

## Joseph Smith: The Profile of a Prophet

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In 1955 President Hugh B. Brown, who served as an apostle and a member of the First Presidency during the administration of President David O. McKay, gave a devotional speech at Brigham Young University entitled “The Profile of a Prophet”.<sup>1</sup> In this remarkable devotional President Brown related, among other things, the details of a meeting he had shortly before the outbreak of World War Two with a “prominent English gentleman, a member of the House of Commons, formerly one of the justices of the supreme court of England.”<sup>2</sup> President Brown describes a conversation the two began on religious subjects and how, upon further elucidation, his English friend expressed his incredulity at Joseph Smith’s claims to be a modern prophet. He recalls how his associate “asked me to prepare a brief on Mormonism and discuss it with him.”<sup>3</sup>

Later in his devotional President Brown gave, as part of his “brief” presented to and agreed upon by his friend, a qualifying list of attributes of a true prophet. In a few pages I wish to compare Joseph Smith’s prophetic character and attributes with President Brown’s qualifications.<sup>4</sup>

*1. He will boldly claim that God had spoken with him.*

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh B. Brown, “The Profile of a Prophet”, reprinted in *“Praise to the Man”: Fifteen Classic BYU Devotionals about the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo: Brigham Young University and Intellectual Reserve, Inc., 2005), 59-69.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The reader is further directed to Kevin Christensen’s cogent “Biblical Keys for Discerning True and False Prophets”, found on the FAIR website at <http://www.fairlds.org/Bible/prophetttestsfv5.pdf> (Accessed February 24, 2011.) The scope of this review does not allow me to include an in-depth discussion of Christensen’s engaging paper, but I wholeheartedly recommend it to the eager investigator on the subject of how Joseph Smith’s prophetic claims holds up under biblical scrutiny.

If there is anything that characterizes Joseph Smith's descriptions of his visions, it is boldness. In his 1838 history, which would later be canonized as part of the Pearl of Great Price, the Prophet unapologetically declared that despite bitter persecution

it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision [of God the Father and Jesus Christ]. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise. So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation (Joseph Smith- History 1:24-25).

*2. Any man so claiming would be a dignified man with a dignified message - no table jumping, no whisperings from the dead, no clairvoyance, but an intelligent statement of truth.*

Hugh Nibley, in his vintage work on the subject, has discussed the nature and role of prophets in the primitive Christian community and the restored Church of Jesus Christ. He notes the palpable difference between prophets and maundering mystics as well as prophets and pedestrian preachers, to name just two examples.<sup>5</sup> Among other things, Nibley draws attention to the distinct way in which true prophets have declared their message to the world. They plainly and matter-of-factly declare their visions and revelatory experiences without couching their words in philosophical contrivances or hasty rhetoric. And this, Nibley reminds us, is what gets them in trouble.

As soon as the Apostles said, "We are his *witnesses* of these things," the council and the high priests "were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them" (Acts 5:32—33; italics added). Again, we are told that the multitude "were cut to the heart" when Stephen accused them of rejecting what had been brought "by the disposition of angels" (Acts 7:53—54). But the last straw was when he had the effrontery to say, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. *Then* they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him" (Acts 7:56—58). If Stephen had spent his life, as innumerable philosophers have, denouncing the vices and follies of the age, he might have died peacefully in bed. But those fatal words, "I see," were his death warrant. And what did Paul say to make the Jews cry out in utter horror: "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live," as "they . . . cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air?" (Acts 22:22—23.) What indeed? These were the unforgivable words that made him unfit to live: "Suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou

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<sup>5</sup> See Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets* (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987), 98-107 and 17-25, respectively.

me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest" (Acts 22:6—8). Paul could have won his audience over by speaking as a scholar, but when he bore witness to what he had seen and heard, he was asking for trouble.<sup>6</sup>

Nibley draws an insightfully distinct and unmistakable parallel to the molestation of the ancient prophets and the abuse poured out upon the Mormons.

To come down to modern times, why were people so furiously angry with Joseph Smith? It was not for being a reformer or rebuking a naughty world. In his day, the most popular preacher was the one who could denounce the manners of the times most fiercely and paint the most lurid picture of the wrath to come. Nobody led militant campaigns against even the most rabid preachers of hellfire or swore to drink their blood. We have said that the world in which Jesus lived was full of quacks and impostors who carried on unmolested. So in the time of Joseph Smith, the country was full of strange separatist cults with strange social programs and strange moral practices such as the Mormons were falsely accused of, but no one thought it virtuous to burn their settlements or shoot them on sight. In what did the modern prophet's deadly offense consist? In the summer of 1833 a much-publicized mass meeting was held in Missouri to protest the admission of Mormon immigrants into Jackson County, and this was the official objection: "The committee express fears that . . . they will soon have all the offices in the county in their hands; and that the lives and property of other citizens would be insecure, under the administration of men who are so ignorant and superstitious as to believe that they have been the subjects of miraculous and supernatural cures; hold converse with God and his angels, and possess and exercise the gifts of divination and unknown tongues." Charles Dickens, as is well known, was very favorably impressed by the Mormons he saw both in America and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

England, but one thing about them he could not tolerate: "What the Mormons do," he wrote in 1851, "seems to be excellent; what they say is mostly nonsense," because "it exhibits fanaticism in its newest garb," namely, "seeing visions in the age of railways." That put them in the same class with the prophets and Apostles of old. "We know Abraham is our father, and Moses is our prophet, but who is this guy?" "Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead—who do you think you are?"<sup>7</sup>

Joseph Smith, as we have seen before with his 1838 description of his First Vision, fits the pattern of ancient prophets and apostles by unequivocally and plainly bearing witness to what he had seen and heard without the vain sophistries and vague ramblings that characterize quacks and impostors.

*3. Any man claiming to be a prophet of God would declare his message without any fear and without making any weak concessions to public opinion.*

One area in which Joseph Smith clearly demonstrates this trait is in his handling of the doctrine of plural marriage. Joseph's condoning and practice of plural marriage merited scorn and ridicule from the press and the pulpit. Scandalous rumors and libelous publications decried the Prophet's character for his behavior. For example, the *Nauvoo Expositor*, an infamously scurrilous anti-Mormon publication that, in the immortal words of Lucy Mack Smith, "belched forth the most intolerable and blackest of lies",<sup>8</sup> listed the Prophet's sealing to a "plurality of wives, for time and eternity" as one of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 15-16, internal citations removed. Nibley concludes this theme with this caveat: "Before we even consider the question of whether Joseph Smith was a true prophet or not, the uniqueness of his position deserves respectful attention. Because, true or false, he was the first man since the days of the Apostles to claim the things that real prophets claim. The modern prophets who excited the laughter and contempt of the world exactly as the ancient prophets... were the first men since ancient times to talk of what they had seen and heard in the presence of God and angels. What could they expect but a prophet's reward?"

<sup>8</sup> Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith By His Mother*, ed. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 322.

the many grievances that he would have to account before his pious critics, who assured their readers that they were merely acting out of “Christian love, meekness and humility, yet to no effect.”<sup>9</sup> Other criticisms of the Prophet for his advocacy of and involvement in plural marriage have been a hallmark in anti-Mormon literature and has become a stock theme that was and is repeated by the Prophet’s adversaries.

And yet how did the Prophet himself react to these scrofulous complaints? Did he make any “weak concessions to public opinion” or back from what he believed? No. He continued to practice plural marriage and even recorded a revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 132) explaining and clarifying the doctrinal and procedural aspects of plural marriage. Church leaders and members would follow in his footsteps and continue to practice plural marriage for roughly another 50 years despite bitter persecution from non-Mormon legislatures, “reformers”, zealots and clergy.

*4. If he were speaking for God he would not make concessions, although what he taught would be new and contrary to the accepted teachings of the day. A prophet bears witness to what he has seen and heard and seldom tries to make a case by argument. His message and not himself is important.*

The careful student of Joseph Smith’s sermons and teachings cannot fail to note the Prophet’s blunt refusal to make concessions to his critics over doctrinal matters. Such is especially evident in his Nauvoo-era teachings. In two sermons Joseph Smith expounded on topics such as the nature of God, the divine potential of mankind, and a

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<sup>9</sup> *Nauvoo Expositor*, Vol. 1 No. 1, June 7, 1844. The paper goes on to deplore “Joe Smith... the rough customer” for his “‘spiritual wife’ dictrine.”

plurality of gods in a divine assembly. “God Himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens,” the Prophet proclaimed in his famous King Follett Discourse,

is a Man like unto one of yourselves—that is the great secret! If the veil were rent today and the great God that holds this world in its sphere and the planets in their orbit and who upholds all things by His power—if you were to see Him today, you would see Him in all the person, image, fashion, and very form of a man, like yourselves. For Adam was a man formed in His likeness and created in the very fashion and image of God. Adam received instruction, walked, talked, and conversed with Him as one man talks and communicates with another...The first principle of truth and of the Gospel is to know for a certainty the character of God, and that we may converse with Him the same as one man with another, and that He once was a manlike one of us and that God Himself, the Father of us all, once dwelled on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did in the flesh and like us.<sup>10</sup>

This radically anthropomorphic conception of God was revolutionary in the Prophet’s day. Mainstream creedal Christianity taught then, as it does now, that God is an incorporeal and transcending spirit without body, parts, or passions. The Prophet’s striking corporeal depiction of God, while finding precedent in biblical and early Jewish and Christian teaching,<sup>11</sup> was nonetheless considered a blasphemy by Joseph’s

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<sup>10</sup> An amalgamated text for the King Follett Discourse that departs from the traditional rendering found in the *History of the Church* and other popular LDS publications is found in Stan Larson, “The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text”, *BYU Studies* 18/2 (1978), 1-18. The quote above is on pages 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> For an LDS perspective on the early Christians’ acceptance of a corporeal God, see David L. Paulsen, “Divine Embodiment: The Earliest Christian Understanding of God”, *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), 239-293; for a non-Mormon defense of biblical anthropomorphism, see Edmond LaB. Cherbonnier, “In Defense of Anthropomorphism”, *Reflections on Mormonism*, 155-173; as an aside, I also raise the reader’s attention to Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 83-103. “Anthropomorphism is quite the norm for descriptions of Ugaritic [and by extension

contemporaries that still brings fiery indignation down upon the Mormons today by their critics of other Christian traditions. But Joseph's reaction to these criticisms was far from conceding.

O, ye lawyers, ye learned doctors, who have persecuted me, I want to let you know and learn that the Holy Ghost knows something as well as you do... When I say doctors and lawyers, I mean the doctors and lawyers of the Scriptures I have done so hitherto, to let the lawyers flutter and let everybody laugh at them... Come here, ye learned men, and read, if you can. I should not have introduced this testimony, only to show that I am right.<sup>12</sup>

Later in the sermon the Prophet even directly challenged one of his longtime theological rivals.

Alexander Campbell, how are you going to save them with water? For John said his baptism was good for nothing without the baptism of Jesus Christ. Many talk of any baptism not being essential to salvation, but this would lay the foundation of their damnation.<sup>13</sup>

In response to apostates who proclaimed Joseph Smith a fallen prophet for his teachings on the divine council of the gods, the Prophet Joseph bluntly denounced his critics with scriptural and logical appeals. After referencing 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 the Prophet acknowledged that "some say I do not interpret the Scripture the same as they do. They say it means the heathen's gods." Nevertheless, the Prophet insisted that "Paul says there are Gods many and Lords many; and that makes a plurality of Gods, in spite of the whims of all men. Without a revelation, I am not going to give them the

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and association Israelite] deities...it is commonly thought that anthropomorphism is a general ancient Middle Eastern trait that Israel eventually discarded, unlike the rest of the region. This characterization is inaccurate for both Israel and the rest of the ancient Middle East" (pg. 87).

<sup>12</sup> Larson, "The King Follett Discourse", 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 16.

knowledge of the God of heaven. You know and I testify that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods. I have it from God, and get over it if you can. I have a witness of the Holy Ghost, and a testimony that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods in the text.”<sup>14</sup>

After reading from the Hebrew Bible<sup>15</sup> to demonstrate his point, the Prophet challenged “the apostates and learned men to come here and prove to the contrary, if they can.” The Prophet went even so far as to “defy all the world to refute” him.<sup>16</sup> Joseph then concluded his sermon with the stern warning that “as the Lord lives, God never will acknowledge any traitors or apostates. Any man who... will betray me, he will betray you. All men are liars who say they are of the true Church without the revelations of Jesus Christ and the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which is after the order of the Son of God.”<sup>17</sup>

Do these sound like the words of a man who was quailing under the pressure of his critics when countered or challenged? Judge ye! on whether or not Joseph Smith was a man who would concede to his critics or surrender to those who were thrown into paroxysms of rage by his bold and revolutionary doctrines.

*5. Such a man would speak in the name of the Lord, saying, “Thus said the Lord,” as did*

*Moses, Joshua, and others.*

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 6:474

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion on Joseph Smith’s reading of the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1, see Kevin Barney, “Joseph Smith’s Emendation of Hebrew Genesis 1:1”, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30/4 (Winter 1997): 103-35 and “Examining Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith’s Understanding of Genesis 1:1”, *BYU Studies* 39/3 (2000): 107-24.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:475. In a more humorous vein the Prophet Joseph countered the Trinitarian notions that “say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God... three in one, and one in three!” He observed that such “...is a strange God anyhow... It is a curious organization.. All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God -- he would be a giant or a monster.”

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:478.

A sampling of Joseph Smith's revelations published in the Doctrine and Covenants that begin with the prophetic "thus said the Lord" clause can be found in the following:

- "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servants" (D&C 86:1).
- "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you who have assembled yourselves together" (D&C 88:1).
- "Behold, thus saith the Lord unto the elders whom he hath called and chosen in these last days" (D&C 52:1).
- "Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my church in Zion" (D&C 119:1).
- "Behold, thus saith the Lord, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, even he who was crucified for the sins of the world" (D&C 54:1).
- "Behold, thus saith the Lord your God unto you, O ye elders of my church, hearken ye and hear, and receive my will concerning you" (D&C 64:1).
- "Verily, thus saith the Lord: Let a conference be held immediately" (D&C 118:1)
- "Thus saith the Lord, verily, verily I say unto you my son, thy sins are forgiven thee" (D&C 90:1).
- "For verily, thus saith the Lord, it is expedient in me that they should continue preaching the gospel" (D&C 73:1).
- "Verily, thus saith the Lord, in addition to the laws of the church concerning women and children, those who belong to the church, who have lost their husbands or fathers" (D&C 83:1).

More examples could be furnished, but the above should suffice. It should be abundantly clear at this point that Joseph Smith follows the precedent of biblical prophets by introducing many of his revelations with “thus saith the Lord”.

*6. Such a man would predict future events in the name of the Lord, and they would come to pass, as did those predicted by Isaiah and Ezekiel.*

Joseph Smith made a number of prophetic claims of what would transpire in the future. He made many prophetic claims that, upon investigation, do indeed seem to have come to pass.<sup>18</sup> We shall analyze a few of these prophecies here.

Perhaps the most well known prophecy made by Joseph Smith was the predicted outbreak of the American Civil War nearly thirty years before the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter in South Carolina. On December 25, 1832, the Prophet Joseph found himself reflecting on the “troubles among the nations” and how they had become “more visible this season than they had previously been since the Church began her journey in the wilderness.”<sup>19</sup> Upon further inquiry the Prophet received the following revelation, now canonized as section 87 in the Doctrine and Covenants:

Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls; And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place. For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great

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<sup>18</sup> Duane Crowther has compiled a list of prophecies by and about Joseph Smith and explored their nature and fulfillment. His book is indispensable in analyzing Joseph Smith’s prophetic ministry. See Duane Crowther, *The Prophecies of Joseph Smith: Over 400 Prophecies By and About Joseph Smith and Their Fulfillment* (Bountiful: Horizon Publishers, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:301.

Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations. And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war. And it shall come to pass also that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation. And thus, with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations; That the cry of the Saints, and of the blood of the Saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies. Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen.

The Prophet Joseph Smith further declared in 1843: "I prophesy, in the name of the Lord God, that the commencement of the difficulties which will cause much bloodshed previous to the coming of the Son of Man will be in South Carolina. It may probably arise through the slave question. This a voice declared to me, while I was praying earnestly on the subject, December 25th, 1832" (D&C 130:12-13).

Critics of Joseph Smith explain away this striking prophecy by rationalizing that anyone in Joseph Smith's day could have predicted the outcome of the American Civil War by merely observing national current events. With slave rebellions in the southern States and economic tensions between the North and the South, it wouldn't have taken a "prophet" to guess that war would sooner or later break out. However, upon closer

inspection we discover that Joseph Smith's prophecy was remarkably fulfilled in fine details that would not have been readily apparent to any of Joseph Smith's contemporaries.<sup>20</sup> As much as Joseph Smith's critics wish to deny such, it doesn't change the fact that Joseph Smith's civil war prophecy was fulfilled to the letter.<sup>21</sup>

Another prophecy of Joseph Smith's involves Stephen A. Douglas. B. H. Roberts, in his monumental *Comprehensive History of the Church*, reports the incident and its fulfillment.<sup>22</sup> Taking his source from William Clayton's journal entry for May 18, 1843, Elder Roberts reports how Joseph Smith dined with Judge Stephen A. Douglas. The two men began discussing the "history of the Missouri persecution" and the attempt to gain redress from President Martin Van Buren and the United States Congress. After expressing his frustration and displeasure with the United States government for its failure to protect the Saints, the Prophet Joseph uttered a solemn warning and prophecy to Douglas. Said Joseph, "Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if you ever turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of the Almighty upon you; and you will live to see and know that I have testified the truth to you; for the conversation of this day will stick to you through life".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 192-195.

<sup>21</sup> Another excellent discussion of the Civil War Prophecy is found online at [http://www.jefflindsay.com/LDSFAQ/FQ\\_prophecies.shtml#war](http://www.jefflindsay.com/LDSFAQ/FQ_prophecies.shtml#war) (Accessed February 25, 2011). Especially insightful in Jeff Lindsay's article is the documentation of the incredulous reaction to the prophecy by some of Joseph Smith's contemporaries, a fact which should make critics of Joseph Smith cautious before they dismiss the Prophet's claims.

<sup>22</sup> B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1957), 2:183-189.

<sup>23</sup> Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 2:183

Elder Roberts, after noting that the prophecy was published “in the Deseret News of September 24th, 1856” and “afterwards published in England in the Millennial Star, February, 1859”,<sup>24</sup> gives a history of Douglas’ political ambitions and aspirations to the Presidency of the United States. As is well known to every high school history student, Douglas, who received the Democratic nomination, went on to run against Abraham Lincoln, his Republican rival and contender for the Presidency, in the election of 1860. As is also well known, Douglas lost the election to Lincoln. While there are indeed many complex political and historical issues that surround the reason behind Douglas’ loss to Lincoln, the prophetic words of Joseph Smith almost two decades earlier cannot be cast aside idly.

From Elder Roberts’ investigation we learn that Douglas, who had previously been sympathetic with the Mormons, made an abrupt turn in his policies towards the Saints in Utah Territory and began decrying what he described as a “pestiferous, disgusting cancer which is gnawing into the very vitals of the body politic” in reference to their alleged treasonous behavior against the United States government.<sup>25</sup> Douglas further admonished that the political rights of the Saints “must be cut out by the roots and seared over by the red hot iron of stern and unflinching law” in order to “protect them further in their treasonable, disgusting and bestial practices would be a disgrace to the country--a disgrace to humanity--a disgrace to civilization, and a disgrace to the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2:184. I note this fact to show that knowledge of the prophecy was not an after the fact ordeal but something that the Latter-day Saints were aware of before its fulfillment.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 186.

spirit of the age.”<sup>26</sup> Thus was the hand of Douglas raised against the Saints. Elder Roberts goes onto explain that

Mr. Douglas had it in his power to do them a great service because of his personal acquaintance with Joseph Smith and the great body of the "Mormon" people in Utah, as well as their leaders; for he had known both leaders and people in Illinois, and those whom he had known in Illinois constituted the great bulk of the people in Utah when he delivered his Springfield speech. He knew that the reports carried to the east by vicious and corrupt men were not true. He knew that these reports in the main were but a rehash of the old, exploded charges made against Joseph Smith and his followers in Missouri; and he knew these Missouri reports to be false by many evidences furnished him by Joseph Smith in the interview of the 18th of May, 1843, and by the "Mormon" people at sundry times during his association with them at Nauvoo. He had an opportunity to befriend the innocent; to refute the calumny cast upon a virtuous community; to speak a word in behalf of the oppressed; but the demagogue triumphed over the statesman, the politician, over the humanitarian; and to avoid popular censure, which doubtless he feared befriending the "Mormon" people would bring to him, he turned his hand against them with the result that he did not destroy them but sealed his own doom. In fulfillment of the words of the prophet, he felt the weight of the hand of the Almighty upon him-- Mr. Douglas failed of his dearest ambition, the presidency of the United States, and on the 3rd of June, 1861, he died.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Elder Roberts succinctly summarizes the whole episode by concluding that “it was impossible for any merely human sagacity to foresee the events foretold in this prophecy.”

It is worth noting that critics of Joseph Smith typically cite a part of the Prophet's conversation with Douglas as evidence of Joseph's fraud. The pertinent quote is Joseph prophesying in the "name of the Lord of Israel" that

unless the United States redress the wrongs committed upon the saints in the state of Missouri and punish crimes committed by her officers, that in a few years the government will be utterly overthrown and wasted, and there will not be so much as a potsherd left, for their wickedness in permitting the murder of men, women and children and the wholesale plunder and extermination of thousands of her citizens to go unpunished, thereby perpetrating a foul and corroding blot upon the fair fame of this great republic, the very thought of which would have caused the high-minded and patriotic framers of the Constitution of the United States to hide their faces with shame.<sup>28</sup>

Since the United States government is obviously still functioning today, critics contend that Joseph Smith uttered a false prophecy. However, when read in context it seems apparent that Joseph was talking not about the system of American democratic federal government *per se*, but instead the functioning political party, the Whig Party, that was then presently the dominating political force in the US government. In 1843, when the prophecy was uttered, the Whigs had control of the presidency, with President John Tyler having been elected on the Whig ticket, and the Senate. However, with political divisiveness rife in the Whig Party over issues such as slavery, the Whig Party and the Whig government was dissolved beginning in 1854. More drastic changes to the federal government came with the Civil War and the passing of the 14th Amendment.

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:394.

Other possible interpretations of this prophecy exist, but I find the above explanation the most compelling.<sup>29</sup>

A final example of a fulfilled prophecy of Joseph Smith is found in the *History of the Church*. The night before his death, Joseph Smith found himself in the upstairs bedroom of the jail in Carthage, Illinois, with, among others, Dan Jones. Jones was a recent convert to the Church from Wales, and was a naval captain whose primary responsibility at the time was ferrying Saints up the Mississippi to Nauvoo. According to the entry in the *History of the Church*,

soon after Dr. Richards retired to the bed which Joseph had left, and when all were apparently fast asleep, Joseph whispered to Dan Jones "are you afraid to die?" Dan said, "Has that time come, think you? Engaged in such a cause I do not think that death would have many terrors." Joseph replied, "You will yet see Wales, and fulfill the mission appointed you before you die."<sup>30</sup>

Jones did in fact serve a mission to his native Wales later that year. And his labors in the Welsh Mission were responsible for converting many of his countrymen to the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Other examples could be supplied, but the above three are sufficient for now to demonstrate that Joseph Smith did make several prophetic predictions that did come to pass.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A more detailed analysis of this particularly prophecy is found at [http://en.fairmormon.org/Joseph\\_Smith/Prophecies/Government\\_to\\_be\\_overthrown\\_and\\_wasted](http://en.fairmormon.org/Joseph_Smith/Prophecies/Government_to_be_overthrown_and_wasted) (Accessed 25 February, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:601.

<sup>31</sup> Other examples of fulfilled prophecies can be found in Gilbert Scharffs' classic work *The Truth About "The God Makers"* (Salt Lake City: Publisher's Press, 1986), 387-398.

*7. He would have not only an important message for his time but often a message for all future time, such as Daniel, Jeremiah, and others had.*

Towards the close of his earthly ministry the Prophet Joseph Smith reflected on his role as a prophet and the impact his ministry would have for the world. "I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord," the Prophet remarked in May of 1844, "and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world."<sup>32</sup> Regardless of what one thinks about Joseph Smith, be he a prophet or a fraud, one cannot deny that the work he established has had a deep and significant impact on the world of religion. A Church he established in 1830 in upstate New York with six founding members has now become a world-wide Church of 14 million. His teachings and doctrines have had a significant impact in the lives of many people, kindreds and tongues. The scriptures he brought forth have caused untold multitudes to come closer to God and awaken a solemn inner-spirituality. The Church he organized has provided social and spiritual shelter from the evils of the world to men and women around the globe.

In 2005, on the bicentennial of his birth, both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars and historians gathered at the capital of the United States (ironically the same capital that flatly rejected his pleas for redress for the unjustified crimes perpetrated on him and his followers) to pay tribute to Joseph Smith and assess his role in modern society as a prophet, seer, and revelator, a quintessential American prophet, a religious genius, the

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<sup>32</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:365.

instigator of a new world religion and a host of other roles.<sup>33</sup> This same Joseph Smith, who was born in the backwoods of Vermont and reared in the frontier of western New York, was said of one of his contemporary critics to be “the most successful impostor in modern times; a man who, though ignorant and coarse, had some great natural parts which fitted him for temporary success, but which were so obscured and counteracted by the inherent corruption and vices of his nature that he never could succeed in establishing a system of policy which looked to permanent success in the future”<sup>34</sup> Time has not been kind to Governor Thomas Ford’s condemnation of the work begun by Joseph Smith.

The verdict of time will determine just how much more of an impact Joseph Smith and his movement will have on the world in the future. But at the present it is readily apparent that Joseph Smith has left an indelible mark on the world.

*8. He would have courage and faith enough to endure persecution and to give his life, if need be, for the cause he espoused, such as Peter, James, Paul, and others did.*

Richard L. Anderson, in a 1983 devotional on the parallel lives of Paul and Joseph Smith, wrote a fictional account of what Joseph Smith may have said about the persecutions he endured.

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<sup>33</sup> *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois: From Its Commencement As A State In 1818 to 1847* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs & Co., 1854), 354-355. Contrast Ford’s bleak assessment of Joseph Smith’s work with that of another contemporary, Josiah Quincy: “It is by no means improbable that some future text-book, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: *Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet*. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace to their descendants. History deals in surprises and paradoxes quite as startling as this. Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past From the Old Leaves of Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 376.

A number of times Christians leveled guns at me with the threat of death. Once I was beaten, tarred, and feathered, and left unconscious. Twice I was endangered by stagecoach runaways when on the Lord's business. I have taken back roads and waded through swamps to escape my enemies. I have endured years of inconvenient travel on land for the kingdom, as well as risked many steamboat journeys on waterways. I faced years of unjust legal harassment, making my own home unsafe, and was imprisoned for a long winter in a filthy jail on unverified charges. Through all I maintained the responsibility of leading the Church, worrying, praying, and planning for the welfare of my family and my fellow Saints.<sup>35</sup>

The parallels between this hypothetical statement by Joseph Smith and Paul's description of his trials in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 11:24-28) are readily apparent, a point which Anderson was attempting to underscore to demonstrate that like the ancient apostles so too Joseph Smith endured hardships and persecutions. "The envy and wrath of man have been my common lot all the days of my life . . . and I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation," the Prophet remarked in 1842 (D&C 127:2). President John Taylor, writing shortly after the martyrdom of Joseph and his brother Hyrum, proclaimed that in spite of the persecutions leveled at him throughout his life, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord... lived great, and... died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his blood; and so has his brother Hyrum" (D&C 135:3).

Despite the frankly putrid attempts to disqualify him as a true martyr because of the his attempt to defend his life and the life of his fellow prisoners with a firearm,<sup>36</sup> the

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<sup>35</sup> Richard L. Anderson, "Parallel Prophets: Paul and Joseph Smith", in *"Praise to the Man"*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 7:102-103. I will not mask my feelings when I say that I find this anti-Mormon criticism a mortifyingly horrendous and repulsively heinous accusation. Self-defense does

fact remains that Joseph Smith “who was put to death... was a true martyr and a true prophet in the strictest and holiest sense of the word.”<sup>37</sup>

*9. Such a man would denounced wickedness fearlessly. He would generally be rejected or persecuted by the people of his time, but later generations and descendants of his persecutors would build monuments in his honor.*

What I find truly remarkable about Joseph Smith is that he not only called the world to repentance like ancient prophets, but his revelations speak of his own need to repent of his sins and shortcoming. A revelation received in 1829 commanded Joseph to “repent and walk more uprightly before me, and to yield to the persuasions of men no more” (D&C 5:21). This stern rebuke came to Joseph after the loss of the 116 pages.

And behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men. For, behold, you should not have feared man more than God. Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despised his words—Yet you should have been faithful; and he would have extended his arm and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble. Behold, thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall. But remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you, and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work.  
(D&C 3:6-10)

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not disqualify one from being a martyr by any stretch of the imagination. Furthermore, not surprisingly, I have found few anti-Mormons who are willing to speak words of condemnation against Joseph’s and Hyrum’s murderers for their wanton and cold blooded butchery of two innocent men, regardless of the status of their prophetic legitimacy.

<sup>37</sup> Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, 181.

In this 1838 autobiography Joseph Smith himself recounts how he was left to all kinds of temptations and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. (Joseph Smith - History 1:28)

For this cause Joseph felt “condemned for [his] weakness and imperfections”, which is what prompted him “to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one” (Joseph Smith - History 1:29). The resulting divine manifestation was the angel Moroni, who instructed young Joseph, among other things, about the Book of Mormon and the course of its foretold translation. The point I wish to make here is the high mark of Joseph’s prophetic character to not only be bold enough to denounce the sins and woes of the world, which one can read abundantly in Joseph’s revelations (e.g. D&C 1:15-16), but also his willingness to recognize his own

need to repent and draw closer to God through humility and penance. Joseph truly was a Prophet who denounced wickedness and sin; even his own.<sup>38</sup>

10. *He would be able to do superhuman things - things that no man could do without God's help. The consequence or result of his message and work would be convincing evidence of his prophetic calling: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).*

Joseph Smith's ability to perform superhuman feats is most powerfully demonstrated by the Book of Mormon. Above all other things the Latter-day Saints consider the Book of Mormon as the ultimate monument to the Prophet's divine calling and inspired ministry. Much has been written extensively on the miraculous production of the Book of Mormon, which is heralded by Latter-day Saints to truly be, in the words of Isaiah, a "marvellous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:14). Much has been written on the astonishing production of the Book of Mormon, which defies the hitherto simplistic counter-explanations that critics of the book have offered.<sup>39</sup>

Joseph's bewilderingly remarkable accomplishments have been noted by various spectators, which has left some confused at how an undereducated and uncultured upstart from upstate New York could have accomplished what he did. Others have seen his accomplishments as *prima facie* evidence of his inspired call. President John Taylor, for example, was impressed with the fact that "in the short space of twenty years,

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<sup>38</sup> This theme has been further explored by Richard E. Bennett, "Joseph Smith and the First Principles of the Gospel", in Richard N. Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson, *Joseph Smith, The Prophet and Seer* (Provo: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2010), 33-39.

<sup>39</sup> For a sampling, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Not So Easily Dismissed: Some Facts for which Counterexplanations of the Book of Mormon Will Have To Account", *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005), xi-xlix; Neal A. Maxwell, "By the Gift and Power of God", *Echos and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, John W. Welch (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 1-15.

[Joseph Smith] has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain” (D&C 135:3).

Michael R. Ash, in his study on evidences supporting the Prophet Joseph Smith, draws attention to the Word of Wisdom and the Latter-day Saint attitude toward education as two examples of the fruit of Joseph Smith that bespeak his divine calling. Ash notes how the Word of Wisdom, revealed through the Prophet Joseph before any compelling scientific evidence could prove the dangers of tobacco use and alcohol consumption, has spared untold thousands from the woes of cancer, heart disease, emphysema and a host of other health ills associated with the use of harmful substances. He likewise posits that Joseph Smith’s encouragement and positive endorsement of both sacred and secular education has continued on through later Mormon generations to create great Latter-day Saint scientific, business and educational leaders.<sup>40</sup>

The fruit of the work of Joseph Smith is there for all to partake and determine for themselves how that fruit was produced, be it either through human genius or divine providence.

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<sup>40</sup> See Michael R. Ash, *Of Faith and Reason: 80 Evidences Supporting the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Springville: Cedar Fort, Inc., 2008), 168-172; for more on the Word of Wisdom, consult Steven C. Harper, *Setting the Record Straight: The Word of Wisdom* (Orem: Millennial Press, Inc., 2007).

11. *His teachings would be in strict conformity with scripture, and his words and his writings would become scripture. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21.)*

"Joseph Smith was a mighty doctrinal teacher," wrote Elder John A. Widtsoe. "All that he taught is strictly Biblical. Opponents who attempt to unhorse 'Mormonism' by quoting the Bible never succeed. Whoever has tried it once, seldom tries it again. The doctrine of the Bible is the doctrine of the restored gospel."<sup>41</sup>

To illustrate how Joseph Smith meets this standard, I cannot help but mention an amusing experience that I had while serving as a missionary in New England. My companion and I were attempting to track down a young former investigator who had dropped the previous missionaries laboring in the area. The remarks on her teaching record indicated that she was a promising potential convert and that things seemed to have been going relatively well with the teaching process. She was progressing nicely towards baptism and was what missionaries would call a "golden" investigator. So what was the problem?

We finally made phone contact with this young woman and asked her why she had stopped visiting with the missionaries. After listing a few reasons as to why she had "quit the Church", which included some personal and family matters, she paused for a moment and then remarked how she was uncomfortable with Joseph Smith's teachings because, to use her own words, it was apparent to her that he had simply "plagiarized

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<sup>41</sup> John A. Widtsoe, "The Divine Mission of Joseph Smith", *Handbook of the Restoration* (Independence: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1944), 31.

from the Bible”. My ever sharp companion quickly reminded her that the reason Joseph Smith’s teachings were so similar to the Bible was because his teachings were, surprisingly enough, *scriptural*, or in total harmony with what past biblical prophets had revealed about God. She remained unconvinced, and insisted that Joseph Smith merely bootlegged his teachings from the Bible.<sup>42</sup>

Anecdote aside, Latter-day Saints are familiar with the beloved classic *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, which was edited and compiled by the Prophet’s great-nephew Joseph Fielding Smith. Few Latter-day Saints, however, are as familiar with a re-published version of this classic work that included literally thousands of scriptural annotations and footnotes.<sup>43</sup> The editor and annotator of the volume, Richard C. Galbraith, includes a handy introduction to the theme of “Joseph Smith and the Holy Scriptures”, in which he discusses the scripturally nuanced and influenced teachings of Joseph Smith throughout his ministry. “In this dispensation,” writes Galbraith after careful examination, “Joseph Smith stands preeminent in his knowledge of [and I would add doctrinal harmony with] the holy scriptures and its authors.”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, even a cursory glance at the forty seven pages of scriptural index (nearly half of which are devoted solely to biblical scriptures) at the back of the book should dispel any doubts as

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<sup>42</sup> This was, I confess, a rather refreshing criticism after a lifetime of being consistently assured by many individuals that Joseph Smith’s teachings are diametrically opposed to the Bible.

<sup>43</sup> *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Richard C. Galbraith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. This shouldn’t come as a surprise, since the angel Moroni was the first among many angelic messengers to tutor Joseph Smith in biblical prophecies and scriptures beginning in 1823 (Joseph Smith-History 1: 30-41). Note that besides the scriptures listed by Joseph Smith in his account Moroni also instructed him in “many other passages of scripture” (v. 41) that couldn’t be mentioned. Fortunately, Oliver Cowdery was able to discover what those other scriptures were and reported them accordingly to William W. Phelps in the Church’s 1835 newspaper *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger & Advocate*, cited in *Scriptural Teachings*, 7.

to whether or not Joseph Smith's teachings were in harmony with both ancient and modern scripture.<sup>45</sup>

Even Joseph Smith's diaries, letters, speeches and other writings are rife with biblical allusions and language. Grant Underwood, in concluding his survey of Joseph Smith's use of the Old Testament in his teachings and writings, writes that "the Prophet Joseph Smith had a masterful command of the Bible, particularly of the prophetic writings... [W]e can take Brother Joseph as our example of what it means to have a grasp of this book of scripture. He used it to liken its events to his time; he accepted it as historical fact; he freely incorporated its passages into his daily conversations; and his commentary on its many difficult passages continues to enlighten the Latter-day Saints today."<sup>46</sup> Robert L. Millet, after an enlightening study of Joseph Smith's use of the New Testament, comes to a similar conclusion. "Latter-day revelation [given through Joseph Smith] sheds a brilliant light upon the Bible and allows those who seek to read by that light to become more acquainted with the doings and doctrines of prophets and seers who preceded us by many centuries. In particular, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Joseph Smith Translation of the scriptures provide a treasure-house of knowledge concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the former-day Saints" of the New Testament era."<sup>47</sup>

Equally importantly, I would add, is the fact that besides being in harmony with previously written scriptural texts, Joseph Smith added to the canon of scripture through

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 453-500.

<sup>46</sup> Grant Underwood, "The Prophet Joseph Smith's Use of the Old Testament", *Ensign* (August 2002), 35

<sup>47</sup> Robert L. Millet, "Joseph Smith and the New Testament", *Ensign* (December 1986), 34.

his own independently<sup>48</sup> received revelations and translations. It was Joseph Smith himself who made it an indispensable article of faith of the Church of Jesus Christ that “we believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and we believe that he will reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Article of Faith 8).<sup>49</sup> An open canon of scripture is an essential and defining characteristic of the Church of Jesus Christ today, as it was anciently.<sup>50</sup>

Many Christians today see the claim of an open canon of scripture as an affront to the sacredness of the Bible and God’s previously revealed word. To this charge, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles aptly responded in his April 2008 General Conference address by reminding his listeners that

continuing revelation does not demean or discredit existing revelation. The Old Testament does not lose its value in our eyes when we are introduced to the New Testament, and the New Testament is only enhanced when we read the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. In considering the additional scripture accepted by Latter-day Saints, we might ask: Were those early Christians who for decades had access only

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<sup>48</sup> I use the term “independent” insofar as Joseph Smith received these revelations on his own investigation and supplication to the Lord. It is clear that Joseph Smith did not receive revelation in a vacuum, but was stimulated by various catalysts, be they the Urim and Thummim (D&C 3, 6, 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 17), biblical texts such as John 5:29 (D&C 76), the behavior of contemporaries (D&C 89), current national or political events (D&C 130:12-13), ancient Egyptian papyri (the Book of Abraham) or even Masonic rituals (the temple Endowment).

<sup>49</sup> Undoubtedly some of those “many great and important things” that pertain to God’s Kingdom include articles canonized after the Prophet Joseph Smith’s ministry as D&C 136 (President Brigham Young’s revelation on the westward migration), D&C 138 (President Joseph F. Smith’s vision of the redemption of the dead), and Official Declarations 1 and 2 (a revealed directive for the cessation of the practice of plural marriage amongst the Latter-day Saints and the revealed policy of extending priesthood blessings to all worthy males, regardless of race, respectively). Other of those aforementioned “great and important things” may very well include items not necessarily canonized but nonetheless of great import to the Latter-day Saints, such as the “Proclamation on the Family” issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1995.

<sup>50</sup> The nature of the canon in the primitive Church has been discussed by Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, 200-206.

to the primitive Gospel of Mark (generally considered the first of the New Testament Gospels to be written) - were they offended to receive the more detailed accounts set forth later by Matthew and Luke, to say nothing of the unprecedented passages and revelatory emphasis offered later yet by John? Surely they must have rejoiced that ever more convincing evidence of the divinity of Christ kept coming. And so do we rejoice.<sup>51</sup>

And so we see that, contrary to the claims of Joseph Smith's detractors, the Prophet's teachings are in fact in strict conformity to scripture. More evidence could be cited, but the above is sufficient enough for our present purposes.<sup>52</sup> In light of all of this, well could the Prophet Joseph declare in 1844 that "I know the scriptures and understand them."<sup>53</sup>

### *Conclusion*

We have seen from this investigation that Joseph Smith aptly meets the criteria set forth by President Brown as the characteristics of a true prophet of God. Of course, it is impossible to *prove* that Joseph Smith was a prophet merely by secular scholarship, although this scholarship may be intriguing and fruitful for study. As with all that pertains to things spiritual, the divine calling of Joseph Smith as a prophet can only be ascertained by prayer and revelation from God (Moroni 10:4-5). However, the Apostle Paul instructs us to "prove all things" and to only "hold fast to that which is true" (1

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<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey R. Holland, "My Words...Never Cease", *Ensign*, April 2008, 92

<sup>52</sup> Other resources that the reader should turn their attention to if they desire further investigation include Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christian?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991); Richard R. Hopkins, *Biblical Mormonism: A Biblical Basis for LDS Theology* (Springville: Cedar Fort, Inc., 2006); Matthew B. Brown, *All Things Restored: Evidences and Witnesses of the Restoration*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Covenant Communications, Inc., 2006), 1-21, 69-181; Daniel C. Peterson, "Mormonism As A Restoration", *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006), 389-417; Michael R. Ash, *Of Faith and Reason*, 141-177; Christopher Mills, *The Holy Bible & Mormonism: Understanding the Mormon Faith* (Salt Lake City: Millennial Mind Publishing, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 357.

Thessalonians 5:21). Likewise, the Doctrine and Covenants explains that because “all have not faith” we are to “seek... out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). As such, it is hoped that the information in this paper will be a catalyst for the reader to sincerely and seriously account for the evidence of Joseph Smith’s prophetic calling as he or she seeks an answer from God as to the truthfulness of the claims of that “choice seer” Joseph Smith (2 Nephi 3:6-7).