

The Bible

by Marvin Cowan

The sermon explores the authority, reliability, and completeness of the Bible in contrast to LDS beliefs about scripture.

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Mormonism"

Description

Marvin Cowan discusses the LDS belief in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, highlighting the Mormon view that the Bible is mistranslated and incomplete, leading to the need for the Book of Mormon. He contrasts Mormonism's attack on the Bible's reliability with the Christian belief in the Bible as the complete and trustworthy Word of God, emphasizing the historical accuracy, divine prophecies, and the Bible's claim of eternal endurance. Cowan points out the inconsistencies within LDS leadership regarding the importance of different LDS scriptures and the controversial Inspired Version Bible by Joseph Smith.

Transcript

"We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God."

8th Article of Faith by Joseph Smith

LDS Apostle James Talmage wrote, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts the Holy Bible as the foremost of her standard works, first among the books which have been proclaimed as her written guides in faith and doctrine" (A. of F., p. 236).

And LDS Apostle Bruce McConkie said: "Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (known informally by the nickname Mormons) believe the Bible. Indeed, so literally and completely do their beliefs and practices conform to the teachings of the Bible that it is not uncommon to hear informed persons say: 'If all men believed the Bible, all would be Mormons.' Bible doctrine is Mormon doctrine, and Mormon doctrine is Bible doctrine. They are one and the same" (What The Mormons Think of Christ, p. 2).

Such statements have led many to assume that the LDS view of the Bible is similar to what Protestants believe, but such is not the case. Mormonism actually attacks the Bible on two counts: (1) it is mistranslated, and (2) it is incomplete.

INCOMPLETE AND INCORRECT TRANSLATION

The mistranslation of the Bible is suggested in the eighth Article of Faith. Talmage explains, "There will be, there can be, no absolutely reliable translation of these or other scriptures unless it be effected through the gift of translation, as one of the endowments of the Holy Ghost... Let the Bible then be read reverently and with prayerful care, the reader ever seeking the light of the Spirit that he may discern between truth and the errors of men" (A. of F., p. 237).

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth Prophet of Mormonism also said: "There is not one principle pertaining to the salvation of men that is so clearly stated in the Bible, as it has come down to us, that men do not stumble over - not one thing. There is not one principle they can be united on that has been so clearly stated that they do not find their interpretations of it conflicting" (D. of S., Vol. I, p. 278).

Joseph Smith also declared, "Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors" (T. of P.J.S., p. 327). And LDS Apostle Mark E. Peterson said, "Many insertions were made, some of them 'slanted' for selfish purposes, while at times deliberate falsifications and fabrications were perpetrated" (As Translated Correctly, p. 4).

LDS Apostle Orson Pratt also wrote:

If it be admitted that the apostles and evangelists did write the books of the New Testament, that does not prove of itself that they were divinely inspired at the time they wrote.... Add all this imperfection to the uncertainty of the translation, and who, IN HIS RIGHT MIND could for one moment suppose the Bible in its present form to be a perfect guide? Who knows that even one verse of the Bible has escaped pollution, so as to convey the same sense now that it did in the original? (Divine Authority of the Book of Mormon, pp. 45, 47; read all of this pamphlet for a detailed attack upon the Bible).

In addition to this charge of an unreliable translation, Mormon leaders say that important doctrine as well as whole books have been deleted or added by corrupt men. Joseph Smith declared, "Upon my return from Amhurst Conference, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures. From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of men, had been taken from the Bible or lost before it was compiled" (T. of P.J.S., pp. 9-11).

The B. of M. also says, "Many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible... Thou fool, that shall say a Bible, we have got a Bible and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?" (II Nephi 29:3,6).

Notice that only "fools" trust in the Bible alone! Verse 10 of the same passage goes on to say, "Wherefore, because ye have a Bible ye need not suppose it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written." The B. of M. declared that more revelation was needed and thus made way for its own existence!

The B. of M. also predicts a great and abominable church has "taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (I Nephi 13:26).

The bottom of that page of the B. of M. dates this perversion of the gospel around 600 B.C., which was long before the "gospel of the Lamb" was even given in the New Testament! LDS claim the B. of M. has restored these "plain and precious things," and that it is the "fulness of the gospel" (B. of M. I Nephi 13:34-35; D. & C. 20:8-9; 27:5). But they are hard-pressed to point to anything that has been "restored" by

the B. of M. Our chapter on the B. of M. discusses this problem further.

Apostle Orson Pratt also claimed, "The Bible has been robbed of its plainness; many sacred books having been lost, others rejected by the Romish Church, and what few we have left, were copied and re-copied so many times, that it is admitted that almost every verse has been corrupted and mutilated to that degree that scarcely any two of them read alike" (The Seer, p. 213).

Pratt made another familiar LDS charge against the Bible, saying:

The gathering together of the few scattered manuscripts which compose what is now termed the Bible was the work of uninspired man which took place centuries after John finished his manuscript. Among the vast number of professedly inspired manuscripts, scattered through the world, man, poor, weak, ignorant man assumed the authority to select a few, which according to his frail judgment, he believed or conjectured were of God, but the balance not agreeing, perhaps, with his peculiar notions of divine inspiration, were rejected as spurious. The few, selected from the abundance, were finally arranged into one volume, divided into chapter and verse, and named the Bible (Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon, p. 3).

Pratt goes on to say that this selection or rejection of the books of the Bible was done by a vote of those uninspired men as they met in councils (Ibid., pp. 36-38). Pratt shows indignation at the very idea of the early church fathers voting to accept or reject scripture. But, Talmage wrote concerning LDS scripture, "the works adopted by the vote of the church as authoritative guides in faith and doctrine are four: the Bible, the B. of M., the D. & C., and the P. of G.P." (A. of F., p. 7). Therefore, the LDS Church accepted their four books of scripture by a vote! LDS must explain why it was wrong for the early church to vote on scripture and yet it was right for the LDS Church. Actually, about all those early church councils did was officially vote to endorse the books of the Bible then in use by the church. The Holy Spirit had already made the selection and guided them into all truth as Jesus promised He would in John. 16:13. There is absolutely no evidence that the books of the Bible were selected or rejected the way Pratt says they were.

Pratt also condemned the Catholic Bible, declaring, "That the Romanists have continued in their apostasy until the present day is demonstrated from the fact that they have not added one single book to their canon since they first formed it" (Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon, p. 38).

Pratt said the same thing about the "Harlot Daughters," i.e. Protestants (Ibid., p. 40). We will discuss what the LDS have added to their original scriptures in our chapter "More LDS Scripture and Revelation."

Orson Pratt also attacked the Bible saying, "The voices of several hundred jarring, contending, soul-sickening sects, were constantly sounding in your ears; each one professing to be built upon the Bible, and yet each one differing from all the rest. Under this confused state of things, you have peradventure, involuntarily exclaimed: can the Bible be the Word of God! Would God reveal a system of religion expressed in such indefinite terms that a thousand different religions should grow out of it?" (Divine Authenticity of the B. of M., p. 47).

What would Pratt say now that over 200 splinter groups have come out of Joseph Smith's original church? (See Denominations that Base Their Beliefs on The Teachings of Joseph Smith by Kate Carter). Neither LDS prophets nor their scripture have eliminated church splits!

It is strange that Mormonism attacks the reliability of the Bible while Talmage calls it their "first" book of doctrine! But, not all LDS leaders agree on which LDS scripture is the most important. For example,

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the LDS Church wrote, "In my judgment there is no book on earth yet come to man as important as the book known as the Doctrine and Covenants, with all due respect to the B. of M. and the Bible, and the P. of G.P. which we say are our standards in doctrine. The book of D. & C. to us stands in a peculiar position above them all" (D. of S., Vol. III, p. 198).

Obviously the D. & C. and the Bible cannot both be in "first" place above other LDS scriptures! But Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, said, "I told the brethren that the B. of M. was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts than by any other book" (T. of P.J.S., p. 194).

Thus, while Dr. Talmage said the Bible is the most important book to Mormons, Joseph Fielding Smith said the D. & C. was the most important, and the founder of Mormonism declared the B. of M. was the book that would get men nearer to God. As Mormons now practice their faith, Joseph Fielding Smith is really the most accurate because LDS believe the Bible has been corrupted and therefore is not too reliable. Furthermore, the B. of M. does not teach much Mormon doctrine, as our chapter on the B. of M. shows.

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explains their view of "scripture:" "The Church uses the King James Version of the Bible, but acceptance of the Bible is coupled with a reservation that it is true only insofar as it is translated correctly (Eighth Article of Faith). The other three (The B.of M., D.& C., and P. of G.P.), having been revealed in modern times in English, are accepted without qualification" (M.D. p. 764). This statement clearly shows that the LDS leaders question the reliability of the Bible, but not their other three books of scripture. However, three of their four books of scripture have been changed several times. The last time was in 1981. The only book of scripture they did not change was the Bible! Since it is the Bible they claim has all the problems, their actions are a bit strange. LDS leaders made changes (including doctrinal changes) in their B.of M., D. & C., and P. of G.P. when those books were already perfect enough to be "accepted without qualification." Why couldn't they correct the corruptions in the Bible if they really exist? Could it be that LDS leaders know that the Bible is not as corrupt as their own three books?

According to LDS scripture, every LDS president is "a seer, a revelator, a translator and a prophet" (D. & C. 107:91-92, M.D. pp. 591-592). Yet, even though Joseph Smith re-translated the Bible, the LDS accept only the King James Version as their official Bible!

MORMONISM'S INSPIRED VERSION BIBLE

According to the D.H.C., Vol. I, pp. 324 and 368, and Times and Seasons, Vol. VI, p. 802, Joseph Smith completed a translation of the Bible. Those sources and Andrew Jensen's LDS Church Chronology show that the New Testament was finished February 2, 1833, and the Old Testament on July 2, 1833. In a revelation given on January 10, 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon are commanded to "continue the work of translation until it is finished" (D. & C. 73:4). Obviously this was not talking about the B. of M. which was published in 1830. Nor could it be talking about the Book of Abraham Papyrus which Joseph Smith saw for the first time on July 3, 1835 (D.H.C., Vol. II, p. 235). Furthermore, Joseph Smith was commanded by God in D. & C. 124:89 to "publish the new translation of my holy word unto the inhabitants of the earth" (see also D. & C. 94:10 and 104:58).

In spite of these commands in LDS scripture the LDS Church never published the Inspired Version of the Bible until 1979. According to LDS Apostle Bruce McConkie, the reason it was not published is that "...This

inspired revision of the ancient scriptures was never completed by the Prophet" (M.D., p. 383). If that is true, Joseph Smith was a very disobedient Prophet because he was commanded to finish it (D. & C. 73:4) and publish it (D. & C. 124:89)! As previously mentioned, Smith himself claimed he did complete it, but it had not been published at the time of his death in 1844. When he was killed, the manuscript went to his wife who never accepted Brigham Young as the successor to her husband. Her son Joseph III later became the Prophet of the Reorganized LDS Church and published the new translation for the Reorganized LDS Church for the first time in 1867. Many LDS people have used the RLDS edition, but it has never been officially endorsed by the LDS Church because they did not trust the "apostate" Reorganized LDS Church. The ninth printing of the 1944 edition entitles it the Inspired Version The Holy Scriptures. Below that title it says "A New Corrected Edition." On p. 3 of the Preface, we read: "As concerning the manner of translation and correction, it is evident, that from the manuscripts and the testimony of those who were conversant with the facts that it was done by direct revelation from God."

If the inspired translation was done by direct revelation and yet needed correction by revelation, will the revealed corrections need to be corrected by further revelation? Why couldn't God reveal it correctly the first time? And why is about 90% of it a copy of the King James Version if that translation is as bad as LDS leaders have claimed it is? Since 1979, the King James Bibles published by the LDS Church have most of the Inspired Version in the footnotes and appendix, but they call it the Joseph Smith Translation or the "JST."

One of the LDS charges against the Bible is that many books have been lost. Talmage lists 20 "lost books" of the Bible, which include "The Book of the Covenant (Ex. 24:7); Books of the Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14); Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13)," and so on (A. of F., p. 501). Even if all 20 of these books are mentioned in the Bible, does that prove they were intended to be books of the Bible? If so, Epicurean and Stoic philosophy should be included also since the Apostle Paul quotes it in Acts 17:18 and 28. Just because some writing is mentioned in the Bible does not prove that everything in that document is supposed to be part of the Bible! One would expect the Inspired Version to contain the "lost books" which LDS claim make our Bible incomplete. But, not a single "lost book" has been replaced in the Inspired Version or in any other LDS book of scripture. In fact, the Inspired Version only has 65 books because Joseph Smith deleted the Song of Solomon!

Are the "mistranslations" which LDS claim are in the Bible corrected in the Inspired Version? One good example is in Is. 65:1, "I am found of them who seek after me, I give unto them that ask of me; I am not found of them that sought me not; or that inquireth not after me."

Paul quoted this verse in Rom. 10:20, but in Joseph Smith's translation it says: "But Esaias is very bold and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." Smith's "inspiration" speaks for itself!

The Inspired Version prophesies the coming of Joseph (Smith) in Gen. 50:24-33. But, you do not need to look beyond Gen. 1:1 to see that this is no ordinary Bible. Other texts that did not fit Smith's doctrine were changed so that they did fit. For example, Ex. 33:20 says, "Thou canst not see my face and live." But, the Inspired Version says, "Thou canst not see my face at this time. John 1:18 says, "No man hath seen God at any time." But, the Inspired Version says, "and no man hath seen God at any time except he hath borne record of the Son" (John 1:19). I John 4:12 says, "No man hath seen God at any time," but the Inspired Version adds, "except them who believe." Since Joseph Smith claimed that he saw God and Christ in 1820, he made the Bible conform to his teachings! Smith changed hundreds of verses in his Inspired

Version, but not one change can be substantiated by the original manuscripts!

Thus, the charge against the Bible made by LDS Apostle Mark E. Peterson certainly fits Joseph Smith's Bible! He said, "Many insertions were made, some of them slanted for selfish purposes, while at times deliberate fabrications were perpetrated" (As Translated Correctly, p. 4).

A COMPLETE, TRUSTWORTHY BIBLE

Since the LDS god is just a glorified man, it may be difficult for LDS to believe he can protect his word. But, Christians trust the Bible as the Word of God for several reasons. Archaeology has verified many locations and events mentioned in the Bible which show that it is truly an historical document. Some Biblical prophecies are known to pre-date their fulfillment, which suggests divine guidance. These things, along with the Bible's own claim that it is the Word of God, give Christians confidence in it.

Isaiah wrote, "The Word of our God shall stand forever (Is. 40:8). Peter said much the same: "The word of God which liveth and abideth forever" and "The word of the Lord endureth forever" (I Peter 1:23 & 25). Jesus also declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Jesus who made that claim also said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). If He has all power in heaven and earth, and He says His word will not pass away, we ought to be able to believe it! Rev. 19:6 also calls Him "The Lord God omnipotent" (all powerful). And if God cared enough to give mankind His Word, then He ought to also be able to preserve it. If the All Powerful Lord God can "keep" believers (I Peter 1:5), it is reasonable to believe that He can keep His Word too!

Gal. 1:8-9 warns against teaching any other Gospel than that which Paul had already preached. But, it is impossible for Mormons to show that Paul taught such LDS doctrines as: God is a glorified man, celestial marriage, a temporary hell, or protective sacred underwear.

There is no Bible verse that says "this is the end of all scripture." But, Paul did write in Rom. 15:19, "I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ." Peter also wrote in II Peter 1:3 that "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness." Paul said in Col. 2:10, "You are complete in Him" (Christ). Therefore, what could "more scripture" possibly add? Christians already have all things that pertain to life and godliness, because the gospel has been fully preached and believers are "complete in Him." The only thing which can be added to that completeness is distortion or perversion which Paul warned against in Gal. 1:6-9. Jesus also said, "the word that I have spoken - shall judge him (man) in the last day" (John 12:48). Therefore, no new "scripture" can add anything helpful to the gospel.

Sometimes Christians use Rev. 22:18-19, to show that nothing should be added to the Bible. LDS respond that this verse applies only to the book of Revelation. While it does apply to the book of Revelation, it also applies to the whole Bible since it is located at the end of the last book of the Bible. But, LDS claim that Duet. 4:2 and Prov. 30:6 teaches the same thing as Rev. 22:18-19, so most of the Bible should not have been written if that same logic is used with them. However, those texts simply say that the Word of God must not be changed by adding to or deleting from it. But, in his Inspired Version of the Bible, Joseph Smith did add and delete from the book of Revelation in texts like Rev. 1:1-8. Therefore Rev. 22:18-19 does apply to the LDS!

The New Testament writers were "eyewitnesses" of Jesus' earthly ministry (II Peter 1:15-18, I John 1:1-5) and recorded the things they heard and saw for our benefit. Although Paul was not a disciple during Jesus' earthly ministry, he was specially chosen by the Lord as a witness while the other apostles were still alive

(Acts 22:14-15; I Cor. 11:23; Gal. 1:11-17). He also testified concerning the same thing as the other writers: what he had seen and heard of the Lord. Although much more could be written (John 20:30; 21:25), there is no need for more because we already have "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3; John 20:31). Most people haven't read the Bible through once, so more scripture probably wouldn't get read even if it existed. We do not need more scripture, but we do need to know the scripture we have!

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