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"HE BEHELD THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS": JOSEPH SMITH AND DIABOLISM IN
EARLY MORMONISM 1815-1831

by

Steven R. Hepworth

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

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2021

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ABSTRACT

“He Beheld the Prince of Darkness”: Joseph Smith and
Diabolism in Early Mormonism 1815-1831

by

Steven R. Hepworth, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2021

Major Professor: Dr. Patrick Mason
Department: History

Joseph Smith published his first known recorded history in the preface to the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. In it, he recounted the loss of the earliest portions of the book’s manuscript due to theft in a scheme the future prophet believed was concocted by the devil. Smith claimed to receive a revelation that instructed him on how to overcome the diabolic plot meant to discredit and destroy the Book of Mormon. This was not Smith’s first or last recorded encounter with the devil. He believed the devil was real and that he was engaged in a cosmic battle between God and Satan. Much of Smith’s early prophetic projects were directed at engaging and winning this cosmic battle. This important aspect of Joseph Smith’s religious thought, under-developed in the vast scholarship written about him, is crucial in understanding how he developed his prophetic identity and religious system. This thesis explores the impact Joseph Smith’s diabolism, that is his belief in and encounters with the devil, had on the formation of his prophetic identity, his production of new scripture, and the rise of early Mormonism.

(152 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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Diabolism in Early Mormonism 1815-1831

Steven R. Hepworth

Joseph Smith published his first known recorded history in the preface to the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. In it, he recounted the loss of the earliest portions of the book’s manuscript due to theft in a scheme the future prophet believed was concocted by the devil. Smith claimed to receive a revelation that instructed him on how to overcome the diabolic plot meant to discredit and destroy the Book of Mormon. This was not Smith’s first or last recorded encounter with the devil. He believed the devil was real and that he was engaged in a cosmic battle between God and Satan. Much of Smith’s early prophetic projects were directed at engaging and winning this cosmic battle. This important aspect of Joseph Smith’s religious thought, under-developed in the vast scholarship written about him, is crucial in understanding how he developed his prophetic identity and religious system. This thesis explores the impact Joseph Smith’s diabolism, that is his belief in and encounters with the devil, had on the formation of his prophetic identity, his production of new scripture, and the rise of early Mormonism.

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Steven R. Hepworth

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In January 1844, Latter-day Saint apostle Parley Pratt published a fictional account of an interview between the Devil and Joseph Smith. In the narrative, Satan is concerned about Smith's work and tells the prophet that he is out conducting business and "warfare against you and your imposition" because Smith had "made more trouble than all the ministers or people of my whole dominion have for ages past." Satan is worried that Smith would "overthrow my kingdom" and "leave me not a foot of ground on earth."¹

While fictional, the account portrays one aspect of Joseph Smith's prophethood as a contest between Smith and the devil. Joseph Smith believed the devil was real and fought to diminish Satan's power and influence on earth. Diabolism, that is a belief in and encounters with the devil, played a central role in forming Smith's propheticism, both forging his identity as a prophet and propelling his prophetic projects. As historian Richard Brodhead has noted, propheticism is the process through which men and women form and exert their prophetic identity, which typically includes access to a special knowledge of reality and includes the consequences of their prophetic undertakings.²

Smith's first recorded encounter with the devil took place in 1820, immediately preceding his first theophany. Indeed, scholars have rarely noted, let alone fully considered, that the devil was the first supernatural being Smith personally encountered. In the following decade Smith participated in various activities that included elements of diabolism. His treasure seeking

¹ Parley P. Pratt, "A Dialogue between Joseph Smith and the Devil," *New York Herald*, January 1, 1844.

² Richard H. Brodhead, "Prophets in America circa 1830: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nat Turner, Joseph Smith," in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.

enterprises included a common component of battling or overcoming evil spirits. He retrieved and translated gold plates published as the Book of Mormon. Both the retrieval and the translation included diabolic encounters. He organized a Church, performed an exorcism, and received revelations. He revised the Bible, inserting the devil into the Old Testament. He received revelations instructing him to build Zion, a refuge from Satan and the evil of the world. Smith believed the devil actively opposed all of these prophetic endeavors. Diabolism helped shaped and establish Joseph Smith's prophetic identity in his and his follower's minds. Exploring Smith's religious beliefs regarding diabolism connect some of his seemingly disparate projects. Smith expended much of his prophetic influence and power to combat the power of the devil. This thesis will examine the importance of diabolism in the religious life of Joseph Smith.

The devil in nineteenth-century American existed most prominently in the religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening. Preachers implored their congregants to seek for a personal conversion. Nestled into these calls for conversion were warnings about the potential interference from Satan. This iteration of the devil shed his horns and hooves and worked on his targets' inner minds. Spiritual warfare became a common theme in revival sermons. God desired all to become newly born, and Satan sought to abort any new birth experience. Preachers and congregants believed that not only were they engaged in a battle against Satan, but that the devil also fought against them, taking a particular interest in defeating the spread of their message. He no longer worked with witches and those that sought his power and company, but he sought to interrupt the lives of Christians who were seeking to discontinue their sinful ways and looking to find redemption through God. Converts saw these struggles with Satan as a precursor to their

sought-after conversion, an initiatory rite into the evangelical experience.³ In this cultural milieu, Joseph Smith became an American Prophet and founded The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Prophets are figures imbued with special knowledge of reality. This unique knowledge compels a prophet to act, either on behalf of a being he or she represents or on behalf of a cause or a people. Philip Barlow has persuasively argued that Joseph Smith was endowed with this special understanding of reality and his prophetic undertaking was to fix reality itself. His prophetic projects were all meant to mend a reality that had become fractured.⁴ In a revelation given to Joseph Smith on May 6, 1831, in Kirtland, Ohio, God reiterated to Smith the importance of having a correct knowledge of reality: “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come, and whatsoever is more or less than these is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.”⁵ Smith believed that Satan was a significant reason why reality, and even the very nature of truth, had become distorted. He worked to undo the damage Satan had inflicted on Christianity and the world.

Joseph Smith was deeply concerned with the idea of diabolic deception and expended much of his prophetic authority and enterprise to expose Satan and cast him out from among members of the Latter-day Saint faith. George A. Smith, a cousin to the prophet and a Church leader in Utah in the latter half of the nineteenth century, reminisced years after Smith’s death

³ For an extended discussion on Satan and the Second Great Awakening, see W. Scott Poole, *Satan in America: The Devil We Know* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 33–65; Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1997), 28–76; Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995), 57–121; Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 129–213; and Richard Godbeer, *The Devil’s Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 85–120.

⁴ Philip L. Barlow, “To Mend A Fractured Reality: Joseph Smith’s Project,” *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 3 (Summer, 2012): 32–33.

⁵ “Doctrine and Covenants, 1835,” p. 211, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed January 26, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/219>.

that “There was no point upon which the Prophet Joseph dwelt more than the discerning of Spirits.”⁶ A number of Joseph Smith’s extant sermons reflect this fact.⁷ Many of his prophetic projects, including the translation and production of scripture, church organization and priesthood hierarchy, the building and gathering believers to Zion, and his temple liturgy and cosmology all dealt with protecting believers from the power of the devil, casting him out or limiting his influence within the Church, and correcting errors introduced into the world by the evil one. For Smith, diabolism was to blame for the false reality in which the world existed, and he had the prophetic vision and power to correct reality and cast the devil out from society. This thesis explores the impact diabolism had on Joseph Smith’s religion making during the first decade of his religious career.

Chapter Outline

Joseph Smith’s first purported encounter with the supernatural was with the devil preceding his 1820 theophany. Chapter two will explore the diabolism found in the content and context of the various extant accounts of Smith’s experience. These documents and the context in which they were created demonstrate the centrality of diabolism to what has become the origin story of Smith’s prophetic call. Smith and his followers came to believe that Smith’s experience with the dark power Smith encountered in 1820 a sign of Smith’s divine call to prophethood. At the same time, Smith never explicitly identified Satan as the figure responsible for the overwhelming feeling of destruction he felt.⁸ He was also inconsistent in recording this portion

⁶ Quoted in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 21.

⁷ See, for example, Ehat and Cook, *Words of Smith*, 6-8, 11-12, 20, 40, 60-62, 65, 68, 72, 74, 93, 117, 119-121, 124, 128, 160, 186, 189, 205, 319, 330, 342, 374, and 390.

⁸ Many such works exist. See, for example, George Q. Cannon, *The Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City, UT: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888), 36; Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith the First Mormon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 56-57, Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1989), 10.

of his experience. This chapter will evaluate the devil's presence or disappearance in his various historical narratives and analyze why Smith omitted the devil in some of his historical records. The chapter will also explore the use of diabolism as a tool by critics of Smith to dismiss his vision and patrol the boundary of acceptable Christian orthodoxy.

Chapter three will connect Smith's treasure-seeking activities with his discovery and translation of gold plates through the lens of diabolism. From 1823 to 1827, Joseph Smith made an annual trek to a hill near his home where, at the command of an angel named Moroni, he attempted to unearth gold plates. He failed in his attempts for multiple years to recover the plates. Smith, his family, and his co-religionist recorded that the reason for his repeated failure to obtain the gold plates was due to his failure to overcome the devil's temptation to covet the gold plates for their monetary value. During this same period of his life, Smith participated with other locals in the practice of treasure seeking, a component of which involved overcoming evil spirits. Exploring the diabolism in these seemingly disparate activities demonstrates how Smith used a particular style of treasure-seeking as a rehearsal for his annual rendezvous with Moroni and the gold plates.⁹

Once Smith secured the gold plates, he translated them into a volume of scripture called the Book of Mormon. Smith believed that the translation of his new scripture became a cosmic contest between himself and the devil. From meddling with the mode and tools of translation to conspiracies concocted to steal the working manuscript of the translation, Smith was convinced that the devil was hard at work trying to prevent the publication of the Book of Mormon. This

⁹ Jan Shippo has argued for the importance of evaluating both Smith's treasure hunting and religious seeking together as he practiced both activities simultaneously. See Jan Shippo, "The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Towards a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith," *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 3-20.

chapter will consider how and why Smith exorcised the devil as he translated and published the Book of Mormon.

Chapter four analyzes Satan in the actual text of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon contains more references about the devil than does the Bible. Satan is a driving force in the narrative. Prophets in the Book of Mormon see the devil as a corruptor of the Church and the founder of a church that rivals and seeks to overthrow God's true church. He serves as an unknowing agent of providence and as a tempter to humanity. He creates a secret organization that is responsible for the destruction of two civilizations. Lehi, the first prophet in the narrative, speculates on the origins of the devil. Prophets in the book translate other records and reveal the sins and wickedness of previous civilizations to the world. They define what it means to be a seer and become a model from which Smith took on his own prophetic identity. This chapter will analyze these themes and argue their importance for the development of Smith's prophetic identity.

Chapter five traces diabolism in the crucial founding moments of Mormonism in 1830. In January of that year, Smith, after receiving a revelation, sent a contingent of early leaders to Canada to secure a copyright for the Book of Mormon. The expedition failed to do so, opening Smith to criticism. Later dissidents from his church framed the entire episode as a revelation from the devil. In April, Smith performed an exorcism on Newell Knight, an act that some believers considered the first miracle of the Church. The miracle had a lasting impact on Smith and those present. Smith's religious activities in upstate New York, including the exorcism, caused legal trouble as locals charged him with being a fraud and disturbing the peace. The exorcism became a vital part of the trial. In September of 1830, Hiram Page, one of the earliest believers in Smith's visions, received his own revelations through a seer stone, which Smith then

denounced as coming from the devil. Diabolism played a crucial role in how Smith controlled and maintained the challenge to his prophetic authority. This chapter will consider what role diabolism played in important moments in Smith's early religious career and how it contributed to Smith's identity as a prophet.

In the summer of 1830, Smith started a new prophetic project: retranslating the Bible. The project's initial fruit was a revelation detailing an encounter Moses had with God and Satan. The creation story and the expansion of the first chapters of Genesis followed. Chapter six will evaluate how Smith "Satanized" the Old Testament. God reveals to Moses the origins of the devil and his fall from heaven. Moses, Adam, and Enoch join with God in contending against Satan's influence and power over the world. In a connection to the Book of Mormon, the Bible translation explains Cain and Satan's covenantal relationship and describes the detrimental repercussions of that relationship. As part of his prophetic resistance to the devil, Enoch creates the city of Zion, a haven for the righteous that God eventually takes from the earth to dwell with him in heaven. This chapter will show how diabolism in the first chapters of Smith's Bible translation animated Smith's prophetic projects and inspired his prophetism for the remainder of his life.

Method

The basic chronology of Joseph Smith's life is well known. This thesis is a reexamination of Smith's early religious thought through a new lens. While scholars of Mormonism will be familiar with some of the sources used in this thesis, using the lens of diabolism, this thesis looks to provide a fresh reading of these source to prove an alternate interpretation of Joseph Smith and his religion making. This work looks to defamiliarize a figure and movement that has received

widespread attention.¹⁰ As Philip Barlow has argued, “A Joseph Smith too comfortably in our sights is a distorted Joseph Smith. . . Just when we have tamed him through our conventional categories, unsuspected teachings and behaviors impose themselves.”¹¹ This work asserts that diabolism is one of those unsuspecting teachings.

In this work I have refrained from framing Smith’s supernatural experiences and his revelatory pronouncements with disclaimers like “Joseph Smith *claimed* he had received a revelation stating Satan was to blame for the false revelations circulating through the church.” As Richard Bushman, noted historian and biographer of Joseph Smith, has argued when using this methodology, “to blur the distinction – to insist that Smith devised every revelation himself – obscures the very quality that made the Prophet powerful. To get inside the movement, we have to think of Smith as the early Mormons thought of him and as he thought of himself – as a revelator.”¹² While the veracity of Smith’s religious claims lay beyond the tools of the historian, this work does take Smith’s revelations and religious experiences seriously to, as Bushman argues, understand Joseph Smith’s prophetic identity.

Overall, my thesis will fill the gap in both the larger religious field that has explored diabolism in America and in the smaller field of Mormon studies, which, for the most part, has ignored this subject. My thesis will show the significant impact diabolism had on Joseph Smith and his religion. A central component of his prophetic identity was a calling to combat the devil and help the Saints of God overcome Satan's powers.

¹⁰ For a review of the historiography on Joseph Smith see Richard Lyman Bushman, “A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-first Century,” in *Believing History: Latter-Day Saint Essays* ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 262-278.

¹¹ Barlow, “To Mend a Fractured Reality,” 31.

¹² Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), xxi.

Literature Review

Missing from the vast corpus of writings about Satan in nineteenth-century American religious thought is a thorough examination of diabolism's impact on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, especially its founding prophet Joseph Smith. Many new religious groups appeared on the religious map of Western New York in the nineteenth century. Revivalist preachers brought their concern over Satan's influence from the less-populated rural countryside to the urban centers near the newly constructed Erie Canal.¹³ Katherine and Margaret Fox interpreted "rappings" that marked the beginnings of spiritualism, a movement often decried as the offspring of the devil.¹⁴ Ellen Gould White, a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, published a volume in 1858 titled *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels And Satan and His Angels* that, in part, outlined the work of the devil from the fall of Jerusalem to the Second Coming of Christ. Historians have evaluated these examples, among others, in the context of diabolism in nineteenth-century America. Latter-day Saints have generally been ignored or underexamined in this literature.

Jeffery Burton Russell's work, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World*, is the final tome in his multi-series work examining Satan throughout Christian history. Russell's analysis of Satan in the nineteenth century saw a being that existed primarily in literature as a symbol for the evil nature and depravity of man. Russell argues that after the Enlightenment "theology and metaphysics were superseded by aestheticism and symbolism when Satan's metaphysical existence was dismissed." Indeed, for Russell, the notion that God and the devil were busy meddling in humans' affairs was dead after the eighteenth century. Russell argues that Satan made a resurgence in the nineteenth century as a symbol in literary work. He represented

¹³ Poole, *Satan in America*, 50.

¹⁴ Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 248.

human evil and corruption and was used to mock Christianity satirically.¹⁵ Russell fails to explore new faith traditions and their grapple with Mephistopheles. Doing so would have complicated his narrative. An exploration of the Latter-day Saints would have demonstrated Satan's centrality as a metaphysical being and a body of believers who accepted a theology with Satan as a real individual.

In *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost The Sense Of Evil*, Andrew Delbanco traces what he sees as the slow death of Satan, commencing with the age of reason. For Delbanco, the first step of the devil's path to dissolution came with witchcraft's discrediting in the eighteenth century. The farce of witchcraft was a sign that the devil was "no longer to be taken seriously as an invisible contender for human souls."¹⁶ From here, Delbanco argues, the nineteenth century replaced the idea of sin as evil with sin as error. This diminished the role of Satan as tempter. Any interaction with the devil and his demons were seen as the consequence of a sick mind rather than a supernatural encounter with a supernatural being. For Delbanco Satan became more folklore than formidable. Delbanco contends that by mid-century Satan was nothing more than "a road-show entertainer," whose "personal existence . . . was so feebly realized, and so superficially regarded that the fact of his existence and influence upon the minds of the people, [was] virtually disbelieved."¹⁷ Delbanco does not include Joseph Smith or his Church in his study of the death of Satan. Doing so would have challenged his assertion that Satan was nearly dead by the mid-nineteenth century.

Christine Leigh Heyrman, in her book *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, challenges the notion that Satan was near extinction by heading south and exploring revivalism

¹⁵ Jeffery Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 150-167.

¹⁶ Delbanco, *The Death of Satan*, 75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 96-96.

in the Southern United States. While Heyman agrees with Russell and Delbanco in that few believed in a physical, material Satan, she shows how evangelicals believed in a tempter “who raised evil impressions in the minds of those awake or asleep. Indeed through the first half of the nineteenth century, most evangelical clergymen took pains in many of their public statements to dispel lay fears that Satan could assume corporeal presence.”¹⁸ Heyrman’s work does much to complicate the intellectual history of Satan in American religious thought, but her regional approach limits the scope of her inquiry. Hence she fails to bring Latter-day Saints into her narrative of Southern diabolism.

W. Scott Poole’s work *Satan in America: The Devil We Know* resurrects Satan's place in the nineteenth century. Poole surveys the place the devil held in the religious world of evangelical conversion. For Poole, the American devil of the nineteenth century was not dead but actively attacking Christianity. Satan’s targets were those seeking a spiritual sign from God; Satan could attack those who wanted nothing to do with him. Poole argues that many Christians in the nineteenth century believed Satan hindered the spread of the gospel and damned souls. Poole explores Latter-day Saint diabolism and argues it is solely a result of its American context and milieu. He examines Lucifer's hubris nature in the primordial world where, in a fracture of family relations, he leads a rebellion against God. Satan’s war on free will, for Poole, was an ardent criticism of Calvinism and its doctrine of predestination. Poole sees the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon narrative as children of the devil and compares this with Cotton Mather’s view that Native Americans held a special relationship with the devil.¹⁹ While Poole does attempt to situate Latter-day Saints within the larger context of diabolology in the nineteenth century, his view of the role Satan played in the new religion is too narrow. For all his examination of Satan's

¹⁸ Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 57.

¹⁹ Poole, *Satan in American*, 51-53.

role in conversion stories, he fails to examine this phenomenon in Joseph Smith's first theophany. He ignores Smith's translation projects and the presence of Satan in Smith's scripture making. While Poole brings Latter-day Saints into the conversation, more analysis is required to understand diabolism in early Mormonism.

Kathryn Gin Lum traces how the fear of hell and damnation affected antebellum America in her book *Damned Nation: Hell in America From the Revolution to Reconstruction*.

Americans, Lum argues, fretted about eternal damnation, and this preoccupation influenced and was linked to social justice, morality, and family. Particularly poignant is her examination of discourse on hell during the Second Great Awakening. Clergy warned of hell and each congregant's responsibility to escape hell and warn others to do the same. She details how salvation became a communal affair that crossed racial, class, and theological divisions.²⁰ Gin Lum incorporates Joseph Smith into her narrative by examining his 1832 revelation and its representation of hell. Gin Lum argues that Smith's heaven and hell was a modified version of Universalism. She sees Smith as offering salvation for all but the very few by organizing heaven and hell into varying grades of existence. Gin Lum's examination depicts a Mormonism dissenting against the prevailing evangelical thought about hell and its occupants. Gin Lum does little in the way of examining diabolism in Mormonism and connecting it to Smith's ideas about salvation and hell. Understanding Smith's beliefs about Satan would have helped her contextualize and unfold a better understanding of Smith's conceptualization of hell.

Whereas scholarship on diabolism has typically excluded Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints, the substantial body of Mormon studies scholarship has typically excluded the devil.

²⁰ Kathryn Gin Lum, *Damned Nation: Hell in America From the Revolution to Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5-6, 144-148.

In her seminal biography *No Man Knows My History*, Fawn Brodie argued that Joseph Smith was a conman who eventually came to believe in his deceit. Brodie opined that “The casual reader will be shocked by his deceptions – sometimes clumsy, but even more shocking when they were deft. . . Certainly a persisting consciousness of guilt over the cunning and deception with which his prophetic career was launched would eventually have destroyed him.”²¹ Brodie had no use for a category like diabolism because she did not take Smith’s religious inclinations seriously. Dan Vogel’s biography, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, echoes many Brodie's ideas. For Vogel, Smith was a “pious fraud,” a religious figure who was intentionally duplicitous for a morally acceptable end. Seeing Smith as a fraud is not only polemic in nature, but, as noted above, fails to account for Smith’s preoccupation with fraud and deception from human and supernatural forces.²²

Jan Shipps rightly criticized scholars for separating Smith the treasure seeker from Smith the religion maker in her excellent essay, “The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith.”²³ Shipps argued that studies of the prophet needed to include both practices, as Smith was seeking treasure while simultaneously receiving communications from heaven. While some scholars have taken up the challenge to examine this dual Smith²⁴, none have connected the work of prophetic seer and treasure seeker with the devil. My work will help piece together Shipp’s prophet puzzle by showing how Smith created a theology around peeping or seeing into a seer stone and how this helps explain why he ceased his practice of treasure-seeking and occupied himself with the translation of scripture.

²¹ Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 84–85.

²² Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004).

²³ Shipps, “The Prophet Puzzle,” 3-20.

²⁴ For example see Mark Ashurst-McGee, “A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet,” Master’s Thesis (Utah State University, 2000).

A study that has looked at the supernatural and magical culture – a culture fraught with concerns over diabolic power and intervention²⁵ — that surrounded Smith is D. Michael Quinn’s *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Quinn argues that Smith was a magic practitioner who incorporated his magic world view into his theology and revelations. While Quinn briefly delves into the diabolism surrounding Smith, noting, for example, that “For those Protestants who believed that the age of Christian miracles was over, all supernatural effects necessarily sprang from either fraudulent illusions or the workings of the Devil,” he mostly ignores both the importance of Satan in the magic world view and Smith’s life.²⁶

John Brooke’s award-winning work *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, connects the Latter-day Saint faith and Joseph Smith to early modern hermeticism and argues for its dominant influential place in Smith’s doctrines. He states that “Smith’s failure to achieve an independent competency, interwoven with anxieties over illegitimate ways to wealth and perceptions of satanic power, would combine with traditions of hermeticism and restoration to shape the emergence of the Mormon Church.”²⁷ Brookes depicts Smith as waging war against all deceivers and counterfeiters by implementing white magic and divinatory powers. He noted that “Mormons . . . were ‘wary of Satan’s power and desire to counterfeit the works of God.’”²⁸ Brookes rightly sees a Smith preoccupied with the devil, but his excavation of the topic is cursory and focused on Smith’s treasure hunting activities. He does not consider the religious aspects of Smith’s diabolism.

²⁵ David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgement: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 71-116.

²⁶ D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 8. For a discussion of Satan and the magic world view, see, Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 67-97.

²⁷ John L. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644 - 1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 135.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

Richard Bushman's biography of Smith reviews, in Bushman's words, "A side of Joseph Smith not adequately examined in other biographies: his religious thought."²⁹ Missing from Bushman's excellent examination, however, are Smith's teachings and writings about the devil, and their central place in Smith's religious world. Bushman's reflections on Smith's early life, his movement from local treasure seeker to prophet, his religious enterprises, his creation of a Latter-day Saint cosmology, miss an essential component found in each strain: the concern for satanic power and deception, and its effect on the Saints and the world. Exploring diabolism in Smith's thought will add to Bushman's exploration of Smith's religious thought.

Taking a fresh analysis of the Latter-day Saints' origin story (the First Vision), Steven Harper places Joseph Smith's encounter with an unnamed Methodist minister around 1820 as one of the pivotal identity-forming moments in Smith's life.³⁰ Harper argues that the minister's rejection of Smith's theophany was one important framing point Smith used for his published accounts of the first vision. Harper does not evaluate this interaction through the lens of diabolism, which would have added to his insightful analysis and complicated his arguments about Joseph Smith and the formation of memory.

This is not an exhaustive list of scholarship written on Joseph Smith and the rise of his Church. Still, it demonstrates different methodologies and lenses historians have used to understand the religious movement. Missing from most of this writing is an adequate contextual understanding of diabolism, its role in Smith's culture, and religious thought. Some limited studies from within Mormon studies have endeavored to explore this theme.

²⁹ Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), xxi.

³⁰ Steven C. Harper, *First Vision: Memory and Mormon Origins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 9-37.

In 1955, Lamar E. Gerrard studied the devil and the Latter-day Saints in his master's thesis "A Study of the Problem of a Personal Devil and its Relationship to Latter-day Saint Beliefs."³¹ Gerrard explores some teachings of Joseph Smith on the topic of the devil. Still, he fails to contextualize the Latter-day Satan within diabolism of the nineteenth century and trace Satan's influence from Smith's youth forward. Gerrard looked to discuss theodicy in Latter-day Saint theology more so than focusing on the impact of Mephistopheles. While Gerrard does offer some insight into Smith's teachings on the devil, the existence and access to many more primary source documents and secondary source literature require a new probing on the topic.

Exploring Smith's ultimate vision of heaven, Douglas Davies argues that Satan is central to Smith's cosmology and prophetism in his work *Joseph Smith, Jesus, and Satanic Opposition: Atonement, Evil, and the Mormon Vision*. Davies sees the Moses-Satan interaction from Smith's book of Moses as a parallel to Smith's diabolic encounter. This and other revelations about Satan become a core strand of thought in Latter-day Saint theology for Davies, as he states, "The role of the devil and evil spirits cast from heaven at the time of the heavenly apostasy was, indeed, influential in early Mormon thought."³² While Satan is in the book's title, Davies is more concerned with Smith's Christology than his diabolism. Davies' work also declines to examine how diabolism formed Smith's early prophetism, falling short of giving a full examination of the centrality of the Latter-day Saint thought and prophetic identity.

Terryl Givens has explored Satan's early theological ideas in Latter-day Saint thought in his erudite work *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity*, and in his most recent book *The Pearl of Great Price: Mormonism's Most*

³¹ Lamar E. Gerrard, "A Study of the Problem of a Personal Devil and its Relationship to Latter-day Saint Beliefs," Master's Thesis, (Brigham Young University, 1955).

³² Douglas J. Davies, *Joseph Smith, Jesus, and Satanic Opposition: Atonement, Evil and the Mormon Vision* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 167.

Controversial Scripture. Wrestling with the Angel examines a theology of Satan in the LDS Church while tracing and connecting that theology to early Christian thought. Givens accomplishes similar work in *The Pearl of Great Price*, contextualizing and analyzing the Satan found in Smith's Book of Moses and Book of Abraham. Satan is located at the periphery of these books, supplementing the more critical theological considerations found in these revelations. My work will show how the interaction of God's prophets with Satan found in these scriptures played a central role in how Smith viewed his role as prophet and how he developed his prophetic projects.³³

"Satan Mourns Naked Upon the Earth" is an adept and insightful look at exorcism in the Latter-day Saint movement by Stephen Taysom. Taysom notes that since the inception of the Church, belief in a literal devil and his ability to possess individuals have played an important role in believers lived religious experiences. Taysom studies four instances of exorcism in Mormon history. Additionally, Taysom contextualizes these exorcisms within the larger religious landscape. While this work fills a historiographical gap in Mormon studies, the limited scope of the article forces Taysom to limit his ability to expand on the importance of diabolism in LDS thought and practice to exorcism. His writing is a good demonstration of the significance and understudied nature of this topic.³⁴

Christopher Blythe, in his book *Terrible Revolution: Latter-day Saints and the American Apocalypse*, examines the ways Latter-day Saints formed their identity through diabolism.

Blythe notes that "themes of diabolism plotted how Mormons saw themselves and constructed

³³ Terryl L. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 130–35; Terryl L. Givens and Brian M. Hauglid, *The Pearl of Greatest Price: Mormonism's Most Controversial Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 27–60.

³⁴ Stephen Taysom, "Satan Mourns Naked Upon the Earth': Locating Mormon Possession and Exorcism Rituals in the American Religious Landscape 1830–1977," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 27, no. 1 (Winter, 2017): 57–94.

others.” Blythe’s excellent dissertation explores early Mormon beliefs about the devil and the impact of these beliefs on Mormon eschatology. Blythe’s study helps connect and situate Mormon worry about diabolism, but his study focuses on later Mormonism, taking little time to analyze diabolism’s impact both Joseph Smith’s prophetic identity formation as well as the identity of his early congregants. Apocalyptic identity was a small part of a larger identity Latter-day Saints formed surrounding Satan.³⁵

Conclusion

As I have tried to demonstrate here, there is a need to understand and contextualize how diabolism influenced Joseph Smith and the rise of the Latter-day Saint Church in both the more extensive American religious history and Mormon studies. As historian Fernando Cervantes notes, “The subject of [diabolism] is as intriguing as it is neglected. The subject of the devil is still one which is seldom addressed.”³⁶ Examining Smith’s prophetism and the lived religion of early Latter-day Saints through the lens of diabolism will connect many of Smith’s seemingly disparate projects, offer a new solution for the prophet puzzle, and provide a seldom used context to study Smith’s prophetism.

³⁵ Christopher J. Blythe, *Terrible Revolution: Latter-day Saints and the American Apocalypse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

³⁶ Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 1.

Chapter 2

“I was seized upon by some power”: Joseph Smith, Diabolism, and his first vision

“The adversary then made several strenuous efforts to cool his ardent soul. He filled his mind with doubts and brought to mind all manner of inappropriate images to prevent him from obtaining the object of his endeavors.”

- Orson Hyde (A Cry in the Wilderness, 1842)

Joseph Smith was raised in a Christian home. His family read from the Bible, which would have included New Testament passages discussing the devil. While the family’s religious loyalties split among various denominations, they discussed fundamental Christian beliefs at the dinner table.³⁷ The idea of the devil would have been no stranger to a biblically literate Joseph Smith.³⁸

Members of the Smith family attended revival meetings prevalent in the early part of the nineteenth century. Many itinerant preachers speaking at revivals hoped to awaken and inspire their audiences to seek a conversion experience. They often evoked just as many threats of diabolic temptation and promises of damnation and as they did promises and hopes of salvation. Warnings about possible interference from Satan on the road to conversion became common.³⁹ During his attendance at such meetings, it is probable the young Smith heard such pronouncements. They may have foreshadowed his own encounter with the devil.

Beginning at a young age, Smith experienced spiritual discontentment. He recorded that he often reflected on his soul’s status and sinful state. This pondering led him to the scriptures as

³⁷ For reading on the Smith family’s religious inclinations see Dan Vogel, "Joseph Smith's Family Dynamics," *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 22 (2002): 51-74; Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage: Influences of Grandfathers Solomon Mack and Asael Smith*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2003); Brooke, *The Refiners Fire*, 151-157; Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 1-16; and Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 8-29.

³⁸ Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11-13.

³⁹ Poole, *Satan in America*, 33–38.

well as attending various evangelical meetings for answers. He became even more confused as he believed a contradiction existed between God's holy word and organized religion.⁴⁰ Smith contemplated that his confusion was due in part to "the contentions and divisions the wickedness and abominations and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind," which greatly distressed his mind.⁴¹

Smith observed these contentions firsthand in the religious milieu of Western New York.⁴² He wrote that "Multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division among the people. Some were contending for the Methodist faith, Some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist."⁴³ Smith felt that the Christian world had "apostatized from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament."⁴⁴ Later Latter-day Saint theology injected these beliefs about apostacy into their reading of New Testament scriptures. One example of this is found in the second Pauline letter to the Thessalonians where Paul writes, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."⁴⁵ It is impossible to know if the

⁴⁰ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/2>.

⁴¹ History, circa Summer 1832, 3.

⁴² Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 3-13; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 95-115; Milton V. Backman *Joseph Smith's First Vision: The First Vision in its Historical Context* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 53-89.

⁴³ History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2], p. 2, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/2>.

⁴⁴ "History, circa Summer 1832," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/2>.

⁴⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (KJV). Smith published in the newspaper "Elders' Journal" in of October of 1837 that "Because of the apostasy, they [Christians] have departed from the faith, of this, the apostles warned by telling them the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine . . . there would be a falling away." "Elders' Journal, October 1837," p. 12, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-october-1837/12>.

teenaged Smith was familiar with these New Testament passages. Still, the prophetic Smith of the 1830s created a historical narrative that showed him as a young man viewing a world sitting in darkness waiting for rescue. While Smith's historical reports do not inculcate the devil for the apostasy, his later translations and revelations do.⁴⁶

Ultimately, as Smith later recorded, the only course of action he felt would give him a reprieve from his guilt-filled conscience and end his frustration over a world lying in sin was to pray to God and ask Him what to do. Smith later recorded that he went into a grove of trees situated near the family farm in Palmyra, New York in the spring of 1820 to do just that. Smith's account of his theophany is well known. What some historians have overlooked or under-analyzed in Smith's first vision narrative is Smith's encounter with a dark power before the beginning of his theophany. This may be because Smith did not record this part of his visionary experience consistently in his historical accounts. Regardless of the reasons, investigating the role Satan played in Smith's historical narratives illuminates how Smith viewed himself as a prophet and how he viewed the Christian world. Looking at how he described his first encounter with the supernatural chronologically helps show the evolution of his prophetic identity. Smith believed that, as a fourteen-year-old boy, he was involved in a cosmic struggle with the devil and was saved by God both physically and metaphysically. This belief shaped how Smith viewed the world and himself.

Satan as Corruptor: 1832

Joseph Smith first undertook to write and publish an account of his 1820 vision in 1832. Satan does not appear anywhere in the narrative. Smith recorded that he considered the world to

⁴⁶ See for example "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 260, JSP; "Times and Seasons, 15 June 1842," p. 816, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020; "Appendix: Orson Pratt, A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, 1840," p. 29, JSP.

be in apostasy. When God appears to Smith, he forgives him of his sins and then warns him that “the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments.”⁴⁷ The 1832 account depicts a God who rejected all churches and creeds in Smith’s day and considered the world to have fallen away from the pure faith. This fear was almost as old as Christianity.

Early Christians believed that Satan sought to corrupt the Church.⁴⁸ By the Reformation leaders like Martin Luther considered the pope to be the Antichrist and Catholicism the Church of the devil.⁴⁹ By Smith’s day, restoration movements appeared all over the religious landscape, hoping to recover the New Testament Church they felt had been lost or corrupted.⁵⁰ Smith’s commentary on an apostasy and God’s appraisal that churches had “turned aside from the gospel” implied that Satan had corrupted Christianity but did not overtly confirm it. He saw a wicked world in need of redemption. He saw a discordant Christian society stuck in a cycle of contention. Smith further recorded that he “felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world.” While he did not name or blame Satan for the world’s state of affairs, words like “darkness,” “abomination,” and “sin” create connections to the prince of darkness and the father of sin.⁵¹

While Satan was absent from the 1832 account, the effects of his role as corruptor, a position he had occupied since early Christianity, was present. The specter of Satan lay behind

⁴⁷ History, circa Summer 1832," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/2>

⁴⁸ Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing inc., 2003), 21-26.

⁴⁹ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. Roy Harrisville (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 56-60.

⁵⁰ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 180-182.

⁵¹"History, circa Summer 1832," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 10, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/2>.

God's condemnation of the status of Christianity. The early Church established official doctrine and canonized scripture, in part, to identify theology and praxis considered heresy. To protect the Church from Satan and heresy, the Church defined and established orthodoxy. As Christianity became codified, voices began to claim that Satan had corrupted the Church from within or that the devil had influenced reformers criticizing the Church.⁵² Restorationists in Smith's day, while reticent in assigning credit to the devil for the status of Christianity, at least recognized that corruption and sin ultimately necessitated a restoration.

Though the specter of Satan is present in the 1832 account, the actual devil is absent. This history was written after the Book of Mormon's publication and Smith's translation of the book of Genesis. Both works of scripture deal with the devil, his work, and his existence. Prophets found in the narratives contended with the devil in vision or worked to reveal the devil to the world. Smith would draw from these sources to construct his own prophetic identity. Why then is the devil absent? By the 1830s, as Christine Leigh Heyrman has noted, evangelical visitation accounts were as likely to be derided as they were to be received with awe.⁵³ Smith, wanting to legitimize his prophetic call, may have avoided identifying the devil with his 1820 vision because of his audience's reaction. Additionally, he may have wanted his interaction with God, not the devil, to be the focus of his vision. Whatever the reason, the 1832 account of Smith's vision detailed very little about his experience with Satan.

Prophets, Visions, and the Devil: 1835

⁵² Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 114-122; Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 25-76.

⁵³ Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 54.

Robert Matthews, who called himself the Prophet Matthias, visited Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio, in November 1835.⁵⁴ His visit precipitated the next account of the first vision. Smith relayed to Matthews the origins of Mormonism, including his first vision. Smith described how his first attempts at praying were futile as his “tong seemed to be swollen in my mouth, so that I could not utter.” He then heard what he thought was someone walking toward him. He attempted to pray again but the noise of a person approaching grew louder to the point where Smith remembers getting to his feet to discover the noise’s source. Seeing no one and finding himself still isolated, he kneeled again to pray. This attempt proved successful as he found his “tong liberated,” and he was able to call “on the Lord in mighty prayer.”⁵⁵

Smith did not identify Satan as the source of the disturbance or the cause of his swollen tongue. Still, the descriptions fit how evangelicals spoke of diabolic disruptions during a new birth experience in the nineteenth century. Historian W. Scott Poole has observed that “Converts in the nineteenth-century revivals would see struggles with Satan, sometimes of a very physical variety, as a precursor to their conversion, almost an initiatory rite into the evangelical experience.”⁵⁶ Smith’s experience was of “the physical variety,” and aligned with the diabolic struggles others encountered.

While Satan was not identified in Smith’s 1835 retelling, he did recognize the devil in the visionary experiences of Robert Matthews. Matthews had spent a few days with Smith regaling him with several visions and messages he said were given by God. He claimed to be a

⁵⁴ For a history on Robert Matthews see Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Matthews and Smith are often analyzed through the category of fraud. Many Anti-Mormon publications compared them side by side due to their geographic proximity among other similarities. For a further analysis on this comparison see J. Spencer Fluhman, “*A Peculiar People*”: *Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 30-31.

⁵⁵ “Journal, 1835–1836,” p. 23, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/24>.

⁵⁶ Poole, *Satan in America*, 42.

descendant of Mathias, the apostle chosen to replace Judas, and that the spirit of Mathias rested in him by what he called the “transmigration of soul or spirit from Father to Son.” Smith responded by saying that Matthew’s doctrine was from the devil and that a wicked spirit possessed him. Smith also stated that “My God told me that his God is the Devil . . . and so I for once cast out the Devil in bodily shape.”⁵⁷ This narrative connects Smith’s work to that of prophets in the Book of Mormon who similarly dismissed figures identified as anti-Christ and claimed that their God and their message were from the devil.⁵⁸

The context surrounding the creation of the 1835 account contrasts Smith’s call by God as a prophet to his dismissal of Matthew’s preaching and prophetic identity by calling it diabolic. The devil was not attempting to trick or deceive Smith in his account but did try to impede Smith’s prayer. Matthews on the other hand, is represented as being in league with the devil. Smith used the devil to patrol the boundary between what he considered legitimate visionary experiences and fraudulent ones. The first time Smith mentioned a potential diabolic conflict before his first visionary experience came in a setting where he rejected another’s visionary accounts by dismissing them and the revelator as a product of the devil.

Persecution and the Devil: 1838

The third known account Smith produced about his vision fleshes out a much more detailed encounter with the devil. Smith, with the help of scribes, wrote the account between 1838 and 1839.⁵⁹ During this period Smith had been imprisoned in Missouri on charges of treason. After Governor Lilburn Boggs issued an executive order authorizing the extermination

⁵⁷ "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 29, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/30>.

⁵⁸ See chapter 4, pages 66-70.

⁵⁹ It is not known whether the pages in Smith’s 1838-1839 history that cover the first vision were written in April and May of 1838, September of 1838, or June of 1839. See James B. Allen and John W. Welch, “The Appearance of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith in 1820,” in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations 1820-1844*, ed. John Welch (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 47.

of Mormons who did not leave, his followers fled the state.⁶⁰ The history reflects Smith's and his followers' feelings about the opposition and persecution they experienced during this period. Smith added that erroneous rumors about the origins of his prophetic call and the rise of his Church by "evil disposed and designing persons" also compelled him to write a new history to set the record straight.

It is striking that the context for his most detailed account of the opposition Satan presented him in 1820 was included in a narrative that framed the Church's rise and history through a lens of opposition and persecution. In this history, an unknown evil force assumed to be Satan, prevented Smith from praying and commencing what the prophet now saw as the start of God's restoration movement. In the narrative, Satan attacks Smith at various intervals to stop the organization God's Church. The evil-disposed men the history referred to were merely a part of a larger diabolic plot created to stop Smith from receiving his prophetic call and carrying out his mission.

Smith, as in previous histories, described the confusion he felt as a youth about the status of his soul and the multitude of religious sects contentiously fighting for converts. As the history arrives at the moment of Smith's prayer, it describes his battle with Satan:

I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction, not to an imaginary ruin but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world who had such a marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being. Just at this moment of great alarm I saw a pillar of light exactly over

⁶⁰ For an analysis of the tension between Mormons and the state of Missouri see Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1987).

my head above the brightness of the sun . . . it no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound.⁶¹

This version of events escalates the encounter to dramatic heights. No longer is Smith distracted and struggling to pray; he is facing imminent doom. His tongue was not just swollen, it was bound. No specter was wondering the woods. This was a direct physical attack that, as Smith described it, was the most powerful force he had ever encountered up until his moment of delivery. Opposition became the focus of the encounter, a microcosm of the opposition Smith faced throughout his life.

For those who read Smith's account, Satan's assault may have been the most relatable part of the miraculous story. Contemporary preachers warned their congregations about this possibility. The Reverend Charles Finney, addressing his congregants at the Chatham Chapel in New York in 1835, warned that "You must expect very frequent and agonizing conflicts with Satan. Spiritual Christians, he understands very well, are doing him a vast injury, and, therefore, he sets himself against them. Such Christians often have terrible conflicts. They have temptations that they never thought of before, blasphemous thoughts, atheism, suggestions to do deeds of wickedness, to destroy their own lives, and the like. And if you are spiritual, you may expect these terrible conflicts."⁶²

Ministers were not the only ones to speak and warn of diabolic intrusion. Many converts to evangelical Christianity recorded their individual battles with Satan before being rescued or receiving a conversion. A New England man, born in 1802, wrote an anonymous account of his spiritual rebirth experience in Connecticut in 1822. While investigating the Methodist Church, he

⁶¹ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/3>.

⁶² Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion: The Life and Works of Charles G. Finney* (New York: Oberlin Goodrich, 1968), 111.

experienced a spiritual agony that he stated “can never be described. The pains of Hell had got hold of me I was cut off from hope and sunk in despair. The quicker I could know my doom and yield to my fate the better.” Subsequently, he wrote that “I strove, I cried, I wept. I called for mercy, but none was to be found. My sins my crimes deserved Hell and to Hell thought I must go.” This language echoes Smith’s fears of destruction in his 1838 history. The anonymous author continued, “About 11 o'clock at night when in deep distress of soul I started off for the woods but when alone in the field with none but God near, Satan appeared to me in a form I will not now describe. I saw him as really and as truly as I ever saw any form in my life. I was greatly frightened and fled from the field.” Twice more that night and once again the next morning, the author stated the devil troubled him. He concluded by saying, “I saw that horrid form. I tell the truth. I lie not.” Much like Smith’s experience, the unnamed seeker sought solitude as he prayed to God to forgive his sins. Satan disrupted the experience. This individual used similar language as Smith in describing the devil. “I saw him as really and as truly as I ever saw any form in my life.”⁶³ Smith said that his destruction was “not to an imaginary ruin but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being.”⁶⁴ For both men, Satan and his power were real.

Smith was delivered from the devil by the appearance of deity. The contrasting exposure to God's power and the devil’s would reappear in Joseph Smith’s description of the production of the Book of Mormon. He stated that he was tempted by the devil when retrieving the gold plates. The 1838 history mimicked Moses's experience in a revelation Smith produced in June 1830

⁶³ Anonymous, “Spiritual Autobiography by a man of New England born ca. 1802, relating his revival/conversion experiences, including visions obtained during solitary prayer in the fields in 1823–24,” presented in *Mormonist Twenty-Nine* (Syracuse, NY: Rick Grunder Books, 1988), item 2.

⁶⁴ “History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2],” p. 3.

where the ancient prophet was attacked by Satan and delivered by God.⁶⁵ Prophets in Smith's scriptures were required to understand the difference between God's power and the devil's. For many of them, this knowledge came from direct contact with the devil. The 1838 account of Smith's first vision, more than any other known version, helped create a founding narrative where Smith as a prophet was exposed to the devil and knew how to detect him and decipher between him and God. He would later gain more experience and become more adept at this practice.

As Smith's theology evolved, he continued to teach his congregants how the devil operated and how to overcome him. During a church conference in June of 1831, the devil possessed Harvey Whitlock. Smith commanded the devil to leave. Multiple accounts of the event describe the occasion as one in which the "man of Sin" was "revealed." One attendee noted that God allowed it "for the express purpose that the Elders should become acquainted with the devices of Satan; and after that they would possess knowledge sufficient to manage him."⁶⁶ Smith later revealed specific "keys" that would allow believers to decipher between true and false spirits.⁶⁷ This teaching culminated in a temple ceremony called the endowment that Smith initiated in Nauvoo in the last years of his life.⁶⁸ The first vision story created a foundation story for this teaching. Smith, like other prophets, battled the devil and was empowered with the knowledge of how to recognize and defeat Satan. He then created teachings and ceremonies that allowed his followers to replicate his 1820 experience of delivery from the devil. Joseph Smith believed it was imperative to pass this knowledge on to his followers.

⁶⁵ See chapter six. See also Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 135.

⁶⁶ "John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847," p. 28- 29, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-whitmer-history-1831-circa-1847/33>; Hancock, Levi. Autobiography, ca. 1854. Photocopy. Church History Library, MS 8174.

⁶⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 129:4-9.

⁶⁸ Taysom, "'Satan Mourns Naked upon the Earth', 61; David John Buerger, *The Mysteries Of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 30, 35.

Satan's attack on Smith also served to cement Smith's unique status as a prophet. While other religious seekers of Smith's day may have encountered the devil on their way to conversion, the devil in Smith's 1838 account attempted to stop God from initiating a restoration movement. In Mormon eyes, Smith's encounter with the devil was remarkable because the outcome of his vision was extraordinary. Smith's devil knew the history of humanity and therefore knew what Smith was destined to do. This origin story showed the faithful that even the devil recognized Joseph Smith as a prophet.

The Devil and the Vision: 1842 and Beyond

Joseph Smith produced the final known account of his vision in 1842. At the invitation of John Wentworth, the editor of the newspaper the "Chicago Democrat," Smith wrote a brief history about his Church. The tone of this account is much less defensive than the 1838 version. It may be for this reason that Smith makes no mention of the diabolic disturbance.⁶⁹ While this may be evidence that Smith decided to either downplay or ignore this portion of his vision in his later years, other contemporary accounts show otherwise.

In 1843, Levi Richards attended a meeting in Nauvoo, Illinois, where Smith spoke about his early life events. Richards recorded in his journal that Smith said, "Earth & hell opposed him & tryed to destroy him – but they had not done it =& they never would."⁷⁰ Orson Pratt, an early Church leader and influential thinker within the faith, published a pamphlet in 1840 that described Smith's first visionary experiences. He included Smith's battle with the devil, writing, "At first, he was severely tempted by the powers of darkness, which endeavored to overcome

⁶⁹ "'Church History,' 1 March 1842," p. 706, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/church-history-1-march-1842/1>.

⁷⁰ "Levi Richards, Journal, 11 June 1843, extract," p. [15], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/levi-richards-journal-11-june-1843-extract/1>.

him; but he continued to seek for deliverance, until darkness gave way from his mind.”⁷¹

Another early church leader, Orson Hyde, published a pamphlet for proselytizing in 1842. He also included a description of the devil’s part in the first vision, writing, “The adversary then made several strenuous efforts to cool his ardent soul. He filled his mind with doubts and brought to mind all manner of inappropriate images to prevent him from obtaining the object of his endeavors.”⁷² This description of events mirrors Finney’s depiction of how the devil may interfere during prayer. However, unlike Finney, Hyde was not describing a mere conversion experience but was detailing what he believed to be the devil’s attempt at stopping God from calling a new prophet.

Satan in the historical accounts

Joseph Smith never identified the opposing power he felt in 1820 as the devil. Of the extant accounts of the vision, only Orson Hyde’s 1842 version, in which he calls Satan “the adversary,” explicitly names Smith’s attacker. It is unclear why Smith chose not to identify the figure who played a central role in his translation projects and revelations. He may have felt that the critical aspect of his revelation was the appearance of deity for external audiences. Richard Bushman has argued that as Smith became more confident in his prophetic identity, he released more details about his visionary experience.⁷³ This may explain why Smith revealed additional descriptions about the opposition he encountered between 1832 and 1838. He may not have addressed the devil in his 1842 account because he wanted his readers to focus on the message

⁷¹ "Appendix: Orson Pratt, A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, 1840," p. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-orson-pratt-an-interesting-account-of-several-remarkable-visions-1840/5>.

⁷² "Orson Hyde, Ein Ruf aus der Wüste (A Cry out of the Wilderness), 1842, extract, English translation," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/orson-hyde-ein-ruf-aus-der-wste-a-cry-out-of-the-wilderness-1842-extract-english-translation/1>.

⁷³ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 40.

from God. Whatever the case may be, the devil, though not named, became an essential part of Smith's first visionary experience.

Diabolism, the Vision, and Boundary Maintenance

Diabolism played a vital role in nineteenth-century America in regulating visions. Many mainline Protestants believed that the age of miracles and visions had ended.⁷⁴ Early Americans were preoccupied with deception. Confidence men seemed to be lurking around every corner, anxious to peddle their brand of deceit. While Americans enjoyed con acts as entertainment, fraud in religion went beyond acceptable societal boundaries.⁷⁵ As J. Spencer Fluhman has observed, American Protestants took on detecting religious counterfeits with "added urgency" in the nineteenth century, as religious leaders and writers "patrolled the boundaries of religious authenticity tenaciously."⁷⁶ Since some Protestants considered the age of Christian miracles over, they believed that supernatural effects and visions sprang from either fraudulent illusions or the workings of the devil. As a result, as Keith Thomas has noted, many Protestant leaders "condemned as diabolic anything that imitated biblical miracles, particularly direct communication with God."⁷⁷

The vision of Methodist preacher Benjamin Abbott serves as an example of this boundary maintenance. Born in Pennsylvania in 1732, he saw a vision of Hell and the demons that reside there in 1772. Abbott thought he was doomed to dwell there for eternity. Like Smith, Abbott was saved by a bright light that drove the vision from his mind. Abbott was convinced that this was a

⁷⁴Richard Lyman Bushman, "The Visionary World of Joseph Smith," *Brigham Young University Studies* 37, no. 1 (1997): 183-204.

⁷⁵ James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 12-29; Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 1-32.

⁷⁶ Fluhman, "A Peculiar People", 25; Halttunen, *Confidence Men*, 33-55.

⁷⁷ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 256; Quinn *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 8 and 13.

direct communication from God to convert him from his life of gambling and sin to one of a faithful Christian. When he relayed his vision to his wife, she became concerned about the content of his dream and had him speak with her minister. Abbott recorded of that experience “I related my conviction and my conversion; he paid a strict attention until I had done, and then told me that I was under strong delusions of the devil.”⁷⁸ Abbott’s minister used diabolism to maintain the boundary of proper religious experience.

Joseph Smith received a similar reaction when he shared his vision. Between 1820 and 1830, Smith, so far as is known in the historical record, told only one person about his visionary experience. Sometime after the vision occurred, he was in the company of a local Methodist preacher. It is not known what Smith said or if he included details about Satan’s involvement. Smith recorded that the minister “treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil that there was no such thing as visions or revelations in these days, that all such things had ceased with the apostles and that there never would be any more of them.”⁷⁹ Smith’s religious experience was dismissed as the work of the devil. The preacher used diabolism in the role of boundary maintenance. It was effective in preventing Smith from openly sharing his vision again. No known record exists of his vision before at least 1830.⁸⁰ It did not prevent Smith from claiming to have more visions.

More pressing in this rejection, however, was Smith’s reaction to it. This detail comes from his 1838 narrative that also expands his encounter with the devil before his theophany. The situation appears to have parallels to the New Testament, where Pharisees witnessed Christ cast a

⁷⁸ Benjamin Abbott, *The experience and gospel labours of the Rev. Benjamin Abbott: to which is annexed, a narrative of his life and death* (New York: Published by Ezekiel Cooper and John Wilson, for the Methodist Connection in the United States, John C. Totten, printer, 1805), 6–10.

⁷⁹ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/3>.

⁸⁰ Steven Harper, *First Vision*, 9-12.

devil out and claimed it was by the power of the devil that he cast out devils.⁸¹ Smith may have wondered how the vision could come from the devil when God delivered him from that figure. Between 1820 and 1830, when the Book of Mormon was translated and published, Smith had determined that the Methodist preacher had it wrong. Visions and miracles did exist. Though Satan could imitate them, teaching they had ceased to exist was a diabolic doctrine and served as evidence that, as the Book of Mormon stated, Christianity had become corrupted.⁸² Smith rejected the minister's evaluation of his vision and embraced the idea that visions were central to God's dealings with his children.

In his 1838 history, Smith candidly recalled the ridicule and persecution he felt he faced after the vision became public. He painfully remembered that individuals from "all the sects" united to "persecute me." He compared his experience to Paul's when the latter preached to King Agrippa. Smith opined that "few believed [Paul], some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad, and he was ridiculed and reviled, but all this did not destroy the reality of his vision."⁸³ Smith felt similarly about his theophany. In an atmosphere where frauds and the deluded were called out and dismissed, Smith persevered in his religious course. He flatly rejected any notions that his entire vision may somehow be the work of the devil or a figment of his imagination. He stated that "I had seen a vision, I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it."⁸⁴

An entry in Smith's history describing the intervening period between his first visionary experience and the appearance of a supernatural being named Moroni reflects how Smith felt one

⁸¹ Matthew 12: 22-26. (KJV)

⁸² 2 Nephi 28: 6, 16-23.

⁸³ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/5>.

⁸⁴ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. 4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 5, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/4>.

should deal with those who have been deceived. He had stayed aloof of organized religion due to God's command for him not to join any church. The juxtaposition of religious visions and inactivity caused some of Smith's friends and neighbors, as he recalled, to deride him. Smith interjected in his history that "if they supposed me to be deluded, to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me."⁸⁵ This reflection was an autobiographical statement about how Smith viewed this role of reclaiming the deceived as one of his prophetic roles. He was not only to reclaim individuals who had been deceived, but Christianity itself from the power of the devil, the mistranslations and errors found in the Bible, and from evil and conspiring men who sought to get gain from the religious beliefs of others.⁸⁶ He felt his friends should have done this for him if they sincerely believed he was delusional.

Conclusion

A significant part of Smith's prophethood dealt with the demonic, yet, puzzlingly, he was reticent about naming the devil in his first vision accounts. This hesitation suggests that Smith's later projects – the translation of the Book of Mormon and the Bible and his revelations – formed and framed how Smith recorded his first vision narrative. Although Smith was reticent to identify the devil in his accounts of the 1820 vision, later generations of Latter-day Saints leaders and believers would read Satan into the story. Smith's battle with the devil would come to serve as a representation of opposition many of Smith's followers felt they had experienced in their own life. Church leaders to the present day use the experience to warn church members about the power of the devil.⁸⁷ The devil of Smith's first vision continues to be an essential aspect of

⁸⁵ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/5>.

⁸⁶ I explore this theme farther in chapters four, five, and six.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith The Prophet* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1989), 11; Carlos E. Asay, "'Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning!': Joseph Smith's First Prayer and the First Vision," *Ensign*, April 1997, 23; Richard J. Maynes, "the First Vision: Key to Truth," *Ensign*, June 2017, 64; and "Eight Truths from the First Vision," *Ensign*, February 2020, 21.

Smith's visionary experience for current-day members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Chapter 3

Treasures, Translation, and the Devil

"It was impossible for any man to translate the book of Mormon by gift of God and endure the afflictions, and temptations, and devices of satan, without being overthrown unless he had been previously benefited with a certain round of experience: and had our brother obtained the record the first time, not knowing how to detect the works of darkness, he might have been deprived of the blessings sending forth the word of truth to this generation. . . He had learned by experience, how to discern between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the devil".

- Oliver Cowdery (Letter VIII," LDS Messenger and Advocate, Oct. 1835)

The devil took on a more prominent role in Joseph Smith's life in the decade following his initial vision. Treasure-seeking and stone peeping, activities in which the young Smith participated, had diabolic elements attached to them. Treasure-seeking, a particular type of treasure hunting, prepared Smith for his religious projects. As Smith commenced the Book of Mormon's translation, he and his followers believed Satan interfered with the work by impeding, corrupting, stealing, and otherwise destroying the new volume of scripture. In Joseph's mind, this project became a cosmic battle as God and Satan clashed over the outcome of the translation. Smith included a history of the translation project centered on the obstacles Satan had created in the preface of the first published edition of the Book of Mormon. The first introduction readers had to the book of scripture dwelt on Satan's attempts to impede God's work. This chapter will explore how diabolism affected Smith's most important early religious project and shaped his emerging prophetic identity.

Treasure-Seeking and the Devil

Treasure hunting was a common activity in the American Northeast's rural and agricultural communities in the early nineteenth century. It was seen by many as an effort to reconnect with the miracles and power attributed to apostolic Christianity. The Smith family and

many in their geographic vicinity participated.⁸⁸ One Palmyra Newspaper reported that "digging for money hid in the earth, is a very common thing; and in this state it is even considered an honorable and profitable employment. We could name, if we pleased, at least five hundred respectable men, who do, in the simplicity and sincerity of their hearts, believe that immense treasures lie concealed upon our Green Mountains."⁸⁹ The supernatural world provided an opportunity for economic prosperity that may not have otherwise existed for many.⁹⁰

Treasure hunting for many became an extension of the spiritual seeking. As Alan Taylor has observed, the practice represented a "cross-fertilization of material desire and spiritual aspiration." Treasure-seeking practitioners believed they lived in a supernatural environment where "both evil (demons) and good spirits (angels)" existed and where God would reward those who fought evil. The battle required that practitioners have a strong moral character. Because many treasure hunters of this time were also religious seekers, I have decided to follow Taylor's model to identify these individuals as treasure-seekers instead of money-diggers or treasure-hunters.⁹¹

An essential part of this supernatural world was to overcome the guardian spirits, figures who protected treasure and prevented its capture. Many types of treasure guardians existed within treasure-seeking lore. A deceased mortal as spirit guardian was one standard type, and the devil and his demons were another.⁹² It was thought that because Satan's dominion was below

⁸⁸ See Alan Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780-1830," *American Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 6-34; Alan Taylor, "Rediscovering the Context of Joseph Smith's Treasure Seeking," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 4. (Winter, 1986): 18-28; Quinn Early Mormonism, 41-15.

⁸⁹ "Money Diggers" *Palmyra Herald* July 24, 1822. See also Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 34.

⁹⁰ Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy," 7-8.

⁹¹ Taylor, "Rediscovering the Context," 23.

⁹² W. R. Jones, "'Hill Diggers' and 'Hell Raisers': Treasure Hunting and the Supernatural in Old and New England," in *Wonders of the Invisible World: 1600-1900*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University Press, 1992), 97-106; Gerard T. Hurley, "Buried Treasure Tales in America," *Western Folklore* 10, no. 3 (July 1951): 204; Ernest W. Baughman, *Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America* (Berlin: Mouton, 1966), N571.

the earth, he guarded and prevented humans from gaining access to the treasures of the earth. Additionally, because treasure-seeking was associated with the sins of greed, covetousness, theft, and murder, the devil was seen as a natural fit for the narrative.⁹³

Various treasure-seeking accounts from the period detail the devil intervening and preventing treasure seekers from obtaining their goal. The *Ontario Repository*, a newspaper published in Canandaigua county near Palmyra, New York, published an article about treasure-seeking in February of 1825 that reflected this belief. The report laments the fact that so many locals believed "accounts of the marvelous," including "frightful stories of money being hid under the surface of the earth and enchanted by the Devil." It then goes on to detail the failed attempt of a man who dreamt of the location of a chest of money but was foiled as "the chest moved off through the mud."⁹⁴ While Satan was not blamed for the failed excursion, the article pointed out that many believed Satan responsible for the enchantments that protected buried treasure.

A few months later, the *Wayne Sentinel*, a Palmyra newspaper, published another treasure-seeking account that included a diabolic element. Using a mineral stone "which became transparent when placed in a hat and the light excluded by the face of him who looks into it," an unidentified seeker found a potash kettle filled "with the purest bullion." Various attempts were made to unearth the treasure but were unsuccessful. The newspaper article stated that "His Satanic Majesty . . . appears to keep it under marching order."⁹⁵ As treasure guardian, Satan

⁹³ Hurley, "Buried Treasure Tales," 203.

⁹⁴ James D. Bemis, "Money Digging," *Ontario Repository*, February 9, 1825.

⁹⁵ "Wonderful Discovery," *Wayne Sentinel*, December 27, 1825.

stopped a scryer or one who "gazes upon an object like a crystal ball or mirror for knowledge," from gaining the desired object.⁹⁶

Albert Clements, a resident of Saratoga County, New York and a veteran of the War of 1812, recalled that some years after the war he and a group of men went looking for the treasure of Burgoyne, a commander in the British army, at the request of a stranger who said he knew of its location. The men went at night and dug in silence, a requirement in treasure folklore to not disturb evil spirits. Just as the group anticipated success, Clements recalled that "suddenly the *devil* appeared within the mystic circle as he should, according to the annals of money diggers, -- horns, hoofs, tail, flashing eyes, and sepulchral voice, all proved him the genuine Harry himself." The men fled the scene in fear.

The following day the stranger who gave them the original tip said they needed to recruit a man "of great courage and piety, physical force and religious fervor" if they wanted to succeed. They enlisted a man believed to possess the required attributes, and the group attempted a second try at the treasure. Once again, the devil appeared and began to hurl shovels and other tools, causing the men to flee. The recruit stood his ground and managed to step on the devil's tail, causing it to fall to the ground along with the devil's hoofs and horns. He had conquered the devil and captured the treasure.⁹⁷ Treasure-seekers believed the devil could protect treasure and that they could defeat him.

Joseph Smith also struggled against evil spirits as he practiced treasure-seeking. An informative firsthand account of Smith's treasure-seeking activities was provided by one of his

⁹⁶ Clay L. Chandler, "Scrying for the Lord: Magic, Mysticism, and the Origins of the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 47.

⁹⁷ Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County, New York, with illustrations biographical sketches of some of its prominent men and pioneers*, (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 265.

associates, William Stafford.⁹⁸ Stafford recalled that one evening Joseph Smith Sr. approached him and told him his son had been "looking in his glass" and had discovered "two or three kegs of gold and silver." Joseph Smith Sr. informed Stafford that Joseph Smith Jr. had seen him in his stone and that, together, Smith Sr. and he would obtain the treasure. As they approached the location of the treasure Smith Sr. "first made a circle . . . then struck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping off the evil spirits." He next placed a steel rod in the center of the circle and then "enjoined profound silence upon us, lest we should arouse the evil spirit" charged with guarding the treasure. Stafford and Smith Sr. failed to capture the buried loot. They returned to Smith's home and inquired of Joseph Smith Jr. why they had failed. He replied that he had been "looking in his stone and watching the motions of the evil-spirit—that he saw the spirit come up to the ring and as soon as it beheld the cone which we formed around the rod it caused the money to sink."⁹⁹ Both the Elder and Junior Smith believed that an evil spirit had prevented the capture of the treasure. Evil spirits in treasure lore were not always analogous to the demons or the devil in Christianity, but they were sometimes conflated.¹⁰⁰ Evil spirits, which the Smiths may have interpreted as demons or the devil, were a part of the more extensive treasure lore and a part of the Smith family's treasure activities.

The Devil and the Angel

During this time of treasure-seeking, Smith again began to feel religious angst for his soul's eternal status. On the evening of September 21, 1823, Joseph Smith prayed to God for a remission of his sins and a sign showing his standing before the Lord. He felt that during the

⁹⁸ Stafford provided the statement to Philastus Hurlbut in 1833 as part of Hurlbut's project to collect affidavits from locals who knew the Smith family. These were later published in *Mormonism Unveiled*.

⁹⁹ William Stafford Statement, 8 December 1833; Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 237-240, reprinted in Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1998), 2:59-61.

¹⁰⁰ Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 195, 197; Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 142, 166.

interval of time between this prayer and his first vision in 1820, he had "fallen into many foolish errors" and had given into "divers temptations to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God."¹⁰¹ These statements came from his 1838 history when Smith had fully donned his prophetic identity. The inclusion of his youthful discretions is often seen as a reaction to other published material attacking Smith's young character or an apology for such behavior.¹⁰² This may be a mature Smith recognizing the role the devil and temptation played in his youth. While he claimed that he was not guilty of any grave sin, it was important for him to address that he had been exposed and capitulated to temptation.

In answer to his prayer, a heavenly messenger Smith identified as Moroni appeared to him. He told Smith about metal plates buried in a nearby hill that contained the history of an ancient people who had lived on the American continent. Smith was to translate these plates through seer stones, objects similar to those Smith had been using to find treasure, and make the record available to the world. Moroni appeared a total of three times to Smith that evening. Each time he repeated the message he had previously delivered while adding additional content.¹⁰³

On his third visit, Moroni warned Smith about the devil interfering with his mission, saying that "Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family) to get these plates for the purpose of getting rich."¹⁰⁴ Moroni further instructed Smith that he was to have no other purpose in obtaining the gold plates than to build up God's kingdom. An essential objective of Moroni's third visit to the seventeen-year-old was to warn

¹⁰¹ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 14, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/5>.

¹⁰² Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 16-13; Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Book, 2004), 87-91.

¹⁰³ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/6>.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

him about Satan. From the outset, Smith's prophetic history included a devil looking to obstruct and interfere with his religious enterprises. Moroni further implored Smith not to covet because Satan would seek to exploit the Smith family's impoverished state to tempt him to focus on the gold of the ancient record and ignore the spiritual purpose for which they were written. The warning proved prescient as Smith's greed prevented the budding prophet from obtaining the ancient record for four years.¹⁰⁵

The following morning Smith encountered Moroni for the fourth time. He repeated the message he had delivered the night previous, including the caution about Satan, told Smith to tell his father about the entire vision, and then meet him at the hill where the plates were deposited. As he made his way to the hill, two "invisible powers" began to work on the mind of Joseph Smith "so powerfully," that "the great object so carefully and impressively named by the angel had entirely gone from his recollection that only a fixed determination to obtain now urged him forward." As he arrived at the hill, he recognized the plates' exact location from his vision and removed a large rock that covered a stone box housing the plates. Smith, overcome with greed as he saw the gold plates, looked to see if anything of potential value lay in the stone box and before he attempted to take them out.¹⁰⁶

As Smith turned his attention to the plates, he felt a physical shock flow through his body as he reached for them. He hesitated and then tried a second time to recover the plates, where he was shocked again. For a third time, mustering all the strength he could, he reached out to grab the plates, he failed again. Frustrated, he cried out, "why can I not obtain this book?" Moroni appeared and stated, "because you have not kept the commandments of the Lord." As Moroni

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ "History, 1834–1836," p. 93-94, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1834-1836/97>.

had warned, Smith had sought the plates for their potential economic benefit. Because of this, he was denied possession of the plates.¹⁰⁷

In 1835 Oliver Cowdery, an early associate of Smith's, wrote a series of eight letters to W. W. Phelps, a recent convert, describing these early events in the life of the prophet. Cowdery detailed this episode and highlighted the encounter Smith had with the devil as he attempted to retrieve the gold plates. Cowdery framed the entire experience as a lesson for Smith about God's power and the power of the devil that was central to Smith's future career. Cowdery noted that after Moroni's rebuke about Smith's intentions, Smith began to pray to God for mercy. Moroni told Smith to "'look!' and as he thus spake he beheld the prince of darkness, surrounded by his innumerable train of associates." According to Cowdery, Moroni showed Smith hell and the devil so that Smith would be familiar with both powers. Cowdery stated that Moroni told Smith that he showed him "the glory of God and the power of darkness" so that he would never again be "influenced or overcome by that wicked one." Moroni then stated, "You have now beheld the power of . . . Satan, by which you may ever be able to detect the evil one."¹⁰⁸ This exposition by the heavenly messenger would become a staple of Smith's prophetic teaching. In Smith's revelations, scripture, and instructions, he continually emphasized how to recognize God's power and Satan's imitation and how to overcome the latter.¹⁰⁹

From the written record, it seems that Smith believed it was vital for him to have exposure to Satan's power if he were to be successful at translating the Book of Mormon. Cowdery's history, written more than a decade after Smith's first trip to the hill, shows the staying power of this belief. Cowdery wrote that:

¹⁰⁷"History, 1834–1836," p. 94, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1834-1836/98>.

¹⁰⁸ Oliver Cowdery, "Letter VIII," *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1835, 2:198–99

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Moroni 7: 15-25; Ehat, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 6-7, 8-12, 21-21, 44, 61, 65, 117, 119.

It was impossible for any man to translate the book of Mormon by gift of God and endure the afflictions, and temptations, and devices of satan, without being overthrown unless he had been previously benefited with a certain round of experience: and had our brother obtained the record the first time, not knowing how to detect the works of darkness, he might have been deprived of the blessings sending forth the word of truth to this generation. Therefore, God knowing that satan would thus lead his mind astray, began at that early hour, that when the full time should arrive, he might have a servant prepared to fulfill his purpose. So, however afflicting to his feeling this repuls[e] might have been, he had reason to rejoice before the Lord and be thankful for the favors and mercies shown; that whatever other instruction was necessary to the accomplishing this great work, he had learned by experience, how to discern between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the devil.¹¹⁰

Of all the lessons Smith learned on his inaugural trip to the Hill Cumorah, Cowdery highlighted Smith's encounter with Satan and how it served to teach Smith the difference between God and Satan. Other prophets from Smith's translation projects, such as Moses, would experience similar encounters.¹¹¹ A defining experience for prophets in Smith's world was an encounter with the devil for the purpose of understanding and recognizing the difference between God and Satan.

Smith's encounter with the devil while attempting to extract buried gold was not unique in the context of treasure-seeking. In Smith's confusing puzzle as treasure seeker and prophet,¹¹² the devil, while not occupying the same role in both worlds¹¹³, was present in both activities.

¹¹⁰ "History, 1834–1836," p. 95, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 14, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1834-1836/99>.

¹¹¹ See chapter 6.

¹¹² Jann Shipp, "The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith," in *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays On The Past* ed. D. Michael Quinn (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1992), 54-74.

¹¹³ In Smith's plates narrative, the devil did not play the role of treasure guardian. Much has been written about the figure of Moroni as treasure guardian. See, for example Ronald V. Higgins, "From Captain Kidd's Treasure Ghost to the Angel Moroni: Changing Dramatis Personae in Early Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 17-42; Larry E. Morris, "'I Should Have an Eye Single to the Glory of God': Joseph Smith's Account of the Angel and the Plates," *FARMS Review* 17, no. 1 (2005), 11-81; Adam Price Hock, "'Behold an Angel of the Lord Came and stood before me': A Cultural Examination of Joseph Smith's 1823 Visions of Moroni (Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2013).

Many participants viewed Treasure-seeking as a religious activity.¹¹⁴ For Smith, the devil inhabited and traversed both worlds. In trying to understand how Smith went from a local seer to a religious figure, his encounters with the devil connect both activities. Smith had to learn how to overcome evil spirits to capture the treasure, and he had to overcome the devil's temptations before being entrusted with God's sacred word.

The Smith Family and the Devil

Joseph Smith's entire family worked collectively to help Joseph conquer the temptations and power of the devil. Smith's mother Lucy remembered the support and worry her family felt for Joseph as he relayed the angel's instructions and commands. Lucy recorded that the family was worried that Joseph, through some neglect on his part, might fail in obtaining the plates and that the family prayed to God that "he [Joseph] might be more fully instructed in his duty, and be preserved from all the wiles and machinations of him 'who lieth in wait to deceive.'"¹¹⁵

Smith's struggle with the devil took on a family dimension. He probably told his family that he did not receive the plates due to his failure to heed Moroni's warning about Satan. He most likely shared with them his vision of Satan and his demons in hell and the instruction he had received from Moroni on how to discern between the power of God and the power of the devil. So impactful was this experience for the entire Smith family that they focused their family prayers on Joseph and his need for divine aid to overcome temptation. They believed in the devil

¹¹⁴ Jared Hickman, "'Bringing Forth' the Book of Mormon: Translation as the Reconfiguration of Bodies in Space-Time," in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity*, eds. Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Brian M. Hauglid (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2020), 67-77.

¹¹⁵ "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," p. 89, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/96>. The creation and reception of Lucy Smith's history has been controversial and contested, for an introduction to this see Sharalyn D. Howcroft "A Textual and Archival Reexamination of Lucy Mack Smith's History," in *Foundational Texts of Mormonism: Examining Major Early Sources*, ed. Mark Ashurst-McGee, Robin Scott Jensen, and Sharalyn D. Howcroft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 298-335.

and thought he had successfully tempted Joseph, which prevented him from receiving the gold plates. The entire Smith family believed in and rallied around Joseph Smith and worked together to help him successfully overcome Satan and retrieve the ancient objects.

After failing to get the plates, Moroni instructed Smith to return on the same date the following year, at which time he would receive the plates if he brought the right person. Smith asked who that person was to be, and Moroni responded his oldest brother Alvin.¹¹⁶ Smith's oldest brother had taken on a larger share of running the family. He took the lead in framing and building the new family home and lent his name to the mortgage contract. It made sense for Joseph Smith Jr. to bring him the following year. Perhaps Alvin would have helped Joseph resist the devil's temptations as he obtained the record, but this was not to be.

Two months after the instruction to bring him, Alvin became ill with bilious colic. His parents sent for a doctor who administered a large dose of calomel. It became lodged in his upper intestine and led to Alvin's death. This sent shockwaves through the Smith family and disrupted the family routine and dynamic. Mother Smith recorded that Alvin had shown a greater interest in the ancient record than anyone else in the family, and "consequently, we could not bear to hear anything upon the subject."¹¹⁷

Alvin's religious standing further complicated his death. Like his father and other family members, Alvin remained aloof from joining a church and died without being baptized. William Smith, another brother, remembered years later that at Alvin's funeral, a Reverend Stockton

¹¹⁶ Knight, Joseph 1772-1847. *Joseph Knight reminiscences*, CHL. <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=37b7b91c-4148-45d6-8f32-df4acf06fe99&crate=0&index=1> (accessed: May 15, 2020).

¹¹⁷ "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," p. 93, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed May 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/100>. For a further discussion of the impact of Alvin's death on the family, and the culture of "good death" surrounding the Smith family, see Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven As It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35–37.

spoke and “intimated very strongly that [Alvin] had gone to hell.”¹¹⁸ Antebellum America was enthralled in a contested debate about the existence and nature of hell.¹¹⁹ As noted earlier, many revivalist preachers warned their listeners about religious ambivalence. In his interview, William Smith notes that this comment from a religious authority greatly upset Joseph Smith Sr. He felt Alvin was a good boy and contested the idea that he had gone to hell. The temptations of the devil had overcome Joseph Smith Jr. on his first trip to the hill. His second trip promised success if he brought with him his elder brother Alvin. Now Alvin lay dead and possibly damned. While the two events were not necessarily connected, the devil played a role in both.

Smith returned to the hill as instructed in the autumn of 1824. He was less than confident about his ability to obtain the plates since the angel had required him to bring Alvin along. Still, he felt he had obeyed all the commandments and would be successful in retrieving the sacred relics. Moroni had previously instructed Smith that he was to take the plates and go straight home without delay. He was also to remember the previous instruction Moroni had given him not to covet whatever treasure might be buried in the hill.

As Smith retrieved the plates, a thought flashed through his mind that there might be other treasures in the stone box that could rescue his family from their impoverished state. He laid the plates on the ground, searched the stone box to analyze its contents, and then covered it to prevent others from obtaining the treasure. As Smith went to gather the plates again, he realized they were gone. Panicked, Smith prayed for help. Moroni appeared and told Smith he had not obeyed the commandments given him. Defeated, he returned home empty-handed for the second time. Smith’s family was disappointed that he had not succeeded. Lucy recorded that,

¹¹⁸ Zion's Ensign; 1891-1899; Volume 5, 1893-1894; 1894 January 13 (No. 3); Church History Library, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=b1ab0810-4723-4d54-ac00-2f95725217af&crate=0&index=5> (accessed: May 16, 2020)

¹¹⁹ See Gin Lum, *Damned Nation*, 87-125.

“We were much disturbed by this as it showed to us more strikingly than anything which had previously come to our understanding the insinuations & power of the adversary. And we doubled our diligence in prayer before God that Joseph might be more fully instructed and preserved from all the wiles and machinations of Him who lieth in wait to deceive.”¹²⁰ The Smith family believed that Satan was once again responsible for Joseph’s failure.

Prophethood and the Treasure-Seer

Throughout 1824 and 1825 Smith still participated in glass peeping and treasure-seeking. It may be that Smith continued to participate in these activities to practice how to find hidden treasure without desiring it for money. Smith is clear that after 1823 he continued to work among treasure-seekers but he claimed that it was never as the initiator of the expeditions.¹²¹ This was perhaps his chance to learn how to resist the power of the devil. It is also possible that his family, particularly his father, encouraged him to continue to treasure-seek with this goal in mind.

A court case in 1826 alludes to these possibilities. Peter Bridgeman brought charges against Joseph Smith Jr. for being a disorderly person and an imposter, again insinuating that Smith was either a sinister conman or deceived. New York law allowed anyone claiming to find lost goods to be charged as disorderly.¹²² In the case, Smith clarified his recent involvement in treasure-seeking. The docket entry for the court case of *People v. Joseph Smith Junior* summarizes Joseph’s testimony. “He [Smith] has occasionally been in the habit of looking . . . to find lost property for 3 years . . . that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always

¹²⁰ "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, Page [2], bk. 4," p. [2], bk. 4, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/44>.

¹²¹ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 8, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/10>.

¹²² Marvin S. Hill, “Joseph Smith and the 1826 trial: New Evidence and new Difficulties,” *BYU Studies* 12 (Winter 1972): 223-233.

rather declined having anything to do with this business.”¹²³ Other witnesses testified, claiming Smith was a fraud and did not possess the ability he claimed to have. Interestingly, none of the witnesses claimed Smith did this to try and obtain the treasure for himself. It was always to inform others where it was located so they could then go and retrieve it. In this way, Smith, perhaps, was attempting to dispossess his attachment for buried riches.¹²⁴

Some treasure- participants believed that the activity could “enhance one’s spiritual growth.” Alan Taylor has observed that “For many rural folks, treasure-seeking was a materialist extension of their Christian faith as well as a supernatural economy. For them, the actual contest with the supernatural assumed an importance equal to recovering a treasure.” Commenting on evil spirits, Taylor added, “successfully besting an evil spirit connoted a share of divine power, a reassuring confidence that he shared in divine grace.”¹²⁵

Historians have created useful categories to help define and understand different treasure-seeking practices. A treasure digger was one who “was usually motivated only by the desire to obtain whatever riches were supposed to lay buried or hidden.” No religious connection was involved in the practice. Alternatively, individuals labeled “treasure-seers” possessed “the gift of seership in one of its many forms and sometimes confronted the spirits who guarded the treasure. For the treasure-seer, the primary reward was expanding his or her seeric gift.” This meant that the treasure-seer had little interest in a financial reward for his or her services, sometimes demonstrating “disdain for riches by absenting themselves from the dig once they had instructed

¹²³ "Appendix: Docket Entry, 20 March 1826 [People v. JS]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 3, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-docket-entry-20-march-1826-people-v-js/1>.

¹²⁴ Gordon A. Madsen, “Being Acquitted of a ‘Disorderly Person’ Charge in 1826,” in *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith’s Legal Encounters*, ed. Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 71-92.

¹²⁵ Taylor, “The Early Republic’s Supernatural Economy,” 22. See also Taylor, “Rediscovering the Context of Joseph Smith Jr.’s Treasure-Seeking,” 19,21,23-24; and Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 64.

the diggers how to locate the treasure.”¹²⁶ While it may be an overstatement to declare that Smith had no interest in the financial side of treasure-seeking, it may be that he desired to reach the status of treasure-seer, thinking that this would enable him to recover the gold plates.

As other scholars have suggested, Treasure-seeking was a preparatory practice for Smith’s later religious career.¹²⁷ The role of Treasure-seer may have provided Smith a chance to rehearse for his anticipated trip to the Hill Cumorah. One common way some scholars have framed the four years between 1823 when Smith first learned of the plates and 1827 when he received them is to depict a young Smith who needed to mature spiritually and intellectually.¹²⁸ A slight emendation to this standard narrative sees a Smith that needed to practice overcoming his desire for treasure by practicing the treasure seer’s role. This trial period, however, was not open-ended.

Moroni instructed Smith to cease keeping company with treasure diggers during Smith’s 1826 visit to the Hill Cumorah. He said that there were wicked men in that crowd, and he was to associate with them no longer. Moroni also insisted that Smith improve his moral behavior. He was to “not lie, nor swear, nor steal.”¹²⁹ The narrative continued to show the character flaws of a budding prophet; he was still failing to adhere to God’s commandments. This was the necessary work he needed to perform to get the plates and overcome the prince of darkness.

This was not the last scolding from Moroni that year. 1827 was to be Smith’s last opportunity to get the plates; if he failed, he would not be permitted to try again.¹³⁰ This urgency

¹²⁶ Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 65. See also Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire*., 30-33; and Hickman, “‘Bringing Forth’ The Book of Mormon,” 68-69, 76.

¹²⁷ See, for example, Shipps, “*The Prophet Puzzle*,” 3-20; Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 11-21; Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 65; Ashurst-McGee, “A Pathway to Prophethood; Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*, 69-87; and Hickman, “‘Bringing Forth’ the Book of Mormon,” 67-77.

¹²⁸ Hickman, “‘Bringing Forth’ the Book of Mormon,” 76.

¹²⁹ “Mormonism – No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly*, July 1859, 165.

¹³⁰ Knight, Joseph 1772-1847. *Joseph Knight reminiscences*, CHL.

led Moroni to appear to Smith outside of what had become a routine annual timeline, to get him to live up to the required standards necessary to overcome the devil's temptations. Lucy Smith later recorded Joseph as saying he had taken "the severest chastisement, that I have ever had in my life. It was the angel of the Lord . . . [he] said, that I had not been engaged enough in the work of the Lord; that the time had come for the record to be brought forth; and, that I must be up and doing, and set myself about the things which God had commanded me to do."¹³¹ Joseph's moral character had to be right, and time was of the essence.

One of the major contradictions in the sources of these events deals with the character of Joseph Smith. Smith, his family, and his close associates describe a young man who was religious and trying to improve his character to be found worthy of taking possession of the ancient record. Other sources from neighbors and former associates describe him as indolent, greedy, a deceiver, and a treasure hunter. The unfriendly sources viewed Smith as someone who was in league with the devil, and it was their duty to alert others to this salient fact.¹³² Individuals with varying degrees of loyalty and animosity to Smith saw the devil as a central part of the plates' story.

On the evening of September 22, 1827, Joseph Smith and his new bride Emma Hale Smith went to the hill to retrieve the plates. After four years of trial and error, Smith finally recovered the plates. He had developed the ability to see the plates in religious terms and not monetary ones. He had overcome a temptation that had plagued him for nearly half a decade. But Satan's involvement with the Book of Mormon had just begun. Satan would continue to harass Joseph as the young prophet sought to translate and publish the book. These events demonstrate

¹³¹ "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," pgs. 103- 104, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/111>.

¹³² See, for example, Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: Or, A Faithful Account of that Singular Imposition and Delusion* (Painsville, OH: By the Author, 1834), 94, 116, 132, 185, 210, 232, and 260.

how Smith believed the devil played an ever-increasing role in frustrating his prophetic endeavors. Smith saw himself as a prophet and Satan as his enemy. Satan would take a more direct and diabolic part in the Book of Mormon's translation and publication.

Diabolism and the Materiality of the Gold Plates

From Smith's first recorded telling of his theophany to a local minister, he had to deal with accusations that he was a conman. As previously noted, Americans were surrounded by and concerned about frauds in the nineteenth century.¹³³ Exposing religious frauds became a critical action to maintain the boundary of acceptable Christian orthodoxy. External observers relegated Smith into the role of fraud quite quickly while his inner circle of associates wrestled with the issue. The materiality of the gold plates served to convince his followers that he was not being deceived. They may have also helped to confirm to Smith that he had not been deceived. From Moroni's appearance in 1823, Smith described the plates' look, feel, and makeup to his family. As one scholar has noted, "Smith's witnesses of seeing and touching the plates had a convincing verisimilitude."¹³⁴

Others also saw and felt the plates, confirming their existence. Three witnesses, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer, saw the plates through supernatural means. Moroni appeared to them and showed them the plates. Additionally, eight men, connected to Smith by blood or faith, saw and handled the plates without the supernatural accompanying the experience. These witnesses published their experiences in the preface to the Book of Mormon. The first three witnesses recorded that "We have seen the plates . . . we have seen the

¹³³ Fluhman, "A Peculiar People", 25; Halttunen, Confidence Men, 33-55.

¹³⁴ Michael Hubbard MacKay, "Performing the Translation: Character Transcripts and Joseph Smith's Earliest Translating Practices," in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity* ed. Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee and Brian Hauglid (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2020), 87.

engravings,”¹³⁵ while the eight witnesses stated, “we did handle with our hands . . . we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken.”¹³⁶ One function of the materiality of plates was to prove to the world that they existed and that Smith was not a fraud or deceived by the devil.

Martin Harris’ experience with the convincing power of the gold plates materiality is one example of their role in quelling fears of fraud. Smith needed financial support to commence the work of translation. He received a revelation through his seer stone that Martin Harris, a neighbor and friend to the Smith family, would supply him with everything he needed. Upon asking him for help, Harris replied, “If it is the devil’s work I will have nothing to do with it, but if it is the Lord’s, you have all the money necessary to bring it before the world. . . . Joseph you know . . . that the devil is to have great power in the latter days to deceive if possible the very elect; and I don’t know that you are one of the elect.” Harris then hefted the plates and felt their weight. He knew the Smiths could not afford a material as heavy and thick as what he was holding. He went home that night to pray, imploring God to make clear what he should do. Harris remembered that “[God] showed me that it was his work and that it was designed to bring in the fullness of his gospel to the gentiles.”¹³⁷ The materiality of the plates helped convince Harris that Smith was not a conman nor deceived by Satan.

Joseph Smith and his family also believed that the devil caused the physical plates to be in danger. In her history, Lucy Smith recorded that “Satan had stirred up the hearts of those who had in any way got a hint of the matter to search into it and make every possible move towards

¹³⁵ "Book of Mormon, 1830," p. [589], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-mormon-1830/595>.

¹³⁶ "Book of Mormon, 1830," p. [590], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-mormon-1830/596>.

¹³⁷ “Mormonism – No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly*, August 1859, 168-169.

preventing the work of Mr. Smith.”¹³⁸ Though Smith was seen as a fraud, the belief that the plates existed speaks to the community Smith inhabited. They believed it was possible for plates like the one Smith described to exist. The supernatural had entered the world of the physical. The material plates needed protection.

Satan and the Translation of the Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith kept his process for translating the Book of Mormon close to the vest. During an 1831 church conference, he stated that “it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the book of Mormon,”¹³⁹ giving no further details. Witnesses of the process provided descriptions. David Whitmer asserted that “the way it was done was thus: Joseph would place the seer-stone in a deep hat, and placing his face close to it, would see, not the stone, but what appeared like an oblong piece of parchment, on which the hieroglyphics would appear, and also the translation in the English language, all appearing in bright luminous letters. Joseph would then read it to [his scribe] who would write it down when spoken.”¹⁴⁰ Whitmer, like most others, described translation as a linguistic process. Smith repeated the text he saw in his stone.¹⁴¹ Recent scholarship has looked to move beyond linguistic definitions and has explored translation in terms of time, space, and the metaphysical.¹⁴² A framework of

¹³⁸ "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, Page [1], bk. [1],” p. [8], bk. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 6, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/62>.

¹³⁹ "Minutes, 25–26 October 1831," p. 13, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-25-26-october-1831/4>.

¹⁴⁰ Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 151.

¹⁴¹ Scholarship on Smith’s translation process as linguistic is voluminous. For a sample see Robert J. Matthews, “Joseph Smith – Translator,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993), chapter 6; and Richard L. Bushman, “Joseph Smith as Translator,” in *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith*, ed. Bryan Waterman (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1999), chapter 3.

¹⁴² See, for example, Kathleen Flake, “Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith’s Narrative Cannon,” *The Journal of Religion* 87, no.4 (October 2007): 501-511; Karl K. Sandberg, “Knowing Brother Joseph Again: The Book of Abraham and Joseph as Translator,” in Waterman, *The Prophet Puzzle*, chapter 15; Samuel Morris Brown, *Joseph Smith’s Translations: The Words and Worlds of Early Mormonism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2020), especially chapter 4; Samuel Morris Brown, “Seeing the Voice of God: The Book of

translation that includes diabolism may provide one working definition of what Smith meant by translation.

In a revelation Smith read to the fledgling Church at its founding meeting in April of 1830, the voice of God declared to all that Joseph Smith was to “be called a seer, a translator, a prophet.”¹⁴³ This revelation categorized the various roles he would occupy in the Church. These roles were interconnected and contained specific functions required to translate the Book of Mormon.

The role of a seer was central to the task of some prophets in the Book of Mormon. Seers in the book are the conduits of God’s power, and God reveals to them secret things hidden from the world. As Susan Staker has observed, “The recurring stories of these powerful seers not only constitute the strand of continuity and authority in the *Book of Mormon* world but also became the narrative foundation upon which Smith’s authority was established within the community gathering around the Book of Mormon by the time Smith had finished its dictation.”¹⁴⁴ Smith’s first religious role was that of a seer. Seer bridged the gap between his treasure-seeking enterprises, in which he played the role of treasure seer, and his role as prophet and religion maker.

A particular function of seer in the Book of Mormon was to reveal Satan's secret works from the beginning of time, through history, and on to the current generation. The revelation of this secret knowledge would expose Satan, prevent loss of truth and knowledge, and prevent

Mormon on Its Own Translation,” in MacKay et. all, *Producing Ancient Scripture*, 137-168; and Hickman, “‘Bringing Forth’ the Book of Mormon,” 54-80.

¹⁴³ "Book of Commandments, 1833," p. 45, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 14, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-commandments-1833/49>.

¹⁴⁴Susan Staker, “Secret Things, Hidden Things: The Seer Story in the Imaginative Economy of Joseph Smith,” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* ed. Brent Metcalfe and Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 235-274.

apostasy.¹⁴⁵ A verse from the Book of Mormon outlines this function of a seer, “And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations.”¹⁴⁶ W. W. Phelps, a close associate of Smith, believed that the title referred to Smith’s name in a pre-earth realm. In his eulogy at Smith’s funeral he stated, “Joseph Smith, who was Gazelam in the spirit world, was, and is, and will be in the progress of Eternity: The Prince of Light.”¹⁴⁷ Smith stood in direct opposition to Satan. The Prince of Darkness worked in the shadows to sow “wickedness and abominations,” and Smith as the “Prince of Light,” revealed and discovered past works of darkness.

These verses speak to the very core of Joseph Smith’s understanding and identity as a seer. A seer was to translate records which in part contained the sins of past generations. Translation exposed the secret works of Satan and his modes of operation. A revelation about Moses that initiated Smith’s Bible translation project and the Book of Abraham all contain narratives of Satan working against God and entering into secret oaths with God’s children.¹⁴⁸ Smith, as a seer and translator, produced texts that exposed Satan’s destructive work in the past so that the present would not suffer the same fate.

These gifts of seership and translation were meaningful not only to expose Satan's work, but to prevent him from interfering in the translation process. It seems that Joseph Smith felt

¹⁴⁵ Grant Hardy, “Ancient History and Modern Commandments: The Book of Mormon in Comparison with Joseph Smith’s Other Revelations, in MacKay et al. *Producing Ancient Scripture*, 214-215.

¹⁴⁶ Alma 37:23.

¹⁴⁷ W.W. Phelps, “The Funeral Sermon,” MS, 13 June 1866, CHL. See also MacKay and Dirkmaat, *Darkness Unto Light: Joseph Smith’s Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2015), 68.

¹⁴⁸ See chapters 5 and 6.

deception was possible while he exercised his gift of seeing.¹⁴⁹ Smith's wife Emma later recalled her husband's concern about deception while translating, "When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word . . . one time while he was translating he stopped suddenly pale as a sheet, and said, 'Emma, did Jerusalem have a wall around it?' When I answered 'Yes,' he replied, 'Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived.'¹⁵⁰ Joseph Smith was concerned the message he was receiving through his seer stone was not correct, creating the possibility that not all information communicated through the stone was from God. His reaction to the possible deception was visceral. Emma did not specify when this event transpired during the translation process, but given her early role as translator, this most likely happened as Smith translated the book of Lehi.

In evaluating Emma Smith's and Oliver Cowdery's descriptions of seership and translation, it seems one aspect of the process was for Smith to decipher from what source came the text in the stone. This mode of translation requires a linguistic framework, but it opens a new avenue to understand what how Joseph Smith understood translation. He believed that he was not a mere automaton repeating text; he was a seer who had to use his knowledge and skills gained over a period of time, perhaps starting with treasure-seeking, ensuring that the message received from the stone was correct and from God.

This framework enlarges the role Emma Smith played in translation. She participated in the creation of a translation process.¹⁵¹ She served as a source of knowledge for Joseph as he learned how to decipher the message and its source coming through the seer stones. Emma, the

¹⁴⁹ Christopher James Blythe, "'By the Gift and Power of God': Translation among the Gifts of the Spirit," in *Producing Ancient Scripture*, 49-51.

¹⁵⁰ Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 129.

¹⁵¹ Amy Easton-Flake and Rachel Cope, "Reconfiguring the Archive: Women and the Social Production of the Book of Mormon," in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity*, ed. Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee and Brian M. Hauglid (Salt Lake City: UT, University of Utah press, 2020, 125-133.

more educated of the pair,¹⁵² served as a sounding board to confirm that the messages Smith received were not diabolic communications. Joseph did not know Jerusalem had a wall around it, but Emma did. A revelation describing the translation process instructed Smith to ask if what he had received was right. Asking Emma and collaborating with her was one-way Smith fulfilled this requirement.¹⁵³

Joseph Smith continued to work at this process of asking and ensuring his translation was correct. This may provide one possible reason why Smith sent Martin Harris East to show some copied characters from the plates to scholars working in the field of translation. As Michael MacKay notes, copying and printing the characters was a “performance” that served to validate to Harris and others the plates existence and the need to have them translated.¹⁵⁴ The performance may have also helped confirm to Smith that he had mastered the translation process by verifying if the text he had received from the stone was correct. He may not have recognized the text or known what to make of the messages appearing in the stones. He may have lacked confidence and “sought some kind of authoritative confirmation.”¹⁵⁵

MacKay’s argument point to an unsure Smith struggling to know if the translation content was received correctly. Contextualizing Martin Harris’ trip to the East with the comments of Emma Smith on her husband’s concern that “he had been deceived” while translating leads to another possible reason for the trip. Smith was worried about deciphering the source of the translation. While he left no evidence indicating that he had received translation text from Satan through the seer stones, his visceral reaction to text in the stone indicating

¹⁵² Linda King Newel and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 3-4, 6.

¹⁵³“Book of Commandments, 1833,” pgs 16- 17, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-commandments-1833/21>.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

Jerusalem had a wall shows that he believed this might have been possible. Validating his translation through secular translators and his amanuensis confirmed to Smith that the content and translation were correct. Smith used scribes and the academy to follow the revelation's requirement "to ask" if a translation was right. These processes ensured that Satan was not involved in the translation.

God, Satan, and Stolen pages

In the spring of 1828, Smith began in earnest to translate the gold plates into English. Martin Harris served as his principal scribe. By June, they had a manuscript of over one hundred pages. During this time and due to the financial aid Harris had given to the project, his familial and social circles were concerned that Smith was deceiving him for monetary gain. As discussed previously, Harris had this concern as well but managed to work through it. He now wanted his family and friends to be as sure as he was that Smith's scripture production was at the behest of God. On multiple occasions, Harris pled with Smith to allow him to take the Book of Mormon home to show his wife and others to appease their concerns. Smith said no, stating God had denied the request, but God and Smith eventually relented.¹⁵⁶

Smith's history records that Harris, under covenant, promised to show the manuscript to a few select individuals. As Harris headed home, Smith turned his attention to Emma and the birth of their first child, Alvin. The baby did not survive childbirth, and Emma was on the verge of death. As Emma recuperated from the difficult delivery, both she and Joseph turned their thoughts to the Book of Mormon manuscript. Martin had been away for longer than the agreement specified. Joseph sent a messenger to bring Harris to Smith. As Harris arrived in

¹⁵⁶ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 9, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/11>.

Harmony, he broke down to Joseph and cried out that he had lost the Book of Mormon manuscript and lost his soul. Joseph later reminisced that he had felt like his own soul had been damned.¹⁵⁷

God, in a revelation responding to the situation, rebuked both Martin Harris and the young prophet. In the revelation, God reiterated that man could not stop his works. Joseph is chastised for fearing man more than God. He was told that if he would have followed God's commands, God "would have extended his arm & supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary." God acknowledged to Smith in the revelation that Satan was involved in impeding the work of translation, and if Smith wanted God's protection, he needed to obey his commandments.¹⁵⁸ Smith believed that the manuscript had been stolen by "evil and designing men." God told Smith it had been taken by "evil and designing persons." If Smith had listened to God, the manuscript would not have been lost, and God would have protected Smith from these evil men.¹⁵⁹ The manuscript was lost, the plates and stones were taken from Smith, and the translation came to a halt. God then reiterated to Smith the importance of the work, that the world needed to know about the history of the various peoples and tribes found in the Book of Mormon who were destroyed "because of their iniquities & their Abominations & for this very Purpose are these Plates prepared." The world needed to know how Satan had caused the destruction of a people in the past to prevent the occurrence in the present.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, Page [1], bk. [1]," p. [6], bk. 7, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/86>.

¹⁵⁸ "Revelation Book 1," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/3>.

¹⁵⁹ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 10, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/12>.

¹⁶⁰ "Revelation Book 1," p. 1-2, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed August 4, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/4>.

Once Smith was permitted to translate again, it appears from the record that Smith proceeded from where he left off instead of starting over.¹⁶¹ As he finished translating the book, he needed to address what to do with the beginning. Would he retranslate the work that was lost? Another revelation from God answered his question. The revelation commences with a directive from God that Smith was to “be diligent unto the end, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan and those that do uphold his work.” He then revealed the extent of the diabolic plot concocted by those who stole the manuscript, “And behold, satan has put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated. . . and on this wise the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work; for he has put it into their hearts to do this, that by lying they may say they have caught you in the words which you have pretended to translate.” Smith’s revelation framed the whole episode as one large diabolic conspiracy. Satan continuously exerted effort to stop the work of translation. Smith believed he was living in a history where, like actors from the bible, he was battling the forces of evil. The missing pages became a contest between God and Satan. Smith’s own life takes on cosmic import. God, the devil, and man were all actors in the translation of the Book of Mormon. The stolen pages created such a dilemma that a revelation was required to fix the situation. Smith, as a prophet, revealed the diabolic plot and provided the heavenly answer to the problem.

In the preface to the Book of Mormon, which also served as his first published history, Smith detailed the story of the lost 116 pages.¹⁶² Smith’s early history and the reader’s first exposure to the Book of Mormon deal with God and Satan. For the most part, the words

¹⁶¹ MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness Unto Light*, 124.

¹⁶² “Joseph Smith’s Historical Enterprise,” *Series Introduction for the Histories Series*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/doc/series-introduction-for-the-histories-series>.

published in the preface were taken from the revelation Smith had earlier received on how to handle the lost manuscript. Various publications trying to assess Joseph Smith and his early beginnings included this story. Smith's battle with the devil in his first vision remained relatively unknown before the 1830s, but the story of the 116 pages circulated long before that.¹⁶³

Conclusion

After seven years of work, Smith finally had a printed copy of the Book of Mormon for distribution. In a revelation Smith received a few months after the book's publication, God had confirmed that Smith had received protection from heaven during the translation process and that he had "been delivered from all thine enemies, and thou hast been delivered from the powers of Satan and from darkness!"¹⁶⁴ The publication of the Book of Mormon became an exorcism of the devil. Smith had struggled for years against the temptation of greed and had encountered what he believed to be diabolic plots carried out by evil men and women to prevent the Book of Mormon's publication. Through God's power, he had accomplished his mission. The narrative Smith crafted for the decade after his first vision was one where he was continually trying to overcome diabolic power. This theme became a significant undercurrent in the Book of Mormon text. Smith's translation revealed a tragic past where entire ancient American civilizations were destroyed because, unlike Smith, they succumbed to temptation.

¹⁶³ For example, see Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled Or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion* (Painesville, Ohio: By the Author, 1834), 15, 21-22.

¹⁶⁴ "Revelation Book 1," p. 32, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 17, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/16>.

Chapter 4

Diabolism in the Book of Mormon

I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all humanity.

- Lehi (2 Nephi 2: 17-18, the Book of Mormon)

Satan occupies a significant role in the narrative of the Book of Mormon. The book's central figure is Jesus Christ, but Satan is its central antagonist. The book commences with Old Testament prophets and terminates some four-hundred years after Christ's death. Satan spans that history, and prophets from the beginning of the book, contemporaries with their Old Testament counterparts, know and write about him. He is not always in the forefront of the narrative but lurks in the shadows and works through human agents. He is responsible for evil and sin. He recruits and works through willing individuals to bring about death and darkness. He actively persecutes and corrupts God's Church. Prophets in the book believe Satan corrupted the Bible. At times, he is an agent of providence used to implement God's will.

The pinnacle of Satan's efforts results in the downfall of two civilizations. He creates secret organizations that conspire to murder, steal, and topple governments. These secret networks incite civil war. Mormon, a prophet, abridger, and namesake of the book, writes that an essential function of the Book of Mormon is to warn future generations about the dangers of Satan's secret network. Ultimately, his influence and power destroyed two civilizations. Satan is a major force of opposition and evil in Joseph Smith's first scriptural production.

Satan, Native Americans, and Demonic Mimesis

The Book of Mormon is a thousand-year history of Israelites (pre-Columbian Christians) living in the Western Hemisphere beginning about 600 BCE. The narrative commences with one family's emigration from Jerusalem to the new world after being warned by divine providence of a pending Babylonian takeover. What is significant about the Book of Mormon's approach to Christ is, as historian Terryl Givens has pointed out, its radical approach to Christology. The first family of the book's narrative all have a pre-Christian knowledge of Christ. They are a New Testament family living in an Old Testament world.¹⁶⁵ Lehi, the patriarch of the family, receives a revelation from God warning him that Jerusalem would be captured and enslaved because of its wickedness. God tells Lehi that He has prepared a place across the ocean to provide protection and prosperity for his family. In his vision, Lehi received a book from Jesus Christ. Lehi reads from the book and states as he did so that he "was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. And he read saying: 'Wo, wo unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations!'"¹⁶⁶ The first act a prophet does in Smith's book is to read and translate a text that warns about the sins and abominations of a people, leading to destruction. Smith would repeat this very act as he translated the Book of Mormon.

The people of Jerusalem reject Lehi and his prophetic warning of destruction and attempt to murder Lehi for his accusations against them. Lehi is told in a dream to take his family and flee Jerusalem. He was then told that God would lead them to a promised land, "a land which is choice above all other lands."¹⁶⁷ This land was to be free of the abominations and sin that currently reigned in Jerusalem. It was to be a sanctuary, only if Lehi and his family kept the commandments of God. Otherwise, the family and their descendants would be cursed, "even

¹⁶⁵ Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 199–200.

¹⁶⁶ 1 Nephi 1:12-13.

¹⁶⁷ 1 Nephi 2:20.

with a sore curse.”¹⁶⁸ This curse was a separation from God. These early scenes in the Book of Mormon lay the groundwork for Satan's entrance.

After Lehi's death, his family fractures. One group designate themselves Nephites, after Lehi's faithful son Nephi. The other group is identified as Lamanites, after Lehi's rebellious son Lamien. The Lamanites cause wars and contentions with the Nephites. This contention continues for hundreds of years throughout the history of the Book of Mormon. Eventually, the Nephites become wicked, and the Lamanites commit mass genocide against them. Nephi records this event centuries before it occurs, “I beheld that my brethren did contend against my seed, according to the word of the angel; and because of the pride of my seed, and the temptations of the devil, I beheld that the seed of my brethren did overpower the people of my seed.”¹⁶⁹

Smith believed that Native Americans of his day were the Book of Mormon peoples' living descendants, specifically the Lamanites. Christians had debated and discussed for centuries the origins of Native American beliefs. Catholic missionaries in the sixteenth century were shocked to find similarities between indigenous and Catholic practices. As Robert Orsi has argued, starting with Justin Martyr, a commonly employed explanation for this phenomenon was that “Satan in his wiles had seduced native populations into the worship of evil by means of depraved copies of Catholic rituals. . . . Satanic mimesis of Catholic sacraments was an affirmation by inversion of the Catholic supernatural.”¹⁷⁰ Catholics believed that native groups practiced a demonic replica of Christianity without its power or correct form because it was revealed by Satan.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ 1 Nephi 2:23.

¹⁶⁹ 1 Nephi 12:19.

¹⁷⁰ Robert A. Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 33.

¹⁷¹ For a further analyses of demonic mimesis see Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World*, 14-16, 25, 29, 47, 49, 51-53, 69-71; Poole, *Satan in America*, 52-52; John K Thornton, *A Cultural History of The Atlantic World: 1250-1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 406-409, 420-425, 430-433, 454; and Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion*, 192-193, 200.

The Book of Mormon provided an alternate reason for the similarities between Native American and Christian rituals. According to the book, ancestors to Native Americans were Christians. They prayed, were baptized, performed miracles, and worshipped Christ. Nephites undertook extensive proselytizing missions among the apostate Lamanite people. Nephites eventually apostatized from the faith and were wiped out by the Lamanites. Lamanites then practiced a corrupted form of Christianity influenced by the devil. Satan had not revealed an imposter religious system ex-nihilo, but had corrupted Christianity from its pure form. Lamanites were not, as Scott Poole has argued, “the children of Satan,” but a fallen branch of Israel requiring reclamation.¹⁷² Prophets in the Book of Mormon, knowing of the Lamanites future fallen state, wrote their record, hoping to convert future Lamanites to the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁷³ This belief spurred Smith and his associates to proselytize the Book of Mormon's message to American Indians.¹⁷⁴

Satan as Corruptor of the Church

Prophets in the Book of Mormon believed that Satan attacked God’s Church and created his own. The prophet Nephi records that he was shown a vision of America and the Protestant Christians that will settle it. Among them he witnesses, “the formation of a church” that “is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down . . . I saw the devil that was the founder of it. This Church would seek “gold, silver, silks, scarlets, fine twined linen,” precious clothing, and “harlots.” Nephi stated that this church would exist for “the praise of the world,” as it sought to “destroy the saints of God,

¹⁷² Poole, *Satan in America*, 53.

¹⁷³ See, for example, Enos 1: 11-14.

¹⁷⁴ Ronald W. Walker, “Seeking the ‘Remnant’: The Native American during the Joseph Smith Period,” *Journal of Mormon History*, 19, no. 1 (Spring 1993), 1-33.

and bring them down into captivity.”¹⁷⁵ The Church is the personification of greed, sexual immorality, and corruption. This Church has similar qualities to those ascribed to Babylon in the book of Revelation.¹⁷⁶ While the text echoes reformation attitudes toward the Catholic Church, Smith did not clarify if a specific church was being described.¹⁷⁷

One way this Church of the devil would enslave faithful Christians, according to Nephi, was through the corruption of the Bible. Nephi sees writings by the Jews passed on to Protestants. An angel in the vision tells Nephi that “when [the Bible] proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord.” The writings became corrupted once they were passed to the gentiles as the “great and abominable church . . . [had] 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.”¹⁷⁸ Satan and his Church are seen in vision as corrupting the Church, its saints, and its holy word.

Satan’s Church would not go unchecked forever. Nephi again in vision saw “that great and abominable church . . . shall turn upon their heads; for they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads.”¹⁷⁹ The wicked would destroy the wicked. A revelation Smith received at a conference of the Church in 1830 further elaborated the eschatological destiny of Satan’s Church. God as voice declares that the “great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth” will be “cast down by devouring fire.” Satan’s Church is permitted to act as foil and corrupter for a time, but ultimately it, along with the wicked, is to be cast down to hell.

¹⁷⁵ 1 Nephi 13: 5-9.

¹⁷⁶ See Revelations 17:6; 17:15; 18:3; 18:24;

¹⁷⁷ Over time various church leaders both asserted and denied that these passages related specifically to the Roman Catholic Church. See Gregory A. Prince and W.M. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and The Rise of Modern Mormonism*, (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2005), 121-123.

¹⁷⁸ 1 Nephi 24-28.

¹⁷⁹ 1 Nephi 22:13.

The Book of Mormon not only outlines the rise and fall of Satan's Church but outlines how he skillfully attacks members of God's Church. The Book of Mormon creates a narrative where the contest for converts in Smith's day became a contest between God and Satan. One prophet in the book recorded, "there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations."¹⁸⁰ Nephi warns future readers to be on guard to false churches and false doctrine. He writes, in language similar to Smith's 1838 first vision account, that Churches will "contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another . . . Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines . . . Yea, they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted because of false teachers, and false doctrine."¹⁸¹ Christ, in an appearance to the Nephite people after his resurrection, clarifies doctrine that apparently caused conflict between believers and then stated that "he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another."¹⁸² In the Book of Mormon, Satan is seen as a corrupter of the Church, an organizer of his Church, and the cause of contention on matters of doctrine.

The Devil, the Bible, and the Book of Mormon

As previously discussed, the Book of Mormon details how the devil corrupted the Bible. Joseph Smith believed that one important function of the Book of Mormon was to correct errors

¹⁸⁰ 1 Nephi 14:10.

¹⁸¹ 2 Nephi 28: 11-12.

¹⁸² 3 Nephi 11:29.

introduced into the Bible. In Smith’s view, the Bible had become corrupted at the hand of scribes and translators, possibly by Satan’s inspiration. Nephi again in vision saw the corruption of the Bible. He recorded that “plain and precious” truths would be taken from the Bible. “And after these plain and precious things were taken away [the Bible] goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; . . . because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which was plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God – because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.”¹⁸³ The corruption of the Bible, according to Nephi, would give Satan power over Christians. To correct the Bible then, was to diminish Satan’s power.

The Book of Mormon was not meant, however, to replace the Bible. According to the book itself, it was to become a companion scripture, tethered to the Bible. One was to believe and read both, which would stamp out false interpretations and translations that had seeped into the Bible over the centuries. A prophecy given to Joseph, the son of Israel, and repeated by Lehi in the Book of Mormon states that “that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins [the Book of Mormon], and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah [the Bible] shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions.”¹⁸⁴

The Book of Mormon was meant to save the Bible from false doctrine, contentious interpretation, and diabolically inspired corruption.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ 2 Nephi 28: 9-11.

¹⁸⁴ 2 Nephi 29: 1-14.

¹⁸⁵ Grant Hardy, “Ancient History and Modern Commandments: The Book of Mormon in Comparison with Joseph Smith’s Other Revelations, in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith’s Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity* ed. Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Brian M. Hauglid (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2020), 225.

Concerns over the purity of the Bible were not unique to Smith. Original wording lost intent, careless translations by scribes, and other potential issues in the Bible vexed Christians. Many attempted to return the Bible to a purified state.¹⁸⁶ By 1830, over seven hundred editions of the Bible were used among scores of denominations.¹⁸⁷ Seven new translations of the English Bible or portions of it had been published in the United States when the Book of Mormon came off the printing press in 1830.¹⁸⁸ There was an unrest in the United States about the status of the Bible.

Alexander Campbell, a contemporary of Smith, translated the King James Version of the New Testament and published it in 1826 in an attempt to restore the original meaning lost through the centuries. Campbell's scriptural creed stated that "where the Scriptures speak we speak; where the scriptures are silent, we are silent." Campbell looked to restore the primitive New Testament Church, and due to this singular preoccupation, sought to provide his congregants with the Bible in its pure form.¹⁸⁹ Unlike Smith's view that the Bible had become corrupt, in part, through diabolic machination and insidious or careless bible scribes, Campbell believed that the errors found in the King James Version were the result of "it's translators theological biases, the fact that it was the product of a committee of translators which invited interpretive compromise, and the reality that older, more reliable manuscripts were now available from which a translation of the New Testament could be made."¹⁹⁰ The Bible was recoverable for Campbell because human error could be corrected through human effort. Smith believe

¹⁸⁶ Samuel Morris Brown, *Joseph Smith's Translation: The Words and Worlds of Early Mormonism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 137-141.

¹⁸⁷ David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 639.

¹⁸⁸ Paul C. Gutjahr *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), appendix five.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 101-107.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

correction required revelation and the production of new scripture because the Bible, in part, had become corrupted by the devil. Heaven was needed to step in to save the scripture.

One reason the Book of Mormon would correct the Bible was due to its miraculous production. Because Smith was able to translate through divinely acquired tools, he avoided issues in language that plagued the Bible. Many critics of the Bible in Smith's day saw language as "the central cause of doctrinal plurality and sectarian strife."¹⁹¹ In Smith's view, The Book of Mormon overcame language issues due to its unique translation process and therefore did not suffer from the same translation inaccuracies the Bible did. As Samuel Brown has observed, the Book of Mormon provided a model for the correct way to transmit scripture. The Protestant Bible, weighed down by centuries of "inaccurate manuscripts in multiple languages, an absence of prophetic authority to adjudicate translation and canon, and no clear link between the bible and the church," suffered inaccuracies.¹⁹²

The Book of Mormon was also meant to convert Lamanite descendants and reclaim them from their fathers' false beliefs in a way the Bible could not. Joseph Smith and the publication of the Book of Mormon were to play an integral role in saving the Lamanites' posterity. Speaking about the apocalyptic days leading to the millennium, Nephi wrote that once the Book of Mormon was published, it would convert many gentiles to the gospel, who would then take the book and its history of Lamanites to American Indians, the "remnant" of the Lamanites. This would cause Native Americans to have a "knowledge of their fathers" which would lead them "the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers . . . and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among

¹⁹¹ Brown, *Joseph Smith's Translation*, 35.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 138.

them, save they shall be a pure and a delightsome people.”¹⁹³ The Book of Mormon contained a detailed history of a lost civilization. Restoring this knowledge would lead Native Americans back to the Christianity of their forefathers. This is something the Bible could not accomplish on its own. The redemption of Native Americans also served to repair the damage brought because of the Lamanites' willingness to follow Satan's temptations.

The Book of Mormon spoke out on various doctrines heavily disputed in nineteenth-century America. In the book's climactic event, Jesus Christ appears to Nephites after his resurrection, organizes a church, and teaches the correct mode of baptism. The record hints that this had been a point of argument for the Nephites. Christ was disappointed that his people were not united in their beliefs. He commanded that to avoid contention and said that the devil was the cause of contention.¹⁹⁴ Doctrinal disputes led to conflict, which derived from the devil. Just as Christ had done for the Nephite people, the Book of Mormon looked to clarify doctrine that caused contention in Smith's day.

This doctrinal clarification became a point of criticism for some of Smith's detractors. In the first substantive critique of the Book of Mormon, Alexander Campbell criticized that it attempted to settle every debate within Christianity. He wrote that “Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in N. York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies – infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the

¹⁹³ 2 Nephi 30: 3-6.

¹⁹⁴ 3 Nephi 11: 29.

question of freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man.”¹⁹⁵ Campbell’s critique was meant to dismiss Smith’s book, but it demonstrates what the book was after.

The Book of Mormon exorcised errors introduced to the Bible and clarified doctrinal disputes. Bible errors, according to the Book of Mormon, caused many Christians to falter and stumble, giving Satan power over them. Contention over belief also stemmed from the devil. The Book of Mormon looked to settle all these matters, diminishing the devil’s power. Smith and his followers believed that because of its miraculous translation process, the Book of Mormon was not as susceptible to error as the Bible was. The Book of Mormon fixed the Bible and with it exorcised the devil out of it.

“Satanizing” the Old Testament

The devil of Joseph Smith’s nineteenth-century world was not the same figure known to early Christians. The devil’s role in the Old Testament was seen by early Church Fathers as an adversary and tester, as exemplified in the story of Job.¹⁹⁶ Satan, though a tempter, was employed by and submissive to God. He is not Lucifer nor the snake in Genesis. Similarly, he was never rebellious and cast out of God’s presence before the creation of the world. As Henry Kelly has argued, he became all these things in post-biblical readings and interpretations of the sacred text.¹⁹⁷

Prophets living before the birth of Christ in the Book of Mormon know about and discuss the existence, role, and history of the devil and teach it to believers and record it for preservation and future dissemination. They reveal how Satan tempts and tricks God’s children alongside

¹⁹⁵ Alexander Cambell, *Delusions: An Analysis of The Book of Mormon; With An Examination of Its Internal And External Evidences And A Refutation Of Its Pretenses To Divine Authority* (Boston: Benjamin H. Green, 1832), 13.

¹⁹⁶ Marvin E. Tate, “Satan in the Old Testament” *Sage Journals* 89 no. 4 (December 1992), 461-474. Tate identifies Numbers 22;22-38; Job 1-2; Zechariah 3:1-7; and 1 Chronicles 21:1-22:1 as the scriptures most Christians often associated with Satan. Additional scriptures that Tate sees as foundational to Christianity’s theological development of Satan includes Genesis 3:1-5; Isaiah 14:12-17; and Ezekiel 28:11-19.

¹⁹⁷ Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan a Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13-15.

sermons discussing Christ's mission and crucifixion. They predict the rise of Satan's Church as well as predict his future downfall. Prophets in the Book of Mormon not only believe in the existence of a figure called Satan; they consider him a real being who wields power and influence. They spend extended time discussing him, his influence over the people, and where he fits in the cosmic narrative of God's creation and plan of salvation for his children.¹⁹⁸

A significant part of the Book of Mormon's "Satanization" of the Old Testament is its treatment of the devil's background and his involvement in the fall of Adam and Eve. For much of early Christian history, it was unknown where the devil came from. The Bible is mostly silent on the topic, which led many early Christians to believe that angels and heavenly messengers in the Bible came from nowhere; they just appeared. It was not until the second century that Justin Martyr first postulated that Satan was the serpent that caused Adam and Eve to fall. He believed Satan tempted them for an unspecified sinful reason, and he was cursed for it.¹⁹⁹ Tertullian of Carthage thought that the creation account detailing animals' formation was allegorical and described the creation of angels, with Lucifer being the chief angel. After his fall, he then became Satan, the adversary.²⁰⁰ The devil in John Milton's seminal work *Paradise Lost* falls from heaven because of his pride, causing a rebellion in heaven after losing a position he saw as rightfully his. By the nineteenth century, most standard bible commentaries defined the devil as a fallen angel or chief of fallen angels.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ For example, see 2 Nephi 2: 17-18; 2 Nephi 26: 10, 22; Mosiah 16: 3, 5, 11; Helaman 5: 12; 3 Nephi 6: 17, 28; Ether 8: 25; and Moroni 7: 11-17.

¹⁹⁹ Kelly, *Satan A Biography*, 176.

²⁰⁰ Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 131; Kelly, *Satan a Biography*, 179.

²⁰¹ Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 131.

Lehi, the first prophet in the Book of Mormon, addresses his family shortly before he dies. He theologizes on the fall of Adam and Eve and its meaning for God's children. Lehi definitively states that it was Satan who tempted Adam and Eve leading to their fall:

I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as a God, knowing good and evil.²⁰²

The devil of the Book of Mormon was the tempter in the Garden of Eden, lived with God before the creation of the world, and became an enemy to God due to his rebellion. Lehi knew this, a Jewish citizen living in the new world, six hundred years before the arrival of Christ.

The fall in this narrative is not seen as a negative, but part of God's plan; He intended for Adam and Eve to fall. Lehi teaches his family that a significant part of the human experience was to be exposed to opposites. As the author of evil, Satan would tempt humanity, providing the opposite to God's goodness. The tree of life and the forbidden fruit were both created by God to entice Adam and Eve. Satan becomes an unknowing providential agent as his temptations in the Garden of Eden brings about the fall.²⁰³ For Lehi, the fall was necessary for God's plan because if Adam and Eve "had not transgressed he would not have fallen . . . they would have had no children," and "would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin."²⁰⁴ For Lehi, everything that transpired in the

²⁰² 2 Nephi 2:17-18.

²⁰³ For historical background on Satan as an agent of providence, see Cervantes, *Devil in the New World*, 129-133, Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion*, 187-189, and Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 36-37.

²⁰⁴ 2 Nephi 2: 22-23.

Garden of Eden, including Satan's role as the tempter, happened due to "the wisdom of him who knoweth all things."²⁰⁵ Because Adam fell, says the prophet, men exist and experience joy.

The expanded knowledge about Satan in Smith's scripture speaks to a larger issue that Smith was confronting and fixing. Various verses in the book show Satan convincing the world that he does not exist.²⁰⁶ Smith may have viewed the absence of a Satan back story in the Bible as evidence of Satan's successful campaign to wipe his influence from history. Book of Mormon prophets, many of whom live long before Christianity's birth, outline how Satan tempted peoples, governments, and civilizations to sin, organized crime, persecuted the faithful and attacked the Church of God. If the Bible, especially the Old Testament, ignored or obfuscated the devil's role, the Book of Mormon brought it from the periphery and made it a central feature.

Antichrists as Agents of the Devil

By the nineteenth century, many Protestants believed that Satan mainly worked through third party agents. This version of Satan attacked and influenced the mind more than the body.²⁰⁷ Smith saw Satan working through third parties in his own life. When the Book of Mormon's original manuscript was stolen, he believed Satan himself inspired the conspirators. The devil did not intervene directly but recruited willing participants to carry out a plot meant to discredit Smith and disrupt the Book of Mormon's publication.

The Book of Mormon employs various characters as anti-Christ. A man named Korihor denies the existence of Christ and argues that men are free to follow their desires. Korihor preaches that religion is merely a tool for oppression. Though the Nephites during this period of their history enjoyed religious freedom, Korihor had so much success in his preaching and

²⁰⁵ 2 Nephi 2: 24.

²⁰⁶ See for example 2 Nephi 28: 22.

²⁰⁷ Muchembled, *A History of the Devil*, 187-188; Darren Oldridge, *The Devil: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40-41; Poole, *Satan in America*, 5; 101-102; 120.

became such a public nuisance that he was taken to the people's Chief judge and prophet Alma. Korihor rejected the notion that prophets, or anyone, could know the future. Korihor also denied belief in an afterlife or the justice of God and preached that because once a man was dead, that was the end of him, he should do whatever he wanted during his life. He rejected the notion of a fall and regarded a Christ figure's need to sacrifice himself to save everyone as ridiculous. His proselytizing efforts meted him great success as many believing Nephites were convinced to leave God's Church.²⁰⁸

Korihor eventually lands an audience before Alma, the head of God's Church. Alma questions Korihor, who accuses Alma and the Church of subverting the Nephite people through religion to his service. After Alma outlines evidence, he attempts to prove God's existence, Korihor demands a sign from God. He becomes deaf and unable to speak, confirming that God does indeed exist. Before his death, Korihor admits that it was the devil that showed him what to say and instructed him on what to do. "the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say."²⁰⁹ Though it was Korihor who attacked God's prophet and Church, the narrative reveals that behind the scenes it was really Satan orchestrating the events. Korihor believed what the devil had told him and admitted that he had come to believe the lies the devil told him.

In this account, the devil attacks God's Church and its members through the agency of humans. He appeared to Korihor in the form of an angel and convincingly lied and tricked Korihor to do his bidding. While Korihor found initial success, he was no match when facing God's prophet. He was overpowered by being struck dumb, and in the end, confessed the entire

²⁰⁸ Alma 30.

²⁰⁹ Alma 30: 53.

conspiracy. Through his human agent Alma, God prevents Satan from spreading his lies and leads his children away from the truth. Korihor is forced to beg for sustenance and dies. The account ends with a moral warning about any who would follow in Korihor's footsteps stating that "And thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily dram them down to hell."²¹⁰

The figure of Korihor in the Book of Mormon is a key in understanding how Smith viewed his own prophetic identity, how diabolism functioned in Smith's religion making, and to connect Smith's early revelatory experiences with his scripture making endeavors. Korihor had received diabolic revelation and did not know it. He then proceeded to deceive others by teaching what Satan had communicated to him. Korihor was ultimately taken to Alma as the Nephite people recognized that his role as the chief priest was to evaluate Korihor and his teachings. Alma rejects Korihor's beliefs, attributes them to doctrines of the devil, and accused Korihor of being under his influence. He detected Satan, exposed him and his minion, and cast them both out from among the people. Alma protected God's church and controlled orthodoxy within it.

The episode reflects Smith's belief that revelation could come from the devil and that he could appear as an angel of light. Smith later wrote that Satan appeared as an angel of light in the summer of 1829 when Peter, James, and John, three of Christ's apostles from the New Testament, appeared to Smith and Oliver Cowdery and invested in them priesthood power. Smith recorded at that time that "Again, what do we hear? . . . The voice of Michael (who Smith in his revelations identified as Adam in a pre-Earth state) on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light!" Michael, the archangel from the Old

²¹⁰ Alma 30: 60.

Testament, in Smith's view the first and highest-ranking prophet detected Satan and, it would seem, prevented his interfering with Smith receiving "the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!"²¹¹

Sherem is another Antichrist and agent of the devil in the Book of Mormon. He, too, is successful in convincing many that there will be no Christ so that he could "overthrow the doctrine of Christ." Sherem is presented as educated, a skillful orator, and able to "use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil." Sherem meets God's prophet Jacob and declares that he has been teaching people incorrectly concerning the purpose of the law of Moses. Sherem believes no man can see the future, so anyone claiming a religious system is meant to point to a future being, like the Law of Moses points to Christ for Book of Mormon prophets, is a fraud. Jacob attacks Sherem's arguments and accuses him of being inspired by the devil. Sherem, like Korihor, demands a sign as proof of God's existence and the future birth of Jesus Christ. Sherem falls to the earth and is mortally injured. Before his death, he confesses that he had been deceived by the power of the devil.²¹²

Sherem, excited at the opportunity to confront Jacob, accuses him of corrupting the law of Moses and falsely teaching that Christ would come in the future to save everyone. He also denies, like Korihor, that any man or prophet can know the future. He asked for a sign from Jacob to prove the existence of God. In response to the request, Jacob rejoins, "What am I that I should tempt God to show unto thee a sign in the thing which thou knowest to be true? Yet thou wilt denies it because of thou art of the devil. Nevertheless, not my will be done; but if God shall smite thee, let that be a sign unto thee."²¹³ Sherem was struck dumb and died a couple of days

²¹¹ Joseph Smith to "the Church of Jesus Christ," [7] Sept. 1842, in Revelations Collection, Church History Library, [D&C 128:20–21].

²¹² Jacob 7:1-23.

²¹³ Jacob 7: 14.

later. Before his death, a multitude gathered around him, and he confessed that he believed in Christ, the Holy Ghost, and in ministering angels. He then stated that he had been “deceived by the power of the devil.”²¹⁴

In both, the stories of Korihor and Sherem, the dangers of diabolic deception are laid out. These men were the cause of many faithful to leave the Church. They were eloquent, educated, and enticing. According to the text, they were both deceived by the devil and became his agents. The stories define the role of prophets and reveal how the devil operates through human agents. Korihor and Sherem are the antitheses of prophets. They receive revelation from the devil, preach false doctrine, and look to lead God’s children to hell.

On the other hand, visionaries know God’s truth, receive revelation from God, define and defend orthodoxy, and look to build up and protect God’s Church leading its members to heaven. Prophets can detect Satan working through human agents. Joseph Smith mimicked this prophetic function in his career when he declared Hiram Page’s revelations diabolic. Book of Mormon prophets and their nineteenth-century counterpart believed Satan worked through human agents, and they believed they needed to confront these diabolic emissaries to safeguard the Church.

Free Will, Salvation, and Damnation

The Book of Mormon places primacy on the agency of humanity. As Lehi noted, God’s children were to be exposed to opposites so that they could employ their agency. God’s law required a punishment or reward to be affixed to a conscious choice. Lehi teaches that all men are “instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.” Knowing and recognizing the difference was a consequence of the fall and the consequential reason for human experience. Humankind was to be enticed between good and evil and to learn how to choose the good, or as

²¹⁴ Jacob 7:17.

Lehi put it, “God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one [good] or the other [evil.]”²¹⁵ Humanity was to be exposed to sin and evil, with Satan taking on the role of enticer and tempter so that they could learn to love good and hate evil.²¹⁶

In Smith’s early scripture, it was inevitable that men and women would sin. There was still a consequence of sin, but there was also a way out. For Smith, atonement was the cause of free will. Without it, all humanity belonged to the devil, no matter what choice was made, “by the law no flesh is justified; or by the law men are cut off.” Atonement meant there was no immediate consequence for sin. It allowed humanity to be exposed to both good and evil. It permitted the choosing of evil to taste of its fruit without becoming poisoned and allowed for ultimate salvation. Humanity was left to choose salvation over death versus having salvation chosen for them. “Men . . . are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”²¹⁷

Satan is the great tempter in The Book of Mormon, and the book goes to great lengths to outline how he tempts and tricks humanity into sin. From the first prophet to the last, the book is littered with sermons, writings, and admonitions covering the topic of the devil and his temptations. The prophet Nephi addressed those who would live in the last days, which Smith’s followers, along with many others in the nineteenth century, believed they were, and discussed how Satan would operate.²¹⁸ Nephi warned that in that day, Satan would “rage in the hearts of

²¹⁵ 2 Nephi 2: 5; 17-18.

²¹⁶ 2 Nephi 2: 22-24.

²¹⁷ 2 Nephi 2: 27.

²¹⁸ For a treatment on Millennial and its impact on the Latter-day Saint movement see Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

the children of men,” causing contention and anger. The devil would trick some into a false sense of security, leading away from the unsuspecting “carefully down to hell.” Further yet others, he would convince there was no hell nor devil. making them think their piety was enough, and thus he would “lead them away carefully down to hell.” Some he would convince that there was no hell and that there was no devil. This was perhaps a criticism of the enlightenment, which heavily attacked the idea of a devil.²¹⁹ Forcefully Nephi warns those who reject the Book of Mormon, claiming, “We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the Word of God, for we have enough,” will have the truth they already possess taken from them.²²⁰ Nephi’s warnings about the devil in the last day depict a devil sowing chaos and driving men and women away from God.

Smith’s scripture defined both salvation and damnation. Samuel, a Lamanite prophet, called to preach and reclaim an apostate Nephite people, prophesied about Christ’s birth and death and the consequence of those acts on humanity. Concerning Christ’s resurrection, Samuel taught Christ’s death and resurrection enabled all of humanity to return to God’s presence where they would be judged. This was a type of universal salvation as all of humanity would again stand in God’s presence. But there exists in the doctrine a possibility that the reunion will not be permanent. Those judged and found unworthy are to be cast out of God’s presence a second time, experiencing “a spiritual death, yea, a second death.”²²¹ Repentance and ordinances, says Samuel, are the only way to escape the second death. This doctrine in Smith’s scripture presents the final judgment as a victory over the separation of God and his children and the scene of a

²¹⁹ 2 Nephi 28: 20-30.

²²⁰ 2 Nephi 28: 29.

²²¹ Helaman 14: 16-17.

second separation. A universal salvation is followed by selective salvation and possible damnation.

Hell was on Americans' minds in the early to mid-nineteenth century; it was not just a Sunday issue. White evangelicals used hell as a tool for social control as they defined what it meant to be saved and who would be saved. Religious dissenters, Native Americans, and other minority groups, as well as other doubters challenged mainstream conceptions of salvation and hell.²²²

Calvinists' doctrine of predestination caused many to wonder if God chose who would be saved and who would not, what good did rebirth and repentance do to save the sinner? Jonathan Edwards defended predestination, highlighting God's ultimate sovereignty in the life of man. All sinners had a duty to repent and potentially escape the horrors of hell, but "God only elected certain people, for reasons unknown, to receive a new spiritual sense." For Edwards, as historian Kathryn Gin Lum has noted, the damned were sentenced to hell not by external forces but because of their inherited fallen natures.²²³

Methodists and Universalists pushed back against the current of predestination. Methodists by the late eighteenth century emphasized free will and the ability inherent in each person to repent and overcome sin. Prevenient grace removed the guilt of Adam's sin on the human race and opened the possibility for each person to receive God's election based on his or her response to free will. Universalists considered the soteriology of God as they considered the ultimate state of the soul after death. God was just, and hence in the expiation of his Son, as John Murray, a former Presbyterian minister who preached and lived in Main, stated, "exactd the uttermost farthing hence he is a just God, and a Savior." Universalist saw the sacrifice as the

²²² Gin Lum, *Damned Nation*, 2-5.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

ultimate force for good, knowing what God had done, individuals should be inspired to repent and live moral lives. The sacrifice also meant that God would save all humans. God's law required all be punished for their sins, but the suffering of Jesus Christ was that payment. The debt collector had been paid and did not require a second payment from the actual sinner.²²⁴

The Book of Mormon deals heavily with the topic of hell. An early prophet of the book named Jacob defined hell as the status of a person's spirit. "And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other."²²⁵ Smith's early theology saw a devil that persisted in trying to bring souls to Sheol. Death means that all men would be dragged down to hell. With Christ's redemption, as the earlier quote from Samuel points out, all would overcome death and hell and be beckoned into God's presence. It was then only those who refused to use their free will to repent would be cast out of God's presence and live in hell under the power of the devil permanently. Smith's scripture participated in the dissent of Calvinist teachings of hell and damnation. It did not argue for full, universal salvation but did align itself closer to its Methodists counterparts in believing all men could be saved through repentance and the free will Christ's suffering offered all men.

Hell was not only an individual concern in the nineteenth century. Communities and the nation were at stake. The rise of democratized Christianity and the intense competition over converts forced religious groups to ponder what would happen to members of different faiths after death. Smith considered this question with the religious diversity found within his extended

²²⁴ Ibid.,17-35.

²²⁵ 2 Nephi 9: 12; 19.

family and brother Alvin's death. Additionally, religious preachers still saw America as a light on a hill. From the arrival of the first European settlers, Catholics and various Protestant groups taught that diabolic revelation was the source of Native American culture and beliefs.²²⁶

Satan and Secret Oaths

The Book of Mormon sees two Christian civilizations, the Jaredites and Nephites, destroyed through war. Gadianton initiated the group among the Nephites and Akish among the Jaredites. These groups existed to gain hegemony over local governmental institutions, enrich initiates through acts of theft and murder, and keep all the group's activities covert. The prophet Mormon blames the Nephites' destruction on Gadianton and his group of robbers.²²⁷

These secret societies were of ancient origin, started with Satan, and were passed down from Cain. They were also the “most abominable and wicked” institution “in the sight of God.”²²⁸ The Jaredite record was found and translated by the Nephites, creating a meta-narrative for Smith's prophetic work. Mosiah translated the record by using seer stones. The narrative outlined the destruction of the Jaredite civilization because of the power and influence of a secret society led by Satan. The Jaredites had brought with them a record “concerning them of old, that they by their secret plans did obtain kingdoms and great glory.”²²⁹ Smith then translated the record using seer stones and made known the history of two civilizations destroyed because of these secret societies' existence and influence. The Nephites failed to learn from the genocide of the Jaredites, who was unable to learn from their records about the destruction caused by secret societies. The Book of Mormon hoped that its future readers would not make the same mistakes.

²²⁶ Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World*, 8-10; Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), pgs 60-61.

²²⁷ Helaman 2: 13-14.

²²⁸ Ether 8:18.

²²⁹ Ether 8:9.

In the Jaredites case, Akish, a man tasked with overthrowing the government, started a secret band and made each member swear an oath of secrecy. These oaths were “given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain . . . and they were kept up by the power of the devil . . . to help such as sought power to gain power, and to murder, and to plunder, and to lie, and to commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms.”²³⁰ Akish and his men are successful in overthrowing the government.

Gadianon and his follower created the same secret society centuries later among the Nephites. Satan again is seen as the source of the secret, “and those secret oaths and covenants . . . were put into the heart of Gadianon by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit and he has brought it forth from the beginning of man even down to this time.”²³¹ The prophets in the Book of Mormon were instructed to write about these groups' evil and wicked acts but not reveal the actual oaths and signs.²³² A central focus of Mormon, the prophet-historian, and the man responsible for compiling most of the narrative in the Book of Mormon is revealing the devastation and carnage caused by these secret groups. He hoped that including this devastation would warn future readers about the dangers of these secret societies. Joseph Smith became one in a line of prophets that wrote, warned, and revealed the secret works of groups like Gadianon.

Since its publication, reactions from some of Smith's contemporaries to more recent analysis argue that the Book of Mormon's narrative secret combinations were really Smith's critique of Masonry. Others have argued that the Book of Mormon's secret order acts as a

²³⁰ Ether 8: 15-16.

²³¹ Helaman 2:26 and 29.

²³² Helaman 6: 25; Alma 37:29.

critique on Jacksonian Democracy.²³³ These various analyses fail to consider Joseph Smith's religious concerns. Smith's understanding of a seer and its specific connection to diabolism illuminates why such a large portion of Smith's scripture deals with secret organizations. Smith was a seer who revealed to the world the evil deeds and wicked plots of secret groups under the leadership of Satan. Mosiah in the Book of Mormon did the same thing. When a record was brought to him, and he was asked to translate, the resulting narrative was about a group, having been guided by God to the new world during the construction of the tower of babel, who grew into a large nation that, because of "secret combinations" commenced a massive civil war that wiped out the population. The Book of Mormon narrative had figures like Mosiah, Nephi, and others who divined diabolic plots in the past and warned about the power and possibility of the plots in the present and in the future. Smith replicated these seers' work by producing the Book of Mormon, a book that detailed the rise and fall of two civilizations due to secret orders created by the devil himself.

Moroni, the concluding prophet of the Book of Mormon and the heavenly messenger Smith claimed entrusted him with the gold plates, wrote about the environment that would exist in the day that the book was discovered and published. "And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness. Yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled."²³⁴ Smith was living in a day when secret combinations again existed. He received further revelations concerning this topic.²³⁵ Smith then, like the seers in his scripture,

²³³ See Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 161-163; Dan Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry: A Rejoinder to the Critics of the Anti-Masonic Thesis," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 275-320.

²³⁴ Mormon 8:27-28.

²³⁵ See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 38: 12-13, 28-29, 32; 42:64.

translated a record that detailed how an entire nation was wiped out because of the secret works and plots of a diabolically led secret groups. They caused upheaval in their day's political organizations, and, more importantly, to Smith's religious sense, they destroyed the Church of God and killed believers. The Book of Mormon does not end in triumph as the Nephites are wiped off the face of the earth. Its hope lay in the future where descendants of the Lamanites will learn about their true identity, be converted to the gospel, and help usher in a dispensation that will not end in destruction. Smith's Book of Mormon served as a warning to his generation about these secret groups' danger and existence. Zion, Smith's utopia, was God's answer to Satan's secret society.

Conclusion

Diabolism is a central overarching theme in the Book of Mormon. Demonic mimesis explains the similar nature of American Indian rituals to their Christian counterparts. The Book of Mormon "Satanizes," the Old Testament, restoring a lost knowledge of the devil's fall and placing him in Eden's Garden. Prophets in the book repeatedly warn about the danger Satan presents to God's Church and predict the rise and fall of a church established by the devil. Prophets contend with the devil's agents in the Book of Mormon, protecting orthodoxy and the Church by revealing the devil as the mastermind behind the human figure. Satan is shown to be the author of temptation and evil. He is an agent of divine providence as his temptation in the Garden of Eden precipitates a fall that God intended to happen. Secret societies created and empowered by Satan are the downfall of multiple civilizations in the Book of Mormon. These diabolic undercurrents in the Book of Mormon served to form and inform the prophetic identity of Joseph Smith. As the Book of Mormon was published, diabolism moved from the pages of the scripture into the prophet's life.

Chapter 5

The Rise of The Church of Christ and Diabolism

After he had thus suffered for a time, I succeeded in getting hold <of> him by the hand, when almost immediately he spoke to me, and with great earnestness requested of me, that I should cast the Devil out of him, saying that he knew he was in him, and that he also knew that I could cast him out. I replied "If you know that I can, it shall be done" and then almost unconsciously I rebuked the devil, and commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from him; when immediately Newel spoke out and said that he saw the devil leave him and vanish from his sight. This was the first miracle which was done in this Church, and it or by any member of it, and it was done, not by man nor by the power of man, but it was done by God
 - Joseph Smith (History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2])

1830 was a momentous year for Joseph Smith. He published the Book of Mormon, organized a church, successfully brought new converts to the faith, and initiated a Bible translation. Smith believed the devil undermined this work. Converts to his new faith also saw the devil in the world around them. An exorcism of Newell Knight, a church member living in Colesville, New York, demonstrated Smith's power over the devil and convinced others to join the church. Others rejected Smith's religion and used the exorcism to charge Smith with disorderly conduct. Members of Smith's faith received revelations, challenging Smith's revelatory station in the Church. Smith quelled these challenges and secured the priority of his revelations through diabolism. During the first year of Smith's organized religion, diabolism displayed and challenged Smith's early prophetic identity and authority.

Copyright and the Devil

Once the Book of Mormon's translation was complete, Smith searched for someone willing to print his work. Due to the loss of the early manuscript pages and his concern over the security of the translated manuscript, Smith looked to obtain the copyright for the Book of Mormon as it would provide legal protection from those looking to steal and publish it. He

secured the U.S. copyright for his book on June 11, 1829. He found a printer, and, after obtaining financing for the project, prepared the manuscript for printing. A copy of the original document was created, and Smith instructed that the original manuscript and the printers manuscript never be taken to the printing office simultaneously. His lost work, which his revelation stated was caused by Satan, was ever-present on his mind.²³⁶

Smith's fears of unauthorized publication were realized when Abner Cole, a Palmyra resident, began publishing excerpts of the Book of Mormon in *The Reflector* in October of 1829. Cole editorialized various passages of the book as he printed them. Smith confronted him about the unauthorized printing, argued that he had the law on his side as he had secured the copyright, and demanded that Cole cease printing excerpts of the scripture in the newspaper. Cole eventually acquiesced, but the early printing provoked local citizens to unite and promise not to buy any copy of the book.²³⁷

Early in 1830, most likely in January,²³⁸ Smith received a revelation commanding him to secure a copyright in Canada. Book sales, which Smith counted on to pay for the printing and to fund his future church, were down. This revelation may have been intended to protect book sales in Canada and prevent another Abner Cole situation. The revelation instructed Oliver Cowdery, Hiram Page, Josiah Stowell, and Joseph Knight Sr. to seek copyright for the Book of Mormon all over the earth so that "my work be not destroyed by the workers of iniquity to their destruction & damnation." Popular books were typically reprinted in other countries without an author's consent at any cost; no international copyright law existed at the time.²³⁹ Securing the copyright

²³⁶ For a detailed analysis surrounding the negotiations and contract Smith secured to print the Book of Mormon see MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light*, chapter 9.

²³⁷ MacKay and Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light* 81.

²³⁸ The date of this revelation is contested, see Stephen k. Ehat, "'Securing' the Prophet's Copyright in the Book of Mormon: Historical and Legal Context for the So-called Canadian Copyright Revelation," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (2011), 11-25; MacKay and Dirkmaat *From Darkness Unto Light*, 214.

²³⁹ Ehat, "'Securing' The Prophet's Copyright," 37-52.

would protect Smith's new scripture from evil men, perhaps even "secret combinations" conspiring to destroy Smith and his new scripture. The copyright was a preemptive move against any potential diabolic plots to diminish the Book of Mormon's sale.²⁴⁰

The endeavor ultimately failed. Cowdery and company went to Kingston, Canada, and learned that obtaining copyright was difficult and costly and that there was little to no interest in the Book of Mormon anyway. Defeated, they went home without securing the copyright. Information surrounding this trip's purpose and the reaction of followers to Cowdery and Page's failure to fulfill the revelation is contested.²⁴¹ Joseph Smith never recorded his feelings on the nature of the expedition or the outcome. Almost half a century later, David Whitmer, in an effort to prove Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet, reflected on the copyright revelation and its outcome. While Whitmer's recollection of the events is self-serving and came fifty-six years after the event, it still serves as a useful tool to view the diabolic discourse Smith may have been using in 1830.

Whitmer reported the events in Canada and wrote:

Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto Canada, and that they would sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon. Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely. Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto . . . and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: "Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of men: and some revelations are of the devil." So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copyright was not of God, but was of the devil or the heart of man.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ "Revelation Book 1," p. 31, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 26, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/15>.

²⁴¹ See Ehat, "'Securing' The Prophet's Copyright," 5-10.

²⁴² David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ by a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* (Richmond, VA: David Whitmer, 1887).

Whitmer published the account to discredit Smith. Latter-day Saints were his intended audience. While Smith may not have declared that a possible source for the revelation was the devil, Whitmer would not have used that statement if he did not think it plausible that church members would believe Smith would say or teach it. Though written decades after the Canada copyright revelation, Whitmer's statement can be seen as a reflection of Smith's teachings on revelation and diabolism in 1830 and later. Members of the church believed Satan could give revelation and were vigilant in discerning spirits.

Joseph Smith and Exorcism

With the completion of the printing of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith turned his attention to organizing a church. A revelation with God as voice given to Smith as early as the summer of 1829 instructed Smith to organize the “The Church of Christ” on April 6, 1830. Once organized, Smith visited pockets of believers spread throughout New York. One cluster of Saints lived in Colesville. The branch centered around the Knight family, who Smith had gotten to know in 1825 while Josiah Stowell employed him to dig and find buried treasure. In late April Smith visited Colesville to preach to neighbors and friends of the Knight family. During his visit, Smith spent some time with Newel Knight, a thirty-year-old universalist. Smith invited him to pray vocally at a meeting but Knight refused to pray and fled to the woods. There he attempted to pray but could not do so, an experience reminiscent of Smith’s 1820 vision. Knight began to feel very uneasy in “body and mind” and went home. His wife was alarmed at his appearance and sent for Joseph Smith.²⁴³

²⁴³ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 40, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/46>.

When Smith arrived, he found Knight suffering in mind and body and later noted that Knight was acting very strange. Smith recorded that “his visage and limbs were distorted and twisted in every shape and appearance possible to imagine.” Knight was then thrown off the ground and tossed in every direction. By this time, neighbors had heard the commotion and gathered to witness the strange event. Smith grabbed onto Knight, who then requested that Smith cast the devil out of him, “saying that he knew he was in him, and that he also knew that I could cast him out.” Smith then cast the devil out of Knight, remembering that he did so “almost unconsciously” as if the act were a natural and instinctive thing for this newly minted prophet to do.²⁴⁴

For many American religious groups in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the practice of exorcism was almost non-existent. One cause for this practice's retreat was cessationism, the belief that miracles had died along with Christ's Apostles. For some, miracles were nothing more than theatrics aimed to trick the gullible and profane God. During the Second Great Awakening, Protestants believed that while the devil, symbolic or real, could physically attack (not possess) individuals, he did most of his work through the mind.²⁴⁵

Joseph Smith rejected the cessation of miracles and cast out the devil in a physical demonstration of this rejection. The Book of Mormon preached that miracles, including exorcism, were an essential function in God's Church and would always be a part of it.²⁴⁶ The book promised those in Smith's day that miracles would still exist and that among them would be exorcism. Exorcism would prove to those who witnessed it that the one performing it was a

²⁴⁴ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 40, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/46>. For a history of the Knight family see Larry C. Porter, “A Study of the Origins of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the States of New York and Pennsylvania, 1816-1831” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1971).

²⁴⁵ Taysom, ““Satan Mourns Naked upon the Earth, 62-67; Brown, *Joseph Smith's Translation*, 155-156.

²⁴⁶ For example, see Mosiah 3:6.

true believer and called of God.²⁴⁷ Smith later recorded that he did not do the act, but “by God, and by the power of Godliness” was the exorcism successful.²⁴⁸ Smith used the exorcism as evidence that he had been endowed with divine powers and could overcome the devil. This exorcism also connected Smith to New Testament Apostles. After Christ called twelve Apostles, the Bible records that he gave them power against “unclean spirits” to cast them out.²⁴⁹ Christ taught that exorcism would be a sign of a believer.²⁵⁰ At the April 6th meeting, Smith read a revelation calling him an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Weeks after the meeting, Smith was imitating miracles that Christ and his Apostles performed. His audience would have made the biblical connection. The exorcism demonstrated Smith’s calling, power, and reference to past religious figures. Smith recorded after the event that “As may be expected, such a scene as this contributed much to make believers of those who witnessed it, and, finally, the greater part of them became members of the Church.”²⁵¹ Exorcism helped Smith cement his role as prophet and brought in new converts to the new church.²⁵²

This event did not go unnoticed in the larger community. When Smith returned to baptize more converts in Colesville in June, he was arrested for disturbing the peace. The nature of the exact charges is unclear. Smith said he was arrested for preaching the Book of Mormon. Joseph Knight senior recorded that locals accused Smith of money-digging and disturbing the peace.

²⁴⁷ Mormon 9:24.

²⁴⁸ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 40, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/46>.

²⁴⁹ Matthew 10:1 (KJV).

²⁵⁰ Mark 16:17 (KJV).

²⁵¹ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 44, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/50>.

²⁵² For a detailed analysis of how exorcism helped define and form Latter-day Saint identity, see Christopher J. Blythe, “Vernacular Mormonism: The Development of Latter-Day Saint Apocalyptic, 1830-1930” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2014), 32-133.

The plaintiff stated that the charges were meant to expose Smith's fraud.²⁵³ The hearing lasted all day and into the night. The judge acquitted Smith of all the charges.²⁵⁴ He was immediately arrested again by a constable from the neighboring county for the same crimes. At this trial, the exorcism of Newel Knight played a central role as the prosecution attempted to use it as evidence that Smith was unstable and should be expelled from the county. The lawyer representing the county asked Knight about the exorcism. Newel stated that it was God that had cast the devil out of him and that Smith was "the instrument in the hands of God on this occasion."²⁵⁵ Newel's testimony demonstrated what the exorcism meant to him and other early church members. It was a sign from God that Smith was indeed a prophet. Others saw this as a warning that Smith was delusional and dangerous. The exorcism was controversial and gave Smith's followers and opponents fuel to prove their position. Smith was again acquitted of the charges.

Hiram Page and Revelations

Diabolism played a role in regulating revelation in the fledgling Church. At the end of the summer of 1830, Smith moved from Harmony, Pennsylvania to Fayette, New York, due to the growing tension and distrust between him and the locals. Smith later recorded that any hope that Fayette would prove to be a haven was quickly squashed because "To our great grief . . . we soon found that Satan had been lying in wait to deceive, and seeking whom he might devour."²⁵⁶ The

²⁵³ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 117.

²⁵⁴ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 44, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/50>.

²⁵⁵ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 46, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/52>.

²⁵⁶ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 53, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/59>.

whom was Hiram Page, one of eight witnesses who published an account of their experience viewing the gold plates.

Page had in his possession a seer stone, and through it was receiving revelation for the Church regarding the organization of Zion and the order of the Church. Smith had set his seer stone aside after completing the Book of Mormon translation. This upset and worried some members of the Church, like David Whitmer, who trusted the revelations received through the seer stone more than Smith's other revelations.²⁵⁷ Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family believed God was the source of the Page's revelations. However, Smith saw these revelations as "entirely at variance with the order of God's house, as laid down in the New Testament, as well as in our late revelations."²⁵⁸ This was an early test of power in Church governance. Who was authorized to receive revelation for the Church? Smith delayed answering that question until the September Church conference. Before the conference convened, Smith received a revelation that settled the matter. The Lord with Smith as voice asserted, "Verily verily I say unto you no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this Church excepting my servant Joseph, for he receiveth them even as Moses." Again, God reminded Smith and the whole Church Smith was a modern Moses, the mouthpiece of God. What then of Page's revelations? How were they to be explained? The revelation continued, "thou shalt take thy brother Hiram between him and thee alone and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him."²⁵⁹ Page, the revelation made clear, had been deceived by the devil. Newel Knight later recalled that it took some effort from Smith

²⁵⁷ David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 31-36, 42, 49.

²⁵⁸ "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 54, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/60>.

²⁵⁹ "History, circa June 1839–circa 1841 [Draft 2]," p. 54, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 4, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-june-1839-circa-1841-draft-2/60>.

to convince his followers that Satan was behind the whole matter. Knight stated that “after much labor with these brethren they were convinced of their error, and confessed the same, renouncing the revelations as not being of God, but acknowledged that Satan had conspired to overthrow their belief in the true plan of salvation.”²⁶⁰ Smith’s followers believed Smith’s revelation and that they had been deceived. Smith’s use of diabolic revelation to explain the origin of Page’s revelations display a central function of his prophethood: detect Satan, alert the saints, and cast the devil out.

At this same conference, Smith received a revelation that contained the germs of Satan's primordial history in his revision of the Bible. The revelation detailed how Smith and his followers were to find other believers and gather them to Zion. It also connected to the Book of Mormon, identifying “the great and abominable church” which the Book of Mormon identifies as the church of the devil, and states that a devouring fire will destroy it. God ends the revelation by announcing that the world would end in a thousand years of peace, followed by a brief conflict incited by Satan.

The content then shifts to before time existed. God expands on information about the devil in the Book of Mormon, describes the fall of Satan from heaven, and explains that “Adam, being tempted of the devil – for, behold, the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency; and they were thrust down, and thus came the devil and his angels.”²⁶¹ Satan’s removal from heaven is an exegesis of Revelations chapter twelve that briefly depicts a war fought in heaven: “Michael and his angels fought against the

²⁶⁰ Knight, Newel 1800-1847. Newel Knight autobiography and journal, circa 1846-1847, Church History Library.

²⁶¹ "Book of Commandments, 1833," p. 65, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-commandments-1833/69>.

dragon; the dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.”²⁶² The Bible does not explain what the battle was about but gives a detailed description of the participants.²⁶³ According to Smith’s revelation, Satan rebelled against God and led a third of heaven away from Him. Satan’s great sin was pride, as he sought God’s position and power. This text in germ form was a central theme in Smith’s Bible translation. Smith continued to reveal the devil’s forgotten history, and as part of his restoration of all things, he restored the fall of Satan and his followers to the world.

The revelation also commented on the status of children and Satan’s power over them. The Book of Mormon rejected infant baptism as an evil abomination and “a mockery before God.”²⁶⁴ The scripture clarified that Christ’s expiation settled original guilt and, therefore, children were innocent before God. Smith’s 1830 revelation explained that children were incapable of sinning and that “power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me.”²⁶⁵ God imposed limits on Satan’s power in Smith’s revelations. Later Smith’s revelation would declare that all children who died before the age of accountability would be saved “in the celestial kingdom of heaven.”²⁶⁶

Smith’s concern over the status of Satan’s domain over children may have come from his limited experience in school. New England Primers were popular books used in the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to teach children to read. They prepared young children to read the Bible, the ultimate goal of literacy for most Christians in this era. Many of the primers contained warnings to children about the devil and his temptations and the consequence of sin.

²⁶² Revelations 12:7-8 (KJV).

²⁶³ For an analysis of what other religious groups and individuals made of this war see Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 130-135.

²⁶⁴ Moroni 8: 8-9.

²⁶⁵ "Revelation Book 1," p. 40, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/24>.

²⁶⁶ Revelation, 21 Jan. 1836 [D&C 137:10].

Children were warned that they, like adults, could be damned if they did not repent and live sinless lives.²⁶⁷ Smith may have addressed the first literature he was exposed to apart from the Bible and rejected the message contained therein.

Joseph Smith and his followers living in Colesville, New York, experienced a miraculous and challenging year in 1830. Joseph Smith's exorcism of the devil from Newel Knight brought with it converts and controversy. Hiram Page's revelation tested Smith's authority in the Church. At the end of this diabolically full year, Smith wrote to the Saints residing in Colesville. Remarking on the news that more individuals were open to joining Smith's church, he stated, "It gave us much joy to hear from you, to hear that God is softening the hearts of the children of men in that place, it being the seat of Satan. But blessed be the name of God, it also hath become the abode of our savior."²⁶⁸ The seat of Satan is a reference to the book of Revelations in a passage that foretells the persecution of believers in Ephesus brought on by Satan. The scripture states that "the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried."²⁶⁹ Smith saw parallels from his own experience in Colesville to those of believers of the New Testament. Both were attacked but ultimately overcame Satan. Smith pointed out that though Colesville was "the seat of Satan," his power was diminishing, and it was becoming "the abode of the savior" due to the work of the Church. Smith was looking to exorcise Satan not only from Knight but from the entire populace of Colesville. A revelation recorded at the end of July specifically called attention to the fact that Smith had been "delivered from the power of Satan and darkness."²⁷⁰ Smith's religious narrative throughout 1830 had him battling with and overcoming

²⁶⁷ Emma Hastings, "Children Used to Learn about Death and Damnation with their ABCs," *Smithsonian Magazine*, September 19, 2017, 31-37.

²⁶⁸ "Letter to the Church in Colesville, 2 December 1830," p. 198, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-in-colesville-2-december-1830/3>.

²⁶⁹ Revelations 2:10 (KJV).

²⁷⁰ "Revelation Book 1," p. 32, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/16>.

Satan. As God's prophet, he was empowered to defeat Satan, but he would be brought into conflict with him because of his particular station. The satanic opposition served to prove he was God's prophet. Satan looked to destroy the kingdom of God on earth, and as Smith was working to build it up, it was only natural to expect strong resistance for Satan. Satan formed and confirmed Smith's prophetic identity.

Chapter 6

“Satanizing the Old Testament”: Moses, Enoch, and Diabolism

And it came to pass that when Moses had said these words, behold, Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man worship me.

- Moses (Old Testament Revision 1, June 1830)

During the first official meeting of Smith’s Church, he was identified in revelation as, among other roles, a prophet.²⁷¹ What did the title of prophet mean to Joseph Smith? His next scriptural project provides possible answers to this question. After translating and publishing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith turned his religious ambition to a translation or revision of the Bible. The first chapters of his translation contained a lost vision of Moses, a creation narrative, the fall of Adam and Eve, and an account of the prophet Enoch's life and mission. Smith’s scripture told a cosmological history of humanity that combined the Old Testament and the New Testament into one continuous narrative. The prophetic figures found in Smith’s translation provided a model for Smith’s prophethood, and the narrative would prove central to Smith’s activities for the rest of his life. A critical component of the translation would be the central figure of Satan. Again, Smith’s scripture expands on Satan's pre-earth story, modifies his role in the fall, and presents a narrative where God and his prophets weep over and combat against the sins of the world inspired by Satan’s power and temptations. Smith saw himself participating in the same work as the figures of Moses and Enoch. He, too, worried about Satan's influence in the world and sought ways to diminish it.

Smith stated that one reason for the Book of Mormon's existence was to give a needed correction to the Bible, but it seems that for Smith, the new scripture did not go far enough to

²⁷¹ "Revelation Book 1," p. 28, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/12>.

correct and settle the Bible's problems. The fact that the twenty-four-year-old Smith was willing to take on Christianity's most sacred writings demonstrates that he had begun to embrace the identity as a prophet. As the Book of Mormon hinted, Smith believed the Bible was not in its pure form. Over the centuries, it had become corrupted through mistranslation and evil designing individuals, possibly at Satan's behest. Smith's revision of the Bible would look to restore what had been lost or impermissibly changed. Much has been written on Smith's translation of the Bible, his methodology, and its significance.²⁷² What is missing from these analyses is an evaluation of Satan's presence, his function in the text, and the impact of his character on Smith's prophetic identity. Two of the main characters in Smith's revision, Moses and Enoch, expend much of their prophetic energy in expelling Satan from the world. Smith formed his own prophetic identity from the mold of these prophetic figures.

Moses' Vision of the Devil

In June of 1830, Smith produced the first chapter of what was later called the book of Moses. It is unknown if Smith viewed this revelation as part of a more extensive project to revise the Bible. The beginning of the revelation merely states, "A Revelation given to Joseph the Revelator June 1830."²⁷³ Unlike the Book of Mormon, this revelation was not produced from another document like gold plates or papyrus. Moses in the Old Testament does allude to a

²⁷² Smith's Bible project, his intentions, and methods, is a contested and voluminous topic. See the following for an introduction on the subject: Seth Perry, "The Many Bibles of Joseph Smith: Textual, Prophetic, and Scholarly Authority in Early-National Bible Culture," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84, no. 3 (October 2015), 1-26; Philip L. Barlow, "Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible: Fraudulent, Pathologic, or Prophetic?," *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no.1 (January 1990), 45-64; Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 49-67; Thomas A. Wayment and Haley Wilson-Lemmon, "A Recovered Source: The Use of Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary in Joseph Smith's Bible Translation," in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity* ed. Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee and Brian M. Hauglid (Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 2020), 262-284; Karl C. Sandberg, "Knowing Brother Joseph Again: The Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith as Translator," in *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith* ed. Bryan Waterman (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1999), Chapter 15.

²⁷³ "Visions of Moses, June 1830 [Moses 1]," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/visions-of-moses-june-1830-moses-1/1>.

visionary experience that is not recorded.²⁷⁴ It is unknown if the missing vision was the catalyst for Smith's Moses narrative, but, as Terry L. Givens's notes, the first product of Smith's "new translation" of the Bible details this vision only hinted at in the Old Testament.²⁷⁵ Smith was restoring that which was lost, and a crucial segment of the lost vision dealt with Moses' encounter with the devil.

The revelation commences with Moses enjoying an audience with God "face to face" where God shows him his glory, the world, and all humans that have occupied it. God tells Moses that He has a mission for him and that he is "in similitude of mine only begotten," continuing the Christology of the Old Testament Smith had begun in the Book of Mormon. Moses enjoys the presence of God and, as the vision closes, contemplates the mysteries he has just witnessed.²⁷⁶

Moses, physically weakened from having been in God's presence, is then tested by Satan. While this revelation predates any of Smith's recollections of the event, this episode is similar to Smith's visions of Satan in New York, both in 1820 during his first vision and in 1823 with his panoramic view of hell and the devil. Satan appeared to Moses and, paralleling the temptation of Christ in the New Testament, tells Moses to worship him. The command confuses Moses. He reflects on his visionary encounter with God and how he could not withstand the presence of God without being "transfigured before him," and realizes he can withstand the presence of the devil without requiring any transformation. The Book of Mormon describes the "translation" of three of Christ's selected Apostles in the Americas: "it did seem unto them like a transfiguration

²⁷⁴ Numbers 12:6-8 (KJV).

²⁷⁵ Terry L. Givens, *The Pearl of Great Price: Mormonism's Most Controversial Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 37.

²⁷⁶ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/3>.

of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh, into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God.”²⁷⁷ Because Moses did not undergo this change, he could tell the figure in his vision was not God. Moses further states that “I can judge between thee and God for God said unto me ‘Worship God for him only shall thou serve.’ Get thee hence Satan deceive me not. . . I can judge betwixt him and thee. Depart hence Satan.”²⁷⁸ The scene presented here shows Moses working out the difference between God and Satan. He realizes there is a difference in glory between the two and uses that to “judge” who is who.

The scene appears to be a test for Moses. It reflects the biblical account of Christ’s temptations after his baptism. The difference is that Moses, unlike Christ, experienced an extended confrontation with the devil after attempting to drive him from his presence. Moses reiterates to Satan multiple times that God had commanded him to “call upon God in the name of mine only begotten & worship me.” Satan becomes angry attempts to imitate Christ by saying, “I am the only begotten worship me.” Moses becomes fearful and sees the whole of hell, much like Smith did in 1823. He commands Satan to depart again and fails. A third attempt to cast Satan out is successful because Moses does so in the name of Jesus Christ, cementing Moses’s Christology.²⁷⁹ Moses passes the test as he correctly rejects Satan’s demands for worship. Moses is caught in a battle of good and evil and, ultimately, wins. God again appears to Moses and reveals more mysteries to his chosen servant.

This revelation continues to establish Joseph Smith’s belief in Satan as an actual being, it “Satanizes” the Old Testament, and develops a prophetic role that Smith would model. Unlike

²⁷⁷ Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 510–511 (3 Nephi 28:15).

²⁷⁸ “Visions of Moses, June 1830 [Moses 1],” p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 8, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/visions-of-moses-june-1830-moses-1/1>.

²⁷⁹ “Old Testament Revision 1,” p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/4>.

some of his Evangelical counterparts, Smith believed the devil was an actual being who was neither imaginary nor part of the mystical world.²⁸⁰ He had power, could possess individuals, and sought to imitate God, hoping to get God's children to worship him. Satan tempts Moses to do just that in the revelation. Moses knew by direct experience the difference between God's glory and the devil's and therefore knew who to worship and who to cast out. Smith comes to see Moses' experience as vital to his identity: judging the difference between Satan and God (and in the case of both Smith and Moses through direct experience) and casting Satan out.

Smith's first vision experience and his vision of hell in 1823 connect him to Moses' own experience with the devil in an act of "traditionalism" – the act of linking a group's practice with older practices "in an effort to claim special connection with the earlier group."²⁸¹ Exorcism, as Stephen Taysom has argued, did connect Mormonism with ancient Christianity, but the Moses experience went further, connecting Smith and his Church to the Old Testament and its major prophet.²⁸² The Book of Mormon and earlier revelations had made this connection already, but this revelation particularly connected Smith's first vision, his call to prophethood, to Moses' call.²⁸³ Both encountered the devil and were rescued by God. Both experienced the devil's wrath and power and knew for themselves what it was like and how to overcome it.

During his first trip to the Hill Cumorah in 1823, Smith claimed Moroni showed him a vision of the devil and hell that was contrasted with God to help him decipher between the two and always know the difference. This was a key component of Smith's prophetic identity. He

²⁸⁰ Taysom, "Satan Mourns Naked Upon the Earth," 70.

²⁸¹ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 145.

²⁸² Taysom, "Satan Mourns Naked Upon the Earth," 62.

²⁸³ One example from the Book of Mormon states "And he (Joseph Smith) shall be great like unto Moses, whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel. And Moses will I raise up, to deliver thy people out of the land of Egypt. And I will raise up a Moses; and I will give power unto him in a rod; and I will give judgement unto him in writing. 2 Nephi 3: 9-10, 17.

had been given special insight into how to detect between these forces and taught his followers from experience how to do the same.

Moses had encountered Satan and defeated him. He had passed the test. As Richard Bushman has noted, “The Book of Moses, more than any of Joseph’s other works, conveys the sense of prophethood as an ordeal. Visions of light and truth alternate with evil and darkness.”²⁸⁴ These visions of darkness are an ordeal for Moses, Smith, and, as we shall see, Enoch. Smith presents a devil constantly attempting to feign and replicate God and tempts individuals to worship him. At various times in his confrontation, Moses authoritatively declares that he can detect the difference between God and the devil and know who to worship.

Following Moses’ contest with Satan, Smith’s revelation notes why the world does not know about this event. The unnamed narrator states, “Moses bore record but because of wickedness it is not had among the children of men.”²⁸⁵ This statement further solidifies Smith’s belief that the Bible had become corrupted and was missing vital information that he was restoring through his roles as prophet, seer, and translator. At the conclusion of the entire vision, God tells Moses that though Moses would record the vision, it would be lost to the world. God would one day call another “Moses” who would restore the vision to the world. According to this vision, part of Smith’s prophetic project was to restore past encounters of the ancients with God and Satan so the world could learn from them.

Once Satan departs the scene, God returns to instruct Moses further. Though the narrative is silent on the issue, it appears that God intended for Moses to encounter Satan and experience the stark contrast between the two before he could proceed in teaching Moses further. Moses told

²⁸⁴ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, page 136.

²⁸⁵ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/4>.

Satan that he had other things to inquire of God, and he would not stop praying to the true God for answers. Passing this test granted, Moses is granted an additional audience with God. God reveals to Moses the mysteries of godliness. After asking several times for the why of creation, God tells Moses, “This is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” The center of God’s universe in Smith’s revelation was humanity. He did not create for His glory but to glorify His children. This revealed truth would further reveal the why of Satan later in the revelation. If God’s purpose was to glorify his children, Satan’s goal was to prevent their glory and ultimately destroy humanity's salvation.²⁸⁶

The Fall of Lucifer

After recording Moses's initial vision, Joseph Smith turned to the creation story found in the book of Genesis. By the end of 1830, he had completed five chapters of work, expanding about eight pages found in Genesis.²⁸⁷ By February of 1831, he had completed the Genesis saga. At the heart of the narrative Smith translated was the history of the human family. Not only did Smith’s scripture detail the creation and the fall of Adam and Eve, but it also detailed a pre-history of humanity where all humans lived with God in a pre-earth state. Central to this pre-history was the story of the rebellion and fall of Satan.

Scriptural foundations for a pre-history of Satan are scarce. The author of revelation had a vision where he saw a great dragon, and “his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth.”²⁸⁸ Luke’s gospel record’s Jesus saying, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”²⁸⁹ Isaiah has the most detailed reference to the devil’s history:

²⁸⁶ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 3, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 28, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/5>.

²⁸⁷ Kent P. Jackson, “How We Got the Book of Moses,” in *By Study and By Faith: Selections from the ‘Religious Educator,’* ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Century, 2009), Chapter 10.

²⁸⁸ Rev. 12:4 (KJV).

²⁸⁹ Luke 10:18 (KJV).

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”²⁹⁰

John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* focused on Satan’s pre-earth history as Lucifer, making him a tragic figure frustrated at his lowly station in the heavenly hierarchy. Lucifer and his cohort, known afterword as the fallen angels, are cast out of heaven to become Satan and his demons, God’s eternal adversaries. Milton’s pre-earth heaven narrative was rejected by most Christians but offers an example of Satan as a member of God’s court before Smith’s revelation.²⁹¹

The Book of Mormon hints at an angel falling from heaven. The book’s first prophet Lehi discusses the necessity of opposites in life, light and dark, good and evil, for humanity to exercise free will. Lehi speculates that “an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.”²⁹² The scripture does not clarify what the evil desire was but states that after he was cast out of heaven, the devil sought the misery of all of God’s children.

After reviewing the creation of the earth, the narrative of Smith’s Bible translation shifts. God gives Moses a background on Satan so that Moses will better understand what takes place in the Garden of Eden. God reveals that Satan has existed from the beginning. Smith’s later revelations would clarify that all beings are co-eternal with God meaning that God did not create

²⁹⁰ Isaiah 14: 12-14 (KJV).

²⁹¹ Terry L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 177.

²⁹² 2 Nephi 2:17.

Satan.²⁹³ While it does not appear that Smith was addressing the problem of evil, later generations of Latter-Day Saints would develop a theology on theodicy from these Bible emendations.²⁹⁴ The devil approached God and volunteered to be God's Only Begotten, the savior of God's children. He promised that "one soul shall not be lost."²⁹⁵ In exchange for his services, Satan demanded God's honor. Satan wanted to save humanity on his terms.

These verses reveal a heavenly economy where Satan and Christ vie for competing systems of salvation. Unlike Milton's Lucifer, Satan is a high member of God's court, and he is in a position to offer himself to be the son of God. A revelation Smith received in 1832 stated that Satan was an angel who "was in authority in the presence of God."²⁹⁶ He was an influential member of God's court. His ambitions drove him to demand God's honor; he wanted humanity to worship him. He also promised that all humankind would be saved. Latter-day Saints have interpreted this to mean that Satan would deny God's children of free-will. All would be forced to adhere to God's commandments. Satan attacked both God's station and his gift of free will. Jesus Christ offered an alternative in the bible translation "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."²⁹⁷

²⁹³ "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," p. 211, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/219>.

²⁹⁴ See, for example, J. Chase Kirkham, "'Tempered for Glory': Brigham Young's Cosmological Theodicy," *Journal of Mormon History* 42, no. 1 (2016), 128-165; Carl Mosser, "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall: Some Problems for Mormon Theodicies," *Element* 3, no. 1&2 (2007): 45-67; Eugene England, "The Weeping God of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 1 (2002): 63-80; Douglas James Davies, *Joseph Smith, Jesus, and Satanic Opposition: Atonement, Evil and the Mormon Vision* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 109-124; David L. Paulson and Blake T. Ostler, "Sin, Suffering, and Soul-Making: Joseph Smith on the Problem of Evil," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Perry, Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 237-284; James M. McLachlan, "The Problem of Evil in Mormon Thought," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism* ed. Terry L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 276-291.

²⁹⁵ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/8>.

²⁹⁶ "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," p. 227, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/235>.

²⁹⁷ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/8>.

Christ was chosen and a conflict ensued over free will. God tells Moses that “because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power . . . I cause that he should be cast down.”²⁹⁸ Christian fathers often cited pride as the reason for Lucifer’s fall star. Smith’s translation also pointed to pride as the cause of Satan’s fall, but the narrative adds another dimension as God’s rejection of Satan and his plan instill enmity between Satan and God. Satan created conflict over the agency of man. This detail is significant for several reasons. Agency becomes the source for human progression, and to lose it is to die, as the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi declared.²⁹⁹ God’s children were to exercise free will to learn the difference between good and evil and choose the good. In Smith’s provocative King Follet discourse, a sermon he gave month’s before his demise, he taught that “the contention in heaven was, Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved, and the devil said he could save them all; the grand council gave in for Jesus Christ: so the devil rebelled against God and fell, and all who put up their heads for him.”³⁰⁰

Satan in Smith’s narrative became a threat to not only God’s children but to God himself. In God’s appearance to Moses after his battle with Satan, he reveals to Moses that “bringing to pass” the salvation of his children is not only God’s “work” but also his “glory” or power. Satan’s plan for humanity as well as his required payment of God’s glory, as Kathleen Flake has observed, “would have destroyed human agency – the source of [humanity’s] progressive capacity – it would have also destroyed God’s power. Satan’s plan to be the “one” was

²⁹⁸ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/8>.

²⁹⁹ 2 Nephi 2: 11-12.

³⁰⁰ "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Times and Seasons," p. 615, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 9, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/4>.

ultimately an attempt at regicide, even patricide, at unraveling the order by which life is engendered.”³⁰¹ For this rebellion, God cast Satan out of his presence.

Smith’s narrative moves away from a God who creates the devil. Satan became the devil through the same device he was trying to destroy agency. God tells Moses that Lucifer “became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.”³⁰² This saga becomes a template for Smith’s cosmology, his plan of salvation. God’s greatest creation, his children, are free to use their will to accept or reject God.³⁰³ Evil co-exists with God. He is not the author of it, nor can he prevent rebellion by compulsion. Smith’s translation of Genesis shows God battling evil from within His own family. That battle continues on earth where His children, particularly his prophets, join with God in thwarting evil.

The Fall of Adam and Eve

Smith’s Bible recounts the seven-day creation story. The translation specifies that two creations occurred, the creation of all things spiritually followed by the creation of all things physically. God created Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden, where he told him not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The command was conditional; God said, “nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”³⁰⁴ Starting with the Book of Mormon, Smith’s religion framed the fall as part of God’s soteriological plan for his children; it was a necessary and essential part of humanity’s progression. The framing pivoted the fall away

³⁰¹ Kathleen Flake, “Evil’s Origins and Evil’s End in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis,” in *Sunstone*, August 1998, 26.

³⁰² “Old Testament Revision 1,” p. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/8>.

³⁰³ Davies, *Joseph Smith, Jesus, and Satanic Opposition*, 91.

³⁰⁴ “Old Testament Revision 1,” p. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/8>.

from Christendom's ideas of a tragic fall to one in where God planned and intended for a fall to take place. This new framing also cast Satan in the unknowing role as an agent of providence. God created Adam and Eve, placed them in a paradise, and told them not to eat from a tree that would impart knowledge of good and evil. As an agent of providence, Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat the fruit, initiating the mortal existence as God intended.

The Book of Mormon prophet Lehi wrote that Adam and Eve were innocent before the fall and did not know good from evil.³⁰⁵ This point is central in understanding the cosmology Smith's scripture was creating and the role Satan played in that cosmology. Before the fall, Adam and Eve did not know good from evil and could not exercise free will. Agency required opposition, and the devil and his followers would fill that role.

The Bible translation, like the Book of Mormon, places Satan in the Garden of Eden and makes him responsible for Adam and Eve's temptation. In the narrative, Satan influences the serpent, who then tempts Eve to disobey God. While Satan believes he is causing the downfall of God's children, the scripture states that the devil "knew not the mind of God."³⁰⁶ In Smith's cosmology, Lucifer or Satan rebelled in a pre-earth time, and his participation in humanity's fall is a continuation of his rebellion against God. He continues to try and thwart God's plan and destroy His children. The enmity between God and Satan and their battle over humanity's destiny started long before the creation of the earth and will continue until the end of it.

This idea became a central tenet of Smith's prophetic teachings. In this bible translation, God taught Moses the nature and history of the devil to pass that information on to future generations. Smith then recovers the vision so the world would once again have full knowledge

³⁰⁵ 2 Nephi 2: 23.

³⁰⁶ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/8>.

of Satan's pre-earth rebellion, his fall, and his purpose and mission on earth. This knowledge would help humanity defeat Satan and his temptations.

Cain

Joseph Smith's Bible translation follows the influence of Satan on the human family after the fall. Now capable of bearing children, Adam and Eve engender a large posterity and teach them about Christ. Despite their best efforts, the record notes that "Satan came among [their posterity], saying: I am also a son of God . . . and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish."³⁰⁷ Smith's stance on human nature was not that it was evil, but that Christ's expiation had overcome that original sin.³⁰⁸ Humanity became wicked once they listened and gave into the devil's temptations. This was most prevalent in Cain and his murder of his brother Abel.

The Biblical story of Cain and Able contains no mention of the devil. Early Christian thought did not read the devil into the account though centuries-old teachings in the Kabbalah taught that Satan instructed Cain to make his rejected sacrifice to God.³⁰⁹ The text leaves no indication why God accepts Abel's animal offering but rejects Cain's bloodless sacrifice, an issue that has confused generations of readers. Smith's redaction adds context that elucidates God's rejection of Cain and reveals Satan's involvement in the affair. After his ejection from God's presence, Adam learned that he and his posterity were to offer animal sacrifice as "a similitude of the Sacrifice of the only begotten of the Father."³¹⁰ In the narrative, Satan approaches Cain and commands him to make an offering to the Lord. Cain brings the fruit of the

³⁰⁷ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 8, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/10>.

³⁰⁸ See "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 14, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/16>.

³⁰⁹ Kelly, *Satan a Biography*, 201; Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 209.

³¹⁰ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 8, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/10>.

ground, a deliberate act of blasphemy and rebellion against God because “Cain love[d] Satan more than God.”³¹¹ God rejects Cain’s offering and tells him He knows of Cain’s relationship with Satan and warns him that if he does not repent, he will be called “the father of lies” and “perdition.” Cain becomes a diabolic figure, even superseding the devil as God states that Cain will “rule over him.”³¹²

Cain, angry with God, makes a pact and a secret oath with Satan. Satan promises to deliver Able to Cain and promises it will be done so that none will know what Cain has done. Cain can murder for gain and power and remain undetected. Cain murders Able and states that he is “Mahan, the master of this great secret.” Here Smith’s Bible translation connects to and builds on the Book of Mormon. As I previously demonstrated, the Book of Mormon narrative focuses on the fall of two civilizations and blames their destruction on the rise to power of groups created through networks of secret oaths generated by Satan. Here Smith reveals the origins of these groups. The first murder was a conspiracy between the devil and Cain. Smith’s scriptural narratives revealed Satan’s secret works from pre-earth time to Smith’s present day. History was full of diabolic plots, and Smith revealed them to the world. While some historians have argued that these passages were Smith’s veiled attempt at criticizing Masonry, Smith viewed himself as a prophet who, in partnership with God, was revealing Satan's secret acts to

³¹¹ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 9, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/11>.

³¹² "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 9, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/11>.

the world.³¹³ In Smith's thought, doing so would bring darkness to light and diminish the power of the devil.³¹⁴

The secret oath was passed down through Cain's line. Irad, the grandson of Cain, and Lamech, both "entered into a covenant with Satan," and they "began to reveal it unto the sons of Adam." The narrative juxtaposes the actions of Adam, who Smith identified as the Michael the archangel who fought Satan before the creation, who teaches his children about Christ, repentance, and the need for baptism, with the actions of Cain and his descendants who create their secret ordinances with Satan to kill and get gain. The prophetic figure fights against Satan and his followers. Smith imbibed this identity and believed he was fighting against Satan. His production of scripture that included the secret acts of the provided him one way to do so.

Enoch and Zion

Perhaps the most influential model on Joseph Smith's prophetic identity and projects was the figure of Enoch. The Bible mentions two Enoch figures. The little known about the first is that he descended from Cain and had a city named for him. The second, the Bible states, was Methuselah's father who "walked with God; then he was no more for God took him."³¹⁵ Various Pseudepigraphal writings of Enoch have appeared over the centuries.³¹⁶ That Smith had access to

³¹³ D. Michael Quinn has noted that, "The *Book of Mormon* and the Book of Moses repeatedly claimed that the purposes of these secret combinations were to murder and to plunder . . . Thus these passages about secret combinations [do] not seem to refer to Masonry." Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 207. See also Blake Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 1 (1987), 74.

³¹⁴ The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi wrote that "There is nothing which is secret, save it shall be revealed; there is no works of darkness, save it shall be made manifest in the light; and there is nothing which is sealed upon the earth, save it shall be loosed.— Wherefore, all things which have been revealed unto the children of men, shall at that day be revealed; and satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more, for a long time." 2 Nephi 30: 17-18.

³¹⁵ Genesis 4:17; 5:24 (KJV).

³¹⁶ See Given, *The Pearl of Greatest Price*, 44-47.

or was inspired by these writings is contested.³¹⁷ The concern here is not what impact these writings had on Smith's translation, but, rather, the influence the figure Enoch had on Smith's identity.

Enoch arrives on the scene during a period where Satan's influence is widespread. The record states that "Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power."³¹⁸ Satan and his network of conspirators were responsible for the violence perpetrated on God's people. It is for this reason that God calls Enoch.

God calls Enoch to confront Satan and his power. He calls Enoch to preach to the people to repent. God is angry with his children because they have not kept the commandments that He gave Adam God tells Enoch that "by their oaths, they have brought upon themselves death; and a hell I have prepared from them." Enoch goes out and preaches as God commands. He sets out to undo the damage caused by the devil. He tells one audience that "Satan hath come among the children of men, and tempteth them to worship him; and men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God."³¹⁹ Enoch is called to rescue God's children from Satan's grasp.

God reveals to Enoch the depth and dimensions of Satan's evil works and their impact on God. Enoch sees that Satan "had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the

³¹⁷ See Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 191-192; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, "Ancient Affinities with the LDS Book of Enoch, Part I," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013), 1-27; Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 89-101.

³¹⁸ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 11, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/13>.

³¹⁹ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 8, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/10>

earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced.”³²⁰ Satan, portrayed as laughing as his power and dominion grows stronger, is juxtaposed to God’s reaction to the sin and wickedness he sees spreading worldwide. The record states that “the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept.”³²¹ Enoch is shocked at God’s weeping and wonders how it is that God can even weep. God responds, telling Enoch he weeps over his children, that they have used their agency to choose wickedness and reject God.

The wickedness of God’s children, inspired by Satan’s temptations, causes the God of Smith’s scripture to weep. He is not immune to the pain and sorrow inflicted by the devil. Terryl Givens has pointed out for most of Christian history it was assumed that God could not suffer. “To imagine a God literally troubled or grieving for his wayward creatures would be monstrous because it would make God hostage to the whims of those creatures.”³²² Smith’s Enoch learns that God’s ability to weep moves him to long after his creations.

Abraham Heschel, in his seminal work *The Prophets* argues that the fundamental experience of a prophet is “A fellowship with God, a *sympathy with the divine pathos*, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet’s reflection of, or participation with the divine pathos. . . . The prophet hears God’s voice and feels his heart and tries to impart the pathos of the message with its logos.”³²³ This was Enoch’s experience with God. Smith by 1832 was declaring that he had a vision of God and had seen him. Smith had

³²⁰ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 16, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/18>.

³²¹ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 14, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/18>.

³²² Givens, *The Pearl of Greatest Price*, 49.

³²³ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* rev. ed. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), 31.

been called to “cry repentance” to God’s children.³²⁴ Smith’s remedy for evil was also the same as Enoch’s: build a holy city named Zion.

On the day Smith organized his Church, he received a revelation that would outline his prophetic trajectory for the rest of his life and connect him with the weeping Enoch figure. God declares, “Him have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard. Yea, his weeping for Zion I have seen.”³²⁵ Though Zion was just an abstract at this point in Smith’s career, it already played an essential part in his prophetic identity. He is portrayed as the weeping prophet yearning for Zion.

Zion was a term employed during this age to capture the idea of a godly people or project. Most often, Zion was simply the work of God’s kingdom, but nineteenth-century America witnessed a few figures who attempted to build a religious utopia, reifying the concept of a New Jerusalem. The term Zion was found in church hymns and sung at the pews. It was evoked in sermons and found in church newspapers. As Steven Olsen has written, Zion came to represent “the repair of a damaged relationship with God, the healing of a sick and sinful society; the dramatic triumph of good over evil; the transition of the eternal of all the is mortal.”³²⁶ Zion represented the deep spiritual desires of men and women.

Enoch’s Zion is described as a city of righteousness where all the citizens were “of one heart and mind . . . and there was no poor among them.”³²⁷ The city becomes too righteous to remain on earth, and the record indicates that the entire city was taken to heaven. After Zion

³²⁴ "Revelation, June 1829–B [D&C 18]," p. 36, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-june-1829-b-dc-18/3>.

³²⁵ "Revelation, 6 April 1830 [D&C 21]," p. 28, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-6-april-1830-dc-21/1>.

³²⁶ Steven L. Olsen, *The Mormon Ideology of Place: Cosmic Symbolism of the City of Zion, 1830-1846* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2002), 26.

³²⁷ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 16, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/18>.

ascends to heaven, Smith's scriptural account states that "Satan was upon all the face of the earth." This worries Enoch, who asks God what will happen to the earth. Enoch then learns that in the last days God will gather his chosen people to "a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City . . . and it shall be called Zion." God then tells Enoch that "thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom; & they shall see us, And we will fall upon their necks, & we will kiss each other and there shall be mine abode, & it shall be Zion."³²⁸ The Zion in heaven and the Zion on earth are to unite in one glorious reunion.

An essential function of Zion in Smith's early theology was to provide a safeguard against the devil. Zion is a sacred space where the devil has no power both because it has God's protection, and because the citizens of the city ignore his temptations. Zion, for Smith, became an exorcism of Satan from place. Smith's translation projects removed errors and restored truth lost over time. Smith believed, in part, these issues were introduced into scripture by the devil. His translations also revealed the history of secret oaths administered by Satan from the beginning of time, restoring a lost or hidden history of the devil and his works. Zion became an exorcism of Satan from space. Enoch's city was a place of protection for the wicked, and Smith hoped his new Zion would serve as a protection and would meet God and Enoch's Zion in the last days.

Joseph Smith's connection to Enoch and his Zion project was immediate and came to consume the prophet. He received multiple revelations detailing where and how to build the city of Zion. One such revelation received in March of 1831 directly connected God, Enoch, Smith, and Zion in one continuous narrative:

Gather ye out from the eastern lands . . . and with one heart and with one mind,
gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be

³²⁸ "Old Testament Revision 1," p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/21>.

appointed to you. And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion.³²⁹

Smith was to be the “holy man” that would successfully build Zion. The narrative of apostasy, wickedness, and restoration was a staple in Smith’s scripture narratives, and he saw the world’s cyclical history. Smith believed that he was called to end that cycle, and the Bible translation would be the model he would follow to restore Zion successfully. Zion was also the answer to Enoch and Smith’s concerns about Satan and the world's wickedness. It was to be a safe harbor from the persecution and wicked of the earth. Zion would become the major project for Smith for the remainder of his life.

Joseph Smith’s Bible translation injected Satan into the history of the world. Moses had a vision of Satan as well as Enoch. Ancient prophets interacted with the devil, knew his tactics, and worked to mitigate his power and influence on the world. The Translation restored lost knowledge on Lucifer’s fall before the creation of the world. It connected the Bible narrative with the Book of Mormon as Satan established a system of secret oaths commencing with Cain passed down through generations to figures in the Book of Mormon. Humanity’s disposition to reject God and follow Satan is of such a magnitude that the God of the heavens weeps. Finally, the city of Zion provided the answer to the devil’s power, and the wickedness Smith saw in the world. It would be a refuge from the devil, a sacred space that would one day welcome God and Enoch’s city. Joseph Smith saw himself as Moses and Enoch. A prophet called to reveal the devil to the world and one who would successfully build a New Zion, succeeding where other Holy Men failed. Like his prophetic models, Joseph Smith believed he had seen Satan in visions, faced

³²⁹ "Revelation Book 1," p. 72; 74, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/58>.

diabolic plots and conspiracies, and worked to build Zion, a city free from the powers of darkness.

Epilogue

Joseph Smith's diabolism, present from the beginning of his religious narrative, took root and firmly entrenched itself in his religious discourse. This thesis has focused on Satan's role in Smith's early thought through 1830, but he did not leave Satan behind as the Church grew and his theology matured. Throughout the nineteenth century, his followers attempted to build Zion, first in Missouri, then Illinois, and finally in the territory of Utah.³³⁰ Smith continued to expand his theology on Satan, his fall in a pre-earth state, and his influence and power on earth. A third translation project produced a narrative about the biblical figure Abraham, which contains an extended narrative of the devil and his beginnings. Smith's religious system culminated in a temple ceremony that first appeared in Nauvoo and contained a drama reenacting the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Satan is present in the drama and personally tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Satan is cursed, cast out, and represented as the author of many of earth's religions. The ceremony depicted a physical Satan and demonstrated to its participants how to detect the devil and cast him out.³³¹ Joseph Smith continued to insert Satan into sacred histories, expose his methods and power to his followers, and teach them to cast him out.

Satan and beliefs about him in Latter-day Saint thought continue to play an essential part of the religion. Though some, as one scholar has written, believe that "diabolism cooled in Latter-day Saint thought after the nineteenth century," the ideas and beliefs taught by Joseph

³³⁰ For a history of Latter-Day Saints efforts to build Zion see Mario S. De Pillis, "Christ Comes to Jackson County: The Mormon City of Zion and Its Consequences," *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 23 (2003), 21-44; Thomas Carter, *Building Zion: The Material World of Mormon Settlement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Richard H. Jackson, "The Mormon Village: Genesis and Antecedents of the City of Zion Plan," *BYU Studies* 17, no. 2 (1977), 223-240; Eugene E. Campbell, *Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West, 1847-1869* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988).

³³¹ Taysom, "Satan Mourns Naked Upon the Earth," 61.

Smith and contained in his translation projects continue to influence members of the religion today.³³² On New Year's Day in 1877, Joseph Smith's successor Brigham Young spoke at the dedication of the St. George, Utah temple baptistry. Young concluded his remarks by stating, "I am not half-satisfied, and I never expect to be satisfied until the devil is whipped and driven from off the face of the earth."³³³ He believed it was his duty to combat Satan. Church leaders, speaking during the Church's semiannual general conference, have discoursed on the figure of the devil throughout the twentieth century. From 1900-1930 speakers mentioned Satan seven hundred and thirty-seven times. Two thousand two hundred thirty-five references were made to him in the second half of the twentieth century.³³⁴ In April of 1971, Apostle Marion G. Romney spoke on Satan. He entitled his sermon "Satan – The Great Deceiver."³³⁵ Three years later, ElRay L. Christiansen preached on "Power Over Satan."³³⁶ During the fall 1987 conference, Apostle James E. Faust spoke on "The Great Imitator."³³⁷ Dallin H. Oaks, counselor in the Church's highest governing body, the First Presidency, gave a talk in 2004 entitled "Be Not Deceived" to the youth of the Church. He warned that "Satan's methods of deception are enticing: music, movies and other media, and the glitter of a good time. When Satan's lies succeed in deceiving us, we become vulnerable to his power." He then outlined the ways Satan

³³² Blythe, "Vernacular Mormonism," 12.

³³³ Wilford Woodruff Journal, January 1, 1877 Wilford Woodruff journals and papers, 1828-1898, Church History Library; "Dedication Services at the Temple at St. George," *Deseret News*, January 1, 1877, 8.

³³⁴ Lds-general-conference.org "Satan" and "devil."

³³⁵ Marion G. Romney, "Satan, the Great Deceiver," *Ensign*, May 1971.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1971/05?lang=eng>. Retrieved November 30, 2020.

³³⁶ ElRay L. Christiansen, "Power Over Satan," *Ensign*, November 1974.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1974/11?lang=eng>. Retrieved November 30, 2020.

³³⁷ James E. Faust, "The Great Imitator," *Ensign*, November 1987.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1987/11?lang=eng>. Retrieved November 30, 2020.

tries to deceive.³³⁸ Apostle M. Russell Ballard spoke on the same topic in his 2010 sermon “O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One.”³³⁹

Diabolism was employed most recently by the current prophet of the Church Russell M. Nelson to frame the importance of using the Church's correct name. After reviewing why he felt it urgent that members and non-members of the faith employ the full, correct name of the Church Nelson stated, “When it comes to nicknames of the Church . . . the most important thing in those names is the absence of the Savior’s name. To remove the Lord’s name from the Lord’s Church is a major victory for Satan.”³⁴⁰ Nelson, like Smith, believed he was revealing to the Church a hidden tactic by the devil previously unknown. Using the official name of the Church became a way for members to counter Satan. Satan in the twenty-first century is still seen as attacking the Church, and leaders of the faith continue to see it as their prophetic duty to reveal Satan to the Church and fight against his influence. Diabolism continues to play a large and important role in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

³³⁸ Dallin H. Oakes, “Be Not Deceived,” *Ensign*, November 2004.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2004/11?lang=eng>. Retrieved November 30, 2020.

³³⁹ M. Russell Ballard, “O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One,” *Ensign*, November 2010.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2010/11?lang=eng>. Retrieved November 30, 2020.

³⁴⁰ Russel M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church,” *Ensign*, November 2018.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2018/11?lang=eng>. Retrieved November 30, 2020.

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