

Joseph Smith's 1842 pronouncement that Latter-day Saints "believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God,"¹⁴⁵ whereas they only accord the same credence to the Bible "as far as it is translated correctly,"¹⁴⁶ accords the former some kind of preeminence. The error would be to see, as one scholar has, a definitive "demotion of the Christian Bible by virtue of his claim that it had been improperly translated."¹⁴⁷ The matter isn't quite that simple. For one thing, as Philip Barlow has pointed out:

Nothing... captures the evolving but enduring religious quintessence of Mormonism and its relationship to the balance of American religion better than a firm, comparative grasp of the Bible's place among the Latter-day Saints. This assertion applies even to Mormon theology and revelation, which... is inextricably enmeshed with and dependent on prior and often unconscious biblical perspectives.¹⁴⁸

One historian even concludes, based on the relatively few changes Joseph made in his translation, that "what the effort demonstrated was not the distance, but the close parallels the early Saints and their first converts saw between the Bible and the Book of Mormon."¹⁴⁹ Apparently, Joseph was not speaking entirely tongue in cheek when he wrote, in response to the question of "wherein you differ from other sects" that "we believe the Bible."¹⁵⁰ As mentioned previously, early converts used the Bible as the standard against which they measured the Book of Mormon's teachings. Grant Underwood has shown that in early LDS publications the Bible was quoted anywhere from 19 to 40 times as often as the Book of Mormon.¹⁵¹ Clearly this is hardly evidence of the Bible's demotion.¹⁵²

0-7 Howard observes:

One interesting insight comes to us when we see how much more extensive a revision of the ... text was made, proportionately, in that part of the manuscripts written out in full... [T]he natural tendency for the "translators" when writing out the text in full was to make many more revisions per verse and chapter of the King James text than was the case when they later adopted the brief notation system of transcribing their revisions.¹⁵³

0-8 Of course, having an understanding of priesthood ordinances is not the same as being authorized to perform them. As Ehat, *et al.* have written about the "ordinances whereby men were ordained kings and priests": "These ordinances were not introduced in Kirtland because Elijah had not come to confer the fulness of the priesthood upon the Prophet before he administered the Kirtland Temple ordinances."¹⁵⁴

0-9 Even as he was finishing his translation of Genesis, Joseph Smith seems to have believed that God did not intend for him to publish the JST in his lifetime. Writing to W. W. Phelps on 31 July 1832, he said: "I would inform you that [the Bible translation] will not go from under my hand during my natural life for correction, revisal, or printing and the will of the Lord be done" (J. Smith, Jr., *Writings 2002*, p. 273). Although the Prophet later reversed his position and made serious efforts to prepare the 1833 manuscript of the JST for publication, the statement implies that at that time he did not feel authorized to share all that he had learned during the translation process with others.

Another example of a revelation that was not published in Joseph Smith's lifetime is his revelation on war (D&C 87), received on December 25, 1832 and alluded to in D&C 130:12-13 (2 April 1843), and possibly never recorded in its completeness. Woodford¹⁵⁵ describes the extensive nature of the Prophet's visions on this subject as follows:

Joseph later recorded in his history that he had seen in visions the end of this nation¹⁵⁶ and the breaking up of the government¹⁵⁷ if it continued to disregard the rights of the citizens. Elder Grant also recorded the extent of the visions by Joseph Smith concerning these matters. He wrote:

145 Article of Faith 8.

146 *Ibid.*

147 J. G. Gager, *Early*, p. 59.

148 P. L. Barlow, *Bible*, p. xi.

149 T. Smith, *Biblical Culture*, p. 21.

150 J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 8 May 1838, p. 119.

151 G. Underwood, *Usage*, p. 53.

152 T. L. Givens, *Hand*, pp. 190-191.

153 R. P. Howard, *Restoration 1969*, pp. 92-93; cf. R. J. Matthews, *Plainer*, p. 80.

154 A. F. Ehat, *et al.*, cited in J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 302 n. 9.

155 R. J. Woodford, *Historical Development*, 2:1094.

156 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 4 March 1840, 4:89.

157 *Ibid.*, 16 December 1843, 6:116.