

A NOTE ON SOME CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE OLD WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD AND THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS (MORMONS)

Version 1.3

Introductory Remarks	1
Herbert W Armstrong and the Mormons	2
Mormon relationship to the Churches of God	3
Seven Restorations of the Work	5
Concluding Remarks	7
Appendix 1: Mormons and the Sabbath	8
Appendix 2: James Strang and the Sabbath-keeping Mormons	9
Appendix 3: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Community of Christ Seals	11
Appendix 4: J J Strange – Prophet, King, Apostle of the Sabbath	12
Appendix 5: Mormon Revelations and the Sabbath & The Sabbath Question in Early Mormonism	13
References	15

Introductory Remarks

Some years ago I wrote a short paper titled *Roots of Our Beliefs, Names & Titles* (click [here](#) to view it online). The paper demonstrated some similarities between the Churches of God, Adventists, Russellites and Christadelphians. God indeed works in mysterious ways to purify truth and to bring it together into a beautiful mosaic. He used a man to garner and sift through the literature of others to find truths and to then restore them to the Church of God.

The aforementioned paper discussed the similarity in some doctrines and titles of periodicals which may be found between the various Churches of God, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Christadelphians. But I did not discuss in detail the Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

However, because some anti-cult authors have claimed for decades that there are similarities between the old WCG and Mormons, I thought it appropriate to write a short article on the subject.

Herbert W Armstrong and the Mormons

In the aforementioned paper, my only reference to the Mormons was:

“it should be mentioned at this juncture that the 'God Family' concept as taught by Herbert Armstrong is not to be confused with that taught by the Mormons. Indeed, without going into detail, it is a fundamentally different idea and was not fully learned from them. It was a unique understanding which he uncovered from earnest Bible study and deep meditation.”

However, in *Transformed by Truth*, by Joseph Tkach jnr, chapter 4 – “The Right Hand of Fellowship” (<http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/truth/trans4.htm>), he notes:

“[there was] a major article by Ruth Tucker in the July 1996 edition of *Christianity Today* on the vast changes in the Worldwide Church of God. Her article was the first full-length treatment of our reformation to appear in a major evangelical publication. She began:

“For most of a half-century, no book on cults was complete without a chapter on the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) and its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. The late Walter Martin, in his classic *The Kingdom of the Cults*, devoted 34 pages to the group, documenting how Armstrong borrowed freely from Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, **and Mormon doctrines**. And it was during my own research and writing on cults and new religions in 1988 that I became aware that something unusual was happening.”” [emphasis mine]

Herbert W Armstrong was indeed familiar with the Mormons, as would just about everyone with a religious background in the West today. But NOT to the extent that Walter Martin, Ruth Tucker and others proclaim.

For instance, in chapter 15 of his *Autobiography* HWA wrote:

“During our journey across Wyoming, Dorothy's arm was bitten by a spider. It swelled up, and she was taken to a doctor. It must have been about this time that we had to telegraph my father to wire us additional funds. We had run out of food, gasoline, and money. Dorothy's arm had to be soaked in hot Epsom-salts water, and held high continually. Mrs. Armstrong, Bertha, and I had to take turns, on one day's driving, holding that arm, lest it hang down.

We stopped off one full day in Salt Lake City. Walter and I played some tennis on public courts near the camping grounds -- we were carrying our tennis rackets with us. We took the guided tour around the Mormon grounds and through the Tabernacle.”

And that is about the only contact we can be sure of.

But what are the similarities, if any? All Christian churches have beliefs pertaining to love, repentance, faith, hope and such like. But what of the hundreds of other distinctive teachings such as the God Family?

In an article titled "Why will man become God?" (*The Journal*, 31 August, 2000), author Ian Boyne wrote:

"Incidentally, even the famed anticult expert Robert Bowman has stated clearly that there is a difference between polytheistic deification and monotheistic deification. The Mormon view that men can become gods is totally unbiblical and bears no resemblance to the Church of God teaching that man will become a part of the one Eternal Godhead. Men will not become gods but, more properly, God beings."

Noted 'lost tribes of Israel' author, Steven Collins, in an e-mail communication comments:

"I agree with you that while the LDS and the COG camps were aware of each other's writings, there was little if any borrowing from LDS doctrines by HWA. I've had a number of in-depth discussions with Mormons re: their belief systems. You are correct in noting that there is a broad divergence between the "pre-existence" beliefs of Mormons and COG Sabbatarians ... However, in my discussions with Mormons, I saw similarities between the views of Mormons and our traditional WCG views of "God's family." You are correct that the "family of God" concept is more evident in the COG groups, and this ties it to the Bible's "one Godhead" (or "Elohim") doctrine, but there was a core similarity. My conclusion for this similarity in the afterlife was not that one had borrowed from the other, but rather that both views were based on biblical scriptures. The Supreme "Most High" of the Elohim is called "the Father" for a very good reason; because he is creating sons and daughters for eternity via humans on the earth (Romans 8:14-21 and 29, II Corinthians 6:18, etc.)" (e-mail 28 April 2003)

If this be so, then what, if any, relationship or cross-pollination has there been between the Mormons and Churches of God?

Mormon relationship to the Churches of God

During the period roughly 1830s – 1880s, there arose a great alternative religious stirring and the anticipation of Christ's return. At this time the Mormons, Adventists, Russellites, Christadelphian and Church of God movements arose – each having at least some knowledge of each other's beliefs.

These groups often had a fascination with subjects such as Christology, Melchizedek, numerology, prophecies for the last days, an end-time watchman, concept of the 'latter rain', spiritual Zion, true identity of the Whore of Revelation 17, restoration of truth in the last days and so on. There was indeed 'cross-fertilisation' for God works in mysterious ways and restores truths in ways He deems fit. Circuitous, almost 'hidden' ways, it sometimes seems.

For example, one of the Seventh-day Adventist's foremost scholars has discovered that the Holy Days should be observed, due to discussions with Church of God brethren.

One author asks:

"Is it possible that his [HWA's] borrowings included some from the "Restoration movement" established nearly a century before by Joseph Smith Jr.? And is it possible that there might have been substantial interchange between certain Mormon sects and the Church of God (Seventh Day) prior to Armstrong's separation?"

One qualification before proceeding. The term "Mormon" as it is used here does not refer exclusively, or even primarily, to the church headquartered in Salt Lake City. The "restoration movement" has a number of strands, and it is among some of the smaller bodies that interesting convergences with the WCG appear." (G Rumney, *Mormon Influence. Southern Exposure*, page 1)

"Substantial interchange?" After investigation and comparison of doctrines, my answer is a firm "No!" However, that there was knowledge of each other and reading of each other's materials, there is little doubt.

But complete borrowing of doctrines to which the author refers is not the case and, in fact, he does demonstrate or prove. Rumney himself later states that

“While it seems unlikely that Armstrong borrowed directly from the Strangites [a Mormon group] ... he certainly would have known of them” (page 2).

He does think that HWA borrowed the God Family teaching from the Mormons. But this is not possible as Armstrong only started teaching the God Family in the early 1950s during the early years of Ambassador College. But the Mormon belief in a multiplicity of gods that were previously human, that Lucifer was Christ's brother and so forth are not even remotely like Armstrong's God Family/gestation/born again in the resurrection teaching.

Rumney's only “proofs” relate to some very casual connections such as a next door neighbour that Garner Ted Armstrong relates was a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He does, however, point out that in the 1930s the Church of God (Seventh day) was headquartered at Missouri and it “was here that independent Adventist congregations had rejected the authority of Ellen White ... and coalesced into a denomination” (page 1). This was also where Joseph Smith, the founder of the original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (or Mormons as they are popularly known), discovered his “Zion” was to be found in Missouri and stated that Christ would return to the town of Independence.

Later, a Mormon leader, Brigham Young, led a trek to Utah, but those that rejected his rule forged the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the second largest of all Mormon groups, now known as the Community of Christ which has become almost mainstream Protestant). Joseph Smith's immediate family joined this group. Smith's eldest son, Joseph III became church president. This group rejected polygamy and temple rituals.

Rumney finds it interesting that both the Mormon groups and 1930s Church of God leader, Andrew Dugger, believed in “restoring” Church governance. Herbert Armstrong later also proclaimed this theme. The Mormons believed in 12 Apostles and the 70. I had long wondered why the old WCG did not have 12 leading men organized around HWA. Therefore I was pleased to see a Council of Elders formed in 1980 by HWA which sometimes had 12 members (sometimes less). Rumney asserts that

“What few writers have noticed, however, is how closely the Dugger doctrine [on Church governance] resembled that of the various Mormon sects that were active at that time, and working the same territory in direct competition with the Church of God. These were times of public debates between different Christian groups. A favorite subject was the Sabbath question, and the meetings were a form of entertainment in a time before TV chat shows or talk radio. It was an essential principle of the "Restoration" that the apostolic offices were to be re-established, and that this constituted proof of Mormonism's legitimacy. Both the Utah and Independence bodies have 12 Apostles and lesser offices such as "seventies".”

Herbert Armstrong rejected the Church governance structure as advocated by Dugger.

One thing that is interesting though, is the similarities between the seals of the old Worldwide Church of God and the Reorganized Church, perhaps indicating some ‘cross-pollination’ for want of a better word ([see them at the rear](#)).

In any event, a Mormon leader, James Strang (1813-1856), had a falling out with Brigham Young and also the Reorganized church and formed a seventh-day Mormon group in 1850. This group is still extant to this day.

The website of this group (<http://www.strangite.org/>) states:

“We are not a regularly organized church, at least in the corporate and administrative sense. But we are the original church, comprised of people who are members and priesthood holders,

continuing uninterrupted as the original church as it was organized in 1830 and as it existed when Joseph Smith was killed in 1844 ...

We believe in the Ten Commandments, including the commandment to “Remember the Sabbath day . . . the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,” which God gave as a “perpetual” memorial. James J. Strang restored that commandment in 1850 as part of the “Restoration” of all things. See “The Decalogue” in the *Book of the Law of the Lord*. The seventh day is Saturday, and most churches rationalize meeting on the first day which is Sunday.”

Today, this group is very small and scattered, but still observes the seventh-day Sabbath along with basic Mormon beliefs and Strang’s revelations (further information is available in the appendices).

Other smaller groups of Mormons have adopted the Biblical Holy Day observances.

Seven Restorations of the Work

Now, I am a firm believer in the dual meaning of Revelation 2 & 3: it refers to church eras or phases and literal historical churches. It also pertains to seven types of Christians. This was all taught in the old WCG. For instance, we were taught that the 7 spiritual attitudes of Revelation 2 & 3 were to be found through the entire history of the True Church, with each era being dominated by that era’s particular attitude. For example, the Laodicean attitude dominates the 7th era, but the other 7 attitudes are extant as well. It may be that the last 4 eras are formed into distinguishable church groups existing alongside one another in the last days with the Laodicean phase of God’s Church dominating.

Perhaps we can take church eras a step further: they are more than historical eras or phases. They also represent 7 restorations or ‘resurrections’ of a viable, visible Work along with addition truths restored. How opposite to the 7 resurrections of the Roman Empire. The former is non-political, small, weak and scattered. The other is associated with a great false religion – a Whore that mixes some truth with error, resulting in her condemnation on scripture.

Whilst other false pagan religions do not use the Bible and do not pretend to be Christian, this Whore claims to be Christ’s bride! Such lies and blasphemy. As such, the Bible spends much more time addressing this false religion than it does new age religions or others.

Rather than going into detail about each and every doctrinal similarity, I merely list the millennium, knowledge of the ‘lost century’ and rise of the RCC, that God has family attributes, water baptism, an interest in the ‘lost’ tribes of Israel. So the similarities are few and not all that great as some wish to assume. The Mormon view on the lost tribes being amongst American Indians and Maoris differs remarkably from Herbert Armstrong’s British-Israelite view.

The ‘lost tribes of Israel’ teaching was fascinating for explorers in Africa, central Asia and the Americas under protestant and Biblical influences within the British Empire. Many false pronouncements and illogical conclusions identifying the lost tribes of Israel with Afghans to various African tribes.

At a time of religious claims to restoration and discovery in the nineteenth century, Satan was cleverly and insidiously attempting to lead people astray from the true identity of Israel.

Today, there is a new generation of British-Israel scholars that have emerged with much new information and have undertaken indepth study. Amongst them is Steven Collins whose books have been sold by the Brigham Young University bookstore. Collins personally shipped two book orders which they ordered from him.

One senior Mormon who is a professor at a north American university has devoted intense study to the subject and produced a PhD thesis which assists greatly in the overall discussion. He is a subscriber to the British-Israel doctrine and has related how he read Herbert Armstrong’s book on the subject.

Another member of the Mormon church has written a book on the subject of the lost tribes, identifying them with the Anglo-Saxon-Kelts. He has been in communication with researcher Steven Collins for a number of years.

Many years ago, whilst living in western Australia, I met two Mormon evangelists. One was a North American Indian and this represented the first time I had met someone from that ethnic background, so that was an interesting experience.

During the conversation they mentioned how Manasseh may be found amongst north Americans and Ephraim amongst the English. They seemed to indicate that these tribes were not exclusive to American Indians. It was interesting and left me wondering if there was not a small British-Israel identity truth lurking somewhere in the organization.

We turn now to some Mormon groups that have 'migrated' over to many Church of God teachings. For instance, there is the New Covenant Church of God which is a Mormon offshoot. This particular group came to observe the Sabbath in 1999.

Another is the Church of Israel headed by Dan Gayman, but their 'migration' is much more circuitous.

It was in 1942 that a group of religious folk moved with their families from Rhode Island, Missouri, Michigan and Colorado to western Missouri. Their aim was to establish a new rural life away from the cities. Many of them had Mormon leanings (particularly from the Reorganized Church) but many did not. Dan Gayman's father (Leo Gayman) decided to move away from any Mormon influence and was joined by others from the group. They migrated to Vernon County, Missouri which also has historical associations for the Mormons. Here they formed a self-sufficient Christian community.

Their church was led by Duane Gayman, Dan's brother and was known as Church of Christ (interestingly, the name "Church of Christ" was made official by Joseph Smith in April 1830; this was changed to "Church of Latter Day Saints" by Joseph Smith in April 1834. Later, the name "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" was made official in April 1838. The title "Church of Christ" is not to be confused with the Church of Christ, an outgrowth of the Presbyterians whose 'founders' were Thomas and Alexander Campbell. The group is also known as 'Disciples of Christ'. They were called "Reformers," for their desire to restore the Church's first century roots. This way of life came to be known as the "Restoration Movement.").

In any event, Dan and Duane split with Dan calling his group the Church of our Christian Heritage and later the Church of Israel. Over time the Church switched to observing the Biblical Holy Days and later still the seventh-day Sabbath.

This was indeed a very circuitous route from Mormonism to sabbatarianism.

Even many Protestants are now discovering the Sabbath and Holy Days. For instance Restoration Foundation and others. As well as a group which I knew about since a youth which had an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles to be a 'witness' to the Jews. Over time they began to take the annual Holy Days seriously and later many of them decided to observe the Sabbath.

There are groups that have formed separately to the Church of God, emanating out of Protestantism that have formed non-aligned fellowships, observing the Sabbath and Holy Days. Some have been influenced by Messianic Jews or Hebrew roots groups; some by the Churches of God; some by the Seventh-day Adventists or just private study into Biblical typology, which led to observance of these days.

Something is stirring in Protestantism. Conservative researchers such as Walter Kaiser, Bahnsen and others are discovering the Law and the Older Testament (but not the Sabbath just yet). Just as each restoration or 'resurrection' of the Work of the Church of God occurred after God working much sifting through other groups and individuals, sorting out people and doctrines and then refining them to form a group spiritually called out of Babylon, so this may be happening with the seventh era.

Various Church of God groups are approximating Laodiceanism, perhaps soon to be joined by others.

Concluding Remarks

We have seen that there may have been some 'cross-fertilisation' between the Mormons and Church of God groups.

BUT, the connection is very limited and any similarities superficial. This by no means discounts any connection, but it does demonstrate no major borrowing of doctrines or symbols. The history and journey of these two movements have kept rather separate, with the occasional interesting side-glance between each other. In particular the "God Family" concept bears little resemblance between that taught by Herbert Armstrong and that taught by Mormons, except' perhaps, in some ways. Critics, however, do not understand and will not admit that.

Dr Roderick Meredith wrote about the true origin of the God Family doctrine that HWA began to understand in the early showing how it came about from deep thought and study without much or any reference to any other group as far as we are aware (see *Global Church News*, Aug-Sept 1993: 11-12).

Similarly, Aaron Dean, personal assistant to HWA, notes:

"HWA knew we were to judge angels so we must be somewhere between them and God. Then he began looking at scriptures that kept saying Christ our elder brother, and seeing him as He is because we will be like Him; and Christ the first of the first fruits; and the concept of Family and Oneness. At first he thought it might be blasphemy to think we could become God beings, but scripture seemed to indicate this. He told students in class about it, and asked them to look for any scriptures that disagreed, since that would end it. They didn't and in fact all agreed. So it became a teaching in the church. HWA did not borrow the doctrine from another group." (e-mail 25 April 2003)

The major roots of the theology espoused by Herbert Armstrong is primarily the Church of God (Seventh-day). However, being an inspired sifter, he also viewed the works of others (whether Russellite, Seventh-day Adventist, Bullinger, British-Israelites and so on) under the inspiration of God.

He was a divinely-inspired sifter that produced a marvelous mosaic that has not been known since the first century Apostles.

APPENDIX 1
Mormons and the Sabbath
(January - February 2002, *The Sabbath Sentinel*)
by Steven M. Collins

Years ago (when I had time on my hands), I did a study on the Book of Mormon. One thing I found out was that it is a Sabbatarian book. Here are four quotes from the book of Mormon which indicate support only for the seventh-day Sabbath.

Jarom 1:5: "...the people of Nephi waxed strong in the land. They observed to keep the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord. And they profaned not; neither did they blaspheme..." [Interesting that keeping God's laws and the Sabbath is linked to a time when God "blessed" the Nephites. Also "the law of Moses" is affirmed--the modern LDS Church keeps neither the Sabbath nor the law of Moses! The only "sabbath day" connected to the Law of Moses is the 7th day.]

Mosiah 18:23: "And he [Alma] commanded them that they should observe the sabbath day, and keep it holy, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God."

Mosiah 13:16-19: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; But the seventh day, the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, not thy cattle, nor any stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." [It is intriguing to me that the Book of Mormon has "King James English" language structures even though Moroni (who theoretically gave the book to Joseph Smith) likely did not speak like a 17th century Englishman. Nevertheless, if the Book of Mormon is to be "scripture" to a person, it is clear that he is commanded to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.]

III Nephi 18:14: "Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." [The "law of Moses" would include keeping the Sabbath, and this also enjoins the observation of "the statutes and judgments" of the law.]

So, the Book of Mormon requires the reader to keep the seventh-day Sabbath and the Law of Moses. Interesting! Modern Mormons keep neither. By keeping Sunday, Easter, Xmas, etc.; the modern LDS church is proclaiming its submission to the Babylonian Church and the Popes of Rome instead of to the Book of Mormon.

APPENDIX 2
James Strang and the Sabbath-keeping Mormons
(September - October 1999, *The Sabbath Sentinel*)
by Elder John J. Hajicek

One of the earliest Sabbath keeping churches in America is a minor Latter Day Saint church that is separate from the larger Utah-based Mormon church. When the Latter Day Saint church was founded in 1830, they rested on the first day, consistent with the New England Protestant climate where they had their cultural beginnings. How this small group diverged is an interesting episode in the history of American folk religions.

From its inception, the Latter Day Saints considered themselves a "restored church" wherein God would one by one restore all prior laws, priesthood, and ordinances which existed from Adam until Moses, and among Christ and his apostles. Thus, Joseph Smith wrote more scripture that the church compiled into books called the Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants. They gradually added high priests, a first presidency, and apostles into their priesthood. Over time, they added temples, washing of feet, and baptism for the dead, all before Joseph Smith was suddenly killed in 1844. But in 1850, the small variant of the Mormons carried on and restored the seventh-day Sabbath, and has been keeping it ever since.

This tiny branch believes that when Joseph Smith was killed, he appointed a successor named James Strang to lead the church to Wisconsin and Michigan. Brigham Young led the larger opposition group to Utah in 1847. Strang presented authentic archival documents in the hand of Joseph Smith, that appointed him to be the prophetic successor, and he claimed an ordination by angels. He was a brilliant backwoods lawyer, violinist, newspaper editor, and country preacher, who persuaded many of the earliest Mormons to join him.

The Sabbath was important to Strang early in his ministry. Though he made a foretelling distinction between the first day and the seventh day, he initially directed his missionaries to hold their meetings on the first day as had Joseph Smith. Thus, one year had not even passed when he claimed a revelation from God from which the following is extracted: "*And there [Voree, Wisconsin] let them assemble together on the first day of every week, to strengthen one another, and to receive instruction and blessings from me. Again I require of all who have received the Priesthood, that they go out and preach the Gospel, and teach as they are sent the first day of every week,*" (Revelation of 17 January 1845).

Five years later, as his church was being resettled on the Beaver Islands of Lake Michigan, he clarified that the seventh day would be the day of rest in the new island kingdom. "*The saints have been compelled, partly by law, but more by that public opinion or prejudice, which is above all law, to observe it accordingly. God gave them a dispensation to observe the first day, which they have done while under the Gentile power. . . . When the saints are redeemed from Gentile bondage, what shall excuse them from keeping God's everlasting law . . . ?*" [*Gospel Herald*, (23 May 1850): 78-79.]

However, the change to the seventh day was not universal for the church, but principally for those living in their own communities on the islands of the Great Lakes. That was clarified in the newspaper printed on Big Beaver Island: "*The Saints, when by themselves, and not restrained by the institutions of man, keep the Sabbath of God.*" [*Northern Islander*, 12 December 1850.]

Strang soon produced a famous eighty-page imprint called *The Book of the Law of the Lord* on the island in 1851. He purportedly stated that the book was a translation of an ancient Israel text mentioned in the Book of Mormon and the Bible and inscribed on brass plates. The laws, he suggested, were those which existed prior to the added law which was later fulfilled. The book included an expanded or "restored" ten commandments text. When the book was being reprinted in 1856 in a 336-page edition, and while the sheets still lay gathered in the bindery, Strang was killed like his predecessor Joseph Smith. The church press was destroyed by an angry mob, with some of the uncut sheets being rescued. The church dwindled in size after the death of Strang, but stabilized and has survived intact if barely.

Today, most of several hundred believers in the church he led still keep the seventh-day Sabbath, although members who feel uncomfortable sometimes keep the first day depending on their own social environment. Many people leave the larger Utah-based Mormon church when they discover the original Sabbath day, but never learn about this other Mormon church. More information on this unique church, which has survived so long as such a small remnant, is available at <http://www.Strangite.org>.

James J. Strang (1813-1856) is loved by many as Michigan's greatest prophet, and hated by more as Michigan's most dangerous pirate-but recognized by everyone as America's only monarch. He was a debater, lawyer, abolitionist, land developer (Wisconsin and Michigan), Mormon leader, newspaper editor (New York, Wisconsin, and Michigan), temple designer, violinist, historian (*Michilimackinac*), news correspondent (New York *Tribune*), political lobbyist (Washington), and scientist (*Smithsonian*). He was crowned king (1850), successfully defended himself against charges of treason (1851), and was twice elected to the Michigan legislature (1853 and 1855). He was assassinated on Big Beaver Island, Lake Michigan in 1856.

Strang entered the Mormon scene swiftly when in 1844 he claimed that the Mormon founders Joseph and Hyrum Smith had appointed him to succeed them just before their mob deaths. In barely a year, he had already duplicated Joseph Smith's style when he announced that he discovered an ancient American record inscribed on brass tablets in a Wisconsin hillside. Before long, he was issuing thousands of tracts and newspapers from his press in Wisconsin, and had gathered together several thousand members to his church. Brigham Young ignored Strang's affirmations, and took a separate group to near Council Bluffs, Iowa, and eventually to Utah in 1847. In the same year, Strang claimed to have a vision that the gathering place of God's faithful was instead to be in Michigan, on the Beaver Island archipelago. Land ownership disputes broke out with non-Mormons in the area, as well as jealousies over economic prosperity with neighboring Mackinac. Strang developed the city of Saint James, the best sheltered harbor on Lake Michigan, and established a steamboat wood trade and salted fish export industry. When his followers handed him a tin crown and wooden scepter in 1850, other area residents accused him of treason and robbing the U.S. mail sled. President Millard Fillmore stepped in by ordering the U.S. steamer *Michigan* to Saint James to take Strang to a federal trial in Detroit. Strang gained national fame and statewide favoritism from the press during the trial in which he and other Mormon leaders were acquitted. Strang had a political battle in Lansing that required an equally vigorous defense, as other politicians tried to unseat him from a late election victory in the legislative race of 1853-over a quarter of Michigan's geography in the sparsely-populated north. By 1856 his movement was growing so rapidly that a daily paper was implemented, his tabernacle neared completion, his capstone *Book of the Law of the Lord* lay in the bindery, and he was planning a run for congress. Former Mormons conspired in his murder with the captain of the U.S. steamer *Michigan*, and after a few pistol shots from behind a dockside woodpile, Strang lay dying in his wounds with the assassins claiming U.S. protection aboard the boat.

APPENDIX 3
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
and Community of Christ Seals



An earlier version of the RLDS seal superimposed behind the church's Modesto, California chapel.



Present Community of Christ
seal

APPENDIX 4

J J Strange – Prophet, King, Apostle of the Sabbath

(June 1978, *The Sabbath Sentinel*)

by George Dellinger

J. J. Strange: King, Apostle of the Sabbath
 GEORGE DELLINGER

MORMONS are strong advocates of Sunday. They have accepted the first day, based—they say—upon revelation and their understanding of both Scripture and their own sacred writings.

However, one early Mormon leader came out for the observance of the Sabbath and never wavered on that point. This was James Jesse Strang, a man largely forgotten today by those who study the Mormon faith. Strang's life is worth studying, however, if for no other reason (as far as Sabbath keepers are concerned) than his advocacy of the seventh day.

Strang was born in Scipio, Cayuga County, N.Y., on March 21, 1818. Sturdy as a youth and with little education, he worked at farming, teaching, and as postmaster, lecturer, newspaper editor, and lawyer. His family background was Baptist, but the area of New York where he lived had become a center of Mormonism, and he became involved with the new religion when he married Mary Moses Smith, an ardent Mormon.

In the summer of 1843 Strang moved to Burlington, Wis., where his wife's relatives had settled in 1835. In 1844, while visiting in Nauvoo, Ill., he became a member of the Mormon Church. He became very closely associated with the prophet Joseph Smith. When like the Mormons around Nauvoo became more and more difficult because of persecution from their neighbors, Strang went to Wisconsin to establish a haven for the people of his faith around Burlington.

On June 27, 1844, Joseph Smith

and his brother Hyrum were murdered by a mob in the Carthage, Ill., jail. This tragedy immediately brought forth various claimants for the mantle of the fallen prophet, with the majority following Brigham Young and moving west to Utah. But James J. Strang also gathered a sizable following, basing his claim to being Smith's successor upon a letter written to him by Smith in which the prophet said he had seen a vision telling him Strang would be his successor. In addition, Strang claimed to have had a vision at the very moment Smith was shot, in which an angel ordained him to be the ruler of the Mormons.

Strang, a born leader and a skilled debater, carried on a lengthy struggle with leaders of various factions of the Mormons. His natural talents gained him a large following. He led his people to the area of Voree, Wis., not far from Burlington, where he produced his final seal of his divine mission.

On September 13, 1845, Strang led a small group of associates to an oak near Voree. Buried beneath it were some golden plates Strang translated and gave to the world. This find stamped him, in the minds of his followers, as a true successor to Joseph Smith, who had translated the golden plates that became the Book of Mormon.

Strang was excommunicated by the far larger church group that followed Brigham Young, but always undaunted, Strang continued his efforts to gather followers, and he was quite successful for a time. Ever seeking a safe place for his people, Strang decided to take them to Beaver Island in northern Lake Michigan.

1849 and involved the relocation of a considerable number of his followers.

On Beaver Island Strang established a theocracy. Crowned king on July 8, 1850, he ruled like a king. Indeed, his rule could probably be called autocratic, even dictatorial; yet, he tried, at least in the beginning, to give his people a place where they could live their lives in peace according to their faith.

But this proved difficult. The Mormons had many troubles from outsiders and internal difficulties as well on Beaver Island and on the mainland coast of Michigan. The conclusion came in 1856. Strang was shot by four disgruntled former associates and died on July 9. His followers were driven off Beaver Island and their property was taken by their enemies. Scattered like sheep, having no designated successor to their fallen king and prophet, they drifted various ways. Many left all forms of Mormonism. But a loyal handful continue the practices of the faith they were taught. Today some 200 to 250 people remain members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strangites).

In 1880 Strang published *The Book of the Law of the Lord*, a complete guide to the kingdom he set up on Beaver Island. This book contains detailed guidelines for the government of the kingdom. One of his laws was the Sabbath. In Chapter I is a statement of the Ten Commandments, the wording not always the same as the King James rendering, each commandment being followed by notes in which Strang further elucidated the meaning. He numbers the Sabbath as the Third Commandment. In note two he says: "There is no ground for believing that the sanctifying of the Sabbath was not

Anted says I warra four keepi Church that. In note six he says keeping Sunday was an innovation introduced by Constantine.

Yet Strang was virtually unique in early Mormonism in supporting the Sabbath. Why? It is impossible at this date to say where he got this bit of theology, other than to say by divine revelation. He did not learn it from Seventh-day Adventists, for they were not organized until 1863. But we know that early Adventists received the Sabbath from Seventh Day Baptists, and this may be where Strang learned of it, since his background was strongly Baptist. In addition, Seventh Day Baptists were strong in the area of western New York where he spent his early years. Of course, this is only conjecture. Strang's records and the records of the Strangite church—which are often very detailed—tell us nothing of the Sabbath except to command it.

Why, one might ask, did Strang introduce the Sabbath into Mormonism when Joseph Smith, its founder, did not? Edward T. Couch, a faithful Strangite author, offered the following suggestion in his book *The Teachings of Jesus* (page 24): "Joseph Smith taught in regard to a Sabbath day, but did not specify the day. The reason for this is that he taught the people all they were able to receive, and more than most of them were willing to conform their minds to."

Perhaps Couch was correct. At any rate, Strang left his followers the precious legacy of the holy seventh-day Sabbath, something no other Mormon leader did. For this reason, if no other, Strang must not be forgotten.

APPENDIX 5
Mormon Revelations and the Sabbath
& The Sabbath Question in Early Mormonism
(October & November 1978, *The Sabbath Sentinel*)
by George Dellinger

Mormon Revelations and the Sabbath

GEORGE DELLINGER

MORMONS are among the strongest advocates of Sunday keeping in Protestantism. Their reasons, they say, are drawn from their own sacred writings. Mormons accept the Bible, but place much emphasis upon other writings they accept as divinely inspired. These are the *Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *The Doctrine and Covenants*. Since Mormons consider the Sabbath question settled, closed in favor of Sunday because of their sacred writings, it is vital for us to study into the matter and see whether perhaps there is support for Sabbath keeping in these books.

The first reference to notice is in the *Book of Mormon*. In the book of Jarom, verse 5, in speaking of a group of people called the Nephites, it says: "They observed to keep the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord." Mormons believe the Nephites were descendants of the so-called ten lost tribes of Israel who came to the North American continent. We read they kept the Sabbath.

Another valuable reference is in Mosiah 13:12-24, where we find the Ten Commandments listed. In verses 16-19 we find the Fourth Commandment, given essentially as in Exodus 20. Verse 16 says, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Could that be clearer?

Again, in Mosiah 18:23 we read, "And he [Alma, a prophet] commanded them that they should

observe the sabbath day, and keep it holy, and also every day they should give thanks to the Lord their God." Once again, a plain requirement to keep the Sabbath!

The Nephites are frequently described as zealous observers of the law of Moses. See 2 Nephi 5:10 and 25:24-30, Mosiah 2:3, 3 Nephi 1:24, and especially Alma 30:3. This obviously includes the Sabbath, as stated in Jarom 5.

In *The Pearl of Great Price*, a selection of translations made by Joseph Smith, the Sabbath is referred to twice in connection with Creation. In Moses 3:2,3 and Abraham 5:2,3 the Sabbath is mentioned as having been sanctified at creation. This cannot in any way refer to Sunday.

So there can be no question but the *Book of Mormon* and *The Pearl of Great Price* both support the Sabbath. The reason Mormons observe Sunday is not found in these books, however, but in *The Doctrine and Covenants*, a collection of the revelations they believe God gave through the leaders of their church.

The basic reference upon which Mormon Sunday keeping is based is Section 59, a revelation "given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, August 7, 1831." Mormons point out that August 7, 1831, was a Sunday, and then they read verses 12 and 13: "But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy

sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord. And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full." Since this revelation was given on a Sunday and the term Lord's day seems to be used for it, Mormons conclude the matter is concluded.

But is it? If we go up to verse 9 we read, "Thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day." And verse 10 adds: "For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High."

Now if we compare this revelation with Scripture, we find perfect harmony. Which day is the holy day of the Lord? Isaiah 58:13 and Mark 2:28 make it crystal clear that God's holy day is the Sabbath. So if we consider the reference to "the Lord's day" in verses 12 and 13 to be a reference back to verses 9 and 10, we have the Sabbath commanded in plain language.

Furthermore, in Section 68 we have a revelation "given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Hiram, Ohio, November, 1831." Verse 29 of this revelation says, in no uncertain language: "And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

The evidence appears conclusive. The sacred writings of the Mormons plainly command the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath, not Sunday. To use *The Doctrine and Covenants* 59:12, 13 as support for Sunday keeping is simply not enough. If one wishes to be honest with the sacred books of Mormonism, he must keep the seventh-day Sabbath!

(Concluded next month)

The Sabbath Question in Early Mormonism

GEORGE DELLINGER

MORMONS are very strong advocates of Sunday keeping. The reason for this lies in their belief in the inspiration of revelations received by Joseph Smith and others—revelations believed by them to be from God. Their Sunday keeping is based upon these revelations. But we might fairly ask, was there no discussion of the matter in the early days of Mormonism? Did no one ever raise the question, Should we observe Saturday as the Sabbath?

In our previous article, "Mormon Revelations and the Sabbath," we say that a fair and honest study of these revelations lead one to the seventh-day Sabbath of God, not to Sunday. But the question still arises, Was there not even one voice raised in defense of the seventh day? Of course there was James J. Strang, whose group observed Saturday. (See my article, "J. J. Strang—Prophet, King, Apostle of the Sabbath," in the *JUNE SABBATH SENTINEL*). But was he the only one? No, he was not. Let us look at a bit of history.

Wilford Woodruff, converted to Mormonism in 1832, later fourth president of the church, who issued the manifesto forbidding polygamy in 1890, stated in his journal that, before becoming a Mormon, he had kept the Sabbath. He wrote: "In our zeal, my brother Aaron and I adopted the worship of the Lord on Saturday instead of Sunday. I felt that a change in the seventh to the first day of the week was likely a perversion made by man without authority from heaven." He later said that he was keeping the Sabbath when he was baptized into the Mormon faith.

Orson Pratt, one of the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church

wrote in 1850: "Again, must the seventh day or the first day of the week be kept holy unto the Lord? . . . There is rather more evidence . . . [in the New Testament] for keeping holy the Sabbath day or Saturday than there is for keeping the first day or Sunday."

President H. C. Kimball said in 1861: "Has there been any change in the first principles of the doctrine of Christ as revealed by Jesus Himself? No: that doctrine stands good, and will forever remain so. Some suppose that the Ten Commandments . . . have been done away; but I can inform you that they are still in force." He then recited the Commandments, including the fourth, which he had just stated was yet in force. Whatever his personal belief about the day of worship may have been, he could not deny what he said.

There was also some support of the Sabbath among the many splinter groups that formed after Joseph Smith was killed in 1844. J. J. Strang is one example. Another interesting example is found in an obscure magazine published on behalf of the Church of Christ, the followers of David Whitmer.

This magazine, *The Return*, was published at Davis City, Iowa. In the issue for June, 1896, in an article entitled "Should We Observe the Sabbath, or Sunday?" the editor, C. A. Wickes, wrote: ". . . did God establish one day of the week for man to observe as a day of rest and worship, and . . . did He ever change that day? . . . there can be but one answer. . . . We know God gave the 4th commandment, and that it means Saturday. We also know that nowhere in the Bible or Nephite Records (the Book of Mormon) is there any account of a command-

ment of God or Christ, to change that day, or institute any other in place of it.

"It is hardly necessary to state the fact, that the various attempts to show that 'on some other day of the week Christ or the Apostles, or the Church in different places, did this thing or that,' amounts merely to . . . rubbish. . . ."

He then continues with several excellent arguments in favor of the Sabbath. One of these is to point to Matthew 24:20 as proof that Christ's followers would be observing the Sabbath long after He Himself was visibly no longer present.

In the July issue Wickes continued with several Biblical texts and facts of history to prove the Sabbath is perpetual. His final sentence is: "As for me and my house, we will keep the commandments of God."

So we can see that, despite some honest thinking on the part of various early Mormon leaders and writers, Sunday overwhelmed the Sabbath. Joseph Smith simply adopted the tradition of the society that surrounded him. How sad to see how close the Mormons came!

References

- Armstrong, HW (1970) “*NO! I Never was a “Jehovah’s Witness”, or a Seventh-day Adventist!*” (reprint of a July, 1953 *Plain Truth* article)
- Boyne, I (2000) “Why will Man become God?”, *The Journal*, 31 August
- Collins, S (2002) “Mormons and the Sabbath”, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, Jan-Feb: 20
- Collins, S (2003) E-mail, 28 April
- Dean, A (2003) E-mail, 25 April
- Dellinger, G (1978) “J J Strange – Prophet, King, Apostle of the Sabbath”, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, June: 21-22
- Dellinger, G (1978) “Mormon Revelations and the Sabbath”, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, October: 11
- Dellinger, G (1978) “The Sabbath Question in Early Mormonism”, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, November: 20
- Hajicek, Elder J (1999) “James Strang and the Sabbath-keeping Mormons”, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, Sept-Oct: 16-17
- Hoekema, AA (1972) *The Four Major Cults*. The Paternoster Press, Exeter, England
- Meredith, RC (1993) “How we came to understand man’s ultimate destiny”, *Global Church News*, Aug-Sept: 11-12
- Rumney, G (c2000) “*Mormon Influence. Southern Exposure*” (internet article)
- Tkach, J jnr (1997) *Transformed by Truth*. (quoted in <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/truth/trans4.htm>)
- White, C (1997) *Roots of our Beliefs, Names and Titles* (full article available at http://www.originofnations.org/HRP_Papers/doc/index.htm)
-

History Research Projects

GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

www.originofnations.org

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions. The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.
