

Developments in Theology

The developments discussed in this chapter concern Joseph Smith's theology. Previous to the events in Missouri Smith made textual changes to his revision of the Bible, revised some of his revelations, and discussed his early religious experiences that led to the organization of the church. With the excommunication of church historian John Whitmer, it was determined that Joseph Smith would compile a history of what he considered important for church members. Whitmer would not give up his history to church leaders. On April 27, 1838 Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon together with George W. Robinson as scribe spent the day in "writing a history of this Church from the earliest period of its existance [existence] up to this date."¹

The initial 1838 draft of this history was written during a four-day period by George W. Robinson and is not extant. In 1839 it was copied by James Mulholland, another of Joseph Smith's scribes, into what is known as the Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1. The A-1 book was revised before and after its first publication and is now considered to be Smith's official narrative. It incorporates an account of Joseph's early religious calling and has served as the basis for virtually all later official and semi-official histories of the church.

The earliest part of this history was published in installments in the Mormon newspaper *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo, Illinois, between March and May 1842.² Later it was reprinted in *The Latter Day Saints' Millennial Star* in England. In 1851 it was included in a pamphlet, *The Pearl of Great Price*. This was presented in revised form at a general conference of the church in Salt Lake City on October 10, 1880, and accepted as scripture. It has since been widely circulated and is regarded by Mormons as an essential introduction in any investigation of the history of Mormonism. The following extract is from the Manuscript History written in 1839 by Mulholland before it was edited for publication:

Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil disposed and designing persons in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Latter day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a church, and its progress in the world; I have been induced to write this history so as to disabuse the publick mind, and put all enquirers after truth into possession of the facts as they have transpired in relation both to myself and the Church as far as I have such facts in [my] possession.

In this history I will present the various events in relation to this Church in truth and righteousness as they have transpired, or as they at present exist, being now the eighth year since the organization of said Church.³

The history then gives the date of Smith's birth and mentions the family's move to New York. As discussed in Chapter 2 the Palmyra excitement or revival is the backdrop for Joseph

¹ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:233.

² Joseph Smith started publishing his history in the March 15, 1842 issue, stating that it was an "extract from my journal." *Times and Seasons* 3:726.

³ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:267-68.

Smith's first vision. This history is a theological or faith account telling the events "as they have transpired, or as they at present exist." David Thelen wrote concerning memory, "What is important is that the memory be authentic for the person at the moment of construction, not that it be an accurate depiction of a past moment."⁴ Another historian, Marvin S. Hill, concluded that the 1838-39 account was "streamlined for publication," making the story "more logical and compelling."⁵

Joseph Smith's history leaves much to be desired since it leaves out events known from other sources. For example, there is no mention of the use by Smith of a peep stone (known as a seer stone) placed in a hat, the time spent helping others search for hidden treasures that were elusive, or the importance to the treasure guardian for Joseph to bring another individual with him to the hill where the plates were said to be deposited. That the telling of the first vision is theological is known when compared with the historical event that Smith associated with it.

As Joseph Smith explained there was an "excitement on the subject of religion" that preceded his visionary experience. Since the Palmyra revival occurred during the period 1824-25 it creates a problem by including the first vision at a period of time before the revival occurred. Since Lucy Mack Smith and three of her children joined the Palmyra Presbyterian Church during the excitement, their affiliation calls into question whether the message in Joseph Smith's first vision included the information about the churches being an abomination. From Joseph's 1832 and 1835 accounts it appears that his quest was for a personal forgiveness of sins and that he received mercy and was forgiven.

The history states, "But in the process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them." This is of interest since Joseph Smith had previously been an exhorter for the Methodist class in Palmyra. Smith said he prayed in the spring of 1820 and he saw two personages, one pointed to the other and said, "This is my beloved Son, Hear him," indicating that Joseph Smith should listen to the Son, meaning Jesus Christ. The history says that it had never entered into Joseph's heart that all sects were wrong so he inquired which of the sects or churches was right and which he should join. The account included the following information:

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong, and the Personage who addressed me said that all their Creeds were an abomination in his sight, that those professors were all corrupt, that "they draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me, They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof."⁶

Rather than the question concerning whether the churches followed the New Testament, this recollection presents Joseph with a clear and straightforward answer. Smith's earlier statement in 1832 was about knowing the churches did not adorn their profession and had apostatized. In answer to his prayer, the Lord told him "they have turned asside [aside] from the

⁴ David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *Journal of American History* 75 (March 1989):1,123.

⁵ Marvin S. Hill, "The First Vision Controversy: A Critique and Reconciliation," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Summer 1982):39.

⁶ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:273; Joseph Smith-History 1:19, Pearl of Great Price. See Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:6-7; 2 Timothy 3:5.

gospel and keep not <my> commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to th[e]ir ungodliness." In his 1835 telling Smith told of seeing many angels in the vision. These previous incidents were not as important to include this time. Receiving the forgiveness of sins was not included because the central message was not forgiveness. Joseph Smith's first vision had now become his call to be God's prophet.

How much of his 1838-39 account recalls his feelings near the time of this vision is hard to determine. But when other events are taken into consideration, it appears that using the word "abomination" in reference to the creeds is language too strong, especially since members of Smith's family joined the local Presbyterian Church after 1820. As has been pointed out, Lucy Mack Smith and three children joined with the Palmyra Presbyterians after the excitement of religion (revival) that commenced four years later.

When it comes to Smith's second vision telling about gold plates and providing the wording of the messenger it is clear that the words are post-1823. Using Joseph's story as a guide, we can see more clearly how the words in his history fit 1838 rather than pre-1827. The reason for this is that in 1836 Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery reported a vision of the Old Testament prophet Elijah. A comparison of the words said to be from Malachi 4:5, that the priesthood would be revealed by the hand of Elijah, with the Book of Mormon and Bible revision, suggests that they would not have been spoken in the context of 1823. As will be explained, this indicates that the retelling of the historical context and words spoken by the angel of the second vision does not have to coincide with history. It is a sure sign that we are dealing with a theological issue and not a historical event.

Joseph Smith dictated his longest (1838) account of what he said he had repeated many times to family and friends. Joseph stated that in September 1823 a personage appeared to him at night in his bedroom. This personage (named Nephi in the history) told him that there was a book deposited in a nearby hill written in an unreadable language upon gold plates and that this record contained an account of the former inhabitants of America. A vision opened to his mind and he saw where the plates were deposited.

The messenger repeated his message to Smith twice more that night. These visions led Joseph to find the gold plates in the morning. He removed them from the ground four years later in September 1827. Joseph Smith then dictated the contents of the gold record to his scribes. This personage is represented to have quoted Old Testament passages in instructing Joseph. The messenger quoted Malachi 4:5 as: "Behold I will reveal unto you the Priesthood by the hand of Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."⁷

Is it correct that the personage would have spoken these words in 1823? If these words were not spoken in the vision, then their absence would confirm that we are dealing with a theological story. It means that those actual words were not spoken during the visionary experience. It is a story of faith to those who embrace it.

A simple examination makes it clear that the angel would not have spoken these words in 1823 but at a time beyond the publication of the Book of Mormon. The textual variant relates to revealing "the Priesthood by the hand of Elijah." The biblical text reads:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children,

⁷ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:278; LDS D&C 2; Joseph Smith-History 1:38.

and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.⁸

When Joseph Smith made his revision of Malachi in July 1833 he considered the book "Correct."⁹ In explaining the importance of renouncing war and proclaiming peace, Joseph announced a revelation the next month that the Saints should seek diligently "to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers to the children and again the hearts of [the] Jews to the prophets and the prophets unto the Jews lest I come and smite the whole earth with a curse."¹⁰ Though the order is reversed, the message is the same as Malachi. In 1823 there would have been no reason to quote the passage differently. Sidney Rigdon in 1830 was looked upon as a preparer like John the Baptist to prepare the way "before Elijah which should come."¹¹

When one of the early commandments received on September 4, 1830, was prepared for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, wording was added relating to biblical individuals who would drink wine with the returned Savior, indicating that Elijah held priesthood keys with the words, "and also Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers, that the whole earth may not be smitten with a curse."¹²

On April 3, 1836, it is recorded that Elijah the prophet appeared in a glorious vision to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and committed to them "the keys of this dispensation." Elijah was sent "to turn the hearts of the Fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse."¹³ The wording of the text in Malachi changed as Joseph's understanding of it developed. By 1838 when Joseph Smith started dictating his Manuscript History, later recopied by James Mulholland, the following portion of the passage from Malachi was quoted by the angel in these words:

And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers, if it were not so the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

Looking back to 1836 Smith explained that the promise of Elijah coming to reveal priesthood keys was a fulfillment of a promise made in connection to the time he first learned about the Book of Mormon plates. The added words relating to the future promise of obtaining the priesthood from the hand of Elijah are an anachronism. This difference makes Smith's story suspect since it brings into question the accuracy of what he recalled as the words revealed to him in a vision.

⁸ Malachi 4:5-6 (KJV); quoted the same in 1830 BOM, 505; LDS 3 Nephi 25:5-6; RLDS 3 11:26-27.

⁹ OT 2, 119, CCLA.

¹⁰ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 245; LDS D&C 98:16-17; RLDS D&C 95:3 (August 6, 1833).

¹¹ BCR, 46; LDS D&C 35:4; RLDS D&C 34:2 (December 7, 1830).

¹² 1835 D&C 50:2; LDS D&C 27:9; RLDS D&C 26:2. For commentary on the textual revision see Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 72-80.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 280; LDS D&C 110:13-16.

The earliest version of Smith's story about the plates of gold being buried in the ground was told in a treasure-seeking content with the plates or record being protected by a guardian. Joseph Smith's revision of how he first heard about the plates and that he received religious instructions from an angel show we are dealing with a faith story. By 1838 the recounting of the 1823 vision had acquired more impressive theological significance.

Another problem with the story is that there is no evidence that gold plates were used in dictating the text of the Book of Mormon. Brant A. Gardner indicated that the translation process "did not include the physical examination of the plates as part of the translation."¹⁴ Since Joseph Smith did not use the gold plates to produce the Book of Mormon text then the story of having them revealed in 1823 and going to their place of deposit in a hill on a certain day once each year for five years (1823, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827) is suspect. Smith indicated that, after his September 1823 visit to the hill, there was a four-year waiting period before he would obtain the plates. Joseph Smith's credibility becomes shaken when, after he tells about obtaining possession of the plates, it turns out that they were not used for the purpose for which they were reportedly preserved, revealed, and secured. It is pretty hard to believe a man who did not have or use what he said he obtained.

Problems occur when taking Joseph Smith's official 1838-39 story as historical fact rather than as a faith account of religious significance. A helpful insight into understanding Smith is how he regards the confusion among the churches. Joseph, by having the Palmyra revival take place before the vision, creates an additional indication of how this story is being told.

If it is maintained that the 1838-39 history should be read literally, one additional problem needs to be addressed. The story of the second (Book of Mormon) vision, occurring after the excitement of religion in the neighborhood, which has been shown to have ended in 1825, would mean that the earliest time this vision of the angel could have occurred would have been in September 1825. There would be one additional trip to the hill in September 1826, with Joseph accompanied by Emma Hale Smith in 1827. It is of interest that John Corrill, an early church member, gave a shorter time period before Joseph Smith's first introduction to the gold plates. Corrill wrote in 1839:

The simple story as related by others was this. Sometime in A.D. 1825, as nearly as I can recollect, Smith was informed by an angel, that there was a valuable record concealed in the earth, and the time had now arrived for it to be brought forth and published to the world.¹⁵

This would fit if the vision happened after Rev. Lane and Rev. Stockton preached in Palmyra during the revival. Whether the second vision happened in 1823 or 1825 may not be important since Joseph Smith said he did not take the record out of the ground until September 22, 1827. The correct dating cannot be known for sure because the vision of the angel is an issue for theologians in the telling of a religious saga.

¹⁴ Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 134. In note 37 Gardner explains: "The number of testimonies about the face-in-the-hat method indicate that, even if the plates were nearby, Joseph was not consulting them during the translation."

¹⁵ John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 12.

Another development related to where the Garden of Eden was located. Biblical readers and scholars have placed the story of a garden in the Persian Gulf region in the historical setting as outlined in Genesis.¹⁶ Joseph Smith followed this reasoning until his arrival in Missouri. After that point, Joseph taught that Adam lived in what became the present state of Missouri.¹⁷

About July 1838, George W. Robinson recorded in the Scriptorium Book the events that had occurred earlier in May during a trip taken by Joseph Smith. On May 18 Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Thomas B. Marsh, David W. Patten, Alanson Ripley, and George W. Robinson, among others, went north of Far West looking for a location for the gathering of the saints. The next day the group crossed Grand River and arrived at Lyman Wight's home. Robinson wrote, "We came to Col. Lyman Wights who lives at the foot of Tower Hill, a name appropriated by Prest Smith, in consequence of the remains of an old Nephitish Alter [Altar] an[d] Tower." Smith, Rigdon, and George Robinson came to a place where there was a spring and a small hill. After giving the range numbers of the area, Robinson recorded:

which was called Spring Hill a name appropriated by the brethren present, But afterwards named by the mouth of [the] Lord and was called Adam Ondi Awmen [Ahman], because, said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of days shall sit as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet.¹⁸

The next month William Swartzell, a Mormon at the time, worked on walling in the spring. He prayed by the side of the spring that it might produce good water. Rather than keeping the name of the city Spring Hill, Joseph Smith renamed it Adam-ondi-Ahman as Swartzell recorded in June:

I observed to Joseph Smith that this city should have a new name. Brother Joseph placed his back against a small shady tree near the spring, and then said, "We shall alter the name of this stake," (every city being called a stake,) and looking towards heaven for short time, said, "It does not take me long to get a revelation from heaven, and this stake, or city, shall be called Adam-on-Diammon [Adam-ondi-Ahman]."¹⁹

¹⁶ Ronald K. Harrison, professor of Old Testament, Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, wrote the following concerning the location of the Garden of Eden: "On the basis of currently available information it would appear that the one that locates Eden near the head of the Persian Gulf combines the greatest number of probabilities of every kind." Quoted in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, general ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 2:17.

¹⁷ Brigham Young said he heard about the location of the biblical Garden of Eden from Joseph Smith. Wilford Woodruff reported Young saying, "Now Jackson County is the garden of Eden Joseph has declaired this & I am as much bound to believe it as much as I am to believe Joseph is a prophet of God." *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* 5:33, March 15, 1857; see also 7:129.

¹⁸ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:244-45. See LDS D&C 116. See Daniel 7:13.

¹⁹ William Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri from the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838* (Pekin, Ohio: Published by the Author, 1840), 11, June 11, 1838. The journal was expanded for publication including the wording "in two or three days

On July 8 Joseph Smith received a revelation that contained the following question:

Is there not room enough upon the mountains of Adam Ondi Awmen [Ahman], and upon the plains of Olah[a] Shinehah, or in the land where Adam dwelt²⁰

The surveying was completed for town lots and the brethren continued traveling north looking for possible settlements for church members. The area was known by the shortened name Diahman. Church members wrote in their recollections that Joseph Smith discovered what was believed to be the remains of an altar on which Adam offered sacrifices. Smith may have shown a number of such “altars” at Adam-ondi-Ahman. Twenty-year-old Benjamin F. Johnson, who arrived in late October and was not married, chose a lot with a view of Grand River. Johnson recalled:

So I chose the upper [area] which at first appeared rocky; which made the other lots appear almost enviable. But when, after a few days, the Prophet [Joseph Smith] accompanied us to this spot, and pointed out those rocks as the ones of which Adam built an altar and offered sacrifice upon this spot, where he stood up and blessed the multitude of his children, when they called him Michael, and where he will again sit as the Ancient of Days, — then I was not envious of any one's choice for a city lot in Adam-ondi-Ahman.²¹

The name Adam-ondi-Ahman was used prior to 1838 as the place of the residence of Adam. It was used in Kirtland and a hymn was composed by William W. Phelps with the same title.²²

This world was once a garden place,
With all her glories common;
And men did live a holy race,
And worship Jesus face to face,
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.

We read that Enoch walk'd with God,
Above the power of Mammon:
While Zion spread herself abroad,
And saints and angels sung aloud
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Her land was good and greatly blest,
Beyond old Israel's Canaan;
Her fame was known from east to west;

the spring began to fail, and in about one week it went entirely dry." The name was given by Smith about June 11-16 and not in May.

²⁰ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 294; LDS D&C 117:8.

²¹ Benjamin Franklin Johnson Papers, "My Life Review," 30, CHL. See *My Life's Review*, 36.

²² William W. Phelps Journal, June 3, 1835, CHL, "Com[posed]. a hymn - Adam-ondi Ahman."

Her peace was great, and pure the rest
Of Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Hosanna to such days to come —
The Savior's second comin' —
When all the world in glorious bloom,
Affords the saints a holy home
Like Adam-ondi-Ahman.²³

Adam was a central role model for Joseph Smith in his salvation theology. The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants presents additional wording to a March 1832 revelation. The added section included the words "who hath established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman; who hath appointed Michael, your prince, and established his feet, and set him upon high; and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days or end of life."²⁴ This addition indicates that Michael or Adam has the "keys of salvation" under the Holy One.

Joseph Smith responded to the question "If the Mormon doctrine is true what has become of all those who have died since the days of the apostles?" and he answered:

All those who have not had an opportunity of hearing the gospel, and being administered to by an inspired man in the flesh, must have it hereafter, before they can be finally judged.²⁵

The possibility of the gospel being preached to deceased individuals involved priesthood keys or presidency. Since Adam, according to Joseph Smith, held the priesthood it was important to rely in part on biblical passages in interpreting the relationship of Adam to the human family. In the summer of 1839 Joseph Smith explained:

The Priesthood was first given to Adam: he obtained the first Presidency & held the Keys of it, from generation to Generation; he obtained it in the creation before the world was formed . . . the Keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent. = When they are revealed from Heaven it is by Adam[']s Authority.

Dan[iel] VII Speaks of the Ancient of days, he means the oldest man, our Father Adam, Michael; he will call his children together. & hold a council with them to prepare them for the coming of the Son of Man. He, (Adam) is the Father of the human family & presides over the Spirits of all men, & all that have had the Keys must Stand before him in this grand Council.²⁶

²³ "Adam-ondi-Ahman," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1, no.9 (June 1835):144. In the March 1836 issue the word "world" in the first line was changed to "earth."

²⁴ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 197-98; 1835 D&C 75:3; LDS D&C 78:15-16; RLDS D&C 77:3 (March 1, 1832). See Daniel 10:13, 21, and 12:1.

²⁵ *Elders' Journal* 1 (July 1838):43.

²⁶ "Willard Richards Pocket Companion, written in England," 63-64, emphasis omitted, CHL. See Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 8-9.

Continuing Smith gave instructions on salvation for the dead. He quoted in part from Hebrews 11:40 that they without us should not or cannot be made perfect. Joseph Smith explained, "These men are in heaven, but their children are on Earth. . . . We cannot be made perfect without them, nor they without us. . . . The hearts of the children will have to be turned to the fathers, & the fathers to the children living or dead to prepare them for the coming of the Son of Man. If Elijah did not come the whole earth would be smitten."²⁷

This comment developed into the necessity of having performed on behalf of the fathers (deceased men and women), by living proxies the ordinance of baptism for the dead that the individual could not have done while living. In the summer of 1840, proxy baptisms were performed in the Mississippi River where the wording for the baptismal ceremony was similar to how standard baptisms for the living into the church were done. But in this case, the ceremony was performed with a church member standing in the place of the deceased person. The living saints now had a need to work for the salvation of the dead. According to Joseph Smith, this duty could not be passed over lightly "for their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation."²⁸

The following comments were made by Joseph Smith pertaining to his key for detecting evil spirits, the devil, and others when they appear to mortals. These teachings were developed in Missouri, Iowa, and Illinois. In July 1839 President Smith explained to the members of the Quorum of the Twelve some of the keys of the kingdom of God. Wilford Woodruff recorded Smith giving instructions on detecting the devil and the necessity of shaking hands with an angel:

In order to detect the devel [devil] when he transforms himself nigh unto an angel of light. When an angel of God appears unto man face to face in personage & reaches out his hand unto the man & he takes hold of the angels hand & feels a substance the same as one man would in Shaking hands with another he may then know that it is an angel of God, & he should place all Confidence in him. Such personages or angels are Saints with there [their] resurrected Bodies. But if a personage appears unto man & offers him his hand & the man takes told of it & feels nothing or does not sens[e] any substance he may know it is the devel [devil] Then Smith continued with how to detect a non-resurrected saint when he appears: for when a Saint whose body is not resurrected appears unto man in the flesh he will not offer him his hand for this is against the law given him & in keeping in mind these things we may detec[t] the devil that he decieved [deceive] us not.²⁹

That summer Joseph Smith mentioned that an angel of God does not have wings but "has flesh and bones, we see not their glory."³⁰ An editorial in the *Times and Seasons* discussed trying the spirits and told of a sister in New York State to whom an angel appeared with sandy colored hair. It was asked how "was this known to be a bad angel? by the color of his hair; that is one of the signs that he can be known by, and by his contradicting a former revelation."³¹

²⁷ Ibid., 10-11. In Joseph Smith's revision of Hebrews he changed the wording in Hebrews 11:40 to read, "for without sufferings they could not be made perfect." NT MS 2, folio 4, 141.

²⁸ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 320; LDS D&C 128:15 (September 6, 1842).

²⁹ Wilford Woodruff's *Journal* 1:341, June 27, 1839; Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 6.

³⁰ Willard Richards *Pocket Companion*, 72. See Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 12.

³¹ "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3 (April 1, 1842):747.

Joseph Smith gave a discourse in Nauvoo on May 1, 1842. He explained other signs and words to detect false appearances. Willard Richards recorded that Joseph preached in the grove and said: "The keys are certain signs & words by which false spirits & personages may be detected from true.—which cannot be revealed to the Elders till the Temple is completed.—The rich can only get them in the Temple. The poor may get them on the mountain top as did Moses."³²

The next year, on February 9, 1843, Joseph Smith explained: "There are two kinds of beings in heaven viz: Angels who are resurrected personages having bodies of flesh and bones, for instance Jesus said 'handle me and see for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.['] 2nd The spirits of just men made perfect, they who are not resurrected but inherit the same glory." He gave three keys on how to detect whether a messenger (angel, spirit, or devil) came from God.

First, "When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God offer him your hand and request him to shake hands with you. If he be an angel he will do so and you will feel his hand." Second, "If he be the spirit of a just man made perfect he will come in his glory for that is the only way he can appear. Ask him to shake hands with you, but he will not move, because it is contrary to the order of Heaven for a just man to deceive but he will still deliver his message." And third, "If it be the devil as an angel of light when you ask him to shake hands he will offer you his hand and you will not feel anything, you may there fore detect him." As Smith indicated, "These are the three grand keys whereby you may know w[h]ether any administration is from God."³³

There were a number of ways that church members could use to detect a spirit, angel, or devil appearing. They included the discerning by those appointed to watch over the church, by prayer, by shaking hands, by the color of hair, and by comparing the message with previous revelations for agreement.³⁴

While in Liberty Jail, Clay County, Missouri, Joseph Smith agonized over his situation being held for months on reported crimes. He reflected and gave instructions to the church that included moving from a belief in monotheism (one God) to polytheism (many Gods). God, explained Smith, would reveal knowledge not previous revealed. There would be "a time to come in the which nothing shall be with held whither [whether] there be one god or many gods they shall be manifest all thrones and dominions, principalities and powers shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have indured valiently for the gospel of Jesus Christ." Joseph Smith told the saints:

if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas or to the dry land or to the sun, moon or starrs all the times of their revolutions all their appointed days, month[s] and years and all the Days of their days, months and years, and all their glories, laws and set times shall be reveal[e]d in the days of the dispensation of the

³² Jesse, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:379.

³³ James B. Allen, *No Toil nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 388, from William Clayton Journal, February 9, 1843; LDS D&C 129.

³⁴ For teachings relating to prayer and the discerning of spirits, see LDS D&C 46:15-16, 23, 27; RLDS D&C 46:6 (March 8, 1831) and LDS D&C 50:30-35; RLDS D&C 50:6-7 (May 9, 1831).

fullness of times according to that which was ordained in the midst of the council of the eternal God of all other Gods before this world was.³⁵

By the beginning of 1841 Joseph Smith was teaching, "That which is without body or parts is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones."³⁶ In 1842 Joseph published his Book of Abraham and indicated that the earth was planned by a council of Gods. Two years later in 1844 Smith stated that "God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves, that is the great secret."³⁷ In June of the same year Smith said that he had always preached a plurality of Gods since 1829. Thomas Bullock wrote what was said using short abbreviations that are filled out with brackets:

I wish to declare I have allways—& in all congregat[ion]s. when I have preached it has been the plurality of Gods it has been preached 15 years—I have always decl[are]d. God to be a distinct personage—J[esus]. C[hrist]. a sep[arate]. & distinct pers[onage] from God the Fa[the]r. the H[o]ly. G[host]. was a distinct personage & or Sp[irit] & these 3 constit[ute]. 3 distinct personages & 3 Gods.³⁸

Joseph Smith like other individuals developed in his ideas. Smith's recollection of events in his early life took on more of a theological nature than historical reality, and his story grew in the telling. The words that he said the angel spoke to him in 1823 about Elijah became of important significance as he looked back to his early life. Placing the Garden of Eden and Adam-ondi-Ahman in Missouri was accepted by church members since it was spoken by Joseph. His theology about the nature of God became clear to him as he expounded the idea of a plurality of Gods. It was not an issue to him that some of his ideas changed or contradicted what he had said at an earlier time. Joseph was able to express his interpretation of events as he presented new ideas in a revelatory manner. As an oracle to his followers, Joseph's theological development became the word of God.

³⁵ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 297, epistle of Joseph Smith Jr., et al., to the church at Quincy, Illinois, and scattered abroad, and to Bishop Edward Partridge, March 20, 1839; LDS D&C 121:28-32.

³⁶ "Extracts from Wm Clayton's Private Book," CHL, January 5, 1841; Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 60.

³⁷ "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 5 (August 15, 1844):613.

³⁸ Thomas Bullock Report, June 16, 1844, as cited in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 378.