*

*And one more time... I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father; and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, **If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me**, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot*

*bear my word. **Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.*** (Jn 8:37-44 JST/IV)

What is Jesus saying? We've cited these passages three times now, but study this carefully. The devil's desire is to kill Jesus. That is what he is telling us.

*And supper being ended, the devil having now **put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;**.... When Jesus had thus said, he was **troubled in spirit**, and testified, and said, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, that **one of you shall betray me.*** (Jn 13:2, 21 JST/IV)*

Hello! Jesus said he was “*troubled in spirit.*” If this was all according to God's plan, Jesus would have no reason to be “*troubled.*” And what does the word “*betray*” mean? Some will defend Judas and say that “someone had to do it.” That was clearly **not** Jesus' view of Judas. (See Mt 26:17, 20 JST/IV above)

He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled

that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. (Jn 15:23-25 JST/IV)

Isaiah 53 came to pass, but their faithlessness and hatred was a “sin.” The fact that this prophesy “came to pass” does not mean God wanted it to happen that way.

*Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and **they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.** Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.* (Acts 7:51-53 JST/IV)

*Which none of the princes of this world knew; for **had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*** (1Cor 2:8 JST/IV)

Paul acknowledges that it was what had to happen to Jesus, but he states here that their actions were done in ignorance. This does not alter the point that Jesus’ original and primary purpose was to bring God’s kingdom but he was rejected and forced to fulfill the prophesies of Isaiah 53 instead.

Traditionally, and in the theological environment in which Joseph Smith lived, these two very divergent groups of scriptures just cited were reconciled by proclaiming that the first group of

passages refer to Jesus' life 2000 years ago, since they clearly describe what actually transpired, while the second group of passages refer to his return in the future when he establishes God's kingdom on earth.

That would seem logical and plausible, however there is virtually no reason in scripture to reconcile these passages in this manner. There is no indication that the second group of passages refer to a time in the distant future when Christ would return. Both groups of passages clearly refer to Jesus and Israel 2000 years ago. In fact, there was no plan for Christ to return at all if the priests and leaders of Israel had embraced their Messiah and had faith in him. The kingdom of God on earth would have been realized in Jesus' lifetime and we would all be enjoying our lives living in it today.

What a revolutionary proposition? How could it be justified? The answer is simple and one which Joseph Smith could easily have been the foremost proponent of. While most Christians think that the second group of passages refer to the future "*New Jerusalem*" and kingdom of God on earth foretold in the Book of Revelation, (Rev 3:12; 21:2 JST/IV) and others perhaps the future culture being created now by the followers of Joseph Smith, the actual answer is simply: man's free agency. Both groups of

passages cited above referred to Jesus' life 2000 years ago because of man's free agency.

The history of God's endless frustrations in relation to fallen man had become so exhaustive that it appears that God decided to speak, primarily through his prophet Isaiah, in a unique manner which has resulted in serious confusion today. God prophesied what would happen to his son Jesus contingent upon our free agency: We either receive and embrace God's son and the kingdom of God is established, or we reject him and kill him and salvation of forgiveness is given by his sacrificial death on the cross at the hands of sinners. It is simple. Both possibilities were obvious and predictable since the time of the Fall in the Garden. God sent Jesus as the new Adam, according to St. Paul. (1Cor 15:45-47 JST/IV) It was the free agency of fallen man, together with the influence of Satan, which determined their response to him and the actual outcome; not God's predestined plan. Explaining these scriptures by incorporating man's free agency restores consistency to God and to his word.

During the Old Testament age, man's free agency was paramount in the minds of the Jewish people. Their obedience or lack thereof determined their fate. They were very clear about it. However, for some reason, after Jesus gave his life on the cross,

the centrality of man's free agency was somehow shelved or at least reduced to a more personal level. It was somehow conjectured that "*God's in control;*" a concept which effectively contradicts the understanding of man's free agency. This point is critical. Emphasizing and restoring our conscious awareness of man's free agency in these last days may be one of the greatest contributions of Joseph Smith to the entire Christian world and to humanity.

But, the passages cited above, in the context of the Bible as a whole, beg us to address more in-depth three critical issues: First, does man's free agency apply not only to one's personal destiny but also to the fulfillment of God's larger providential will on earth? Second, what might this tell us about the general nature of prophesy? Is prophesy an unconditional statement of what God said will absolutely happen, or does man's free agency even affect what God says to us? And third, Jesus was quoted as saying "*All that is written of me must be fulfilled.*" We have already surveyed two very different kinds of prophesy that "*were written about him?*" For God and God's word to be consistent, we must reconcile those prophecies which transpired with those that did not.

Let's begin by addressing the first point: Does man's free agency apply not only to one's personal destiny but also the

fulfillment of God's larger providential will on earth? Note the following passages of scripture:

Adam and Eve's disobedience of God's commandment not to "eat" derailed the entire original plan of God for his kingdom on earth and caused it to be replaced with a plan of salvation. (Gen chapters 2-4)

*And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, **Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died;*** (Jud 2:20-21 JST/IV)

*But now thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, **because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.*** (1Sam 13:14 JST/IV)

*But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars; **thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.*** (1Chr 22:8 JST/IV)

*And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, **Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the***

*Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, **because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand.** (2Chr 16:7-8 JST/IV)*

*And now, **because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.** (Jer 7:13-15 JST/IV)*

*Then shalt thou say unto them, **Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk everyone after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me; Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favor.** (Jer 16:11-13 JST/IV)*

If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will withhold the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my

sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will withhold the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jer 18:8-10 JST/IV)

Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jer 25:8-11 JST/IV)

Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations....Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord God; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity. (Ezek 5:7-8, 11 JST/IV)

*For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them by whom thy mind is alienated; And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labor, and shall leave thee naked and bare; and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. **I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols....** Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. (Ezek 23:28-30, 35 JST/IV)*

*For thus saith the Lord God; **Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries; I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.*** (Ezek 25:6-7 JST/IV)

*Therefore thus saith the Lord God; **Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of***

them that are slain in the midst of the seas. (Ezek 28:6-8 JST/IV)

And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the Lord; because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it. (Ezek 29:9 JST/IV)

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it; Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee, one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. (Lk 19:40-43 JST/IV)

From the passages of scripture above, we can see clearly that man's free agency applies not only to one's personal destiny but also to the big picture; to peoples and nations. Over time fallen man's free agency, together with his myriad wrong choices, have postponed the fulfillment of God's larger providential will to establish heaven on earth.

Addressing our second point, what might this tell us about the general nature of prophesy? Is prophesy an unconditional statement of what God said will happen, or does man's free agency even

affect what God says to us? Obviously, from the passages just cited, prophesy is contingent on man's free agency and the choices we make, even when God prophesies something. It seems that God refuses to renege on his decision to give his children free agency. He refuses to micromanage our lives. He refuses to force us to do anything. Thus, God has put enormous responsibility upon our shoulders. We can both shatter God's heart or bring him greatest joy and fulfillment. It's been placed in our hands, which brings us to our third point...

There were many things "*written about him*" which *differ* from what actually happened in Jesus' life. We surveyed many of them in the passages cited above. Jesus is even quoted as saying in the book of Luke:

*Then he took the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and **all things which are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man, shall be accomplished.*** (Lk 18:31 JST/IV)

*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that **all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*** (Lk 24:43 JST/IV)

Following each of these two passages, Jesus went on to recall to the disciples Isaiah 53 which foretold of his rejection and suffering. Jesus was clearly trying to strengthen the faith and commitment of his weak followers who were struggling, trying to make sense out of the murder of their savior. He knew his words were not inclusive of Isaiah 9, 11, and 60 and other prophetic passages foretelling of Jesus' victorious establishment of God's kingdom on earth; words that were *also* written about him.

There exists, in Joseph Smith's Bible and in all other Bibles, a much greater abundance of scriptural evidence indicating that Jesus came with the intention of establishing God's Kingdom on earth, 2000 years ago, than passages indicating he will be rejected and sacrifice his life for our forgiveness. Don't worry! That would not mean that there would be no salvation for us sinners.

No one is disputing the fact that Jesus did have to give his life on the cross and atone for our sins with his blood. The issue before us is, was it Jesus' plan and intention from the beginning? The adherents of traditional doctrine have declared the case "closed." This makes it necessary for them to explain away all the overwhelming number of scriptures that we surveyed which tell a different story, one of God's kingdom being "*at hand.*"

They must explain away the prophecies of Isaiah and others and redefine them as pointing the way to some distant future time in history. They must make up excuses for Jesus' tearful remorse over the failure of the people to recognize him and receive him. They must sweep under the carpet Jesus' stern warnings of what will happen to them because of their faithlessness. They must label Jesus' tearful prayer in Gethsemane the product of human cowardice and frailty because they can't imagine any other reason why Jesus might not want to die for us. And, they have to twist Jesus' final words on the cross to be a plea for God to forgive us because we didn't know what a good thing we were doing in murdering his Son, or in Joseph Smith's case, because the soldiers didn't know what a good thing they were doing.

Then, if Jesus came and was received by the Jewish people and leaders in faith and obedience, and established God's earthly kingdom, as Isaiah repeatedly and clearly prophesied, how then would mankind be saved?

Paul called Jesus another "Adam." (1Cor 15:45-47 JST/IV) Adam was the progenitor of humanity. A new Adam means a new progenitor. God had a plan.

It is clear when reading Isaiah chapters 9, 11 and 60 that God's plan for his earthly kingdom included the salvation of all mankind.

Isaiah's prophesy of Jesus' torture and sacrificial death for our sins was his warning of the outcome of Jesus' life if the Jewish people and leaders failed to embrace God's son with faith and obedience. Thus, Isaiah 53 came to pass, leaving the long-awaited earthly kingdom to be postponed for a future time and place and requiring Christ to return. Satan continues to rule this earthly world, wars and suffering continue everywhere, and billions more of God's children pour into hell while a few true believers are saved.

The end result is to say that if there is any truth to this scenario, then it may be considered appropriate to place Jesus in the Garden, planning with his Father to come and establish God's kingdom on earth, contingent upon the faith and obedience of the chosen people, but it would be inappropriate to place Jesus in the Garden, planning with God the Father to come and be rejected and crucified thousands of years later to purchase our forgiveness. It makes all of God's painstaking preparations for the acceptance of Jesus irrelevant and insincere. It makes all of the Old Testament meaningless. It would beg the question: Why waste time? Why not just send Jesus to die long ago, instead of Noah?

Due to man-made doctrines, it has become unthinkable that Jesus should come and be received by the chosen people in faith, love and obedience. But, as we can now see in the scriptures, that

is just exactly what God, the prophet Isaiah and Jesus expected and wanted to see.

This conclusion begs several important but difficult questions: Is God only capable of forgiveness? Couldn't God and mankind just grow up in profound love for one another from the beginning, like human parents and children commonly do? Why does man need to sin and be forgiven? Do the vast majority of God's children have to suffer in eternal hell so that a few true believers can be close to God and be happy? Can a God of immeasurable love be comfortable with that? If everyone will eventually be saved, then why the game of sin and salvation? It would seem to serve no purpose except to help us recognize and appreciate God's mercy. Should parents trap their children into sinning against them so they can forgive them and demonstrate their forgiveness and mercy?

God was furious at the Fall of Adam and Eve; not complacent. God clearly never intended to see it happen. It ruined his entire original plan for man and his beautiful universe. Genesis 6:6 reveals God's devastating pain over the Fall, but this key passage was removed. The plan of salvation was due to man's free agency. It seems clear that Joseph Smith would agree with that and we are only strengthening that perspective in a way that can bring greater consistency to our perception of God and his word.

5. Atonement by the blood

Redemption from sin is a key component of all traditional Christian faith traditions. As we have seen already, Joseph Smith records God speaking of this as early as in the Garden.

*And in that day, the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying, I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever; that, as thou hast fallen, **thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.** (Gen 4:9 JST/IV)*

A pivotal doctrine and pillar of the traditional Christian faith is that the shedding of Jesus' precious blood on the cross was the only way our sins could be atoned for, or forgiven. God needed a blood sacrifice. A cornerstone of this doctrine can be found in a single passage of Scripture, namely Hebrews 9:22. What does it say?

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

This passage is believed to be reinforced by several other passages wherein Jesus declares “*But the Son of man goeth as it is written of him;*” (Mt 26:20 JST/IV) and also passages such as Rev. 13:8, which reads:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

On the face of Paul’s statement, it would seem that a blood sacrifice is an absolute requirement for the atonement of sins. However, he also includes the words “*almost all things.*” Why?

A simple review of the Old Testament reveals that atonement for sin was most often satisfied by a blood sacrifice or burnt offering, but there were several other explicit ways to atone for sin acceptable to God. These included the scapegoat, faith and obedience, money, oil, flour, live bird, incense, meat, drink, jewelry and shewbread.

Which method of atonement did God *prefer*, if any? You would think it would be the blood sacrifice/burnt offering. But NO!

That is clearly NOT the case, according to God's Word in the Bible. Consider the following several passages of Scripture:

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. (Hosea 6:6 JST/IV)

By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. (Prov 16:6 JST/IV)

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. (1Sam 15:22 JST/IV)

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:6-8 JST/IV)

O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not

in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Psalms 51:15-17 JST/IV)

From these several passages of Scripture, we can see that God does **NOT** prefer blood sacrifice/burnt offering for the atonement of sin.

How about the scapegoat method of atonement? Leviticus 16:10 explains what atonement by a scapegoat means:

*But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be **presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.***

It is commonly believed that Jesus was the scapegoat for our sins, but in what context? The shedding of Jesus' precious blood on the cross was unquestionably atonement for our sins, but it doesn't fit the definition of a living scapegoat.

Jesus was actually atoning for sin as the scapegoat when he went out into the wilderness for 40 days of fasting and enduring the temptations of Satan. As the scapegoat, he was a *living* sacrifice. After atoning for sin as a scapegoat, he forgave the sins of any individuals who showed faith and obedience to him. But if that is

true, if Jesus already atoned for sin as the scapegoat, then why would he have to *again* atone for sin as a blood sacrifice on the cross?

Jesus came to atone for the sins of all of Israel and even for all of mankind, not just for a handful of faithful and obedient individuals who came to him.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish; but have everlasting life. (Jn 3:16 JST/IV)

Had the representatives of all the people of Israel, the priests and leaders, come to Jesus in faith and obedience to him, then the requirement to receive Jesus' forgiveness would have been satisfied on the national level and the living scapegoat could have declared the nation of Israel forgiven. Jesus had the authority to do that.

But they came to him instead with scorn and disbelief. Thus, the nation of Israel could not be forgiven. So, to atone for the sins of not only Israel but even for all of us, beyond the handful of individuals who came to him, Jesus had no choice but to walk the path prophesied in Isaiah 53 and make the ultimate offering of atonement with his blood.

This leads us back to one of our original questions: *Does God need blood to atone for sin?* The answer from God's Word in the Bible is obviously no. God's Word in the Bible explicitly says there are several acceptable ways to atone for sin, as previously stated. However, Jesus absolutely needed to offer his life and precious blood as an atonement for sin because of the faithlessness of the leaders of Israel. This may sound blasphemous when compared with the doctrine we are all more than familiar with, but it is perfectly orthodox when held up to God's Word as found in the Bible.

So once again, why then did Jesus say repeatedly: "*The Son of man indeed goeth as it is written of him;*" (Mk 14:19 JST/IV) That is absolutely correct because when the prophecies of Isaiah chapters 9, 11 and 60 became impossible to fulfill due to the rejection and faithlessness of the leadership of Israel, then Jesus had to "*goeth as it is written*" in Isaiah 53 and become the suffering and bruised Lord bearing our sins on the cross.

The logic and consistency of God and his word become apparent once again. God and his word in the Bible must be consistent.

6. The purpose of free agency

The traditional Christian theological environment of Joseph Smith's day prevented believers from being able to see beyond repentance and forgiveness in terms of God's plan of salvation. In addition, this perception of God's plan of salvation even became mistaken for God's original plan of creation. The literal world of God's kingdom on earth became out-of-sight and somewhat out-of-mind.

Of course, there is logic to it. By faith in Jesus and in the offering of his life on the cross, penitent believers can be forgiven of sin. But our perspective has historically been limited by our concepts.

The forgiveness of God is certainly available to anyone who uses their free agency to choose to repent and believe. It is critically important to every fallen human being. However, we are asking a bigger question, which is: Why did God give free agency to man before the Fall? Was it because he knew that man was going to Fall

and he would need it in order to choose to repent and believe or not? Then was the Fall predestined? If it was part of God's original plan, then what became of Adam and Eve's free agency? Can we say they genuinely had free agency but God knew they would make the wrong choice? Then if their decision was foreknown, their free agency must have been an illusion.

Some will say that God gives everyone free agency every minute of their lives, but at the same time God foreknows every decision they will make. There are certainly a few people who can recognize the irreconcilable contradiction in this logic. Joseph Smith, in his unique narration of the Garden scene in the book of Genesis, makes it clear that Adam and Eve fell by the exercise of their free agency and not because it was predestined to happen. That would be absolutely correct and serves to bring greater consistency to God's word.

But what if man had not Fallen? Is it conceivable? Is it possible? Or, was it an essential part of God's original plan for man? To say that man must suffer and be broken in order to appreciate God's mercy and grace in receiving us back into his bosom is no different than saying that I cannot appreciate my mother's tender love unless I suffer torment at the hands of a cruel

step-father, or similarly unless I eat something bitter before enjoying my rhubarb pie.

Free agency was not given to man so that he might acquire forgiveness and appreciate God's grace if and when they fell into sin. Free agency was given to man so he could fulfill the three great blessings and become what Jesus commanded us to become when he said: "*Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.*" (Mt 5:50 JST/IV) In other words, we were created to, intended to and commanded to become like Christ, like Jesus, like the true Adam that he modeled for us all.

Could we conceive of the possibility of Jesus falling into sin? It would not be possible. Why? Not because he is the son of God and God cannot be tempted. In fact, Jesus was tempted directly by Lucifer in the desert during his 40 days of fasting. It is because his love is fully perfected in God's image. That means Jesus' love is greater than any possible temptation Satan can throw at him. The power of God's love is the greatest of all powers. The point here is, he commanded us to become the same as him in that regard.

Is it possible? Dare we call Jesus a liar? Could he have been joking with such a critical message as this? Certainly not. Then, it must be possible.

Sadly, the best plan for humanity that we have thought the all-loving, almighty God could come up with was one in which billions of his children suffer in sin with the hope that a portion will repent and embrace God's forgiveness, leaving the vast majority to end up in eternal damnation. Given another chance to repent after they leave this physical body, according to Joseph Smith, then hopefully a lesser percentage will end up in eternal hell, or perdition. But if even only one of God's children should end up in eternal suffering, damnation and hell, then perhaps we need to put the 'help wanted' sign out for a more creative and loving God since this lowly, fallen grandfather could never feel comfortable or accept seeing even one of his grandchildren suffer eternally (which is a very long time). And I am absolutely sure that God has far more love than a thousand or million of me.

If St. Paul was correct to liken Jesus to a new Adam (1Cor 15:45-47 JST/IV) and if Jesus modeled for us a man embodying the fully-matured and perfected love of the Father, then God obviously had a much better plan than we thought. Jesus was and is the total fulfillment of what a "*fruitful*" man must be. God instructed all living things to "*be fruitful and multiply.*" Indeed, in every species God's creatures reach their unique, full maturity before multiplying, whatever that may look like for each living thing. It is a necessary prerequisite for multiplying.

Adam and Eve were mature enough physically to have sex and bear offspring, but obviously the Bible reveals to us that they were not yet mature spiritually, not mature enough to be Godly, divine parents to their children. Adam blamed his wife before God, and Eve blamed the serpent. No one repented, and no one took responsibility for their sin.

God told Adam to “*be fruitful and multiply.*” (Gen 1:30 JST/IV) Maybe we missed something here. We are created with the potential to become like God but we have been multiplying without first becoming truly “*fruitful.*” In fact, we have been multiplying a world of sin. Adam and Eve multiplied to create the first murderer in history. When an angel asked Adam why he was making a sacrificial offering to God, he answered that he had no idea except that God required it.

*And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, **Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him, I know not, save the Lord commanded me.*** (Gen 4:6 JST/IV)

This is proof positive that Adam had not even come close to becoming the mature embodiment of God’s divine love as Jesus modeled it for us. His love for God was yet undeveloped. His relationship with his Father in heaven was simply one of obedience.

This is the level of an obedient angel, a servant; not a fully-matured human son as Jesus showed us. This cannot be considered “*fruitful*” in any qualitative sense. Therefore, Adam was not yet qualified to be a father to his children.

The goal of God’s original plan was a world filled with Christlike adults, raising their children to become the same as themselves, in the full image of God. That was the sole purpose for which God gave us free agency. It was to enable us to learn to love as God loves. Programmed, instinctual love cannot be God’s love, nor can it reciprocate God’s love. He could never find fulfillment sharing that kind of love with us. We have to develop that love on our own, individually, within families, exercising our free agency every step of the way.

There was never a need for evil and suffering. There was never a need for Satan. In fact, according to Joseph Smith’s Bible and all traditional Christian Bibles, God clearly declared that everything he had made was good. “*Everything that God had made*” must include the angels. Lucifer was one of those angels. He was even a leader of angels, according to Rev. 12:9. Lucifer did not create anything. God alone is the creator.

The angel Lucifer betrayed God and became Satan, but there is no reason to believe that this happened before God declared that

everything he had made was good. If the Fall of Lucifer happened before God created Adam and Eve, then either God did not create Lucifer (since God said everything he made was good) or God was not telling the truth. In fact, Lucifer became Satan when he betrayed God, betrayed his responsibility as the “*guardian cherub*” (Ez 28:14-15 JST/IV) in the Garden, and seduced God’s daughter, defiling her and all of her descendants. It was at that moment that Lucifer became Satan. The “*war in heaven*” has been misplaced to be a pre-human event. This would inject enormous inconsistency again into God’s word. God said that everything he had made was “good,” just as he was creating Adam and Eve.

There was never a need for a Fall so that man could have sex and bear children. It was all to happen within the grace of God’s fully-matured divine love between husband and wife. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints places a premium on the mature love of fathers and mothers in the parenting of their children. God is no different.

Forgiveness is essentially important to fallen man, but forgiveness alone will never bring God’s kingdom, either on earth or in heaven. It requires that each of God’s children embody his fully-matured divine love.

So, the end-goal for God has always been a world of his divine love; the realization of his three great blessings to man, not a world of forgiven, penitent and appreciative broken sinners who now perceive God's mercy. God is all about love. His son is all about love. He told *us* to be all about love. Everything in God's creation is all about love. Forgiveness then becomes incidental to the love of God.

Why do angels covet what humans have, and dream they could be human? It is because they cannot have the three great blessings which are available only to human men. Angels cannot have children, families or extended families. They cannot directly experience the joy of family relationships, and they cannot have dominion in the magnificent physical universe that they helped God to create. They are jealous of man.

We should make the angels proud of us with our love and embrace them as brothers in that love. Love is really all they want and need. With God's love flowing to them from God's many children, they will be satisfied. They were created to serve God and serve us and they will be fulfilled in doing that when we are soaked with God's mature, divine love which then flows back to them. Then, we will truly be Latter-Day Saints, and even better than

saints. St. Paul alluded to as much, perhaps without knowing it, when he said:

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. (Rom 8:19 JST/IV)

This reference to “*the creature*” is rendered the “*whole creation*” in traditional Bibles, which includes the angels. We, God’s children, are to have a dominion of love, not just of authority and skill. The missing piece is God’s fully-mature, divine love. Forgiveness is the jack holding up the disabled car, or maybe the temporary ‘doughnut’ spare tire. The flat tire needs to be repaired and the gas tank filled. These restorative repairs can only be done by God’s fully-mature, divine love. Then we can drive freely again, or maybe for the first time ever. God and God’s word are consistent.

7. The Bible and the unchanging God

Jesus cited the Old Testament scriptures and the teachings of Moses many times and said he came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. His teachings supported and clarified the law. He spoke of adultery and said that even if a man thinks wrongly of a woman, he has already committed adultery with her in his mind. (Mt 5:30 JST/IV) He said it is not enough to treat your enemy fairly but you must love him. (Mt 5:46 JST/IV) He said if you do not forgive your enemy, neither will you be forgiven by God. etc. (Lk 6:37 JST/IV) The essence of God's word does not change but our understanding may change in the sense of clarification and depth and maturity.

For this reason, new revelations from God via Jesus or other representatives should likewise be consistent with past scriptures and serve only to clarify and add depth and maturity to our understanding. Any marked deviation from past scripture should be severely suspect because Jesus did not indicate any significant

mistakes of the past, and because it is generally understood and believed that God is unchanging, eternally.

An example might be the claim to have seen the Creator face-to-face. The Bible makes clear that such an occurrence is not possible since God the Father does not have a form within the universe that he created, whether it be in the spiritual realms or the physical realm. That is not to deny that he has manifested himself in the person of Jesus.

*And he said unto Moses, Thou canst not see my face at this time, lest mine anger be kindled against thee also, and I destroy thee, and thy people; for **there shall no man among them see me at this time, and live, for they are exceeding sinful. And no sinful man hath at any time, neither shall there be any sinful man at any time, that shall see my face and live.*** (Ex 33:20 JST/IV)

*And **no man hath seen God at any time, except he hath borne record of the Son;*** (Jn 1:19 JST/IV)

***No man hath seen God at any time, except them who believe.** If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. (1Jn 4:12 JST/IV)*

Whom no man hath seen, nor can see, unto whom no man can approach, only he who hath the light

and the hope of immortality dwelling in him.
(1Tim 6:16 JST/IV)

Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. (Jn 6:46 JST/IV)

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever continueth in sin hath not seen him, neither known him. (1Jn 3:6 JST/IV)

And the Father himself who hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. And verily I testify unto you, that ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape; (Jn 5:38 JST/IV)

So, we seek consistency and respect for the unchanging truth of God as expressed through the ages and we seek to understand the message of Joseph Smith. God cannot be at the same time outraged at the Fall of his first children and also make his Blessing to “*multiply*” impossible without them violating his commandment to them and Falling in sin. If the Fall were actually a good and beneficial thing, and man’s sin were simply one of various forms of disobedience to any of the laws of God, then why would Jesus say in John 8:44 “*You are of your father the Devil...?*” Why the commandment, “*Don’t eat?*” There must be an ancestral connection to Satan. And there is, because Lucifer offered the fruit of sexual love to Eve for his own self-serving desire and she ate of

it. The deep spiritual scar of this illicit intercourse between an angel and a human was passed onto Adam and all of their descendants, including me and you. That is the significance of Jesus' purity as a new Adam and the son of God. He is not of the family or lineage of Satan (Jn 8:38 JST/IV). He is different from the rest of humanity. As he said in the forementioned passage, his father and our father are different. He was not born in sin or of sin.

Thus, God's utter disappointment, anger and grief at the Fall of man should not be turned upside down to convey a positive purpose and meaning. It diminishes the very purpose for Jesus' coming as a new Adam (1Cor 15:45-47 JST/IV) and the value of his death on the cross. There seems to be virtually no viable reason for altering this core message in the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus didn't speak of the need for such a momentous change in our understanding although he had several opportunities to do so.

Perhaps Joseph Smith sensed the sacred value of the human family and thus felt called to revise the meaning of this critical story in Genesis to uplift the value of having children. Perhaps he didn't consider that Adam and Eve were given sexual organs for that very purpose, and also the Blessing to "*multiply*", so there must have been a way for them to do so within God's graces and not in sin and betrayal.

The way it was to happen was for the first humans to begin by becoming fully mature and truly “*fruitful*” and achieve what Jesus referred to when he said “*Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect..*” (Mt 5:50 JST/IV) On that foundation they could then use their God-given sexual organs to share His sacred, divine love and produce the offspring of God; not offspring of sin to whom Jesus could later say: “*Ye are of your father the devil...*” (Jn 8:44 JST/IV)

This will bring the teachings of Joseph Smith not only into much greater essential harmony with the greater body of Christ, but provide a consistent and much more reasonable foundation for the religious people of the world to embrace the rest of Joseph Smith’s wonderful teachings on man’s free agency and on marriage and family as God’s most sacred institution and the cornerstone of God’s kingdom on earth, even eternally.

8. Jesus will return to America

It is commonly understood by observers of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints that it is believed Jesus came to America. Whether that would be a past, present or future event is not clearly understood by outsiders. But, according to some Church scholars, Joseph Smith's own views on this evolved.

At one point in Joseph Smith's ministry it is said that he spoke as if he anticipated Jesus' return around 1890.¹² Later he reportedly revised this to an anticipation of a more personal experience of Christ's return rather than a global, epic event. This view may have evolved even further into a return of Christ's spirit to America through the the Church's leadership and the Latter-Day Saints, themselves.

Well, back to the topic of Jesus returning to America. Why not, after all? What more appropriate place for Christ to return to than this unique Judeo-Christian melting pot of humanity. The history of America began with the early Pilgrims and their incomparable

courage and faith in God as they risked absolutely everything to begin a new life in this land. Their incredible story need not be retold here, but it is a testimony to the hand and heart of God working through people. The early stages of American history continued to display God's presence as General George Washington offered fervent prayer at Valley Forge, to which God worked a miracle beyond imagination by orchestrating the defeat of the British forces in the face of their certain victory.

The leaders of the emerging colonies and states made crystal clear that God was the foundation of their budding republic. That is not to say that sinful nature did not show its ugly head in the form of slavery, the slaughter of Native Americans, and selfish greed, etc. But, these were not particularly American problems any more than anywhere else in the world. These were universal problems of fallen, sinful man and his ungodliness.

Christianity was an inseparable fabric in the creation and building of America. Churches were full on Sundays. Bibles were ubiquitous and studied commonly in people's homes. Everyone owned guns but killings were few and far between and occurred mostly in self-defense. Divorces were relatively rare and business was done on a handshake. Lawyers were seldom needed and hard to find.

How might Jesus return? Why speculate? Some think physically, born of a woman as before. Some think he will appear literally in the clouds of the sky. Some think it will be a spiritual, internal experience within believers. Some think he already returned long ago in the Pentecost. There is no need to guess. This is not our concern in this short book. The question here is, might he return to America? Again, why not?

Many people take literally that he would return to Jerusalem. But, there was no such place between 70 AD and 1948 to return to. Now there is, but who knows what tomorrow may bring. In any case, Jerusalem is not a Christian city. Few people there are looking for the return of Jesus. And Jesus said, as we saw before, that due to the rejection of God's son by the "*tenants*", the owner of the vineyard will take the kingdom of heaven away from them and give it to another people who will produce its fruit. (Mt 21:45 JST/IV) That means the kingdom of heaven will not be established in Israel. They missed their chance when they rejected Jesus.

If Jesus comes to America, to which group of believers will he come? Will he come to the Roman Catholics, or perhaps the Baptists? Certainly Joseph Smith believed he was called to prepare people for his return, meaning he would be coming to the community of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

The Book of Revelation speaks of a “*New Jerusalem.*” (Rev 3:12; 21:2 JST/IV) Will the New Jerusalem be Salt Lake City? If so, does anyone who wishes to be saved need to become a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints? Or, did he already return? Obviously there are far more questions here than there are answers.

It seems clear that Joseph Smith was not crystal clear in his own mind about how Jesus might return, but he was convicted that he would return to America. Why not?

Did it happen hundreds of years ago, or perhaps it will happen in the future? Did it happen around 1890? Other faith traditions, such as the Unificationists, believe that he did return, was born of a woman as before, and that he did indeed come to America in 1965.

Well, the bigger question today seems to be: How will America fare in the war between God and Satan as Jesus returns? Will America be awake? Will it deteriorate into hedonism and selfish materialism? Will it forget God and Jesus altogether? Will its schools teach that there is no God? Will talk of God be banned from the public square? Need I go on? In other words, will America (Americans) be ready to receive him whenever and however he does come? That is the bigger question.

The followers of Joseph Smith are seriously trying to prepare as many people as possible for that day. God bless them and their efforts. May we all learn from them and may they learn from others whom God has also spoken to and through. Amen.

Thank you for reading this book. I do hope it gave you valuable food for thought and enhanced your life and perspective. If so, would you do me a favor and write a very short review for this book on Amazon.com? Together, you and I can help someone else to experience what you did in your reading. Thank you.

Dr. D. Michael Hentrich

- NOTES -

other books by Dr. Hentrich...

- *Trilogy on God*
- *Dare to See*
- *Church on Sand*
- *Angelic DNA*

Endnotes:

¹ From Joseph Smith's First Vision, A Guide to the Historical Accounts, by Steven C. Harper

² Foundational Texts of Mormonism; Examining Major Early Sources, Oxford University Press, 2018, p.199

³ *ibid.* p.391

⁴ *ibid.* p.106-7

⁵ *ibid.* p.100

⁶ *ibid.* p.74

⁷ July 2, 1833, History of the Church 1:368 (<https://www.mrm.org/smith-inspired-version> - accessed 05-27-2021)

⁸ (Joseph Fielding Smith, Selections from Answers to Gospel Questions: A Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorum 1972-73, p. 312 - <https://www.mrm.org/smith-inspired-version> - accessed 05-27-2021)

⁹ (Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie, p. 289 -

<https://www.mrm.org/smith-inspired-version> - accessed 05-27-2021)

¹⁰ , BYU professor Thomas A. Wayment and Haley Wilson-Lemmón, BYU's *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, March 2017

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Smith_Translation_of_the_Bible accessed 05-27-2021)

¹¹ Foundational Texts. p.100

¹² *ibid.* p.212