Spiritualism and Mormonism: Some Thoughts on Similarities and Differences

Michael W. Homer

SPIRITUALISM AND MORMONISM WERE BOTH BORN in the "burned over district" in upper New York State within a generation of each another and teach that it is possible for the living to speak with the dead. Even though Spiritualists and Mormons have often recited these and other similarities—a hope for communitarian reform, a belief in humanity's perfectibility and eternal progress, experimentation with marriage relationships, and possession of a sense of mission—in an attempt to explain Spiritualism's attraction for some Mormons, and why certain Spiritualists were convinced that Mormon revelations were nothing more than Spiritualist manifestations, many similarities between the two are superficial.[1]

Not all Spiritualists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were Christians; non-Christian Spiritualists exhorted fellow believers to "oppose every effort to Christianize, Mormonise, Mohammedanise, or otherwise pollute Spiritualism."[2] In addition, Spiritualism unlike Mor-

---

1. Comparisons by Spiritualists (Emma Hardinge, William Stainton Moses, Arthur Conan Doyle) and Mormons (George Q. Cannon, William S. Godbe, E. L. T. Harrison) follow. For a modern comparison by a Mormon historian, see Ronald W. Walker, "When the Spirits did Abound: Nineteenth-Century Utah's Encounter with Free-Thought Radicalism," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (Fall 1982): 317-18; Ronald W. Walker, "The Commencement of the Godbeite Protest: Another View," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 42 (Summer 1974): 227-28. See also Davis Bitton, "Mormonism's Encounter with Spiritualism," *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 39-50. Non-Mormon authors who have compared Mormonism and Spiritualism include Geoffrey K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 71; and R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows, Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 5, 47, 50, 235.

2. James Burns, "Spiritualism and the Gospel of Jesus," 4, No. 1, in *Houdini Pamphlets: Spiritualism*, Vol. 2 (Houdini Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

monism lacked a central church organization and except for believing in spirit messages from the dead had no universal creed.[3] In fact, similarities noted by one Spiritualist faction were often used to criticize another faction. For example, in 1867 one Spiritualist magazine accused another of being a grab bag of "mormon, Methodist, Shaker, Free thinker, Free lover" thought.[4]

Even if Mormons believed in and occasionally received visions of their dead, most such apparitions occurred only to a select few, under uncontrolled circumstances, and only rarely after the death of Mormonism's first generation.[5] Mormons never conducted seances or took ectoplasmic apparitions or spirit photographs seriously. Given these differences, similarities may have been good arguments to convince potential converts that the two movements were harmonious but not persuasive that the movements were twins.

Although the one similarity the two movements did share—that the living can speak with the dead—and its corollary—that followers can "know" rather than "believe"[6] that life continues after death—was also espoused by other nineteenth-century religions, it was enough to associate the two movements in the minds of critics. Many skeptics criticized both groups—sometimes in the same book or tract,[7] others in separate

---

3. Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychic Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 59.

4. *Spiritual Magazine* (1867): 337ff., 434-37.

5. See Austin and Alta Fife, *Saints of Sage and Saddle: Folklore Among the Mormons* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956); Thomas E. Cheney, ed., *Lore of Faith & Folly* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971).

6. Arthur Conan Doyle in a famous Movietone interview made a point of stating that when he talked about Spiritualism "I am not talking about what I believe, I'm not talking about what I think, I'm talking about what I know" ("Conan Doyle on Screen, Creator of Sherlock Holmes Tells of His Stories and Beliefs," *New York Times*, 26 May 1929, x, 4, 7).

7. For examples of authors who criticized Mormonism and Spiritualism in the same treatise, see Alfred Pairpoint, *Uncle Sam and His Country; or, Sketches of America, in 1855-55-56* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1857), 175-78; S. B. Emmons, *Counsels for the Cottage and the Mansion* (Boston: L.P. Crown & Co., 1856), 96-101, 118-22, later published as S. B. Emmons, *The Spirit Land* (Philadelphia: G.G. Evans, 1859), 96-101, 118-64; Martin Ruter, *A Concise History of the Christian Church* (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1865); William Hepworth Dixon, *New America*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1867), 1:186-359, 2:149-65; Lacon (pseud.), *The Devil in America: A Dramatic Satire. Spirit-Rapping—Mormonism; . . .* (Mobile, AL: J.K. Randall, 1867); and J. V. Coombs, *Religious Delusions, A Psychic Study* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1904). These comparisons were not limited to British and American authors. See Emile Jonveaux, *L'Amérique Actuelle* (Paris: Charpentier, 1869), 227-49, 250, *et. seq.*; Claudio Jannet, *Les Etats-Unis contemporain*, 13ème ed., 2 tomes (Paris: Plon, 1877), 69-74; and Alexandre Erdan, *La France Mystique* (Paris: Coulon-Pineau, 1855), 363-88. Erdan, a French author,

exposés.[8] Orestes A. Brownson (1803-76), a Universalist preacher, radical humanist, and severe critic of Spiritualism, who converted to Catholicism in 1844, wrote that Mormonism was a form "of contemporary spiritualism."[9] He also believed that the devil was the prime mover of Spiritualism and that the Book of Mormon was a piece of literary demonism.[10] Three years later, in 1857 George Templeton Strong, a New York socialite, called the Mormons a "horde of brutalized fanatics who formed a 'Religion of Sensuality'" and argued that if that "most beggarly of delusions should prevail," it would only be "less astounding than the reception of 'spiritualism' by so many thousands as a new Gospel or a Commentary on the old one."[11] That same year Alfred Pairpoint, a British traveler, criticized both Spiritualism and Mormonism and concluded that "blame-

---

had prepared to become a Roman Catholic priest but chose journalism instead. His book not only attacked minority religions such as Mormonism and Spiritualism but was also condemned by the Roman Catholics. More recent comparisons are contained in R. Laurence Moore, "The Occult Connection? Mormonism, Christian Science and Spiritualism," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), and in the popular but unscholarly study by Deborah Laake, *Secret Ceremonies* (New York: William Morrow, 1993), 13, 34.

8. For examples of authors who criticized Mormonism and Spiritualism in separate works, see Count Agenor DeGasparin, *Lecture du Mormonisme, Archives du Christianisme* (1852; 1853), and his *Treatise on Turning Tables, The Supernatural in General, and Spirits*, 2 vols. (New York: Kiggins & Kellogg, 1857); William Edward Biederwolf, *Mormonism Under the Searchlight and Spiritualism and Russellism Unveiled, the Three Books in One* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910). DeGasparin's articles on Mormonism were criticized by T. B. H. Stenhouse in *Les Mormons et leurs ennemis* (Lausanne, 1854) while Stenhouse was LDS Swiss Mission president. See discussion in Massimo Introvigne, *Les Mormons* (Belgique: Brepols, 1991), 181. Stenhouse later wrote his own history of Mormonism, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873), which has been described as a "Godbeite handbook which sought to mold Eastern opinion to the viewpoint of the Utah dissenters." See Ronald W. Walker, "The Godbeite Protest in the Making of Modern Utah," Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1977, 175. For a Spiritualist criticism of DeGasparin's book on Spiritualism, see Frank Podmore, *Studies in Psychical Research* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 43-47.

9. "Spiritualism and Spiritus," *The Catholic World*, June 1869, reprinted in Orestes Brownson, *The Works* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 346, 335.

10. Orestes Brownson, *The Spirit-Rapper: An Autobiography* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co; London: Dolman, 1854). More than twenty years later Brownson wrote that alleged cures by Mormon elders were neither proofs of miraculous intervention nor "an intervention of the Evil One." See "Review of Mgr. de Ségur's *The Wonders of Lourdes*," *Brownson's Quarterly Review* 24 (July 1875): 3512-401, reprinted in Orestes A. Brownson, *Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991). See also Howard Kerr, *Mediums, and Spirit Rappers, and Roaring Radicals: Spiritualism in American Literature, 1850-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 87.

11. George Templeton Strong, *The Diary of George Templeton Strong*, Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1952), 2:376-77.

able as the Spiritual creed may be, it is not cursed with the disgusting details as that of Mormonism."[12] In January 1865 Abraham Hayward, another British observer, wrote in *Frasers Magazine* that the famous British medium D. D. Home "beats Joe Smith hollow; for he persuades people that they hear what they do not hear; that they see what they do not see."[13] Orthodox ministers, both Catholic and Protestant, also found themselves agreeing that the apparitions claimed by these new religious movements were either bogus[14] or inspired by the devil.[15]

Such comparisons and criticisms created a dilemma for followers of both movements.[16] Mormons eventually adopted the position of most other sectarians, that Spiritualism was a counterfeit religion (and in the Mormon mind a counterfeit of Mormonism) inspired by the devil,[17] whereas Spiritualists were content to believe that the revelations of Mormonism were genuine and, even if not fully understood by their recipients, were additional proofs of Spiritualism.

Mention of modern Spiritualism first appeared in Mormon-owned *Deseret News* in 1851, only three years after the famous Rochester, New York, knockings. At first news stories appeared without editorial com-

---

12. Pairpoint, 177.

13. Abraham Hayward, "Spiritualism, as Related to Religion and Science," *Frasers Magazine* 71 (Jan. 1865): 25-26.

14. See Oppenheim, 64-66.

15. Ibid., 66-67.

16. Mormonism and Spiritualism share a common ancestor in Swedenborgism. Arthur Conan Doyle in *The History of Spiritualism* notes that Swedenborgism was a forerunner of Spiritualism which was born in upstate New York. He wrote that Swedenborg's "bust should be in a every Spiritualist Temple, as being the first and greatest of modern mediums" (Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, 2 vols. [London: Cassel, 1926], 1:21). Mormon authors have also noted similarities between Swedenborg's "revelations" and Mormon doctrine. See D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 12-13, 174-75; Rick Grunder Books, *Mormon List 36*, Item 141, describing Swedenborg's treatise *Concerning Heaven . . . and Hell* (Boston, 1825 ed.). One early Mormon convert, John Hyde, returned to England and became a follower of Swedenborg. But his book *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W.P. Fetridge & Co., 1857) makes no mention of his new belief. As a result of this dilemma, Mormon and Spiritualist responses to competing revelations became increasingly defensive throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

17. Other new religious movements, such as Christian Science and Seventh Day Adventists, developed similar responses. See Russell M. and Clare R. Goldfarb, *Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century Letters* (Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1978), 49; and Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking the Sanctuary: Seventh Day Adventists and the American Dream* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1989), 64. For a Roman Catholic perspective, see Giovanni Giuseppe Franco, *Idea Chiara Dello Spiritismo* (Prato: Giachetti, Figlio e.c., 1885), and Donald Hole, *Spiritualism in Relation to Science and Religion* (London: The Society of S.S. Peter and Paul Limited, n.d.).

ment,[18] but following the conversion of a few Mormons to Spiritualism LDS authorities began to actively criticize its pretensions. In 1852 a family of British converts migrating to Salt Lake City lost their faith in Mormonism after a twenty-year-old cousin, Mary Ann, died on the plains. The family was soon visited by Mary Ann's spirit who expressed satisfaction with her family's decision to settle in Ohio rather than resume its trek to Salt Lake City. She also told the family that Joseph Smith was not a prophet, the Book of Mormon was not true, and polygamy was not a divinely inspired doctrine.[19]

The same year Mary Ann died Mormon authorities advised members about the dangerous implications of accepting revelations received outside the context of Mormonism and assured them that the message of Spiritualism was unauthorized, confused, garbled, and self-contradictory. In February 1852 an editorial in the *Deseret News* warned against being "operated upon by a false spirit" and advised Mormons to "live by his creed, and 'mind his own business.'"[20] In July Heber C. Kimball, first counselor to church president Brigham Young, described "spirit-rapping" and asserted:

> The invisible world are in trouble; they are knocking, and rapping, and muttering; and the people are inquiring of them to know concerning the things of God, and there is not a soul of them can tell them anything about the end of the world. They are in a dreadful situation; and in the city of Rochester, near where I used to live, the last information I received from there, there were 135 spiritual writers in that city. I have a brother-in-law

---

18. "Mysterious Knockings," *Deseret News*, 22 Feb. 1851, 210.

19. *Liberator*, 21 Jan. 1853, 12. Another "spiritualist and a Healer," Joseph Ashman (1834-82), confessed to have "dwelt in the tents of the Mormonites" and to have "been one of the Peculiar People." See Joseph Ashman obituary, *Medium and Daybreak* 14 (1883): 5, in Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850-1910* (London: Rutledge and Keggan Paul, 1986), 215.

20. "To the Saints," *Deseret News*, 21 Feb. 1852, 2. This editorial was consistent with the teachings of Joseph Smith who shortly after the organization of the Mormon church in 1830 taught that although all persons are entitled to personal revelation (D&C 8:1-3; 42:61-62; 121:25-26) they may only receive "private" revelations and not those which concern the church (25:9; 28:2-8; 90:14; 94:3; 100:11; 107:91-92). See also, Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1958), 579-86. Smith also taught that some revelations are of the devil (D&C 28:11; 50:2) and that members can distinguish between heavenly and diabolical manifestations (129:4-9). Even Smith himself could be visited by an evil spirit with a counterfeit message (Brigham H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Century One*, 6 vols. [Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1965], 1:162-66). For an excellent discussion of this topic, see Massimo Introvigne, "Il 'canone aperto': rivelazione e nuove rivelazione nella teologia e nella storia dei Mormoni," in *Le Nuove Rivelazioni* (Leumann, Torino: Elle Di Ci, 1991), 27-85.

> there, who is a Presbyterian priest: he couldn't inquire of God about future things, so he inquired of the spirits; but they could not tell him anything about the dead nor the living.[21]

Nine months later at the dedication of the cornerstone of the Salt Lake temple another Mormon apostle, Parley P. Pratt, distinguished between manifestations to Spiritualists and revelations to Latter-day prophets by observing that "ministrations for the salvation and exaltation" of the world can only be obtained "[b]y one holding the keys of the oracles of God, as a medium through which the living can hear from the dead."[22] According to Pratt, Mormons must discriminate "between the lawful and the unlawful mediums or channels of communication—between the holy and impure, the truths and falsehoods, thus communicated."[23] Only in the temple is it possible for "the most holy things pertaining to the salvation of the dead, and all the most holy conversations and correspondence with God, angels and spirits" to take place.[24] The next day during general conference Pratt told church members that spirits are only endowed with as much knowledge as they gained on earth and that only spirits of those who had the gospel or were apostles and prophets could be expected to convey accurate information.[25]

Jedediah M. Grant, Brigham Young's second counselor, also addressed this subject on 19 February 1854 when he informed listeners that he was "more or less familiar with the doings of the Spirit Rappers" and that although he was satisfied that "they are manifestations of spirits" he was convinced "the result of the manifestations of the spirits (wicked spirits) will be to combine their forces in as systematic an order as they are capable of, to successfully resist the Priesthood upon the earth."[26] When Brigham Young addressed the subject at the end of the decade (September 1859) he agreed with his counselors and apostles that the manifestations of Spiritualism were unlawful, confused, and wicked but also taught that "spirit-rapping, spirit-knocking . . . is produced by the spirits that the Lord has suffered to communicate to people on the earth" and that such manifestations were allowed by God to permit the devil to make "the people believe very strongly in revelations from the spirit world."[27]

---

21. Heber C. Kimball, "Believing the Bible—the Gospel—Persecution—Spirit-Rapping, etc.," *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, Eng: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1855-86), 1:36 (hereafter JD).

22. Parley P. Pratt, "Spiritual Communication," JD 2:44.

23. Ibid., 45.

24. Ibid., 46.

25. Parley P. Pratt, "Spiritual Communication," JD 1:6-15.

26. Jedediah M. Grant, "The Power of God and the Power of Satan," JD 2:10-11.

27. Brigham Young, "Providences of God . . . ," JD 7:240.

Given these discourses in the 1850s—that Spiritualism's spirit voices were "inferior" and confusing to believers in true revelation—it must have unnerved LDS leaders that Spiritualists did not deny manifestations experienced by Joseph Smith but instead taught that they provided additional proofs of their own movement. In 1855 a Mormon missionary in St. Louis reported that Spiritualism was "daily adding to the ranks of skepticism. The many contradictory revelations, coming thro' the spiritual mediums, have had a tendency to destroy all faith in true revelation. One spirit says that Methodism is the only true system; others say Presbyterianism, and others say Catholicism, and so on; and some say that Mormonism is true."[28] Spiritualists were eager to harmonize their experiences with those of other faiths. One Spiritualist writer in 1859 wrote that "the conclusions to which we have arrived are, that the Book of Mormon is to a very great extent, a spiritual romance, originating in the spiritual world, and that Joseph Smith was the medium or the principal one, through whom it was given."[29]

This Spiritualist perspective on Mormon revelation was eventually adopted by a group of Mormon merchants and entrepreneurs who became infatuated by Spiritualism beginning in 1868, and it was only then that Mormonism's current official position—that Spiritualism is a tool of the devil—was fully developed. In 1868 William Godbe and E. L. T. Harrison began publication of *Utah Magazine*, which disagreed with the LDS hierarchy on the economic development of Utah. Brigham Young had organized a system of "cooperation" under which Mormons could only purchase from Mormon merchants, and although Godbe and Harrison were both Mormons they condemned this attempt to perpetuate church control over the economic development of the territory. Most non-Mormon merchants also objected.

Although *Utah Magazine* contained articles concerning the economic development of the territory, it also included occasional articles about the supernatural,[30] but editors rarely compared psychic phenomena to Mor-

---

28. Charles H. Bassett to B. L. Mackintosh, *Deseret News*, 20 June 1855, 120.

29. *Tiffany's Monthly*, May 1859.

30. See, for example, "Latest Ghost Talk," *Utah Magazine* 1 (29 Feb. 1868): 87-89; "Swedenborg's Curious Powers," *Utah Magazine* 1 (7 Mar. 1868): 104-105; "Curious Spiritual Manifestation," *Utah Magazine* 1 (28 Mar. 1868): 141-42; "Testimony of the Supernatural," *Utah Magazine* 1 (16 May 1868): 222-23; "Spirit Writing," *Utah Magazine* 1 (27 June 1868): 293; "Chinese Spiritual Mediums," *Utah Magazine* 2 (26 Dec. 1868): 161; "Planchette," *Utah Magazine* 2 (16 Jan. 1869): 204; "Planchette," *Utah Magazine* 2 (23 Jan. 1869): 216; John Lyon, "The Spirit in the Whole Body," *Utah Magazine* 3 (11 Sept. 1869): 297-98; *Utah Magazine* 3 (18 Sept. 1869): 315; L. M. Child, "Things Unaccountable. Clairvoyance, Oracles, Visions and Seers," *Utah Magazine* 3 (18 Sept. 1869): 311; 3 (25 Sept. 1869): 325; 3 (22 Oct. 1869): 340-41; "Emanuel Swedenborg," *Utah Magazine* 3 (16 Oct. 1869): 380.

monism[31] and for the most part continued to support Mormon revelations.[32] In September 1868 Godbe and Harrison traveled to New York City where they attended about fifty seances and communicated with various spirits including New Testament apostles Peter, James, and John, Heber C. Kimball (who died in 1859), and Joseph Smith. These spirits instructed Godbe and Harrison to reform Mormonism from within by integrating it with Spiritualism which at the same time would provide Spiritualism with an organizational structure and a common creed. Upon their return to Utah, Godbe and Harrison chose not to reveal in the pages of *Utah Magazine* these manifestations or their fascination with Spiritualism. Nevertheless, they both continued to object to Young's economic policies and were eventually summoned before church authorities in October 1869 and excommunicated for questioning the temporal and spiritual authority of Brigham Young.[33]

Godbe and Harrison did not immediately affirm their allegiance to Spiritualism[34]—perhaps because of the stigma church authorities had placed on it by condemning it as a tool of the devil; they did, however, organize the Church of Zion and privately informed church authorities that they had received spiritual manifestations. Shortly after organizing the Church of Zion, Godbe and Harrison discontinued *Utah Magazine* and began a newspaper, *The Mormon Tribune,* which allowed them to continue criticizing the economic policies of the LDS church. In March

---

31. Some examples are "Spiritualism and the Priesthood," *Utah Magazine* 2 (16 Jan. 1869): 199; "We Are Nothing if Not Spiritual," *Utah Magazine* 3 (23 Oct. 1869): 390-91; Edward Tullidge, "Our Social Redemption," *Utah Magazine* 3 (23 Oct. 1869): 394-95; "Spiritualism and the Priesthood," *Utah Magazine* 3 (20 Nov. 1869): 458.

32. See, for example, "Our Right to Expect a Revealed Religion," *Utah Magazine* 3 (22 May 1869): 38; "The Doctrine of Our Divine Origin; Its Agreement with our Nature," *Utah Magazine* 3 (1 June 1869): 87; John Nicholson, "Mental Philosophy," *Utah Magazine* 3 (12 June 1869): 90; "'Mormonism' and the Question of Man's Divinity," *Utah Magazine* 3 (17 Jan. 1869): 166-67; "Necessity of an Intelligible View of a Future Life," *Utah Magazine* 3 (31 July 1869): 198-99; "Revelations to Suit the Times, Or the Question of Appealing 'To the Law and To the Testimony,'" *Utah Magazine* 3 (7 Aug. 1869): 213-14; "The Two Kinds of Immortality Offered to Man," *Utah Magazine* 3 (7 Aug. 1869): 218-19.

33. For the views of Harrison and Tullidge with respect to these excommunications, see "An Appeal to the People," *Utah Magazine* 3 (30 Oct. 1869): 406-407; E. L. T. Harrison, "Protest," *Utah Magazine* 3 (30 Oct. 1869): 407-408; William S. Godbe, "A Card by W. S. Godbe," *Utah Magazine* 3 (30 Oct. 1869): 408-11. See also "The Reformation in Utah," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* 256 (Sept. 1871): 602-10.

34. Within a month after their excommunications Godbe and Harrison republished an article, "Spiritualism and Priesthood," which had originally appeared on 16 January 1869 in which they wrote that "we have *no* faith in Spiritualism, as a teacher or as a reliable source of enlightenment" (see *Utah Magazine* 2 [16 Jan. 1869]: 199, and 3 [20 Nov. 1869]: 458; emphasis added). George Q. Cannon's speech denouncing Spiritualism on 31 January 1869 was probably prompted by the 16 January article (see JD 12:362-72).

1870, almost six months after their excommunications, Godbe and Harrison finally disclosed in the *Tribune* their belief that similarities existed between their movement and Spiritualism.[35] They also responded to the LDS church's claim that their movement was "inspired by the devil" by observing that this argument was the only way the Mormon leadership had found

> of dealing with any knotty subject or phenomenon which they cannot explain or reconcile with their own narrow notions . . . to pronounce it "of the devil" and throw it into the waste basket, there to await the rounds of the gentleman with tail and horns who is supposed to gather up such worthless trash as fuel for his grand and eternal apparatus for roasting humanity.[36]

To prove that Mormon doctrine regarding Spiritualism was wrong they pointed out that a former member of the church's twelve apostles and counselor in the First Presidency had become a Spiritualist and that "[l]ooking round the other day at Bro. Amasa [Lyman], who certainly looks ten years younger since the 'buffetings' commenced upon him, we asked how he got along with his afflictions. He replied that he had just been weighed and discovered that the Devil had 'buffeted' him up of eighteen pounds! Not so bad for a very miserable apostate!"[37] The Godbeites also asked: "Will nothing short of the recognition of Brigham Young's infallibility, submission to all his exactions and obedience to all his requirements save humanity from the clutches of this supposed rival aspirant for universal empire?"[38]

That same month E. L. T. Harrison wrote another article noting similarities and differences between Spiritualism and his new Church of Zion. The Church of Zion was similar to Spiritualism since "Spiritualism in its highest sense must include all manifestations of spiritual power the world has ever witnessed."[39] Harrison claimed that "a vision given to Swedenborg or to Andrew Jackson Davis must be produced on the same natural principles as a vision given to Paul, Peter, or Joseph Smith."[40] The differences between the Church of Zion and Spiritualism enunciated by Harrison included the church's belief that it was given a mandate to establish a "central system of Divine Controlling Powers, and our belief in being

---

35. E. L. T. Harrison, "The Church of Zion; or, The Question Is It Spiritualism?" *Mormon Tribune*, 26 Mar. 1870, 100-101.

36. "Spiritualism and the Devil," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 Oct. 1870, 1.

37. "Being 'Buffeted,'" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 Oct. 1870, 1.

38. "Spiritualism and the Devil," 1.

39. Harrison, "The Church of Zion," 100.

40. Ibid.

guided, as a Church, by them alone,"[41] to unite all Spiritualists. In short, the Church of Zion believed in a central church organization which Spiritualism lacked. According to Harrison,

> Joseph Smith . . . was raised up to prepare the way for the establishment of a central spiritual power which, when fully developed, shall sweep all that there is valuable . . . in Spiritualism within its ample folds; taking its highest order of seers, its prophets, its spiritual healers, its inspirational and most spiritual natures, teaching them a higher and a greater gospel, and welding them with Zion into a grand combination for the tearing down of superstition . . .[42]

In short, Godbe and Harrison believed that the transition from Mormonism to Spiritualism would not be difficult because the Mormon church itself was "spiritualistic."[43] Mormonism taught that everyone may obtain "direct evidences of the truth of the fact of inspiration and Revelation," and that such "light" would "never cease so long as the ages roll along."[44] Even one of the Mormon church's twelve apostles, George Q. Cannon, seemed to agree that similarities existed. In 1869, he revealed he had read a book early in his life which contained doctrine he thought was "written by the Latter-day Saints."[45] According to Cannon,

> The argument of the writer was in favor of communication with the spirit world, through the ministering of angels, being as possible in these days as at former times. He used precisely similar arguments to those used by the Elders of this Church; and quoted largely from the Bible to prove that it had been quite common for men in ancient days to have such communications and to possess the gift of prophecy and the spirit of revelation, and he argued in favor of these modes of communication in these days.[46]

Seven months after making this statement, in the wake of Godbe's and Harrison's excommunications, Cannon wrote in the *Juvenile Instructor* that

---

41. Ibid., 101.

42. Ibid., 101. This view of LDS history was further elaborated by T. B. H. Stenhouse in his *Rocky Mountain Saints* and by Edward W. Tullidge in his *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (New York, 1878).

43. E. L. T. Harrison, "The Question of the Hour: Or, Radical or Conservative Measures for Utah?" *Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine*, 1 (Oct. 1880): 133.

44. Ibid.

45. George Q. Cannon, "Unity and Unchangeableness of the Gospel—New Revelation Needed—Spiritualism," JD 12:362-72.

46. Ibid., 369. See also George Q. Cannon, "Thoughts on Spiritism" and "Thoughts on Spiritism Continued," in *Writings from the "Western Standard"* (Liverpool, 1864), 51 and 54. These articles were originally published in the *Western Standard*, 5 Mar., 5 Apr. 1856.

such similarities demonstrate that Spiritualism is a counterfeit form of Mormonism inspired by the devil: "[M]en and women began to receive revelations [shortly after the birth of Spiritualism], not from the Lord Jesus but from spirits, and great wonders began to be shown. . . . what a cunning plan this is of the devil to deceive people and prevent men and women from obeying the teachings of Jesus!"[47] Not surprisingly, the other apostles agreed with Cannon. On 19 December 1869 Orson Pratt told an audience in the Mormon Tabernacle that he had spoken with Godbe and Harrison prior to their excommunications and was told by them about "their supernatural manifestations, commencing some fifteen months before."[48] During his interview with Godbe, Pratt told him that he did not believe Godbe had received visitations from ancient or modern apostles: "I do not believe one of them has been to you, it is the devil, just the same as he has manifested himself in the world."[49] The following April, Pratt told a church congregation that the devil had introduced Spiritualism as a counterfeit of Mormonism after failing previously to convince humanity that "gifts of healing, miracles, prophecy, revelation, the ministering and discerning of spirits"[50] did not exist.

Brigham Young also rejected comparison between Mormonism and Spiritualism. On 6 October 1870 he observed that Spiritualists

> would like to have it considered that "Mormonism" is nothing but Spiritualism; but it is temporalism as well as Spiritualism. A great many want to know the difference between the two. I will give one feature of the difference, and then set the whole scientific world to work to see if they can ever bring to bear the same feature in Spiritualism. Take all who are called Spiritualists and see if they can produce the order that is in the midst of this people. Here are system, order, organization, law, rule and facts. Now see if they can produce any of these features. They cannot. Why? Because their system is from beneath, while ours is perfect and is from above; one is from God, the other is from the devil, that is all the difference.[51]

Like the orthodox clergy—both Catholic and Protestant—Young and his fellow apostles were convinced that Spiritualism was a tool of the devil designed to lure away those who yearned for proof that life continues after

---

47. *Juvenile Instructor* 4 (8 Oct. 1869): 164.

48. Orson Pratt, "Revelations and Manifestations of God and of Wicked Spirits," JD 13:72.

49. Ibid., 73.

50. Orson Pratt, "The Latter-day Kingdom of God," JD 13:134-35.

51. Brigham Young, "Texts for Preaching upon at Conference—Revelations—Deceitfulness of Riches—One-Man Power—Spiritualism," JD 13:266.

death[52] into a system with no creed or church organization. Thus, explained Young,

> its members can only divide and sub-divide, produce confusion on confusion, disorder following on the heels of disorder, one to the right, another to the left, another for the front, another for the rear, one pulling this way, another pulling that, sect against sect, people against people, community against community, politically, religiously, and I may say morally to a great extent . . .[53]

Like the devil Spiritualism was "a mass of confusion, it is a body without parts and passions, principle or power, just like, I do not like to say it, but just like the so-called Christian's God."[54] During another discourse in October Young expressed outrage that "We are accused of being nothing more nor less than a people possessing what they term the higher order of Spiritualism."

> "You are right," say I. Yes, we belong to that higher order of Spiritualism; our revelations are from above, yours from beneath. This is the difference. We receive revelation from Heaven, you receive your revelations from every foul spirit that has departed this life, and gone out of bodies of mobbers, murderers, highwaymen, drunkards, thieves, liars and every kind of debauched character, whose spirits are floating around here, and searching and seeking whom they can destroy; for they are the servants of the devil, and they are permitted to come now to reveal to the people. . . . That is the difference between the two spiritual systems—yes, this is the higher order of spiritualism, to be led, governed and controled by law, and that, too, the law of heaven that governs and controls the Gods and the angels.[55]

Ironically, Godbe and Harrison agreed with Young's assessment of Spiritualism, that it was not governed or controlled by law. For that reason they were attempting to provide it with an organization and common

---

52. Goldfarb, 34.

53. JD 13:266.

54. Ibid.

55. Brigham Young, "The Word of Wisdom—Spiritualism," JD 13:274-83, 281. For additional comments by the Mormon hierarchy on Spiritualism, see Brigham Young, "Sin—The Atonement, etc.," JD 14:72; Brigham Young, "Good and Evil, etc.," JD 14:112-13; Orson Pratt, "The Day of Pentecost, etc.," JD 14:179; Brigham Young, "The Training of Children," JD 14:199-200; Orson Pratt, "The Gospel Restored from Heaven, etc.," JD 17:271-72; Joseph F. Smith, "Arrival in Salt Lake City, etc.," JD 19:195-96; Charles W. Penrose, "The Gospel, etc.," JD 21:353-54; George Q. Cannon, "Discourse," JD 24:339, 341-42.

creed. As such, the religious battle became a power struggle which extended beyond the economic policies of the territory. One Mormon critic, J. H. Beadle, claimed in 1872 that

> there is no other form of apostasy the Mormon Priesthood so fear, hate, and curse, and no kind of mysticism to which apostate Mormons are so prone, as spiritualism. The whole body of the Church seems only to be kept therefrom by constantly hearing from the Priesthood that it is the "doings of the devil," and nothing seems to interest a young and skeptical Mormon so quick as "circles," *seances*, visions, shadowy hands, and conjurations with boxes, "pendulum oracles," *planchette*, and every kind of forbidden and diabolical nonsense.[56]

Although Beadle's distinction between "Mormon Priesthood" and "apostate Mormons" made sense in the provincial boundaries of Utah, it did not make sense to Spiritualists who were not among those who would join a church presided over by former Mormon elders. After the organization of the Church of Zion, Utah became a stopping place for mediums and lecturers, and even if most Spiritualist writers of the period did not cite "Mormon" experiences as examples of spiritual manifestations, several prominent Spiritualist observers were impressed by Mormon sensitivity to psychic phenomena.[57] Although these observers spoke of "Mormonism" they were no doubt also describing Mormon "apostates" affiliated with the Church of Zion. Emma Hardinge Britten, the famous medium who was acquainted with the communitarian-turned-Spiritualist Robert Owen and helped organize the Theosophical Society with Madame Blavatsky, wrote in 1870:

---

56. William Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel* (New York: George A. Crofutt, 1872), appendix, 209 (by the editor, J. H. Beadle, Esquire).

57. Spiritualists who visited Utah prior to the Godbeite schism failed to mention any similarities between Mormonism and Spiritualism. See Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861). Reference to Burton's belief in Spiritualism is in W. H. Harrison, ed., *Psychic Facts* (London: W.H. Harrison, 1880), 70-79. But see Fawn M. Brodie, *The Devil Drives: A Life of Sir Richard Burton* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1967), 314-15. Another visitor to Utah, Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent* (New York: Hard & Houghton, 1866), who saw nothing extraordinary in Mormon claims in revelation, became a Spiritualist after his death when he visited his mortal friends. See Samuel Bowles, *Contrasts in Spirit Life* (Springfield, MA: Star Publishing Company, 1880); Samuel Bowles, *Interviews with Spirits* (Springfield, MA: Star Publishing Company, 1885). Even anti-Mormon writer Maria Ward in *Female Life Among the Mormons* wrote that "Joseph Smith was one of the earliest practitioners in ANIMAL MAGNETISM; and it was the use of this power at that time, that convinced his disciples of his supposed miraculous gifts." Ward attributes the success of Mormonism and her conversion to this predecessor of Spiritualism. See Maria Ward, *Female Life Among the Mormons* (New York: Burdick Bros., 1857), 24.

> Those Americans who have visited the singular dwellers of the desert, calling themselves "Latter Day Saints" or "Mormons" report that phenomenal gifts are abundantly poured out upon them . . . Amongst the "Mormons" resident in California and Nevada, many excellent spirit mediums are to be found, especially in the direction of prophecy and healing. They claim that these gifts are communicable by the old apostolic mode of laying on of hands, and affirm that they have received their gifts from the imposition of hands on the part of their "elders."[58]

Another famous British medium and ordained Anglican minister William Stainton Moses,[59] whose book *Spirit Teachings*[60] has been called the "Bible of British Spiritualism,"[61] expressed admiration for Utah and the Mormons in 1882 in an editorial published in *Light*, a Spiritualist newspaper published in London. After reading a book about the Mormons by Phil Robinson[62] published the same year he became convinced that Mormons were, like the Shakers, "instinctive Spiritualists."[63]

One of the chief elders of these "instinctive Spiritualists," the Society of Shakers, also agreed that "even the Mormons have had Spiritual revelations." After making this remark in 1874 Frederick W. Evans was asked whether he meant "to convey the idea that the spiritual manifestations confirm the truth of Mormonism?" Evans responded by stating, "Yea, to a certain extent." This response surprised the interviewer who said: "Why, I should have thought Mormonism, the very antipodes of your belief." Evans replied: "Mormonism is much better than your New York Christianity."[64] In correspondence to the same editor, Evans later wrote:

> I consider Mormonism a revival of ancient Judaism—the God—Tutelar Deity, of the Jews, is probably the controlling spirit of Mormonism.

---

58. Emma Hardinge, *Modern Spiritualism: A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits* (London: James Burns, 1870), 479. See also James Bonwick, *The Mormons and the Silver Mines* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1872), 148-49.

59. For additional information on Moses, see Oppenheim, 77-81; and Frank Podmore, *Mediums of the 19th Century*, 2 vols. (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, Inc.), 2:275-88.

60. William Stainton Moses, *Spirit Teachings*, 6th ed. (London: London Spiritualist Alliance, 1907).

61. Alan Gould, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 78.

62. Phil Robinson, *Sinners and Saints. A Tour Across the States, and Round them; With Three Months Among the Mormons* (London: Sampson, Lowe, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883).

63. M. A. (Oxon), "Notes by the Way," *Light* 3 (10 Nov. 1883): 487.

64. *New York Daily Graphic*, 24 Nov. 1874, in Henry S. Olcott, *People from the Other World* (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1875), 397.

He allowed polygamy 2,000 years ago. Why not now?

But the Mormons have abolished poverty and prostitution; and from children and youth the *Social Evil.*

Is not that better than New York and co-Christianity? And would it not be well for Christians (?) to stop persecuting Mormons, until there are no poor—no hire of harlots—and those law suits are settled?[65]

The passage from Robinson's book which most impressed Moses was: "The Saints have long ago formulated into accepted doctrines those mysteries of the occult world which Spiritualists outside the [Mormon] faith are still investigating. Your 'problems' are *their* axioms."[66] Robinson also maintained that Jacob Hamblin—a Mormon assigned to the far reaches of southern Utah by Brigham Young as a missionary to native Americans and whose life was filled with stories of healings, dreams, visions, and prophecies—was a perfect example of this "doctrine" because "[t]he miracles and prophecies related in connection with this phenomenal old man would . . . 'stagger even Madame Blavatsky herself.'"[67] Moses was so impressed by this description of Hamblin that he wrote, "if there be any Jacob Hamblins who have the power of their prototype and no sphere of action, let them come over to London. We want 'missionaries' of that type badly, and can employ a whole tribe."[68] A later issue of *Light* in 1884 made reference to the Godbeite schism and that "Mr. D. F. Walker, one of the leading business men in the city, is also one of the most prominent Spiritualists." Like J. H. Beadle the article claimed that "Spiritualism is, however, gradually inoculating the Mormons, or rather spreading among them, and will, no doubt, in time make itself felt. At present the great 'Know alls' of the Church of Latter Day Saints, like many of their brethren of the Protestant Church, attribute the phenomena to his Satanic Majesty."[69]

---

65. Ibid., 400. Evans later criticized U.S. attempts to disenfranchize Mormons because of the practice of polygamy. See F. W. Evans, *A Shaker's Views on the Land Limitation Scheme and Land Monopoly, and Mormon Prosecution* (Mt. Lebanon, NY, ca. 1887). In March 1831 Joseph Smith received a revelation to send Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt, and Lemon Copley to preach Mormonism to the Shakers. See D&C 49:1, and *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (Nov. 1832): 7.

66. Robinson, 199, in *Light* 3 (10 Nov. 1883), 487.

67. Ibid., quoting Robinson, 197. It is likely that Robinson obtained most of his information about Jacob Hamblin from a book by James A. Little, *Jacob Hamblin, A Narrative of his Personal Experience, as a Frontiersman, Missionary to the Indians and Explorer* (Salt Lake City, 1881). This book has recently been republished as part of a collection edition series by Bookcraft. See *Three Mormon Classics* (Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1988), which includes Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal*; George Q. Cannon, *My First Mission*; and James A. Little, *Jacob Hamblin.*

68. *Light* 3 (10 Nov. 1883): 487.

69. "Spiritualism in Utah," *Light* 4 (5 Apr. 1884): 137.

Just as Moses failed to unify British Spiritualists through the London Spiritualist Alliance, and Shakers began to decline after the death of Anne Lee, the Church of Zion failed to fulfill the aspirations of the spirits which had directed Godbe and Harrison in 1868. Despite the efforts of Godbe and Harrison, every Spiritualist remained a law unto him- or herself, a criticism Mormon leaders emphasized in speeches against Spiritualism and the Church of Zion in the 1870s. Initially, Godbe and Harrison hoped to recruit Joseph Smith's eldest son, Joseph III, president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, to become the leader of the Church of Zion, but it soon became evident that young Joseph's infatuation with Spiritualism in the 1850s had subsided by the time the Church of Zion was organized in 1870.[70] The Church of Zion was short-lived because it failed to attract Mormons when it abandoned too much of Mormonism, including its leadership, but was unable to attract Spiritualists because it was located in far-away Utah and retained too much Mormonism, including its practice of plural marriage.[71]

The demise of Spiritualism in Utah did not deter the next generation of Spiritualists, who awoke amid the devastation and death of World War I, from making similar comparisons between Spiritualism and Mormonism. One of the most prominent Spiritualists of this new breed, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, adopted a perspective toward Mormon revelation in both his memoirs and *History of Spiritualism* which was similar to that developed by the Godbeites and popularized by Spiritualists such as Hardinage and Moses.[72]

When Doyle visited Salt Lake City in May 1923 he was struck by the points "which Spiritualism and Mormonism have in common"[73] and was pleased that more than five thousand persons attended his lecture on "psychic phenomenon" in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Doyle thought it significant that both movements originated within a short distance of each other in upstate New York; that Joseph Smith like many Spiritualists saw apparitions of extra-terrestrial beings[74]; and that the message of the first Mormon prophet was similar to that of Spiritualism, since it taught "that the Christian Creeds had wandered very far away from primitive spiritual

---

70. See Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 62-64.

71. For an example of Spiritualists rejecting Mormonism's practice of polygamy, see *Daily Times* (Chatanooga, TN), 14 Nov. 1883, reprinted from *Hagaman's Spiritual Light.*

72. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, 2 vols. (London: Cassell & Co., Ltd., 1926), 1:21; Arthur Conan Doyle, *Our Second American Adventure* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1924), 91-102.

73. Doyle, *Our Second American Adventure*, 87.

74. Ibid., 91.

truths and . . . that ritual and forms have completely driven out that direct spirit-communion and power which are the real living core of religion."[75] Doyle also believed that Joseph Smith had experienced "psychic exhaustion" (which a Mormon might call being "overcome by the spirit"), one of the "known signs of mediumistic power."[76] During his reading of the Book of Mormon he also recognized "many passages which seem to me to be true, as they coincide with the spirit-information which we have ourselves received."[77] The Mormon doctrines with which a Spiritualist like Doyle could agree included teachings that "death confers no knowledge upon a man, but he finds his mental outfit the same as before," "that spirit is itself a superfine matter," and that "[t]rue marriage carries on, but the tepid or cold marriage dissolves."[78] Doyle later referred to some of these similarities in *The History of Spiritualism* which he published three years later.[79] In another book, published in 1930, Doyle recorded psychic experiences which had occurred in Utah and which proved the validity of Spiritualism.[80] (Shortly after his death Doyle took his proselytism to new heights by appearing in spirit to confirmed believers,[81] but there is no evidence he reappeared in Salt Lake City.)

Doyle was one of the most famous Spiritualists of the twentieth century. Other believers of his generation who shared his view that Mormons were adapted to psychic phenomenon include Nellie Beighle, a sometime medium, who in 1893 wrote that "Mormonism must be set down as one of the disorderly phases of American Spiritualism . . . there can be little doubt

---

75. Ibid., 92.

76. Ibid., 94.

77. Ibid., 102. Like Spiritualists of the nineteenth century, Doyle's problem with Mormonism was largely in the practice of polygamy. See, for example, Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1888), 64; Doyle, *The Stark Munro Letters* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895), 218; Doyle, *A Duet with an Occasional Chorus* (London: Grant Richards, 1899), 133-37; and Doyle, *Our Second American Adventure*, 97-98.

78. Ibid.

79. Doyle, *History of Spiritualism*, 1:42. In addition to Doyle, comparisons between Mormonism and Spiritualism were made by Phil Robinson, *Sinners and Saints* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searl & Rivington, 1883); William Stainton Moses, "Notes by the Way," *Light* 3 (10 Nov. 1883), 487; Nellie Beighle, *Book of Knowledge, Psychic Facts* (n.p.: Alliance Publishing Co., 1903).

80. See, for example, Arthur Conan Doyle, "A New Light on Old Crimes," in *The Edge of the Unknown* (London: John Murray, 1930), 197-98 (originally published in *The Strand Magazine*, Jan. 1920, 65-74); and Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Strange Prophet," in *The Edge of the Unknown* (London: John Murray, 1930), 134-36 (originally published in *Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science* 7 [Apr. 1928]: 5-12).

81. Ivan Cooke, *Thy Kingdom Come* (London: Wright and Brown, 1933); Kelvin I. Jones, *Conan Doyle and the Spirits: The Spiritualist Career of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (Wellingsborough, Northamptonshire, Eng., 1989), 224-26.

that the thing has originated in real spirit agency, but not of the purest kind . . . Whatever of error and folly there may be in Mormonism, this at least is genuine and gospel truth"[82]; and the Boston Society for Psychic Research which in 1928 cited "[a]n apparition seen, heard and felt" by the wife of T. B. H. Stenhouse, Fanny Stenhouse (who for a brief time cast her lot with the Godbeites), as an example of psychic phenomena.[83] Although Spiritualism is much more fragmented today than it was a hundred years ago, Spiritualist mediums, sometimes known as channelers, occasionally receive manifestations from the same spirits who visited Joseph Smith as well as from Joseph Smith himself.[84]

Just as Spiritualism's acceptance of some Mormon revelation has not changed since the demise of the Church of Zion, Mormonism's current rejection of Spiritualism is consistent with the policy developed during the Godbeite schism. In 1893 George Q. Cannon wrote in the *Juvenile Instructor:*

> Spiritualism professed to make it easy for all to obtain spiritual manifestations. No faith in Jesus, no repentance, no baptism, no laying on of hands, needed to obtain them. Purity of life was not essential. The wicked and the reprobate, as well as those of better lives, could receive spiritual communications. In this way Satan used Spiritualism to counteract the influence of the Gospel.[85]

Six years later another Mormon apostle, James E. Talmage, wrote in a church-approved text, The Articles of Faith, "[T]he restoration of the priesthood to earth in this age of the world, was followed by a phenomenal growth of the vagaries of Spiritualism, whereby many have been led to put their trust in Satan's counterfeit of God's eternal power."[86] Two decades

---

82. Beighle, *Book of Knowledge, Psychic Facts,* 328-29.

83. Boston Society for Psychic Research, *Noted Witnesses for Psychic Occurrences* (Boston: Boston Society for Psychic Research, 1928), 226-29.

84. In his paper "Between Religion and Magic: The Case of Mormonism," Massimo Introvigne has cited examples of Spiritualists who have channeled "Mormon" spirits including messages from Moroni, received by Spiritualist minister Keith Milton Rhinehart, and the visit of Joseph Smith to a French journalist and UFO contactee, Claude Vorilhon. Contemporary authors have seen the same connection. See Jon Klimo, *Channeling: Investigations on Receiving Information from Paranormal Sources* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1987), 94; and Scott C. Dunn, "Spirit Writing: Another Look at the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 10 (June 1985): 17-26.

85. Juvenile Instructor 28 (1 Mar. 1893): 162.

86. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), 236. Although Talmage was never president of the LDS church, there is no question that his *Articles of Faith* represents official church doctrine. Only six months before ascending to the church presidency Joseph F. Smith said: "Spiritualism started in the United States about the time that Joseph Smith received his visions from the heavens. What more

later, during Doyle's visit to the United States in 1923, Mormon presiding bishop Charles W. Nibley, who later became a member of the First Presidency, wrote that Spiritualism was "the product of dimly-lighted seances" and that it was "born in darkness and is not light to me." He also claimed that "[b]ringing up evil spirits or devils is not new" and that the spirits which talk with Spiritualists are "figments of the devil."[87] A more recent treatment of this subject by Bruce R. McConkie, who also became an apostle, reflects the previously expressed sentiment by Brigham Young and other church authorities. In 1958 McConkie defined Spiritualism as:

> [o]ne of the forms of witchcraft is called *spiritualism*. This doctrine, that departed spirits hold intercourse with mortals, is one of Satan's substitutes for the true doctrine of communion with angels and righteous spirits in paradise. . . . It is true that mediums do make contact with spirits during their seances. In most instances, however, spirits are the demons or devils who were cast out of heaven for rebellion.

He concluded that "Spiritualism is among the vilest of abominable and iniquitous practices."[88] Although his definition was altered in the second edition published in 1966 to exclude reference to witchcraft (except as a related reference), Spiritualism remained a tool of the devil.[89]

It may be true that Spiritualism provided some dissatisfied Mormons an attractive alternative in the nineteenth century, particularly since spiritual manifestations appeared to decline after Joseph Smith's death. Some Mormon converts who were sensitive to supernatural experiences prior to

---

natural than that Lucifer should begin revealing himself to men in his cunning way, in order to deceive them and to distract their minds from the truth that God was revealing?" (Smith, *Conference Reports* [Apr. 1901], 73)

87. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 June 1923, CC-5.

88. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 686-87.

89. The new text reads: "Those religionists who attempt and frequently attain communion (as they suppose) with departed spirits are called *spiritualists*. Their doctrine and belief that mediums and other mortals can actually hold intercourse with the spirits of the dead is called *spiritualism*. Such communion, if and when it occurs, is manifest by means of physical phenomena, such as so-called spirit-rappings, or during abnormal mental states, such as in trances. These communions are commonly arranged and shown forth through the instrumentality of *mediums*.

"It is true that some mediums do make contact with spirits during their *seances*. In most instances, however, such spirits as manifest themselves are probably the demons or devils who were cast out of heaven for rebellion. Such departed spirits as become involved in these spiritualistic orgies would obviously be the spirits of wicked and depraved persons who because of their previous wickedness in mortality had wholly subjected themselves to the dominion of Lucifer. Righteous spirits would have nothing but contempt and pity for the attempts of mediums to make contact with them" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 759).

joining the church and aligned themselves with it in anticipation of such experiences may have been disappointed when Mormonism's spiritual gifts seemed to decline after 1844. Nevertheless, belief in the supernatural is not unique to Mormonism or Spiritualism. Even mainstream Protestants and Catholics do not insist that all forms of heavenly intervention are impossible. One year before the president of the Mormon church, Joseph F. Smith, received his famous vision of the dead, which has since been canonized as church scripture (D&C 138), three young Catholic children saw the Virgin Mary in Fatima, Portugal. In fact, much higher profile converts to Spiritualism than Godbe or Harrison have come out of churches such as Catholicism (Doyle); Anglicanism (Moses); Universalism (Thomas Lake Harris[90] and James Martin Peebles[91]); and Seventh-Day Adventism (Moses Hull[92]).

Nevertheless, as new religious movements which began in New York's burned over district both Mormonism and Spiritualism became anathema to skeptics and believers alike and were thus often compared. They both actively proselyted and successfully claimed converts from Protestants and Catholics. Their claim to new revelation was so central to their belief system and missionary message that it was only logical for detractors to claim that their revelations were satanic. Mormons also believed all revelations outside their church were unauthorized, whether a Spiritualist, Catholic, or Protestant revelation. Spiritualists were not so strict. As long as the apparition was not faked, it proved that they were right in claiming contemporary communication with spirits. It was more central to their message than that of the Mormons that everyone could see and speak with the departed and that such manifestations continued and could occur on a daily basis—and not only to a chosen few.

Thus it was easier for Spiritualists, who had no creed or central organization, to adopt an integralist perspective concerning Mormon revelation. According to this view, all revelations (including those proclaimed by Mormon prophets) if properly understood (which the Mormons did not) support modern Spiritualism and its teachings that the living can speak to the dead, and any attempt to interpret psychic experience beyond this simple truth, by organizing a priesthood or developing dogmas, are misguided. On the other hand, it was much more difficult for a new

---

90. See Arthur A. Cuthbert, *The Life and World-Work of Thomas Lake Harris* (Glasgow: C.W. Pearce, 1908); and Herbert Schneider and George Lawton, *A Prophet and a Pilgrim, Being the Incredible History of Thomas Lake Harris and Laurence Oliphant* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

91. See Andra Cutlip, *Pioneers of Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. 1 (Milwaukee: The National Spiritualist Association of Churches, n.d.).

92. See Paul Kagan, *New World Utopias* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1975).

religious movement, like the LDS church, which had a creed, organizational structure, and claimed divine authority to act in the name of God, to accept competing revelations in the same manner. To do so would increase the likelihood that the leaders' authority would be challenged and their status as the "true church" doubted. While it is likely Joseph Smith will continue to visit Spiritualists and channelers, it is unlikely that Swedenborg, Samuel Bowles, or Arthur Conan Doyle will reveal themselves to the Mormon hierarchy.[93]

93. However Doyle does continue to speak through his books, even to Mormon general authorities. See Carlos E. Asay, "Be Men!" *Ensign* 22 [May 1992]: 41 (quoting Doyle). See also Arthur Conan Doyle, *Through the Magic Door* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1907).