

MORMON SCRIPTURE

The Pearl of Great Price, Part II

By Marvin W. Cowan

Christians believe God inspired the writers of the Bible and therefore it cannot be changed just because someone wants to change it. However, Mormon leaders have made changes in all three of their unique books of scripture several times as we pointed out in previous articles. The "Introductory Note" to the *Pearl of Great Price* declares, "The *Pearl of Great Price* is a selection of choice materials touching many significant aspects of the faith and doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These items were produced by the Prophet Joseph Smith and were published in the Church periodicals of his day. The first collection of materials carrying the title *Pearl of Great Price* was made in 1851.... The *Pearl of Great Price* received wide use and subsequently became a *standard work* of the Church by action of the First Presidency and the general conference in Salt Lake City on October 10, 1880.... Several *revisions* have been made in the contents as the needs of the Church have required. In 1878 portions of the Book of Moses not contained in the first edition were *added*. In 1902 certain parts of the *Pearl of Great Price* that duplicated material also published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* were *omitted*."

The term "Standard works" refers to Mormon scripture as LDS Apostle, Bruce R. McConkie wrote on page 764 of *Mormon Doctrine*, "By the *standard works* of the Church is meant the following four volumes of *scripture*: The *Bible*, *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price*.... 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, having been revealed in modern times in English, are accepted without qualification." That implies that the three unique Mormon books of scripture are superior to the Bible. If they are better than the Bible, why were they changed when the Bible was not changed? Christians would not accept the following statement about the Bible: "Several revisions have been made in the contents as the needs of the Church have required." But that is what LDS leaders said about the *Pearl of Great Price* in the above quotation!

While modern translations of the Bible have been made in many languages, that is not the same as revising, adding to and deleting from the Bible like the above quotation says was done in the *Pearl of Great Price*. A modern translation of the Bible simply translates the meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible into today's languages because many words now mean something different than they did a few generations ago.

Moses 1:1 in the first book in the *Pearl of Great Price* says, "The words of God, which he spake unto Moses...." In verse 3 he says, "I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?" While this concept of God agrees with Psalm 90:2, it does not agree with Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse which is the basis of the Mormon doctrine of God today. In it Smith said, "God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!... I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.... God the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ did..." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 345-346). Therefore, Mormon scripture is not as important to Mormons as what Joseph Smith, their founding Prophet,

said. Moses 1:6 has God saying, “there is no God beside me,” which is exactly what Isaiah 45:5 and 21 says. But, Joseph Smith’s King Follett Discourse says, “you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you....” Smith went on to teach, “there is a god above the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” and Mormons today believe there is an endless succession of gods and that they can become gods too, if they obey the laws and ordinances of the Mormon gospel. Again, Joseph Smith’s teachings are accepted over Mormon scripture.

In Moses chapter two God tells the story of creation to Moses in the same order as Genesis chapter one. But God speaks as though He created everything by Himself even though in verse one He said He created them “by mine Only Begotten.” The words “And I, God...” appear in this chapter at least 30 times and all of the pronouns are first person singular. For example, Moses 2:3-5 says, “And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light. And I, God, saw the light; and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness. And I, God, called the light Day; and the darkness I called Night.” But “Abraham,” the second book in the *Pearl of Great Price*, also has the story of creation in chapters 4 and 5. Abraham 4:3-5 says, “And they, that is (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light. And they (the Gods) comprehended the light, for it was bright; and they divided the light, or caused it to be divided, from the darkness. And the Gods called the light Day, and the darkness they called Night.” The parentheses are in the text. The words “the Gods” appear at least 31 times in this chapter and all of the pronouns are third person plural. Therefore, either the “God” speaking in the book of Moses is an egotist who doesn’t recognize that other “Gods” helped him create everything or the book of Abraham is not scripture and “the Gods” in it don’t exist. Another possibility is that Joseph Smith did not get the book of Moses from God as he claimed. Or, are both books false?

Our next article will discuss more problems in the *Pearl of Great Price*. For more information on this subject we suggest *The Book of Abraham Revisited* by H. Michael Marquardt, published by Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P. O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, UT 84110.