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Changes in the Book of Moses and Their Implications upon a Concept of Revelation

JAMES R. HARRIS*

Changes have been made in the wording of every book that is included among the standard works of the Church, but misunderstandings regarding the *nature, origin, and method* of change have disturbed some members of the Church in every generation since the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Responsible and valid explanations have been given for such changes, but it seems that they must be given afresh to each generation and expanded to include the additional information made available by more recent research. Unfortunately there has also been some clouding of the issue by those who have flatly denied that there have been changes or those who have not made it clear as to what they mean by "no changes."

This article will join the procession of articles dealing with the problem of scriptural change and its impact upon LDS theology. There will be concern to explain the nature of the material undergoing change, the historical situations in which these changes occurred, and the impact of these facts upon a concept of revelation. As it is in the Book of Moses that the most important changes have occurred, an explanation of how and why these changes were made in this text should satisfy the reader.

REVISING AND RESTORING THE SCRIPTURES

Upon receiving the call to revise and restore the scriptures, in June 1830, Joseph Smith began a project that was to occupy much of his time, study, and prayerful thought during many years to come—an "inspired revision" of the Bible. And this inspired revision and restoration of the Bible was both a revision of what was in the current Bible and a restoration of material that through the years had been deleted. The Book

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of Moses is an extract from that revision. In the eight chapters of our Book of Moses, we have large sections that are complete restorations of material previously lost. The so-called "Extract" from the "Prophecy of Enoch" contains the largest restoration of material in the Book of Moses. Just preceding his journal record of this revelation, the Prophet made the following comments:

It may be well to observe here, that the Lord greatly encouraged and strengthened the faith of His little flock, which had embraced the fulness of the everlasting Gospel, as revealed to them in the Book of Mormon, by giving some more extended information upon the Scriptures, *a translation of which had already commenced*. Much conjecture and conversation frequently occurred among the Saints, concerning the books mentioned, and referred to, in various places in the Old and New Testaments which were now nowhere to be found. The common remark was, "They are lost books"; but it seems the Apostolic Church has some of these writings, as Jude mentions or quotes the Prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam. To the joy of the little flock, which in all, from Colesville to Canadaigua, New York, numbered about seventy members, did the Lord reveal the following doings of olden times, from the prophecy of Enoch.¹

The Prophecy of Enoch, though known to the Apostolic Church, was lost to modern Christendom until it was restored, at least in part, in December of 1830. The prophecy provided information that would enable the Church to build up Zion *after the pattern of the Zion of Enoch*. Also, we have no difficulty in identifying the extract as a part of the "extended information upon the Scriptures, a translation of which had already commenced."

THE QUALITY OF THE MATERIAL IN MOSES

Since the Book of Moses is a part of the Inspired Revision of the Bible,² the same qualifications and limitations that apply to the Inspired Revision would in *some respects* also apply to the Book of Moses. The sentiments of President Joseph F.

¹Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1946), Vol. 1, pp. 132-133 [commonly called *Documentary History of the Church*; hereafter referred to as *DHC*].

²The term "Inspired Revision" is used to emphasize that this revision was not based upon biblical and linguistic scholarship but upon authorization and inspiration of God.

Smith, Sidney Sperry, M. V. Van Wagoner, and others were summarized by Calvin Bartholomew as follows:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts changes which the Prophet made in the Bible as improvements over the authorized Version but it maintains that the Prophet did not completely correct the entire Bible.³

This statement indicates that there are materials in the revision that remain unchanged from the King James Version. ly changed, when more extensive changes may have been in order. And there would be areas of the text where a complete revision was accomplished or where there was an extensive restoration of material. Although the Book of Moses is comparatively small, it is relatively easy to identify all three kinds of materials in it; for example, *Chapter 1* of the Book of Moses can be regarded as *an extensive restoration of material* that can be accepted *without* qualification. Chapters 2 and 3 contain very *modest corrections*, and it is obvious that a more *extensive change should have been made*. A comparison of Moses 2 with Abraham 4 and the Masoretic (Hebrew) text of Genesis will help justify and illustrate this point:

Abraham 4:2 reads:

And the earth, after it was formed, was empty and desolate, because they had not formed anything but the earth . . .

Moses 2:2 reads:

and the earth was *without form* and *void* . . .

The Hebrew reads:

והארץ היתה
תהו ובהו

Rendered: and the earth it was empty and desolate . . .

The earth, after it was formed, was empty; consequently, it was void of life; but it certainly was *not* without form. Another verse in Chapter 2 further illustrates the point:

Abraham 4:6

And the Gods also said: Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters . . .

Moses 2:6

And again, I, God, said: Let there be a *firmament* in the midst of the water . . .

Hebrew Text

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים
יְהִי רָקִיעַ
בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם

Rendered: And God said: Let there be an expansion in the midst of the waters . . .

³Calvin Bartholomew, "A Comparison of the Authorized Version and the Inspired Revision of Genesis," Unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1949, p. 158.

Quotes from two standard sources suggest the origin of the word *firmament* in the creation story. From *Webster's New International Dictionary* comes the following:

The word came into English as a translation of the Latin word Firmamentum of the Vulgate, meaning, lit., "A support; prop; strengthening . . ."

The earth was regarded (by the ancient Hebrews) as a flat surface, bounded upon all sides by the watery deep. Above, the heavens formed a hollow vault. This vault was thought to be solid, and was spoken of as a firmament.⁴

J. R. Dummelow wrote:

The [firmament] the sky, heavens. The word means something solid or beaten out, like a sheet of metal. The ancients supposed that the sky was a solid, vaulted dome stretched over the earth, its ends rested on the mountains, and the heavenly bodies fastened to its inner surface.⁵

An appropriate correction of the above, justified by the restoration of knowledge possessed by the ancient prophets, would lead us to qualify these quotations with the statement that it was not the ancient prophets who held such views but the ancient apostates down to and including Saint Jerome who translated the Hebrew רקיע (raqiya), *firmamentum*.

President Joseph Fielding Smith expressed the same sentiment in the following statement:

Firmament. As used in the scriptures, firmament means expanse, [i.e., it has come to mean this through usage]. The firmament of heaven is the expanse of heaven; it refers depending upon the context, to either the atmospheric or the sidereal heavens. (Gen. 1; Moses 2; Abra. 4.) It is not true, as has been falsely supposed, that the ancient prophets believed that the firmament was a solid arch between the lower and upper waters in which the stars were set as so many stones in gold or silver. Such was rather the apostate view of the apostate Church in the dark ages.⁶

A firmament, then, is a solid dome; an expanse is simply a space; these two things are obviously not the same. The one

⁴*Webster's New International Dictionary* (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1928), p. 820.

⁵Rev. J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 4.

⁶Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), pp. 260-261.

idea reflects an apostate theology; the other, the true condition of the waters in the sidereal heavens. Thus we see that Moses 2 is one place that additional changes should have been made. Therefore, it may be said of Moses 2 that "we believe it as far as it has been translated correctly."

The preceding comparison of texts may help the reader appreciate why the Prophet desired to make another revision of his revision of the Bible. It is by no means improbable that Joseph's translation of the Book of Abraham, done between 1835-1842, may have given him additional understanding which indicated the need to make additional changes in the text of Moses. The Prophet's studies of the Hebrew language may also have encouraged and confirmed the need for change as the above comparison would suggest.

HOW MANY REVISIONS OF THE MATERIALS IN THE BOOK OF MOSES WERE MADE?

A comparison of some of the pre-1867 publications of the Book of Moses with post-1867 publications reveals rather extensive change and expansion of the text (see Figure I, pp. 366-367). Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Salt Lake City, claim that the fact that there were extensive changes casts suspicion on the text of Moses. They have published the 1851 edition of the Book of Moses, representing it as *the basic text* containing changes made by Joseph Smith, and have interpolated changes observed in the 1878 edition. They imply that these changes were made by Orson Pratt, or someone else, since the changes were published long after the death of Joseph Smith.⁷ However, the Tanners successfully ignore the fact that Pratt's publication was based on a more complete revision of the Book of Moses made by the Prophet during his lifetime.

The existence of manuscripts representing different stages of completion of the revision of the scriptures was suggested by this writer ten years ago.⁸ This conclusion was based upon a textual comparison of published material which, in general, exhibited a progressive refinement and clarification of the

⁷Jerald and Sandra Tanner, "Introduction," *Changes in the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Microfilm Corp., n.d.), pp. 6-7.

⁸James R. Harris, "A Study of the Changes in the Contents of the Book of Moses from the Earliest Available Sources to the Current Edition," Unpublished Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958.

Figure I. A Comparative Table of Early Published Materials Showing Probable Relationships to Original Manuscripts (*Italics Mine*)

Source Manuscript	Old Testament Manuscript #1 (Least complete)	Old Testament Manuscript #2 (More complete)	Old Testament Manuscript #3 (Most complete)
King James Version	<i>Lectures on Faith</i> as published in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.	<i>The Millennial Star</i> publications of "Extracts from Moses," Vol. 13: 90-93, 1851. Also: The Liverpool edition of the Pearl of Great Price published in 1851.	The Holy Scriptures: An Inspired Revision of the Bible—1867. Also, 1878 edition of the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price.
Genesis			
Examples of Text Moses 2:26	And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Gen. 1:26	And <i>I, God</i> , said unto <i>mine Only Begotten</i> , which was with me from the beginning, let us make man in <i>our own image</i> , after our likeness; and it was <i>so</i> .	And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning, let us make man in <i>our image</i> , after our likeness; and it was so.
Moses 3:17	But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Gen. 2:17	. . . but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, <i>thou shalt not eat</i> of it; nevertheless thou mayest choose for <i>thyself</i> , for it is given unto <i>thee</i> ; but, remember that <i>I forbid</i> ; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. p. 13, verse 10	. . . but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; nevertheless thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that <i>I forbid it</i> , for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

- Moses 4:14 And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord . . . And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord . . . And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord . . . And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord . . .
- Moses 4:15 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, *Where art thou?* *And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where are you going?*
- Moses 5:1-5 No Text *After Adam had been driven out of the garden, he began to till the earth, and to have dominion over the beasts of the field, and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, as the Lord had commanded him:*
- And it came to pass that after I, the Lord God, had driven them out, that Adam began to till the earth, . . . And Eve also, his wife, did labor with him. And Adam knew his wife, and she bore unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth. And from that time forth, the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and to tend flocks, and they also begot sons and daughters. And Adam called upon the name of the Lord, and Eve also, his wife, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the garden of Eden . . .
- And he called upon the name of the Lord and so did Eve his wife also; And they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the garden of Eden . . .

text. The same conclusion can now be further justified by additional information on the manuscripts. During the author's earlier research in this area, he constructed a chart showing possible relationships between the then theoretical manuscripts and the various published materials.⁹ With very slight modifications in the original chart, the ideas represented seem to be remarkably consistent with our new knowledge on the subject.¹⁰ Frequent reference to the revised chart should be helpful as the reader continues through the remainder of this article (see Figure II, pp. 370-371).

THE LEAST COMPLETE REVISION

"Old Testament, Manuscript #1," was the earliest and least complete manuscript of the revision. It was described by Richard P. Howard, historian for the Reorganized Church, as follows:

Old Testament Manuscript No. 1 (fragment) 15 $\frac{2}{3}$ pages comprising Section 22 (Doctrine and Covenants) and Genesis, chapters 1 through 7. Handwriting: John Whitmer. Very fragile and deteriorated. Will not photograph adequately. The text is written out in full. This manuscript was not available in the production of the First Edition of the "Inspired Version" in 1867. It came to the church in 1903 through the Whitmer heirs.¹¹

It is possible that quotations from this manuscript were published in the 1835 edition of the *Lectures on Faith*. The rendering of these verses from Genesis seems to be less polished and somewhat less complete than any of the journal publications (see Figure I, pp. 366-367). This manuscript, or a copy of it, was taken from New York to Ohio by John Whitmer and, as indicated above, became the property of the Whitmer heirs.¹² The major difference between these early texts and the post-1851 journal texts is that the early texts used the third person pronoun which was later changed to the first person. Reed C. Durham regarded this change as evidence that the Reorganized Church had tampered with the original manuscript. He came to this conclusion after making a comparison between the

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

¹⁰See Illustration, Figure V, p. 24.

¹¹Richard P. Howard, "Question Time," *The Saints Herald*, Vol. 113 (May 1, 1966), p. 27.

¹²James R. Clark, *The Story of the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), p. 17.

Lectures version and the 1867 Reorganized Church publication.¹³ Obviously, he did not consult the 1851 *Millennial Star* publication of the same material, edited by Franklin D. Richards, which also portrays the creation story in the first person. With these facts in mind, can we charge the Reorganized Church with originating these changes, or were the changes additional evidence of the existence of an earlier, less complete revision manuscript, such as Old Testament Manuscript #1?

THE MORE COMPLETE REVISION

In that portion of the text now identified as Moses 5:1-4, Old Testament Manuscript # 1 omits verses 2 and 3 completely. These verses seem to have first been included in Old Testament Manuscript #2; at any rate, they are part of the text in the 1851 *Millennial Star* printing (see Figure I, pp. 366-367). Howard described Old Testament Manuscript #2 as follows:

Old Testament Manuscript No. 2 (fragment) 61 pages comprising Section 22 and Genesis, chapter 1-24:42a. Handwriting: John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon. *This represents a revision* of the text of Old Testament Manuscript No. 1, plus new material, extending to Chapter 24:42a of Genesis. Three dates are inscribed in this manuscript:

- a. Page 10, line 6: October 21, 1830.
- b. Page 10, line 24: November 30, 1830.
- c. Page 61, end of text: "April 5th, 1831 transcribed thus far."

This manuscript, also written out in full, is in very fragile condition; several pages will not photograph.¹⁴ (*Italics mine*)

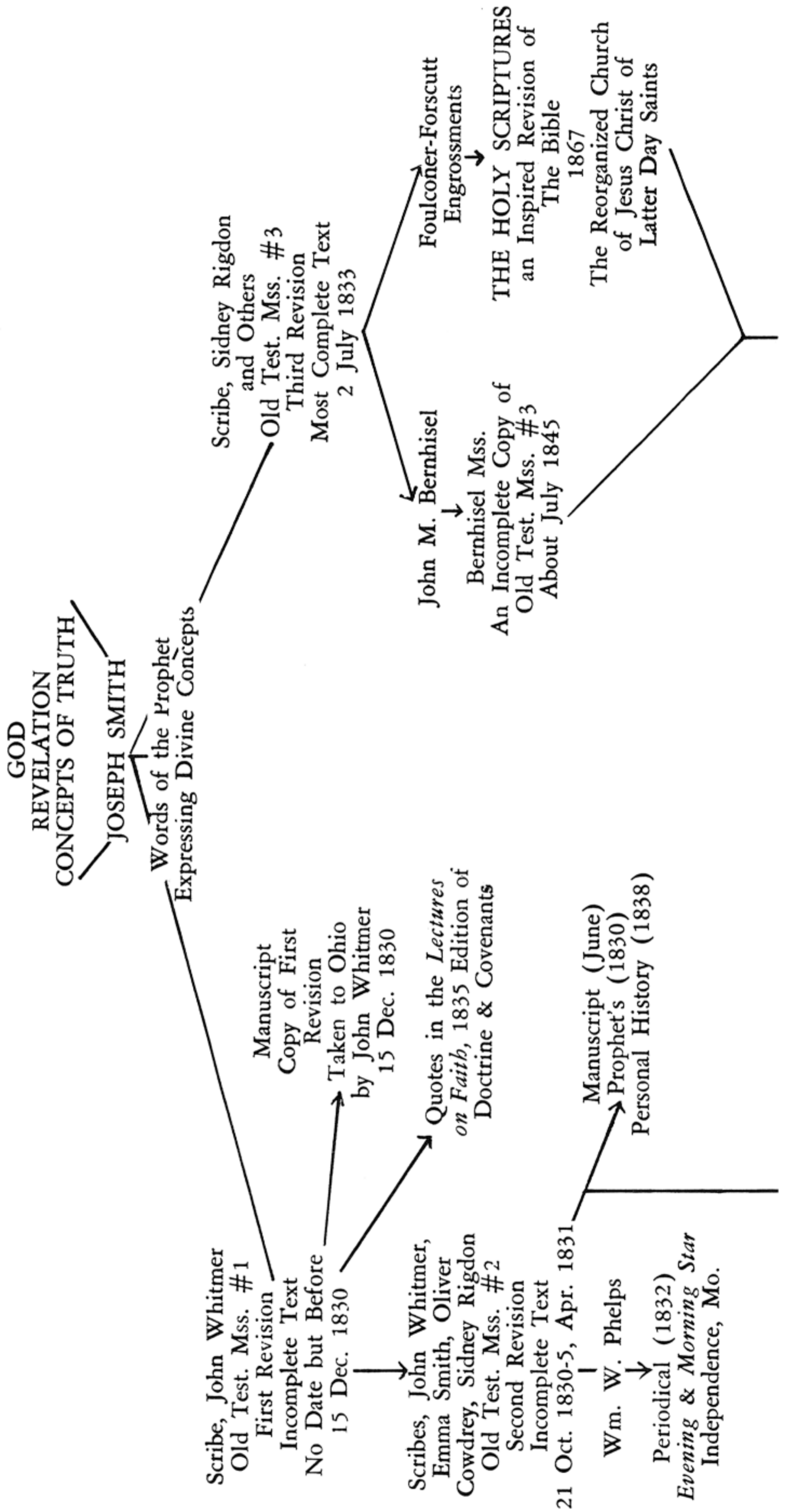
This manuscript was simply described as a more complete revision and extension of the text of Genesis. As such it is the most probable source manuscript for the following publications prior to the 1867 Inspired Revision publication by the Reorganized Church:

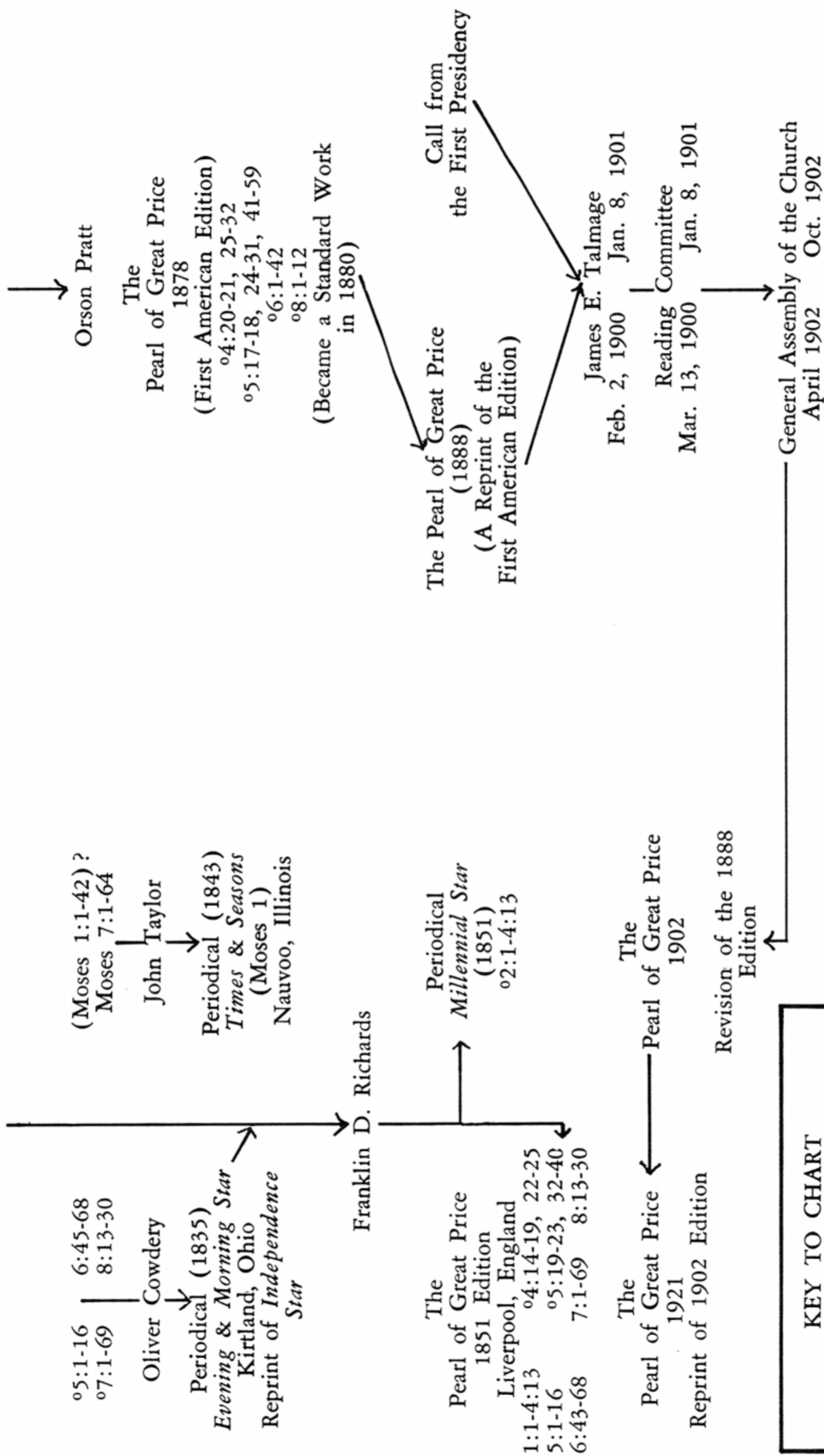
<i>Evening and Morning Star</i> W. W. Phelps (Ed.)	1833	Independence, Mo.
<i>Evening and Morning Star</i> Oliver Cowdery (Ed.)	1835	Kirtland, Ohio

¹³Reed C. Durham, "A History of Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1965, pp. 199-200.

¹⁴Howard, "Question Time," p. 27.

Figure II
 Changes, Relationships, and Editorial Responsibility
 for Manuscripts and Publications of the Contents of
 Our Book of Moses





KEY TO CHART
^oInitial publication of subsequent verses.
 Names between arrows indicate editorial responsibility.

<i>Times and Seasons</i> John Taylor (Ed.)	1843	Nauvoo, Ill.
<i>Millennial Star</i> F. D. Richards (Ed.)	1851	Liverpool, Eng.
First Edition, Pearl of Great Price F. D. Richards (Ed.)	1851	Liverpool, Eng.

These publications of the Book of Moses material show a great affinity, supporting the claim that they had a common origin.¹⁵

THE MOST COMPLETE REVISION

Old Testament Manuscript #3 was the *most complete* revision of the material in Moses and was, indirectly, the principal source (not the exclusive source) for the material found in the 1878 edition of the Book of Moses. A description of this manuscript follows:

Old Testament Manuscript No. 3 comprises three folios or sections of paper and totals 119 pages in all, the last 23 being unnumbered.

a. Folio 1:48 pages, number 1-48, comprising Section 22 (Reorganite edition of the D&C) and chapters 1-19:26z of Genesis, written out completely.

b. Folio 2:48 pages, numbered 49-96, comprising Genesis 19:26b through Psalm 150.

Pages 49-59a are word-for-word transcriptions (full Biblical text), being Genesis 19-26 b-24:73 (end of Chapter 24).

Pages 59 b96 comprise notations only, indicating those verses of the King James Version revised by Joseph Smith, Jr.

c. Folio 3:23 pages, unnumbered, comprising Proverbs-Malachi. Brief, concise notations indicating points of revision.

Handwriting of Old Testament Manuscript No. 3 is *largely* that of Sidney Rigdon, *although several other handwritings*, not fully identified, appear. This manuscript, a further revision of Old Testament Manuscripts No. 1 and No. 2, plus added material beyond Genesis 24, 42a, is itself in many places revised; a fact indicated by marginal interpolations in different colors of ink. Interpolations too extensive for recording in the manuscript were written out on separate scraps of paper and pinned to the manuscript. Date on page 119: "Finished on the 2nd day of July 1833."¹⁶ (Italics mine)

¹⁵Harris, "A Study of Changes," pp. 5-204.

¹⁶Howard, "Question Time," p. 27.

Though Durham emphatically declares that "all of the original manuscript is in his [Sidney Rigdon's] handwriting, any earlier scribal work or preliminary revising was *redone* by Sidney Rigdon,"¹⁷ or that "Sidney Rigdon was the major scribe because the manuscript completed on 2 July, 1833, . . . *is entirely* in his handwriting,"¹⁸ deeper investigation shows that there were several "other handwritings, not fully identified," on the manuscript.¹⁹

THE BERNHISEL MANUSCRIPT

There now rests in the Church Historian's Office a copy of Old Testament Manuscript #3 by the hand of Dr. John M. Bernhisel. (There is also a Church Historian's copy of that manuscript.) Though the Reorganite group questioned its existence and Durham disparaged its value, the Bernhisel manuscript is a very significant copy of the Book of Moses materials, as will be shown. Since the published Inspired Revision of the Bible by the Reorganite Church is an engrossment based on Old Testament Manuscript #3, *but not exclusively on #3*, and since the engrossments were corrected to harmonize *as much as possible* with Old Testament Manuscript #2, one would not expect the published revision to read exactly as the Bernhisel Manuscript.²⁰ But Howard stated that "the Faulconer-Forscutt engrossments were based upon Old Testament Manuscript #3."²¹ The published revision therefore should show considerable unity of thought, if not word, with the Bernhisel manuscript. A comparison was made of the first chapter of the Book of Moses in the 1867 and 1878 editions with the Bernhisel manuscript, and of the Bernhisel with other published versions with the following results:

1. There were 14 points of agreement between the 1867 and 1878 editions and the Bernhisel manuscript representing changes from earlier publications.
2. There were 17 points upon which the Bernhisel manuscript was unique in wording; only two of the 17 points represent uniqueness in thought.
3. There were 3 points upon which the Bernhisel manu-

¹⁷Durham, "A History of Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible," p. 40.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁹Howard, "Question Time," p. 27.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

script disagreed with the 1878 and 1867 editions but agreed with earlier renditions.

4. There were only 3 points of agreement between the *Times & Seasons* publication and the Bernhisel manuscript that were unique to these two renditions.

This preliminary analysis of the texts would indicate that the Bernhisel manuscript has a greater affinity to the Old Testament Manuscript #3 than to any earlier manuscripts, and that there is *no indication of any significant disunity in thought* between these two renditions. This unity in thought may be the basis upon which President Joseph Fielding Smith assured the author that the Bernhisel manuscript was essentially the same as the Inspired Revision rendition of the Moses material.²² It is not suggested that there are *no* differences in thought between these versions, but that the differences are very rare exceptions to the rule. It is this writer's opinion that Durham has made too much of these exceptions.

DID ORSON PRATT USE THE BERNHISEL MANUSCRIPT IN PREPARING THE TEXT OF THE 1878 BOOK OF MOSES?

It is possible that Orson Pratt had enough confidence in the Reorganite publication of the Inspired Revision that he accepted that rendition without making any effort to check it against the primary sources available to him. However, in view of the suspicion cast upon the Reorganite text by President Brigham Young, whose views were clearly communicated to Orson Pratt, it would seem unlikely that Orson Pratt would publish the Book of Moses without taking every possible precaution to check the text with primary sources that were available to him in Salt Lake City.²³ Possession of the Bernhisel manuscript by Brigham Young, or even more so, by John Taylor between 1876-1878 would not have rendered it inaccessible to Elder Pratt. Durham identified John Taylor as one who was greatly influenced by the Inspired Revision.²⁴ His leadership in 1877

²²Personal conversation in 1958, also: Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), p. 10.

²³The minutes of the School of the Prophets indicate that President Brigham Young regarded the Revision "spurious" and that he brought Elder Pratt to *some* level of agreement with his position. "Minutes," *Journal History*, Saturday, June 6, 13, 20, 1868.

²⁴Durham, "A History of Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible," p. 265.

may have encouraged Pratt to revise the Book of Moses and to use the Inspired Revision publication, checking its accuracy with the Bernhisel manuscript.

Elder Pratt's text is almost identical to that of the published Inspired Revision, but one significant variation suggests that Pratt had independent access to a primary manuscript. Moses 1:19 of all texts previous to Pratt's 1878 edition, including the 1867 Inspired Revision, read: "Satan cried with a loud voice and *went* upon the earth, and commanded, saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me." But Pratt's 1878 reading shows a bold change: "Satan cried with a loud voice and *rent* upon the earth." Such a bold, independent move by Orson Pratt, unique in his edition, would suggest that there must have been an authoritative source used other than the published Inspired Revision. It is significant to note that our present text utilizes Pratt's change.

WHY DID ORSON PRATT CHANGE THIS READING?

A careful examination of the Bernhisel manuscript version of Moses 1:19 reveals a very significant point missed by Durham in his study of this material. The Bernhisel manuscript reads "*wrent* upon the earth" (see Figure III, p. 376). This point of agreement between the Bernhisel manuscript and Pratt's 1878 edition represents a departure from the Inspired Revision rendition, and is a strong indication that Pratt used the Bernhisel or possibly some other unknown manuscript of equal authority. In the absence of any knowledge of such a manuscript, the Bernhisel should stand out as the most probable source for this change.

An important confirmation of this reading in the Bernhisel manuscript can be seen in the Church Historian's copy of the Bernhisel manuscript. Written in a beautifully clear handwriting, there can be no mistaking the word "*wrent*."

The superiority of the "*rent*" or "*wrent*" rendition over the "*went*" rendition is made clear by a careful reading of the text. After stating that Satan "*went* upon the earth" the text indicates that he didn't go anywhere but remained in the presence of Moses and declared, "I am the Only Begotten, worship me." In other words, the "*went*" rendition seems to be a contradiction in thought. On the other hand, the state-

FIGURE III

Bottom of Page 137 of the Bernhisel Manuscript

10 And he gave also unto me commandment when he called
 unto me out of the burning bush saying call upon God in
 the name of mine only begotten and worship me.
 11 And again Moses said I will not cease to call upon God
 I have other things to enquire of him for his glory has been upon
 me and it is glory unto me wherefore I can judge between
 him and thee depart hence Satan.
 12 And now when Moses had said these words Satan cried with
 a loud voice and went upon the earth and commanded
 saying I am the only begotten worship me And it came to pass

Verse 12 reads: "And now when Moses had said these words Satan cried with a loud voice and went upon the earth and commanded saying I am the only begotten worship me. And it came to pass . . ." (By courtesy of the Church Historian's Office.)

ment that Satan "rent upon the earth," i.e., made a concerted effort to impress Moses with his power, is consistent with the description of what follows. Satan having demonstrated his power by creating a fissure in the earth, thus inferred that his power is an evidence of his divinity, and he declared "I am the Only Begotten, worship me." It is also apparent that Satan was almost successful because, "Moses began to tremble."

Consequently, there is reason to believe that Durham may have been a little premature in stating that Orson Pratt did not use the Bernhisel manuscript as a source for the 1878 edition of the Book of Moses. Certainly this issue is still unsettled.²⁵

It may be said with certainty that Orson Pratt was not the author of any of the changes in the 1878 edition of the Book of Moses. He was the means of providing a more extensive rendition for the Church, but the source for the changes he published seems to have been the Prophet Joseph Smith's Old Testament Manuscript #3, via the published Inspired Revision of 1867 and the Bernhisel manuscript, or some other primary manuscript of equal authority like the Church Historian's copy of the Bernhisel.

THE TALMAGE EDITION OR THE CURRENT RENDITION OF MOSES

There was no indication from a limited textual analysis comparing the Bernhisel manuscript rendition with Moses 1 in the 1902 Talmage edition that Talmage used the Bernhisel manuscript.²⁶ At several points in the textual comparison the Talmage edition shows a preference for the earlier *Times and Seasons* (1843) or Liverpool (1851) renditions. There are no points that indicate he followed the Bernhisel manuscript rendition. There were only three points at which independent word changes occur, and only two of those could possibly be construed as representing a thought change. And even in these cases it would be debatable whether they are genuine thought changes. It would seem, however, that James E. Talmage displayed more independent action with the text than did Orson Pratt, who took no independent action whatsoever. This is not difficult to understand when one considers that Orson Pratt

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 171-176.

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

had not been officially called (as far as we know) to prepare the text of the Book of Moses for publication in 1878. It was not a standard work at the time he published it, and its stature among the saints seemed to have been somewhat below the appeal of Eliza R. Snow's poems.²⁷

Talmage, on the other hand, had been called by the First Presidency of the Church and given the following instructions:

Elder James E. Talmage called at the President's office and had a talk with the Presidency regarding the edition of the Pearl of Great Price which he is to publish with footnote references. President Cannon suggested that it would be perfectly proper to make references to chapters and verses, but nothing should be done in the way of footnotes in this edition in the way of explaining the meaning of any passages as this light might lead to difficulty.²⁸

The authority of the commission could have given Elder Talmage a little more freedom than Brother Pratt was willing to assume.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CHANGES UPON A CONCEPT OF REVELATION

Many Latter-day Saints have accepted the scriptures of the standard works in their present form without giving much thought to the process by which they were revealed. It would be presumptuous on the part of man to attempt to limit the scope and variety of God's power to communicate with him. God can communicate any way that man can communicate, and he is not limited to the relatively feeble instruments of communication utilized by man. At this moment the writer is trying to communicate ideas or concepts. If he chooses his words wisely, and carefully places those words in logical patterns, someone may arrive at the same concepts that the writer intended to convey. However, such a result cannot be guaranteed. The words selected by the writer are not the concept, but are symbols by which he is trying to communicate that concept. Obviously,

²⁷Sister Snow's poems received front page publicity but Pratt's revision was advertised without heading on the bottom of page 3 of the *Deseret News*, June 24, 1878, p. 3. See also, James R. Harris, "A Study of the Changes," pp. 221-223.

²⁸"Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," February 2, 1900, p. 1.

there is a tremendous risk in the process of transmitting concepts through word symbols. Consequentially, God does not, as a general rule, use this indirect method of communication. Preferably, he communicates concepts directly to the souls of men. When this method is used there is no possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpretation. If the divine communication is to be transmitted to others, the prophet must represent the concepts given him in the thought symbols at his command. The concepts are divine, but the language is still human.

Orson Pratt had much to say on this subject:

The Book of Mormon tells us, that the angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, and man when under the influence of it, speaks the language of angels. Why does he speak in this language? Because the Holy Ghost suggests the idea which he speaks; and it gives him utterance to convey them to the people. Suppose the Holy Ghost should suggest to the mind of an individual a vast multitude of truths, I mean when in the spiritual state, and he wishes to convey that intelligence and knowledge to his fellow spirit; suppose instead of having arbitrary sounds, such as we have here, to communicate these ideas, that the Holy Ghost itself, through a certain process and power, should enable him to unfold that knowledge to another spirit, all in an instant, without this long tedious process of artificial and arbitrary sounds, and written words. . . . How does God perceive the thoughts of our hearts? Is there not here a language by which He can discover and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart? Are we not told in many of the revelations how that God can perceive the thoughts of man, and that for every idle thought we are to be brought into judgment? Yes, He discerns the thoughts and intentions of the hearts of the children of men. Supposing we had some of that power resting upon us, would not that be a different kind of a language from sound, or from a written language? It would. If spirits could commune with spirits, and one higher intelligence commune with another by the some principle through which God sees the thoughts and intents of the heart, it would be nothing more than what has already existed here in this world, according to that which is revealed.²⁹

President Joseph F. Smith identified some basic principles of revelation in his testimony before the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections in connection with the Reed Smoot

²⁹Orson Pratt, "Language and the Medium of Communication in the Future State," *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, pp. 101-102.

seating hearing. During the course of the Smoot Case³⁰ changes made in the grammatical structure of the Manifesto were considered. The dialogue went as follows:

Senator - "I understand this Manifesto was inspired."

Elder - "Yes."

Senator - "That is your understanding of it?"

Elder - "My answer was that it was inspired."

Senator - "And when it was handed to you it was an inspiration, as you understand it, from on high, was it not?"

Elder - "Yes."

Senator - "What business had you to change it?"

Elder - "We did not change the meaning."

Senator - "You have just stated you changed it."

Elder - "Not the sense, sir. I did not say we changed the sense."

Senator - "But you changed the phraseology?"

Elder - "We simply put it in shape for publication, corrected possibly the grammar, and wrote it so that . . ."

Senator - "You mean to say that in an inspired communication from the Almighty the grammar was bad was it? You corrected the grammar of the Almighty did you?"³¹

Some of the saints in 1907 picked up the phrase, "correcting the Lord's grammar," and were no doubt shaken in their faith. B. H. Roberts gave an explanation to these troubled souls by identifying the human elements in the language of the revelations:

In defining what I understand revelation to be, and the manner in which it may be communicated, I have already stated that when we have a communication made directly from the Lord Himself there is no imperfection whatever in that revelation. But when the Almighty uses a man as an instrument through whom to communicate divine wisdom, the manner in which the revelation is imparted to men may receive a certain human coloring from the prophet through whom it came. We know this to be true, because we have the words of different prophets before us by which we may test the matter. We know for instance, that the message delivered to Israel through the Prophet Isaiah possessed dif-

³⁰At the turn of the century (1903-1907) the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections met to determine if Senator Reed Smoot was qualified to be seated since he belonged to a church that practiced plural marriage, etc. See Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church* (Deseret News Press, Salt Lake City, 1930), Vol. VI, pp. 393-399.

³¹Brigham H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1907), Vol. I, p. 504.

ferent characteristics from the message delivered through Jeremiah, or through Ezekiel, or through Amos. It seems that the inspiration of the Lord need not necessarily destroy the personal characteristics of the man making the communication to his fellowmen.

.....

So in this Manifesto issued by President Woodruff. What if there were imperfect, or ungrammatical sentences in it? What does the world care about that in the last analysis of it? The great thing in the instrument was, and the great truth that the Lord made known to the soul of Wilford Woodruff was, that it was necessary for the preservation of the Church, and the uninterrupted progress of her work that plural marriages should be discontinued. Now, any expression containing that truth was all that was necessary. And so there is nothing of weight in the phrase "Correcting the grammar of the Almighty." We do not correct His grammar. Perhaps the brethren made slight corrections in the grammar of Wilford Woodruff. The grammar may be the prophet's, the idea, the truth, is God's.³²

The Lord's chastisement of Oliver Cowdery for attempting to translate without "studying it out in the mind"³³ is well known throughout the Church. This studying-out process within the mind of the translator involved the selection and use of words to build a concept or give it a rational structure. This process is described by Elder Roberts as follows:

But since the translation is thought out in the mind of the seer, it must be thought out in such thought-signs as he is master of, for man thinks and can only think coherently, in language; and, necessarily, in such language as he knows. If this knowledge of the language in which he thinks and speaks is imperfect, his diction and grammar will be defective.³⁴

On rare occasions God may dictate a communication, or his conversation may be recorded as remembered by the prophet. But it seems that God usually communicates in concepts. Unfortunately, the principle of revelation discussed above is best understood when experienced, but difficult to understand without experience. To insure accurate reception, God communicates his will *directly to the souls of men by flooding their*

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 517-521.

³³Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.

³⁴Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, p. 280.

understandings with concepts that cannot be misunderstood. If the divine message is to be communicated to others, a prophet must then select the words that will enable his disciples to perceive the God-given concepts.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The concepts given to a prophet were and are divine; the words with which he transmitted them are and were human. Latter-day Saints should be able to accept new revelation as it flows from the living prophet, and to accept clarifications of past revelation as they come through the proper channels of authority.

The program of the Church is constantly changing to meet new needs and to bring to full maturation promises and objectives that were declared from the beginning of the Restoration. If the saints are to realize their destiny as a Zion people, they must change; and, no doubt, a program will continue to unfold under the direction of the living prophets to encourage, motivate, and command a level of performance that will release the necessary spiritual endowments of power to enable the members of the Church to become a Zion people. Such a program cannot succeed unless the members sense that their primary and continuous commitment is to the living prophets whom God places over them.

Those, in past generations, who were disgruntled over changes that were made in the earliest renditions of the Book of Moses or in any other scripture were worshipping *dead things*. Their ears were not inclined toward the living God who speaks to his Church through his living prophets. In a generation of *change toward fulfillment*, whose voice will be heard?

And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people.³⁵

A tolerance for change has never been more vital. The time grows short and the necessary preparations to meet the coming Lord demand *change toward fulfillment* through the channels of priesthood authority.

³⁵Doctrine and Covenants 1:14.