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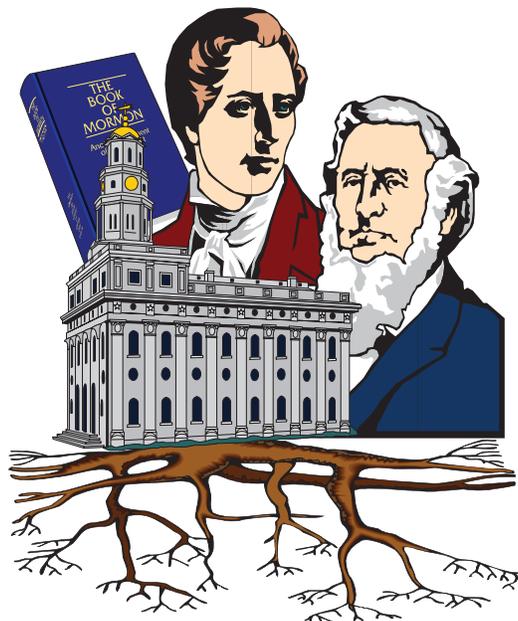
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The Fruit of the Root Mormonism's Fundamentalist Fanatics

by Robert L. Griffin

In that portion of the Sermon on the Mount in which our Lord Jesus gave warning to "beware of false prophets," He used the simile of fruit trees, and averred that a "good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ... Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:15-20). A modern expression of a similar idea is found in the adage, "The fruit doesn't fall far from the tree."

Often, man-made religions go further and further to extremes and false doctrine engenders more false doctrine. Those who tend toward Galatianism become ensnared in a trap that sweeps them into deeper involvement in "works" salvation and legalism. Rejection of the doctrinal tenets of the Christian faith often begets rejection of its moral tenets. The best explanation for these phenomena is, "by their fruits you will know them." There is a natural process of reaping the fruit of the root. Paul's admonition in Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap," certainly applies to individuals, as is evident from the context. But the principle is also operative for movements as well: they *do* reap



what they sow.

In approaching this subject, it should be observed that there are

distinct differences between those groups that come from a solid Christian heritage, and then forsake that heritage (whether through gradual devolution or sudden abandonment), and other movements that from their very foundation have been rife with error. Those familiar with Church history are often shocked at positions taken by certain leaders in mainline denominations. Such giants of the faith as John Wesley, John Calvin, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and others would be aghast at positions taken by some who claim them as spiritual forefathers. The phenomenon of a formerly orthodox body sliding the slippery slope of skepticism, liberalism, and compromise into gross unbelief is tragic indeed, but that tragedy is not the basis of this article.

Here we will focus on movements that from their birth have been based
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ior is a disease, he will not go to Christ for cleansing. If, on the other hand, one decides to call sin sin, he has made a major shift in his perception of reality. He has acknowledged, like the prodigal son, that something is wrong with himself. The confession requires responsibility on one's part. Had the son shifted blame to his circumstances or attributed his anxiety to a condition other than sin, he would have spiraled deeper and deeper, as do so many nowadays, into depression and despair. Repentance and being absolved of his sin reversed the spiral of gloom and despondency.

A physician should be where there are sick people who need his service. It was obvious the Pharisees felt themselves morally whole, as do those who attribute their sinful behavior to illness. People who call sin a disease and treat it as such with talk therapy and/or medication become mired in an endless cycle of more talking and more chemical manipulation of feelings and thoughts. There is no hope; there is no cure. In his book, *Diseasing of America*, Stanton Peele wrote:

"People's belief that they have a disease makes it less likely that

they will outgrow the problem. For this reason, disease approaches are most inappropriate and dangerous for the young. Treatment programs for chemical dependence stress to young substance abusers that they will always have a drug-taking or drinking problem. This almost guarantees that relapses will be frequent, when under ordinary conditions the vast majority would outgrow their youthful excesses. Treatment thus serves mainly as an impediment to the normal process of 'maturing out' of addiction."¹⁴

We must recognize sin as our only hope. When sickness is substituted for sin, the emphasis is on diagnosing instead of judgment or rebuke. Treatment is the focus instead of repentance, forgiveness, and biblical change. To cherish the illusion that sin is sickness is to forfeit forgiveness and restoration of fellowship with God. For the Christian, sanctification is thwarted; for the unbeliever eternal damnation is assured.

Endnotes:

1. Barbara Brown Taylor, *Speaking of Sin, The Lost Language of Salvation*. Cambridge,

- Mass.: Cowley Publications, 2000, pg. 5.
 2. Henri Blocher, *Original Sin, Illuminating the Riddle*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997, pg. 105.
 3. Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., *Mental Health Through Christian Community*. New York: Abington Press, 1972, pg. 27.
 4. *Ibid.*, pg. 28.
 5. Oswald Chambers, *Biblical Ethics: The Moral Foundations of Life, The Philosophy of Sin*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Discovery House Publishers, 1998, pg. 127.
 6. Stanton Peele and Archie Brodsky, *The Truth About Addiction and Recovery*. New York: Simon & Schuster (A Fireside Book), 1991, pg. 26.
 7. Susan Peabody, *Addiction to Love*. Berkeley, Calif.: Celestial Arts, 1994, pg. xii.
 8. James Dobson, *Hide or Seek*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Fleming H. Revell, 1971, pg. 21, italics in original.
 9. *The Truth About Addiction and Recovery*, op. cit., pg. 23.
 10. *Ibid.*, pg. 24.
 11. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 42.
 12. Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart*. Phillipsburg, Pa.: P&R Publishing, 2001, pp. 24, 25.
 13. For a detailed exposition of James 1:13-15 on the stages of temptation read Jay Adams' excellent book, *A Thirst for Wholeness, How to gain wisdom from the Book of James*, (Woodruff, S.C.: Timeless Texts, 1988).
 14. Stanton Peele, *Diseasing of America*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989, pg. 27, italic in original.

THE FRUIT OF THE ROOT

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on extrabiblical and/or anti-biblical belief systems.

CAN A LEOPARD CHANGE ITS SPOTS?

It should also be observed that at times religious movements founded on various aberrations seem to make determined efforts to change, to deny their history, or at least de-emphasize portions of it. Such efforts often may be merely cosmetic or public-image driven, but they are nonetheless evident. Examples are plentiful.

For instance, to cite an extreme case, multitudes of Muslims and their willing apologists claim that Islam is a "religion of peace." They try to convince the public that Al-Qaeda terror-

ists and Palestinian suicide bombers come only from marginal, misguided sects that have perverted the true teachings of Mohammed, and to portray non-violent Muslims as his rightful spiritual heirs. They make every effort to convince the world that Allah is the one true God, and that he is synonymous with the God of the Bible.

How often it is heard, "We all worship the same God, we just call Him by different names." While it is evident that not all Muslims are radical terrorists, the truth is that Mohammed was a product of his times, his culture, and his demonic delusions, and that he achieved many of his goals by violent means. That which is widely known of how he confronted opposition and dealt with "infidels" (i.e., those who resisted his

religion) justifies the inference that if he had possessed high-tech equipment and weapons of mass destruction, he would have used them in much the same way as do modern Islamic terrorists. There is no good reason to believe that he would not have followed the instructions he placed in Surah 4:91:

"You will find others who desire that they should be safe from you and secure from their own people; as often as they are sent back to the mischief they get thrown into it headlong; therefore if they do not withdraw from you, and do not offer you peace and restrain their hands, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them; and against these we have given you a clear authority."

It was this and other teachings found in the Koran that was the basis for the fatwa issued in 1998 by the "Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" (their name for Christians), of which Al-Qaeda is a part:

"To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able, in any country where this is possible."

Osama bin Laden and other extremists are following the example set by Mohammed in his establishment of their religion. They are simply manifesting the *fruit of the root*.

In an entirely different vein, one of the most remarkable developments in the history of modern cults has been the array of doctrinal changes that occurred during the decade of the 1990s in Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. Regardless of one's views about the validity of the transformation,¹ it is undeniable that sweeping changes took place — so sweeping that a *Christianity Today* article claimed, "Never before in the history of Christianity has there been such a complete move to orthodox Christianity by an unorthodox fringe church."²

But it must not be forgotten that close to one-half of the WCG membership withdrew in the '90s, many of that number aligning with the various offshoots that arose: the United Church of God, the Church of God International, God's Church Worldwide, the Church of God (Pasadena), the Philadelphia Church, the Living Church of God, and others. Regardless of where the parent body lands, tens of thousands in these newer cults are still bound in Armstrong's strange amalgam of doctrines drawn from Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventism, British Israelism, and his own fertile imagination, with the imposition of Old Testament regulations, denial of the Trinity, belief in conditional immortality, and the frustration of works-centered salvation. Thousands of Armstrongites continue to reap the *fruit of the root*.

Or, consider the Seventh-day Adventists and their efforts to gain the recognition of evangelical bodies. Their emphases on health, nutrition, weight-loss, benevolence, and personal responsibility are impressive. Yet, they cannot escape their indebtedness to Ellen G. White. Nor are they willing to break away from her erroneous writings, many of which have been shown to have been plagiarized. They claim to believe in the full authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures, but in practice they give equal allegiance to White's books and letters. They ascribe to her the role of Prophetess and use the term "Spirit of Prophecy" as a synonym for her writings. And, they do so while assiduously avoiding public discussion of many of her stranger pronouncements. While they claim to believe in salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus, they remain bound by the implications of her teachings of works salvation and requirements to observe Old Testament law. They are reaping the *fruit of the root*.

THE PROGENY OF JOSEPH

These and other possible examples notwithstanding, there *is no* religious body that has more difficulty in dealing with its roots than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its various offshoots. Almost from the beginning, even while Joseph Smith, Jr. was still alive, and much more so after his death, they began disputing and backtracking on key doctrines, leading to the formation of a succession of Mormon splinter groups.

Former First Counselor to Smith, Sidney Rigdon, when rebuffed in his efforts to succeed the former "money digger," "scryer," "peep stone gazer"³ turned "prophet," formed a "Church of Christ," and later the Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion in Pennsylvania, neither of which is extant. Another close follower of Smith, James J. Strang, claimed to have a letter from Smith naming Strang as his successor. When he could not derail the ascendancy of Brigham Young, Strang led his followers, including many of Joseph

Smith's family members, in forming a rival Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strangites), and proceeded to excommunicate Young and the members of the Mormon First Presidency. Strang was assassinated in Michigan in 1856, but a small group of Strangites today has a church headquarters in Wisconsin.

For two decades after Smith's assassination in 1844, other Young-rejecters formed splinters headed by Lyman Wight, Alpheus Cutler, William Smith, Aaron Smith, and David Whitmer. In 1860, Joseph Smith's widow, Emma, and son, Joseph III, left the Strangites to lead in the formation of The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now known as the Community of Christ). Three years later, several other small groups combined to form The Church of Christ (referred to as Temple Lot), naming Granville Hedrick as their leader. These latter two groups still exist and both are headquartered in Independence, Mo. They both claim ownership of the place specified by Joseph Smith, Jr. as the site of the temple to which Christ will return to establish his millennial kingdom (Temple Lot has actual possession).⁴

These latter two groups were different from most of the splinter groups in one respect: They did not accept or promote polygamy. Other than that, all of the various Mormon groups were simply fighting for the right to name the successor to their founder and "prophet," and to have the authority to preside over heresy.⁵

In the first 68 years of the LDS, there were four presidents: Joseph Smith, Jr. (1830-1844); Brigham Young (1847-1877); John Taylor (1880-1887); and Wilford Woodruff (1889-1898).

The relatively long periods between the death of a president and the elevation of his successor no doubt were related to the infighting that was commonplace in the movement, and this in turn spawned the withdrawals of various groups who gave their allegiance to the losing candidates. But for over a century now, the procedures have been so fine-tuned that only on one occasion has it taken

more than one week for the new president to be installed. That was in 1995 when it took nine days for Gordon B. Hinckley to move officially from the position of First Counselor to replace deceased President Howard Hunter. Hunter had served for only nine months, which apparently slowed the succession machinery.⁶

But for the most part in the 20th century there were no extended power-vacuum that invited the machinations of interlopers. However, pull-outs by groups of dissidents did occur regularly — so regularly that today there are more than 100 Mormon sects — and almost as many splinter sects that no longer exist⁷ — almost all claiming to be the restored one and only true church. The largest of these is the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or, United Effort Plan (UEP), based in Colorado City, Utah (actually straddling the Utah-Arizona border). The current president of the FLDS is Warren Jeffs. Utah State authorities have offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to his arrest on felony sex charges involving a minor.⁸ He is also under indictment in Arizona.⁹ Most of these breakaway groups continue to hold to some or all of several practices from the early years of Mormonism which have been abandoned, or at least publicly disavowed by the Salt Lake City hierarchy.

Of course, polygamy — “The Principle” — was one of these. Joseph Smith, Jr. taught it and practiced it surreptitiously. Brigham Young taught it and practiced it blatantly. John Taylor, the third president of the LDS, defiantly swore that it would never end. Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president, publicly acquiesced to governmental pressure, while the First Presidency privately advised the “saints” to continue to practice it discreetly. Only in more recent days has the practice been forsaken by mainline Mormonism. But the fundamentalist groups continue to promote it and doctrines related to it.

CONTINUING DIRECT REVELATION

One of the first of Joseph Smith’s

teachings to be forsaken by his church was his original teaching that all Mormons should seek direct impressions from the Lord. Biblically oriented Christians believe in the infallibility, reliability, and sufficiency of God’s Word, the Bible. But for Mormonism to exist, there had to be authoritative extra-biblical revelation. While that was acceptable for Smith, he soon realized that if everyone were free to fantasize as he had done, he would quickly lose control. Thus he announced in 1830, the year of the formation of his church, that God had given him a new revelation: only Joseph Smith, Jr. was authorized to receive God’s revelations. Since those days the president of the church has held the titles of “President, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator.”

Almost every instance of a new Mormon sect emerging has originated with some disaffected group going back to their roots, with some new prophet getting a later word from the Lord. Many times this prophet will also claim to be the fulfillment of Section 85 of *Doctrine and Covenants* (the second of Mormonism’s “triple combination” of “inspired” works, along with *The Book of Mormon* and *The Pearl of Great Price*), which included the prophecy:

“Yea, thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things, and often times it maketh my bones to quake while it maketh manifest, saying: And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send *one mighty and strong* [who would have power] ... to set in order the house of God” (vv. 6-7, emphasis added).

It is frightening to consider what evil may fester forth from wicked, deranged individuals who believe they are the “one mighty and strong” and that they are receiving instructions directly from God.

One example was seen on March 12, 2003, when Brian David Mitchell was arrested and charged with the kidnapping and rape of 14-year-old Elizabeth Smart, who had been abducted from her home in Salt Lake

City nine months earlier. When arrested in the company of his wife, Wanda Barzee (a former Mormon Tabernacle organist¹⁰) and Smart, Mitchell had in his possession a 27-page booklet called the *Book of Immanuel David Isaiah*. It turned out that Mitchell, a former Temple worker in Salt Lake City, had declared himself to be a prophet and had chosen the name Immanuel David Isaiah. The book was a collection of documents numbered one through seven, with an addition titled “Plus One.” Mitchell claimed that the writings were oracles that he had received by “the voice of the Lord.” It has been pointed out that the style and content is very similar to that found in *Doctrine and Covenants*.

It was this direct revelation by “the voice of the Lord” that emboldened Mitchell to carry out the kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart, to “seal” her as his wife, and to protest after his arrest that he had done nothing wrong.

LDS apologists universally condemned Mitchell, Barzee, and their actions. But *Sunstone* magazine writer John-Charles Duffy warned:

“Little wonder that mainstream Saints have concluded that Mitchell’s beliefs are ‘bizarre,’ even delusional. Yet the worldview laid out in *The Book of Immanuel* is not the product of lunatic imaginings on Mitchell’s part. Mitchell’s worldview is entirely derivative. Everything about *The Book of Immanuel* that is likely to strike mainstream Saints as bizarre has a precedent in beliefs that thrive on the margins of the LDS community itself.”¹¹

Immanuel David Isaiah, aka Brian David Mitchell, with his “new revelation” from the Lord, was a sad illustration of Mormons reaping the *fruit of the root*.

“BLOOD ATONEMENT”

For genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the biblical doctrine of blood atonement is precious indeed. In the words of Andrew Murray:

“...the blood of the Son of God, in which there was the life of the

Eternal Spirit, has been given, and has now wrought an eternal redemption! He did, indeed, bear our sins, and take them away. **He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.** The life He poured out in His blood-shedding was a life that had conquered sin, and rendered a perfect obedience. The blood-shedding as the completion of that life, in its surrender to God and man, has made a complete atonement, a covering up, a putting away of sin. And so the blood of the new covenant, in which God remembers our sins no more, cleanses our heart to receive His law so into it, that the spirit of His law is the spirit of our life, and takes us into full and direct fellowship with Himself."¹²

The writer of Hebrews said in 9:22, "...without shedding of blood there is no remission." This must be understood in light of its context, which clearly refers to the blood of Christ (see verse 14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?").

In discussing the phrase, "without shedding of blood," A.T. Robertson wrote:

"The author seems to have in mind Christ's words in Matt. 26:28: 'This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.' The blood is the vital principle and is efficacious as an atonement. The blood of Christ sets aside *all other plans* for pardon."¹³

These clear statements of the teaching of Scripture are quite different from what Mormons have meant historically by the term "blood atonement." In the words of Will Bagley:

"Perhaps the most troubling aspect ... was the Mormon leadership's obsession with blood. ... Joseph Smith taught that certain grievous sins put sinners 'beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ.' Their 'only hope [was] to

have their own blood shed to atone.' ... Of all the beliefs that laid the foundation of Utah's culture of violence, none would have more devastating consequences."¹⁴

This Mormon understanding of "blood atonement" was the basis on which Orrin Porter Rockwell, who at times acted as bodyguard to both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, filled the role that earned him the appellations "Destroying Angel" and the "Mormon Samson." In light of Smith's instructions, Rockwell must have felt completely justified in avenging Mormon grievances by "blood atonement." It is widely accepted that he was the culprit in the attempted assassination of Missouri Gov. Lilburn Boggs in 1842, after the Mormons had fled Missouri for Illinois; the murder of Lieutenant Frank Worrell in 1845; and many other acts of bloodshed. (Rockwell was also the scout that led Brigham Young and the Mormon wagon train into the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847.¹⁵)

This novel but deadly concept of "blood atonement" also was advanced by Brigham Young's Second Counselor, Jedidiah Grant, known as "Jeddie, Brigham's Sledge Hammer." Grant preached in September 1856 that the "saints" had the "right to kill a sinner to save him, when he commits those crimes that can only be atoned for by shedding his blood." He elaborated that there were sinners among them who ought "to have their blood shed, for water will not do, their sins are of too deep a dye."¹⁶

This is the background to the grisly episode known as the "Mountain Meadows Massacre" in 1857. A wagon train of settlers, mostly from Arkansas and usually referred to as the "Fancher party" was traveling across Utah toward California. It was made up of four groups that had combined to travel together, plus an assortment of apostate Mormons that had joined the train to flee the Utah Territory. Altogether there were more than 140 individuals, with cattle, horses, and all of their worldly possessions. Almost half of the party were children and adolescents.

All but 17 of the group (those under five years of age) were massacred by what was at first declared to be Paiute Indians. Later, both eyewitnesses and participants told a different story of the slaughter. Their accounts were that John D. Lee, an adopted son of Brigham Young, had entered the circle of wagons of the emigrants under flag of truce, and in two hours had persuaded them to trust him, surrender their weapons, and to depend on him for safe passage and protection from the "Indians." This reminds one of another tactic encouraged by Mormon leaders for dealing with "Gentiles": It was perfectly permissible to lie and otherwise deceive if it would aid in achieving a desired goal.

The now weaponless party was divided into three groups: The youngest children and several of the wounded led the way in a wagon; the women and older children followed on foot; the men came along several hundred yards behind, each closely escorted by an armed Mormon guard. Within a few miles, on the command, "Do your duty," each of the guards fired point-blank into the head of the man he was escorting, and others, some disguised as Indians, shot and bludgeoned the women, older children, and wounded men to death. The children under five years of age were spared and placed in Mormon homes. In 1859, United States authorities located all 17 of them and returned them to family members in Arkansas.¹⁷

The point is not merely to recount gruesome history. Sadly, these "roots" have produced fruit in the present.

On July 24, 1984, a day observed by Mormons worldwide as "Pioneer Day," in remembrance of the arrival of Brigham Young and the Mormon emigrants from Illinois in what is now known as Salt Lake City, Ron and Dan Lafferty forced their way into the home of their sister-in-law, 24-year-old Brenda Wright Lafferty, to fulfill a "removal revelation" Ron had received from "the Lord." Allen, the youngest of the six Lafferty brothers, was Brenda's husband.

All of the Laffertys had been raised in a strict Mormon home, but in adulthood they had left the main LDS body to embrace what is called Mormon “fundamentalism” — usually meaning those who accept Joseph Smith’s and Brigham Young’s teaching about direct revelation from God, “blood atonement,” defiance of civil authority, and, perhaps most of all, polygamy (at times called “plural marriage,” “celestial marriage,” or “spiritual wifery”). Ron Lafferty’s delusions convinced him that he was the “one mighty and strong,” prophesied

firm against the brothers and had encouraged their wives to resist their determination to begin taking other wives. This wrath led to the horrible murders of both Brenda and her 15-month-old daughter, Erica, whom they described as a child of perdition who would grow up to be like her mother.

Both Laffertys were convicted of first-degree murder. Ron was sentenced to death, and is still in the process of legal appeals. Dan was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. His cellmate at Utah State Prison is Mark Hofmann,

historic writings of the founders of their church. They did nothing that Joseph and Brigham did not condone — *at least* in principle, if not in gory detail. They were reaping the *fruit of the root*.

WHY NOT OPEN THE ARCHIVES?

Under the Banner of Heaven author Jon Krakauer states that the more than 60,000 Mormon missionaries roaming the globe claim that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “mankind’s ‘one true church’” and that all other religions are false. He offers:

“It seems to me that if Mormons are willing to make such a strong assertion — if Mormons aspire to convince non-believers that their religion is more valid than other faiths, and that the doctrines of Joseph Smith are truly handed down from God — Mormons should be equally willing to open the archives of the LDS Church to all interested parties, and to actively encourage a vigorous, unfettered examination of the church’s rich and fascinating past.”¹⁸

LDS leaders, however, do all in their power to keep many aspects of their history and their beliefs hidden from their own adherents, and even more so from the public. Perhaps their reasons are clearer when one considers the reaction of a former loyal Mormon who, with his brother, decided to study his religion’s roots. Brad L. Morin wrote specifically concerning Brigham Young’s teachings about “blood atonement”:

“Although she [referring to Dan Lafferty’s estranged wife whom he had met while her husband was in prison] expressed a loathing for the doctrine, I did not take the opportunity to learn what she was talking about. For another thirteen years, I knew next to nothing of this doctrine. In spite of the occasional, dark insinuations, I remained certain that Brigham Young was not responsible for leading anyone into sin. His word carried the



The Original 911 — The Mountain Meadows Massacre Grave Site Memorial in Southern Utah. It was here, on September 11, 1857, that at least 120 unarmed men, women, and children were murdered in cold blood by Mormons and local Indians.

in *Doctrine and Covenants*, and thus qualified to execute the “removal revelation.” In fact, he had also intended to “remove” a longtime friend of his former wife and the president of the LDS Highland Stake, both of whom he believed were complicit in his wife divorcing him. These two were spared because the Laffertys decided to flee to Reno before carrying out the rest of the revelation.

But the principal target of his wrath was his sister-in-law, Brenda, whom he accused of inducing his wife to leave him and of emasculating her husband, Allen. Brenda had stood

who sold the LDS church forged documents, including the famous “Salamander Letter,” and was later convicted of murder in a car bombing.

Mormons were filled with revulsion at the deeds of the Laffertys, and have led the way in condemning them. For the most part, the authorities who have vigorously prosecuted the Laffertys and others in “fundamentalist” sects are mainline Mormons. Most of them, however, have steadfastly refused to consider objectively the fact that the cold-blooded murderers (and other such criminals) were acting out what they had learned from the

weight of scripture. I continued to believe that on the important issues, 'The prophet will never lead the Church astray.' By the end of 1998, my examination of the early Church publication, *Journal of Discourses*, had shattered my naivety. Further research of Utah history in the 1800s exposed Mormon atrocities that left me reeling."¹⁹

Morin continued:

"These teachings, found throughout the *Journal of Discourses*, were acknowledged and defended by Church leaders in my lifetime, including Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the Church in 1970, and the more recent apostle Bruce R. McConkie."²⁰

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Morin began a detailed study of Mormon documents, of which he said:

"I read each of Brigham's statements several times. They were too clear and there were too many of them to dismiss. They came from the *Journal of Discourses*, speeches given to the Church membership in the 1800s, recorded by and preserved by the early Mormon Church. At one time Church members were encouraged to read these discourses, but that encouragement has long since ceased."²¹

After a study and struggle of over 13 years, Brad Morin, and six months later his brother Chris (they have nine other siblings), officially left the LDS church, to the utter dismay of family and friends. *Suddenly Strangers* is the account of their journey. Sadly, when they rejected the error in which they had been steeped, they replaced it with more error (they are self-described as "humanists"). Chris Morin describes their current state:

"I do not make the claim that there is no God; it is simply that I no longer accept what I once thought was compelling evidence for the existence of God. I do not claim to know that this life is all there is; I only admit to myself that I see no more evidence of an

afterlife than I see evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God."²²

So much for Krakauer's appeal for LDS leaders to "actively encourage a vigorous, unfettered examination of the church's rich and fascinating past," and little wonder that those leaders are bent on keeping it hidden.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not just need to encourage examination of their past. They desperately need to repent of their past, and their present, else they continue to reap the *fruit of the root*.

Endnotes:

1. For discussions of the changes in the WCG, see the following articles in *The Quarterly Journal*: "New Wine in Old Wineskins—Has the Worldwide Church of God Really Moved from Cultism to Orthodoxy?" (July-September 1995), "From The Plain Truth to the Real Truth" (October-December 1995), "The Two Faces of the Worldwide Church of God" (January-March 1997), "Transforming the Truth: The Worldwide Church of God Continues to 'Make' History" (July-September 1998; this issue also has an editorial, "The Worldwide Church of God's 'Orthodox' Bandwagon"), and "Being Saved After Death is Still Alive in the Worldwide Church of God" (October-December 2001).
2. Ruth Tucker, "From the Fringe to the Fold," *Christianity Today*, July 15, 1996, pg. 27.
3. Terms used in the early 19th century to designate one who used black arts such as gazing into "magic" crystals to find the location of buried treasure. Some of Smith's earliest problems with law enforcement came when he sold his services for payment in advance and then failed to produce the promised results.
4. The web sites of these groups are: www.strangite.org, www.cofchrist.org, and www.churchofchrist-tl.org.
5. This article focuses on some of the more "far out" practices of historic Mormonism. It is not intended to deal with the many other non-Scriptural teachings that are common to all branches of the LDS, having to do with their perversion of the nature and character of God and the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, their corruption of the way of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and their rejection of the absolute infallibility, reliability, and sufficiency of the Word of God, the Bible.
6. This data is found at the "General Authorities & LDS Church Information" web site compiled by Michael Taylor,

Provo, Utah ([http://home.comcast.net/~mdtaylor md/prophet.htm](http://home.comcast.net/~mdtaylor/md/prophet.htm)).

7. This would be denied by the Salt Lake City LDS, because in their view dissidents cease to be Mormons when they separate from the mother body.

8. See the web site of *The Principle*, a publication of The Center for Public Education and Information on Polygamy (www.polygamyinfo.com/frontdoor.htm).

9. Paul Foy, "FBI says fugitive Warren Jeffs possibly spotted at reservoir," *The Arizona Republic*, Oct. 25, 2005. Document available at: www.azcentral.com/arizona_republic/local/articles/1025fugitive_25.html.

10. See *Sunstone*, Issue 130, December 2003. Document available at: www.signaturebooks.com/excerpts/smart.htm. This magazine is published by the Sunstone Education Foundation and makes the disclaimer, "Sunstone has no official ties to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (emphasis added).

11. John-Charles Duffy, "The Making of Immanuel: Brian David Mitchell and the Mormon Fringe," *Sunstone*, Issue 129, October 2003, pg. 36.

12. Andrew Murray, *The Holiest of All: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1960, pp. 316-317, bold in original.

13. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932, Vol. V, pp. 402-403, emphasis added.

14. Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002, pg. 50, brackets in original.

15. The Mormon view of Rockwell may be found in *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder* by Harold Schindler, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993).

16. Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*. New York: Doubleday, 2003, pg. 204.

17. Three primary sources for information on the massacre are: *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1976*, (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1955, 2 volumes); Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); and the work by Will Bagley cited above.

18. Jon Krakauer, "A Response from the Author." Document available at: www.randomhouse.com/features/krakauer/response.html.

19. Brad L. and Chris L. Morin, *Suddenly Strangers: Surrendering Gods and Heroes*. Self-published, 2004, Chapter 16. Document available at: www.suddenlystrangers.com.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., Chapter 5.

22. Ibid., Chapter 17.