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# The Construction of the Bible

## The Bible Compared to the Koran and the Book of Mormon

by Jeremy Cagle

I find it hard to imagine that anyone could read a book like the Bible and not wonder how it was put together. Millions of people for thousands of years have built their lives on its teachings and given their lives for its teachings. How did God choose to write this book that describes Himself or, more accurately, how did He choose to have it written? Since this first series of articles is on the Bible and a future one will be on the Canon,<sup>1</sup> we thought it would be helpful if we included an article in this edition on how the Old Testament was put together.

In preparing this article, I asked one of my Old Testament professors at The Master's Seminary, Dr. William Barrick, how the Old Testament was formed: what books were included, what books were excluded, what the process was. His response to my question startled me. He simply said, "We don't know."

I had to catch myself because I wanted to argue with him. I wanted to say, "What do you mean, 'We don't know'? How could we not know such important information?"

Before I embarrassed myself, however, I realized that it would probably be best to assess the conversation. First there is Dr. Barrick. He possesses a Masters of Divinity and a Doctorate of Theology from Grace Theological Seminary. He has a working knowledge of over ten languages and has spent thirteen years in Bangladesh translating the Bible into various Indian dialects.<sup>2</sup> Then you have Jeremy Cagle. He has finished two years at The Master's Seminary with a 'B' average.

Consequently, I decided not to argue with him and he, being an informer of the uninformed, sensed my bewilderment and proceeded to explain what he meant when he said, "We don't know." What he told me forms the basis of this article, which discusses the construction and content of the Old Testament by comparing it with the world's largest religion next to Christianity and the world's second largest cult of Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

### I. Islam and Mormonism

First, we will compare the Old Testament to the world's largest religion next to Christianity: Islam. In order to do

that, though, some background of this religion would be helpful. The Islamic population in the United States is currently 5 – 8 million people, or 4 % of the U. S. population. Islamic population world-wide is about 1 billion people, or 16 % of the total population of our planet.<sup>4</sup>

What is Islam's history? Islam began with a man named Muhammed, who was born in 570 A. D. in the trade city of Mecca, which is located in present-day Saudi Arabia. "There is no external (i.e. non-Muslim) supporting evidence"<sup>5</sup> that Muhammed ever existed at all. We do not know much about his early years except that he was married to a rich widow who gave birth to his only surviving child: a daughter.<sup>6</sup>

Around 610 A.D., when Muhammed was 40 years old, he claimed that after meditating in a desert, the Angel Gabriel came to him in a cave and delivered many messages from God concerning life.<sup>7</sup> The angel specifically commanded Muhammed to have these written down. Muhammed could not read and write, so his revelations were published after his death in a book called, the *Koran*.<sup>8</sup> The *Koran* is a recital of Muhammed's teachings in written form, containing 114 surrahs or chapters. We will address the teachings of the *Koran* shortly, but before we do, we should also examine the world's second largest cult of Christianity: Mormonism.

The world's second largest cult of Christianity is the Mormon Church, or "The Church of Jesus Christ of

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Latter-Day Saints<sup>9</sup> as they often call themselves. It has a growing population. In 1999, the worldwide Mormon population was 11 million. In 2004, its membership had grown to 12 million – a growth leap of one million people in five years!<sup>10</sup> The church, which has a great interest in propagating its own education programs, has an enrollment of 320,000 students in high school and college programs in the United States and more than 50 schools outside of the United States.<sup>11</sup>

An interesting fact about the Mormon Church is its wealth. According to an August 4, 1997 issue of TIME Magazine, “The church’s material triumphs rival even its evangelical advances. With unusual cooperation from the Latter-Day Saints hierarchy (which provided some financial figures and a rare look at church businesses), TIME has been able to quantify the church’s extraordinary financial vibrancy. Its current assets total a *minimum* of \$30 billion. If it were a corporation, its estimated \$5.9 billion in annual gross income would place it midway through the FORTUNE 500, a little below Union Carbide and the Paine Webber Group but bigger than NIKE and the Gap.”

What about their history? Mormonism began with Joseph Smith, born December 23, 1805 in Vermont to Joseph Smith, Sr. – a “mystic, a man who spent most of his time digging for imaginary buried treasure (he was particularly addicted to Captain Kidd’s legendary hoard!)”<sup>12</sup> – and Lucy Smith, who was regarded as “highly superstitious” by the people of her day.

Joseph Smith, Jr. was particularly disturbed by the different denominations within Christendom and wondered which ones were true. In 1820, when Smith was 14 years old, he claimed that the Angel Moroni, son of Mormon and leader of the Nephites,<sup>13</sup> appeared to him and told him that he was to translate the Book of Mormon. This work was supposedly composed by Moroni’s father around the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the form of a book written on golden plates. It was conveniently hidden near Smith’s home in Palmyra, New York.

On September 22, 1827, Smith, under Moroni’s supposed guidance, claimed to receive the plates and then, with the help of magic glasses, finished and published them three years later.<sup>14</sup>

## II. Contents of the Koran and the Book of Mormon

Before we compare and contrast the teachings of Islam and Mormonism with those of the Old Testament, we need to know a little bit about what they teach. We need to know something of their doctrine in order to provide a frame of reference in this discussion.

The word “Islam” means “to surrender” or “to submit.”<sup>15</sup> The *Koran*, Islam’s chief authoritative source, teaches three main doctrines to Muslims.<sup>16</sup> First, there is only one God and he is called “Allah.”<sup>17</sup> Allah is not a trinity<sup>18</sup> but he did create heaven and earth by his own power.<sup>19</sup> Allah is all-powerful (omnipotent),<sup>20</sup> all-knowing (omniscient),<sup>21</sup> and ever-present (omnipresent).<sup>22</sup>

Second, the *Koran* teaches that only obedient Muslims go to heaven.<sup>23</sup> Allah will judge everyone on the Day of Judgment<sup>24</sup> and everyone who is not a Muslim will be placed in Hell where there is fire,<sup>25</sup> boiling water,<sup>26</sup> where unbelievers’ faces are covered with fire<sup>27</sup> and their skin is burned and renewed only to be burned again.<sup>28</sup>

Third, the *Koran* teaches that there are five pillars to the Muslim life. An obedient Muslim must do all five:

1. Shahada (Proclamation) – every Muslim must profess that, “There is no true God except Allah and Muhammed is the Messenger of Allah.”
2. Salat (Prayer) – every Muslim must pray five times a day, facing Mecca. Before each prayer, Muslims must wash both hands and feet.<sup>29</sup>
3. Saum (Fasting) – every Muslim must fast through the Month of Ramadan. This fast consists of no eating, drinking, or sexual relations during daylight hours for the entire month.
4. Zakat (Alms – Giving / Charity) – every Muslim must give money to the poor. The exact amount is never mentioned but, if a Muslim family is starving, nearby Muslims must help.
5. Hajj (Pilgrimage) – every Muslim must make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in their lifetime unless they are under very special circumstances. This pilgrimage must take place on the first half of the last month of every lunar year.

In order for a Muslim to go to heaven, he must complete all five pillars.<sup>30</sup> Along with these five pillars, Muslims

cannot drink alcohol,<sup>31</sup> gamble,<sup>32</sup> or repent before death.<sup>33</sup> Muslims have other holy works other than the *Koran*, including the Torah,<sup>34</sup> and the Psalms. The *Koran* is considered to be the chief among these holy works, however.<sup>35</sup>

The *Koran* has a few peculiar passages. In Surrah<sup>36</sup> 18, a boy and his dog sleep in a cave for 309 years.<sup>37</sup> In Surrah 19, Jesus is recorded as speaking when He was an infant (not as a *young boy*, as an *infant*). In this speech, Jesus supposedly claimed to be a Messenger of Allah.<sup>38</sup> In Surrah 27, King Solomon learned the language of birds and this, says Muhammed, was a sign of Allah's favor.<sup>39</sup> Surrah 27 also tells of ants speaking and proclaiming that "Solomon and all his armies" will crush the unbeliever.<sup>40</sup>

The Mormons use three books for their authority: *The Book of Mormon*,<sup>41</sup> *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *Doctrine and Covenants*.<sup>42</sup> These works teach us six major things regarding their teachings.

First, God used to be a man from another planet who currently resides on a nearby star called Kolob.<sup>43</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants* describes God by saying, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's."<sup>44</sup> So, not only is God from another planet, he also exists in the body of a man.

Second, Mormonism teaches that, after you become a good Mormon, you too have the potential to become a god. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:20 says, "Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them."

Third, Mormons claim the true gospel was previously lost from the earth, but Mormonism is its restoration. "Mormonism teaches that, shortly after the death of Christ, the whole Christian world fell into a state of apostasy."<sup>45</sup> This apostasy continued, argue Mormon scholars, until Joseph Smith received his revelations and restored the church to its true state.

Fourth, Mormonism holds that there are three levels of heaven:

1. Celestial – where Mormons spend eternity. There are three levels of the celestial realm. The highest is for Mormons married in the temple; the lowest is for Mormons not married in the temple.
2. Terrestrial – where honorable men (who are not Mormon believers) spend eternity.
3. Telestial – where the wicked spend eternity.<sup>46</sup>

Fifth, man can only be saved by agreeing that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and, consequently, obeying all Mormon requirements as handed down by Smith.<sup>47</sup>

There are several interesting teachings among the Mormons. First, they teach that the Garden of Eden was originally located near Independence, Missouri and that this is also the location of Jesus' return.

Shortly after his arrival Joseph rowed up the Grand River to Lyman Wight's ferry to explore land on the north bank in Daviess County (Missouri). On a high bluff overlooking the river someone in the party discovered the ruins of what seemed to be an altar and excitedly led the prophet to it. After examining it Joseph stood silent, his eyes sweeping over the prairie that rolled away beneath him . . . The glory of the scene made Joseph heady as with new wine. "This is the valley of God in which Adam blessed his children," he said, "and upon this very altar Adam himself offered up sacrifices to Jehovah . . . we will lay out a city which shall be called Adam-ondi-Ahman. Here Adam, the Ancient of Days, shall come to visit his people . . ." <sup>48</sup>

Second, Mormons teach that Jesus was born of a sexual relationship between Mary and God the Father. "In Mormon thinking, as reflected in the authoritative declarations of one of their prophets, our Savior was produced, not by a direct act of the Holy Spirit but by actual sexual relations between 'an immortal or resurrected and glorified Father,' and Mary."<sup>49</sup>

Third, authoritative Mormon sources teach that the only way for people to go to Celestial Heaven is to be baptized in a Mormon temple. If a person is not baptized, he remains in a state of soul sleep. Consequently, Mormons baptize living members in the place of dead members or non-members to keep them from remaining in the state

of soul sleep. And they are spending a great amount of effort in doing so: “The Mormons are spending millions of dollars doing genealogical research in order to find the names of those who have died outside of the faith so that they can do proxy baptisms for them.”<sup>50</sup>

Fourth, Mormons are not allowed to drink caffeine<sup>51</sup> or use tobacco products.<sup>52</sup> Mormons must also spend two years in missionary service and, although they no longer practice polygamy, their originators did.

... over two hundred women, apparently at their own request, were sealed as wives to Joseph Smith after his death in special temple ceremonies. Moreover, a great many distinguished women in history, including several Catholic saints, were also sealed to Joseph Smith in Utah. I saw these astonishing lists in the Latter-day Saint Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City in 1944.<sup>53</sup>

Interestingly, Joseph Smith and his brother died in a shoot-out with a lynch mob in Nauvoo, Illinois, after Smith had directed his followers to burn down a printing press in a nearby town for writing about Smith’s polygamous affairs. The Mormon church immediately honored Smith with the title “martyr.”<sup>54</sup>

### III. Construction of the Old Testament

The above summaries of the *Koran* and the *Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and the *Doctrines and Covenants* must sound pretty strange: ants proclaiming judgment and the Garden of Eden being in Missouri! But, if you think about it, the Old Testament sounds pretty strange, too. In the book of Genesis, we have a talking snake (Gen 2) and a world-wide flood (Gen 7-8). In Exodus, the Nile River turns to blood (Ex 7) and, in Numbers, water gushes from a rock (Nu 20:1-13). In Deuteronomy, over one million people are fed daily from bread and meat from Heaven (Deut 8). In Joshua, the Israelites walk around a wall seven times and it falls down (Jos 6). In Judges, Samson kills 1,000 Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone (Jdg 15).

The *Koran* and the *Book of Mormon* describe some strange events but so does the Bible. Strangeness or lack thereof is not a criterion for authenticity. All of these books have their share of strange happenings. However, as Christians, we believe that the Old Testament is different from these other books. But how? How do we know that there was

a talking snake but no talking ants? How do we know that Moses performed the twelve plagues against Egypt and the location of the actual Garden of Eden remains unknown?

In order to see the difference between these books, we must look at the construction and content of them. Benjamin Franklin once said, “In order to be remembered when you die, you must either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.” These three books have formed four distinct religions, one surviving well over 100 years and the other three (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) well over 1,000. All four have memberships numbering in the millions or even billions. The people who wrote them definitely wrote something worth reading but how did they write it? How were these books constructed?

The first unique thing about the construction of the Old Testament is that it had a multiplicity of authorship. In Islam, the Prophet Muhammed supposedly received a revelation from the Angel Gabriel in a cave in the desert.<sup>55</sup> Muhammed’s followers wrote this revelation down but none of them saw the revelation itself.<sup>56</sup> Nor did any of them hear the angel’s voice. Muhammed and Muhammed alone claimed to see the angel and heard the words of the Koran. No one else was there to confirm his experience.

The same thing happened to Joseph, who apparently was in the woods next to his home in Manchester, New York when he received the vision of the Angel Moroni telling him about some hidden golden plates.<sup>57</sup> No one else saw Moroni or Smith’s “golden plates.” Consequently, Islam and Mormonism are very similar regarding their authorship.

The Old Testament, however, is very different. The Old Testament was written by more than twenty different authors; including Moses, Samuel, King David, King Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, Nahum, Jeremiah, and Hezekiah. More than twenty men testify to Old Testament revelations. What does this mean? What difference would a larger number of authors make? In legal terms, the multiple attestation to a singular event increases the trustworthiness of that event.

Here is an example of this concept: imagine that we are part of a large group of people watching a busy intersection. A

friend drives by on a motorcycle. As he does, a truck cuts in front of him and he crashes. For the sake of argument, imagine that the truck driver's friend is across the street and he sees the same crash. When the officer comes to question witnesses about the event, he hears two different stories: one from us and one from the truck driver's friend across the street.

Who will the police officer believe? He will believe us. Why? Because we have more than one witness. In fact, let's say we have more than twenty. Such a large number of witnesses is very powerful evidence indeed.

The multiplicity of authorship in the Old Testament makes it a unique religious book. Muslims have one author who wrote their book;<sup>58</sup> Mormons also have one author who wrote their book. The Jews have *over* twenty! These twenty authors add validity to the Old Testament.

The second unique thing about the construction of the Old Testament is its distribution. This may not seem like a major point but the way the Old Testament books were distributed does indeed play a major role in their authenticity.

To expand upon this point further, Islam and Mormonism were and are evangelistic religions. Judaism, however, was not. In other words, from the very beginning, the followers of Islam and Mormonism were trying to win converts, while the Jews kept to themselves.

Deuteronomy 12:29-31; 29:18 explains why,

When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going into to possess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How do these nations serve their gods, that I may also do likewise?" . . . so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood."

In a sense the Jews kept this command and in a sense they did not.<sup>59</sup> By far, the largest way Jews spread Judaism was by giving physical birth to other Jews. Jews did not encourage evangelism. They kept to themselves because God commanded it. It was not until the New Testament

that some Jews became Christians and began to evangelize. Islam and Mormonism, however, were very different from their beginnings.

Muhammed died in 632 A.D., and in 633 A.D. Muslims began to evangelize. And they evangelized with the sword. From the years 633 – 642 A.D., Muslim armies captured Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, engaging in twelve major battles to do so.<sup>60</sup> In 710 A.D., Muslim armies entered Spain from North Africa. The Muslim advance was finally stopped in 732 A.D. at the Battle of Tours.<sup>61</sup>

Muslim armies would conquer an area and anyone who did not convert to Islam was put to death. The Koran states, "God has exalted the men who fight with their goods and their persons above those who stay at home. God has promised all a good reward; but *far richer is the recompense of those who fight for Him.*"<sup>62</sup> This is jihad – "religious war."<sup>63</sup>

We see this same attitude today in many Muslim countries. Some of the greatest places of persecution among Christians and followers of other non-Muslim religions are countries under Islamic rule.<sup>64</sup>

As Muslims armies would conquer and convert people, they would bring *The Koran* with them. This book quickly went everywhere and, when Muslim armies left, *The Koran* continued with the armies but also remained with their converts. The original authors were not there to protect its doctrinal purity.

Mormonism functioned in much the same way. Joseph Smith did not receive his revelation until September of 1827 and the *Book of Mormon* was not complete until 1830.<sup>65</sup> Now, 170 years later, there are over ten million followers of Smith's teachings.<sup>66</sup> The Mormons have been *very* evangelistic.

What does the lack of Jewish evangelism have to do with the uniqueness of the construction of the Bible? The Old Testament was not only authored by multiple authors, it never left the community of the Israelites. This would have prevented incorrect translations from occurring because the Old Testament was guarded by the same community that wrote it. The same people who wrote

Genesis through Malachi, also translated it, copied it, studied it, guarded it, and kept it.<sup>67</sup>

This is an interesting because the construction of the New Testament was very different. The New Testament was spread everywhere from Africa to Asia, from Rome to Constantinople in a very short period of time<sup>68</sup> because the New Testament authors were spreading the Gospel. With only a few exceptions – Jonah’s ministry to Nineveh being one of them – Old Testament authors had little or no desire to spread Judaism.

The third unique thing about the construction of the Old Testament is the period of time it took to write it.

The Old Testament took much longer to write than either the *Book of Mormon* or *The Koran*. Genesis was written around 1445 B.C.<sup>69</sup> and Malachi was written around 435 B.C.<sup>70</sup> The Old Testament was written during a period of over 1,000 years. Meanwhile, the revelations of *The Koran* were given to Muhammed in within the last 20 years of his life<sup>71</sup> and the *Book of Mormon* was given to Joseph Smith within the last 17 years of his life.<sup>72</sup> That is a span of 20 years each. Compare that to 1,000 years! That is a huge difference. But what difference would a large amount of time make? Why would a large amount of time add more validity to the Old Testament?

Smith wrote about events that took place between 600 B.C. and 400 A.D.<sup>73</sup> Yet, he wrote during the years 1827 – 1830 A.D.<sup>74</sup> In other words, he wrote about events that occurred 1400 years after the fact! That would be like us trying to write about the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>75</sup>

The Old Testament, however, was quite different. Moses wrote Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy as an eye-witness. 1 Samuel was written by Samuel himself. Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Ezra discuss the capture of Jerusalem and the return of the Jews to it, all while playing major parts in the events they describe. The large amount of time taken to write the Old Testament allowed for eye-witness authorship. The men who wrote the Old Testament wrote of things they experienced, not just heard about. In contrast, the *Book of Mormon* and the *Koran* only covered the experiences their authors heard about.

#### IV. Contents of the Old Testament

In summary, the construction of the Old Testament is unique in its multiple authorship, limited distribution, and lengthy time frame of writing. But what about its contents? *How* it was written was clearly different, but what about *what* was written? First of all, the person of Jesus Christ is very different in the Old Testament compared to the other two books. The Koran states that Jesus was a prophet but was neither the Son of God nor the only way into Heaven.

Speak nothing but the truth about God. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was no more than God’s apostle and His Word which He cast to Mary: a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His apostles but do not say: ‘Three.’ Forbear, and it shall be better for you. *God forbid that He should have a Son!*<sup>76</sup>

The Mormons believe that Jesus is a son of God but not the *only* son of God. To Mormons, the devil is a son of God and so are all obedient followers of Joseph Smith.<sup>77</sup> Mormons, also, obviously, deny the Trinity. “Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God. I say that is a strange God – three in one and one in three . . . It is curious organization . . . All are crammed into one God according to *Sectarianism*.”<sup>78</sup> “Sectarianism” is what Joseph Smith called Biblical Christianity because it taught one God in three persons instead of many different gods. Such a “sectarian” idea “would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God – *He would be a giant or a monster.*”<sup>79</sup>

On the other hand, the Old Testament states that Jesus is equal with God and that Jesus is the *only* man equal with God. Psalm 110:1 states, “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’” Jesus quotes this prophecy in Matthew 22:44 as a prophecy for His own Deity. Peter quotes it in Acts 2:34-36 when he says, “God made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.”

We see another sign of Jesus’ deity found at the end of Isaiah 53:12, “yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.” What man can intercede before God? Here we have a prophecy of Jesus’ word of salvation. Can man appease the wrath of God? No. Only the second person of the Trinity – the Son of Man – can.

The second content unique to the Old Testament is the role of man. According to Islam, man is sinful but, if he follows the Koran, he can go to Heaven. Surrah 3:132 says,

Obey God and the Apostle that you may find mercy . . . those who give alms alike in prosperity and in adversity, who curb their anger and forgive their fellow men; who, if they commit evil or wrong their souls, remember God and seek forgiveness for their sins and do not knowingly persist in their misdeeds. *These shall be rewarded with forgiveness from their Lord and with gardens watered by running streams, where they shall dwell forever. Blessed is the reward of those who do good works.*<sup>80</sup>

As stated earlier, according to Mormonism, man can actually become a god. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:20 states,

Then shall they<sup>81</sup> be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

The Old Testament disagrees with the Islam because it teaches that no one is good enough to get into Heaven through his own works. Psalm 14:1-3 says,

The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. *They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*<sup>82</sup>

The Old Testament also disagrees with Mormonism because it teaches that there is only one God. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 says, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

The third content unique to the Old Testament is about future reward. According to the Koran, Heaven is a place where there is a garden, bliss and fruit, carpets, cushions, and virgin spouses. Surrah 4:57 states,

As for those that have faith and do good works, we shall admit them to gardens watered by running streams, where, wedded

to chaste spouses, they shall abide forever. To a cool shade we shall admit them.

According to Mormonism, there are three levels of Heaven: the celestial heavens where Mormons go, the terrestrial heavens where good non-Mormons go, and the telestial heavens where bad non-Mormons go. In celestial heaven, Mormons become gods and populate their own planet.<sup>83</sup> Consider the following speech from Spencer W. Kimball, the Mormon church's twelfth president,

Brethren, 225,000 of you are here tonight. I suppose 250,000 of you may become gods. There seems to be plenty of space out there in the universe. And the Lord has proved that he knows how to do it. I think he could make, or probably have us help make, worlds for all of us, for ever one of us 225,000.<sup>84</sup>

The Heaven of the Bible is very different. The doctrine of the afterlife is actually undeveloped in the Old Testament. In Genesis 26:24 the LORD appears to Isaac and gives us evidence that He is watching over those who are dead: "The LORD appeared to him the same night and said, 'I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, for the sake of My servant Abraham.'" God blesses Isaac because of who? Because of Isaac? No. Because of Abraham who died earlier in Genesis 25.

But the Old Testament does not tell us much about Heaven. The Old Testament is incomplete until the New Testament, which picks up where the Old Testament leaves off. And the New Testament gives us an idea of Heaven that is very different from the Koran and the Book of Mormon. Revelation 19:7-9 tells of the wedding feast of the Lamb, symbolic of the Church's union with Christ,

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was give to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are the words of God."

The New Testament idea of Heaven does not include virgin wives or the ability to become a god. The New Testament idea of Heaven is being united with Christ. In Romans 8:38 – 39, the Apostle Paul states, "For am convinced that

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Even death cannot separate us from Jesus.

The New Testament idea of Heaven does not involve the pleasure of man but the pleasure of God. God is the greatest thing there is. His pleasure, and being a part of it, must be the greatest pleasure there is.<sup>85</sup> Any other idea of Heaven is idolatrous. Any other idea of Heaven is a fabrication *by man for man*.

Jesus is the Son of God. Man is sinful. Heaven is union with Jesus Christ and the pleasure of God. The contents of the Old Testament (and New Testament) are as different from the Koran and the Book of Mormon as night and day. The Old Testament’s construction is unique and so are its contents. The Bible stands alone in literature as the *only* Word of God.

But what should our reaction be to the teachings of the *Koran* and the *Book of Mormon*? How should we respond to the Muslims and Mormons we meet? Our response should be compassion. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus died for those who would believe in Him *while* they were sinning against Him. The only thing that separates a Muslim and a Mormon from a Christian is the work of Jesus Christ, not the work of the Christian.

We should feel pity for those who spend their lives and their energy pursuing false gods. We should not look upon them with contempt or spite but with mercy and concern. Because of their rejection of the Biblical doctrines of salvation through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, they will suffer an endless Hell.<sup>86</sup> This thought should draw our compassion and an insatiable desire to teach them the truth for, if it were not for the grace of God,<sup>87</sup> their fate would be our own.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The Canon section will deal more specifically with the formation of the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup> Information taken from <http://www.tms.edu/facprofile.asp?profid=2> as of January 3, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Roman Catholicism is, in all respects, the world’s largest cult of Christianity but due to the depth and breadth of the Catholic Church, a discussion of its doctrines is beyond the scope of this article. It is our desire to present a series of articles on Catholicism in the future.

<sup>4</sup> Information taken from [http://www.islam101.com/history/population2\\_usa.html](http://www.islam101.com/history/population2_usa.html) as of January 3, 2006. We regret the use of websites as primary sources in this article. We hope, however, that doing so may give readers easily accessible information for future use and reference.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Sookhedo, *A Christian’s Pocket Guide to Islam* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2001) 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>7</sup> *The Koran*, translated by N. J. Dawood (Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books, 1999) 7.

<sup>8</sup> “Koran” means “recital” in Arabic.

<sup>9</sup> Members of this cult do not like to be called “Mormons” because it makes them sound like a cult of Christianity rather than a denomination of it. “The Church of *Jesus Christ* of Latter Day Saints” has more of a denominational flavor to it.

<sup>10</sup> “The Ensign,” official LDS Church magazine. September 2004 edition, 76.

<sup>11</sup> Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1985) 167.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>13</sup> Supposedly, an ancient people of North America.

<sup>14</sup> Information about the history of Mormonism taken from Walter Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults*, cited above (166 – 226), and <http://www.carm.org/lds/beginning.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Sookhdeo, 9.

<sup>16</sup> A “Muslim” is a follower of Islam. It technically means, “one who has submitted,” (Ibid).

<sup>17</sup> *The Koran*, 5:73; 112:1-4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 5:73.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 2:29; 6:1, 73.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6:61-62.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 2:268; 10:61.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 2:115; 7:7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 3:13, 77.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 3:30; 35:33-37.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 9:63; 11:16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 38:55-58; 55:43-44.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 14:49-50.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 4:56.

<sup>29</sup> This symbolizes the purification of both body and soul.

<sup>30</sup> Information taken from [http://www.carm.org/islam/faith\\_five\\_pillars.htm](http://www.carm.org/islam/faith_five_pillars.htm) as of January 5, 2006. For another source on Islam's Five Pillars, see [http://www.themodernreligion.com/basic/islam\\_pillars.htm](http://www.themodernreligion.com/basic/islam_pillars.htm).

<sup>31</sup> *The Koran*, 2:219; 5:93-94.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 2:219; 5:90-94.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 4:18.

<sup>34</sup> The first five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

<sup>35</sup> Information taken from [http://www.carm.org/islam/islamic\\_doctrine.htm](http://www.carm.org/islam/islamic_doctrine.htm) as of January 5, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Sookhdeo, 83. “Surrah” means literally, a “row or series.” It is used exclusively in the Koran.

<sup>37</sup> *The Koran*, 18:19-25.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 19:29-30.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 27:16.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 27:18.

- <sup>41</sup> The reader may wonder, as he approaches the end of the article, why the *Book of Mormon* is not mentioned here. The *Book of Mormon* actually contains little definitive material on the subjects described in this article. Since the Mormons have many authoritative sources, they jump from one to the other in presenting their doctrine. In order for us to accurately present their doctrine, we have little choice but to do the same. Used herein, “The Book of Mormon” refers to the collective Mormon writings.
- <sup>42</sup> Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Major Problems of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1989) 169.
- <sup>43</sup> George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Desert Book Company, 1980) 235.
- <sup>44</sup> *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1967) 130:22.
- <sup>45</sup> Tanner, 253.
- <sup>46</sup> Tanner, 209.
- <sup>47</sup> Information taken from [http://www.carm.org/lds/lds\\_doctrines.htm](http://www.carm.org/lds/lds_doctrines.htm).
- <sup>48</sup> Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: the Life of Joseph Smith* (Random House, 1971) 211.
- <sup>49</sup> Martin, 213.
- <sup>50</sup> Tanner, 228 – 230.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> Brodie, preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.
- <sup>54</sup> Martin, 175-176.
- <sup>55</sup> *The Koran*, 7.
- <sup>56</sup> Muhammed was alone when he received this vision of Gabriel. There are no records of anyone else seeing the angel or even Muhammed claiming that anyone else did.
- <sup>57</sup> Martin, 170-172 and <http://www.carm.org/lds/beginning.htm>.
- <sup>58</sup> Or one author who is responsible for the ideas in their book.
- <sup>59</sup> Ezekiel 16 presents a graphic allegory of Israel’s unfaithfulness to this command.
- <sup>60</sup> Information taken from <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/history/chronology/century6.html> as of January 7, 2006.
- <sup>61</sup> Information taken from <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/history/chronology/century7.html>.
- <sup>62</sup> *The Koran*, 4:96 (emphasis added).
- <sup>63</sup> Sookhdeo, 81.
- <sup>64</sup> Communist countries are also a great source of Christian persecution. For a source on Christian persecution, see <http://www.aina.org/news/20051221105903.htm>, downloaded 1/7/06.
- <sup>65</sup> Martin, 172.
- <sup>66</sup> “The Ensign,” official LDS Church magazine. September 2004 edition, 76.

- <sup>67</sup> Liberal scholars often attack the New Testament because of how fast it traveled. It would have been likely, so their argument goes, that new societies would have added their ideas to the New Testament. But liberal scholars generally leave the Old Testament alone, for at least a while. Because Jewish scholars had a very tight reign on the translation and copying of the Old Testament, even liberal scholars do not generally question the Old Testament's authenticity, at least not until they have finished questioning the New Testament.
- <sup>68</sup> This is seen in Acts 8:1-3 where a great persecution broke out in Jerusalem scattering the new church to different parts. Obviously, the New Testament was not finished at this time but Paul's letters and later Peter's and other apostle's would soon follow. Also, most of the apostles themselves died outside of Jerusalem, showing their zeal for evangelism.
- <sup>69</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Word Publishing, 1997) 13
- <sup>70</sup> MacArthur, 1359.
- <sup>71</sup> Sookhdeo, 11-13. Muhammed supposedly received the call when he was about 40 and died when he was 62.
- <sup>72</sup> Martin, 169-175. Joseph Smith was born in 1805, completed the Book of Mormon in 1823, and died in 1844.
- <sup>73</sup> Information taken from <http://www.carm.org/lds/beginning.htm> as of January 7, 2006.
- <sup>74</sup> Martin, 169-175.
- <sup>75</sup> The Koran contains precious little historical information in it, so we could not even compare it to the Old Testament on this level.
- <sup>76</sup> *The Koran*, 4:171 (emphasis added).
- <sup>77</sup> Mormons teach that the Devil and Jesus were actually twin spirit brothers. After their birth, Jesus became the 'good' twin and Satan, the 'bad' one. See [http://www.carm.org/lds/lds\\_doctrines.htm](http://www.carm.org/lds/lds_doctrines.htm).
- <sup>78</sup> Joseph Smith, *Joseph Smith's Teachings*, 372 (emphasis added).
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid (emphasis added).
- <sup>80</sup> Emphasis added.
- <sup>81</sup> "They' meaning men. See Mormon quote below on "future reward."
- <sup>82</sup> Emphasis added.
- <sup>83</sup> Tanner, 209.
- <sup>84</sup> "The Ensign," official LDS Church magazine. November 1975 edition, 80.
- <sup>85</sup> For a systematic presentation of this argument, see John Piper's *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Books, 1996).
- <sup>86</sup> In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." Since Muslims and Mormons try to come to the Father in other ways – through the teachings of Muhammed and Joseph Smith – they will fail in their attempt. The Bible only gives two options for eternity: Heaven through Jesus Christ or Hell through anything else.
- <sup>87</sup> Eph 2:8-9.