PRAISE FOR

THE AMERICAN MUHAMMAD

Dr. Alvin Schmidt is one of the foremost living specialists on the world’s religions and particularly their cultic offshoots. No one is in a better position to identify the parallels between Islam and Mormonism—and their radical difference as compared with creedal Christianity. This book is ideal not only for those who wish to be informed in-depth as to the doctrines and practices of these two increasingly influential belief systems but also for those—all too common today—who think erroneously that “Islam and historic Christianity are really saying the same thing” or that “Mormonism is just another Christian denomination.”

—John Warwick Montgomery, PhD, DThéol, LLD
Distinguished Research Professor of Philosophy and Christian Thought,
Patrick Henry College

Alvin Schmidt in The American Muhammad did what no other Christian historian has ever done by gathering seventy valuable parallels between Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, and Muhammad, the founder of Islam. While it’s politically correct to say that Mormonism and Islam are two great religions, Schmidt is politically incorrect and takes on a taboo by being historically accurate in comparing these two religions. Such ‘taboos’ should be considered unfair at best and purely prejudiced at worst. Schmidt takes great courage by rejecting such censorship to prove beyond any doubt that Joseph Smith saw Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, as a great inspiration and role model. What history overlooked, Schmidt provided the missing links, proving that the two flowed out of the same dark fountain.

—Walid Shoebat
Author of Why I Left the Jihad (2005), nationally known speaker, former Muslim Brotherhood member

This book compares the life and teachings of Joseph Smith to Muhammad. This is, in itself, a fascinating subject. Even more interesting, however, is the argument that the parallels aren’t all coincidental, but, instead, they are the result of Joseph Smith’s determined effort to replicate in America what Muhammad had accomplished in Arabia. On account of this, anyone
interested in the history of Mormonism as well as the influence of Islam needs to consult Al Schmidt’s latest book.

—Adam S. Francisco, DPhil
Associate Professor of History and Political Thought
Concordia University Irvine, CA

At a time when Christianity is under assault worldwide, this painstakingly researched and superbly written account of seventy parallels between the founders of two thriving socio-political faiths, Islam and Mormonism, should be compulsory reading for all, especially scholars and journalists dealing with religion and world affairs. It is a scary narrative describing Muhammad and Joseph Smith as violent, greedy, and lecherous narcissists bearing, biblically speaking, the marks of false prophets, thus the opposite of Christ, whose Gospel both reject. Alvin Schmidt shows that Islam and Mormonism have been from the outset religions of the sword, not of love. He deserves gratitude.

—Uwe Siemon-Netto, PhD, DLitt
Director, Center for Lutheran Theology & Public Life

Dr. Alvin Schmidt’s book *The American Muhammad* is a must-read for everyone who wants to understand Joseph Smith and Muhammad. It is extremely well researched and yet very readable. Dr. Schmidt reveals the dark side of both men in a logical, compelling way that will enlighten and equip the reader. *The American Muhammad* should be a must-read in every school in the world.

—Ted Baehr, JD, LHD
Founder and Publisher of MOVIEGUIDE®: The Family Guide to Movies and Entertainment

*The American Muhammad* is a well-written and scholarly book—fascinating, well-researched, and eye-opening! I found Alvin Schmidt’s book particularly captivating! I had previously noticed similarities in the life stories of the leaders Muhammad and Joseph Smith, but Schmidt has gone into impressive detail, letting the facts speak for themselves. This book deserves to be read. It gives unbiased insight not just into the founders of these two religions, but into human nature and powerful human motivations.

—Bill Federer
Author of *What Every American Needs to Know about the Qur’an*
Frequent guest on radio and TV programs
Not long after Joseph Smith founded his controversial movement in 1830, his contemporaries saw parallels between Smith and Islam’s Muhammad. In his intriguing study, Dr. Schmidt explains why. A fascinating look at two men whose religious views have affected millions.

—Bill McKeever
Founder/President of Mormonism Research Ministry
Co-author of *Mormonism 101* and *Answering Mormons’ Questions*

This is the most comprehensive comparative study on Islam and Mormonism. This study provides the reader with a better understanding of who Muhammad and Joseph Smith were and what they taught in the context of the many parallels that occurred in their lives. It proves how the teachings of Islam and Mormonism are at odds with the Western values of liberty and equality. In addition, this work highlights the threat these two religions pose to the West in general and Christians in particular, showing that a distorted gospel is more dangerous than a completely altered theology.

—Hicham Chehab
Pastor of Salam Christian Fellowship
Formerly Adjunct Professor of “Islam and the West”
Former member of the Muslim Brotherhood

The book *The American Muhammad* is an eye-opening experience for America and the world. It brings to light numerous, well-documented facts about Smith and Muhammad, commonly not known by either one’s followers and the general populace. For instance, their having admitted receiving some revelations from Satan, and that some of their other revelations turned out to be false. Dr. Schmidt’s meticulous research shows that history can bring to light hidden secrets kept from us all. This book informs and stimulates readers not afraid of the light.

—Kamal Saleem
Author of *The Blood of Lambs: A Former Terrorist’s Memoir of Death and Redemption*

*The American Muhammad* offers a candid look at the similarities between Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon Church), and Muhammad, the founder of Islam. From angel visits to polygamy, this easy-to-read, yet well-researched book offers the reader a balanced overview of each man as contrasted with biblical Christianity.

—Sandra Tanner
Utah Lighthouse Ministry
The American Muhammad is a good read for the merely curious yet exciting scholarship for the serious researcher. Its clear definitions and copious data support the seventy-some mindset parallels of Joseph Smith, Mormonism’s originator, to that of his ideological mentor, Muhammad, of Islam. The American Muhammad will be provocative to those who assume that either Joseph Smith’s or Muhammad’s religious views and methodology were compatible to that of Jesus Christ and biblical Christianity. The historical reality is the opposite. Their theocracy based on violence and the sword is nowhere similar to that of Jesus Christ, the prince of peace.

—Richard Joseph Shuta, PhD
Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology
and New Testament Studies, Concordia University Ann Arbor
CEO of InHocSignum, LLC

No matter what your personal views are about Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (popularly known as the Mormon Church), or about the Prophet Muhammad, recognized by many as the founder of Islam, there can be no doubt that these men had a deep and far-reaching impact on the world in which we now live. How can it be that these men, coming from humble beginnings and living in simpler times, could have such a profound influence that affects the lives of millions today? Were they both truly prophets? Or were they both driven to their actions by similar life experiences? A comparison of their lives reveals much about what inspired them to actions that have ultimately altered the course of history and the beliefs of people around the world. In this work, Dr. Alvin Schmidt brings together research into the early lives of these religious leaders to compare and contrast what drove these men. His conclusions are very thought-provoking, and are sure to spark considerable discussion among scholars and laymen alike. Serious researchers as well as curious readers will find many topics of interest among the dozens of parallels Dr. Schmidt has pointed out here.

—Lane A. Thuet
Co-Author of What Every Mormon (and Non-Mormon) Should Know
Born LDS and raised in Salt Lake City as a Mormon for 22 years
To George A. Mather, a friend and a long-time student of Mormonism, who encouraged me to research and unveil the parallels between Joseph Smith and Muhammad
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In the realm of Christian missions, few world religions, cultures or ethnic groups have proved a more difficult ground to till than that of Islam. Indeed, the missionaries representing the Church Missionary Society, as one of several examples, toiled 60 years at the beginning of the twentieth century before seeing a single convert among the Sudanese Muslims.¹ This scenario has been duplicated in numerous Islamic communities, which left the sense that Islam was an impenetrable religious society. Yet that did not dissuade Christian mission workers from carrying the banner of love to a world that rejects Christ.

In the history of the United States, a much smaller group that began under the visionary illuminations of Joseph Smith Jr., in 1830, the Mormons, began as a tightly knit religious society. After his death, the much-persecuted church fled and isolated itself behind the Rocky Mountains, forming a natural barrier between it and the eastern American states. Eventually, Christian missionaries targeted the Utah Territory as a mission field, but the Latter-day Saints’ resistance produced little fruit.

Following the unsolved murder of one of the earliest Christian missionaries among the Mormons, a new plan emerged to dot the countryside with mission-sponsored schoolhouses to educate the upcoming generation of Mormons and to plant churches simultaneously. That openness, along with the transcontinental railroad that crossed Salt Lake City, presented a pluralistic frontier where non-Mormon messages could be heard.

The struggles that past missionaries faced have immensely changed through today’s global internet and mass media. People can read, think, listen, debate, and question their beliefs and history with

the global community. The Al-Jezeerah television website, quite an unfriendly source for Christians, has revealed to its mortification that six million Muslims convert to Christianity annually in Northern Africa alone.\(^2\) The more information that is available through modern technology, the more independent the inquirer becomes in the privacy of his heart, mind, and soul.

Similarly, there is a mass exodus within Mormonism and a large number of these become genuine Christians. That exodus dampens the conversion rate among Mormons, leaving its growth stumped as compared to its nineteenth-century projection. Even more troubling is its large segment of inactive members.\(^3\)

Each religion, with its independent dogma, tradition, and culture, has a profound information jungle wherein the astute explorer can sift for gems that others have overlooked. From a Christian perspective, this kind of discovery is noteworthy, because it clarifies our understanding of the scene behind the scene. Who or what guided these two misguided prophets? An insightful answer to this question comes through examining their history and their spiritual journey. When we see marked parallels and similar events that make these two religious prophets repeat the same error over and over, then we are reminded of what King Solomon observed, “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Mormonism, in the observation of many, is becoming a world religion in its own rank. Islam, as its predecessor, had a 1,300-year advanced start in becoming a world religion. There is a striking parallel between the two founding prophets that Joseph Smith’s contemporaries first noticed. Yet Smith made the most remarkable confirmation when he declared himself to be the “American Mohamet.” With that he drew a voluntary parallel between Mormonism and Islam.

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\(^2\) James M. Arlandson, “Six Million African Muslims Convert to Christianity Every Year,” http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles6/AlJazeeraAfrica.php [accessed November 13, 2012]. This article is followed by the verbatim transcript from the Al-Jazeera Website.

As a missionary, researcher, and writer on Mormonism for over 35 years, I know of no one who has culled as much information on the lives of Muhammad and Joseph Smith than the former Illinois College sociology professor, Dr. Alvin J. Schmidt. What he presents is not a simple rehashing of old theories, but a fresh, newly analyzed, religious and sociological study of the two prophets that makes this work captivating and moving. Dr. Schmidt’s credentials and past tomes qualify him to present this material. The reader will certainly be pleased with his clear and logical presentation of the parallel lives of Muhammad and Joseph Smith.

KURT VAN GORDEN
Thanksgiving Day, 2012
Director of the Utah Gospel Mission
PREFACE

This book presents, discusses, and analyzes seventy-some parallels between Muhammad, the founder of Islam, and Joseph Smith Jr., the founder of Mormonism. Thus, readers will find it helpful to know what sources were researched to find these numerous parallels.

Nearly all parallels discussed in the following pages were found by researching the history of Muhammad and Smith, together with closely reading the Koran and the Hadith and also by reading Smith’s main documents, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. By reading these works, many parallels surfaced serendipitously.

CITING HISTORICAL FACTS

This book gathered information from documented, historically reliable accounts in order to give readers a better understanding of how and why Muhammad and Smith conducted themselves the way they did. To be sure, the selection of facts is rarely a totally objective process. But in the interest of reliable, accurate knowledge, I have taken the greatest care to select the facts as objectively as possible. Recently, Richard Lyman Bushman, a historian and a Mormon, urged scholars to do historical studies on Mormonism that are faithful to the past, meaning they should accurately report what really happened, rather than what is supportive or compatible with the official Mormon position. He stated, “The facts cannot be forced into any form at all.”¹ With that in mind, the facts reported and discussed throughout this book attempt to convey accurately and faithfully what actually transpired.

When unknown facts, especially unusual ones, are first revealed, it is quite human not to like seeing or hearing them, particularly when they are contrary to perceptions and beliefs presently held. Thus, uncomfortable facts are often ignored. We all have heard, “Don’t confuse me with the facts; my mind is made up.” But it is also prudent to remember what John Adams, second president of the United States, said, “Facts are stubborn things.” Facts are vital for us to gain a better understanding of given historical individuals, both in terms of who they were, what they did, and how their actions affected people and history. Here the words of Simon G. Southerton, a former Mormon bishop in Australia, now excommunicated, come to mind in regard to the evidence and discussion found in his book *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (2004). Writing about Mormons, he recently wrote,

Any attempt to describe Mormon doctrine is fraught with peril. The most exhaustive survey of the beliefs and doctrines of the LDS, the five-volume *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (1992), contains the proviso that its views are not necessarily the official positions of the church. . . . Yet, the encyclopedia was produced by church scholars, published jointly with church-owned Brigham Young University, and its production was supervised by General Authorities, including a number of apostles. Over time, the Brethren have learned that sudden, public changes to long-held beliefs can be painful and damaging, as was apparent during the public reversals on polygamy and the ban on blacks holding the priesthood—doctrines that had become unsustainable in American society.2

Southerton’s words are even more pertinent in terms of revealing uncomplimentary facts about Muhammad’s teachings, because Mormons occasionally do change some of Smith’s culturally unsustainable doctrines. For instance, as Southerton states, black men were barred from the priesthood virtually from the beginning of the Mormon church, but in 1978 they were finally admitted to the priesthood as a result of a new revelation. This revelation contradicted existing official Mormon teaching that had been affirmed for more

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than a century by the LDS leadership, in spite of the LDS having once had an ordained black elder, Elijah Abel, as early as March 1836 in Kirtland, Ohio. At least one report indicates Joseph Smith ordained him. Later in December 1836, Abel was “advanced to the priesthood rank of Seventy.” But by 1847, Brigham Young (LDS president) affirmed “a subordinate status for blacks within Mormonism.” And eighty years after Brigham’s presidency, Joseph Fielding Smith, in 1958, twelve years before he became LDS president in 1970, reinforced barring black men from Mormonism’s priesthood. He gave the following reason. “Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with a black skin and have been denied the privilege of the Priesthood and the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel.”

Regarding change in the LDS, its leadership has in recent years also tolerated some Mormons who have published scholarly books and articles substantiating the various flaws and deviant behavior of Joseph Smith. Jan Shipps, a contemporary non-Mormon scholar of Mormonism, has stated that there is now (since about three decades ago) a greater openness among Mormons to studying their past that was not true previously. Shipps is right. Mormon leaders now are much more likely to tolerate, and sometimes even accept, criticisms regarding Smith. Muslim leaders, on the other hand, do not tolerate any criticism of Muhammad or his doctrines, no matter how small. They see any less-than-favorable observations about him, no matter how factually authentic, as completely unacceptable, even as

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6 Ibid., 91.


blasphemous. The eruptions of violence that occurred in 2006 in the Netherlands and some other parts of Europe in regard to published cartoons that did not cast a favorable light on Muhammad support this conclusion. Although this book reveals and discusses numerous parallels between Smith and Muhammad that are often not complimentary, they are not cited and discussed to anger Mormons or Muslims but to provide them facts not commonly known. They are intended to be educational.

Less than two decades ago, Paul M. Edwards, a historian of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), argued that Smith

was not the usual sort of person. He did not approach life itself—or his religious commitment—in a usual way. Yet the character of our historical investigation of Joseph Smith and his time has been primarily traditional, unimaginative, and lacking in any effort to find or create an epistemological methodology revolutionary enough to deal with the paradox of our movement.9

Edwards is right. The numerous parallels between Smith and Muhammad, portrayed in the following chapters, confirm that Smith was not an individual who can be understood in the traditional or unimaginative way. The following pages below confirm that conclusion.

CITATIONS FROM THE KORAN AND THE HADITH

According to Islamic teachings, the words of the Koran are Allah’s words that came down from the perfect tablet stored in heaven. But since Muhammad had these words recorded, they are also his words. The words in the Hadith, on the other hand, reportedly did not come down from heaven. So they are only the sayings and traditions of Muhammad. Thus, it can be stated the words in the Koran and also the Hadith are those of Muhammad. The present book cites references from these two sources as his words and thoughts, although he personally did not write their content.

Although Muhammad was illiterate, M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, a recent translator of the Koran, says he “would recite the new addition [revelation] to the Qur’an to those around him, who would eagerly learn it and in turn recite it to others. Throughout his mission the Prophet repeatedly recited the Qur’an to his devotees and was meticulous in ensuring that the Qur’an was recorded. . . .”10 Haleem further adds, “An inner circle of his followers [scribes] wrote down verses of the Qur’an as they learned them from the Prophet. . . .”11 And by the end of his life in A.D. 632 “the entire Qur’an was written down in the form of un-collated pieces.”12 Then between A.D. 650 and 656, Uthman (the third caliph and son-in-law of Muhammad) reportedly standardized and codified the un-collated pieces into one book, the Koran.13

With respect to the origin and content of the Koran, some scholars have in recent years been questioning whether it is historically accurate to say its recorded words are Muhammad’s. They argue the text of the Koran did not really appear until the ninth century (two-hundred years after Muhammad), and so they contend it is primarily a reflection of what Muslims believed and thought about Muhammad at that time.14 That said, the present book still operates with the assumption that the Koran’s words are essentially Muhammad’s, because the argument of the questioners is still strongly debated.

Citations from the Koran are taken from The Holy Qur’an, translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1995). Occasionally, a citation is taken from another translation when a given verse reads more clearly in English. When this is done, the given citation is indicated in a footnote. At the end of each citation from the Koran, the sura (chapter) and its verses are indicated. Thus, if a citation is, for

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., xvi.
example, from sura 9:39, it appears as (K 9:39), where “K” stands for Koran, and “9:39” indicates the sura’s number and its verse(s).

It is also helpful to know that most English translations of the Koran commonly have some words appear in parentheses or brackets in order to bring out more fully the Arabic meaning. Another item worthy of note pertains to the use of the “We” passages in the Koran, for instance, “We have sent verses down to you. . . .” (K 24:34). These verses refer to Allah; editors call this the “royal we.” They do not indicate plurality. Finally, I use the spelling of Koran rather than Qur’an. The former has traditionally been used by scholars in the West.

In addition to citations from the Koran and the Hadith, various references are also cited from some Muslim biographers and scholars who have written favorably about Muhammad. And numerous citations are also taken from books and articles written by various biographers who are critical of him, including citations from some ex-Muslim authors. These sources aid our understanding of who Muhammad was and what he did.

All citations from the Hadith are from the Sahih of al-Bukhari, a multi-volume publication, initially compiled in the ninth century. Muslim scholars consider Bukhari’s compilation among the different Hadith collections to be the most authentic.

CITATIONS FROM SMITH’S DOCUMENTS

The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and portions of the six volumes of the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints are cited as essentially Smith’s works. Most of Smith’s published works were recorded by his scribes.

The Book of Mormon, as is widely known, is the book Smith said he produced from the golden plates of the angel Moroni. It consists of fifteen books, which Mormons see as divine revelations. Its present cover page states it is “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,”¹⁵ and thus it is considered of equal value to the Bible.

According to the Book of Mormon, there were three migrations from the Holy Land to the Americas, one being the Jaredites who

¹⁵ This statement was not on the cover of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. It first appeared in 1982.
migrated in about 2200 B.C., after the Tower of Babel event. A
second migration occurred with Mulek, a son of the Hebrew king
Zedekiah. He and his passengers arrived around 589 B.C. The third
migration took place when Lehi (a Hebrew prophet) and his followers
came from Jerusalem around 600 B.C. Years later, one group of
Lehi’s descendants, the Nephites, absorbed the descendants of Mulek.
But the Book of Mormon focuses primarily on the descendants of
Lehi. Lehi had four sons of which two, Nephi and Laman, figured
most prominently. Nephi’s descendants became the Nephites, and
Laman’s became the Lamanites. These two groups were often at war
with each other. Initially, the Nephites were more righteous; they
were “light-skinned,” and the rebellious Lamanites were cursed with
being “dark-skinned.”

The American Indians, according to the Book of Mormon,
descended from the Lamanites. Much of the Book of Mormon is an
abridgement of the larger plates of Nephi, containing the history of
the Nephites, recorded by Mormon, a prophet. When Mormon died,
his son Moroni buried the plates. And when Moroni, the last of the
Nephites, was killed by the Lamanites in A.D. 421, he became angel
Moroni, and fourteen-hundred years later he gave Smith access to the
golden plates at Hill Cumorah in western New York on September
22, 1827.

Concerning the Book of Mormon, it is interesting to note that a
few scholars for some time have argued that this book is not Smith’s
work but an adapted version of Solomon Spalding’s “Manuscript
Found” (written between 1811 and 1814). The discussion in the

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16 Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (New York: Doubleday &
Company, 1977), 98. The Book of Mormon states when some Lamanites
united with the Nephites “their curse was taken from them, and their skin
became white like unto the Nephites” (III Nephi 2:15).
17 The reputed golden plates are sometimes referred to as brass plates.
William Smith, Joseph’s brother, said the plates were “a mixture of copper
and gold, and much heavier than wood or even stone.” See Donna Hill,
*Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company,
18 Recently, a well-documented book by Wayne L Cowdery, Howard A.
Davis, and Arthur Vanick, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* (St.
Louis: Concordia, 2005) appeared contending that Joseph Smith did not
write the Book of Mormon, but that he and his close associate Sidney Rigdon
adapted it from Solomon Spalding’s Manuscript Found. Some have also
following chapters, however, operates with the assumption that the
Book of Mormon is Smith’s work. Quoted citations from the Book of
Mormon are identified by the name of a given book in parentheses,
along with chapter and verse number.

Doctrine and Covenants is another book Mormons see as God’s
revelations. The revelations were given mostly to leaders of the
church, especially to Smith. Its revelations are recorded in one
hundred thirty-eight sections (each section is a separate revelation).
As with the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants is also seen as
sacred scripture by LDS Mormons. Citations from Doctrine and
Covenants are identified as D&C in parentheses, together with the
section (similar to a chapter) and its verse number(s).

The Pearl of Great Price includes the Book of Moses, the Book of
Abraham, Smith’s revision of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew’s
Gospel, a twelve-page extract of Smith’s History of the Church of
Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints, and The Articles of Faith. The Pearl
of Great Price, however, was not canonized by the LDS until 1880,
almost forty years after Smith’s death.

The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith is a book that
contains speeches and sermons preached by Smith. It was largely
compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith (before becoming tenth president
of the LDS) and first published in 1938.

With regard to the six volumes of Smith’s History of the Church
of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints, it has been shown that much of
their content was not written by him, even though these volumes read
as though he personally wrote or dictated their content. For one,
“more than half of the history was written and compiled after his
death, making it impossible that the majority of the History was
written or dictated by him.”19 Second, “The information written in the
last half of the History, while still written in the first person, as if it
were Joseph telling the story, actually came from many journals and
manuscripts.”20

argued that the Book of Mormon borrowed extensively from Ethan Smith’s
19 Edmond C. Gruss and Lane A. Thuet, What Every Mormon (and Non-
Mormon) Should Know (LaVergne, TN: Xulon Press, 2006), 265.
20 Ibid.
CITATIONS FROM SOURCES ABOUT SMITH

In addition to citing from the primary sources of Smith’s writings, secondary sources (books and articles) written by scholars of Mormonism are also cited. Some of the sources are from scholars whose works have been published by the Mormon-operated publisher Deseret Book Company in Salt Lake City, Utah. Some references, for example, are from books published by Signature Books, also located in Salt Lake City. This publisher has published numerous books often quite critical of some prominent past Mormon leaders. In recent years, this firm has printed scholarly books that have with historical integrity also revealed some facts about Smith that are quite uncomplimentary. Some of these books have even been penned by Mormons in good standing. But some authors of these books have been excommunicated by the LDS. The present book also contains numerous references from ex-Mormon authors, as well as from authors who have never been Mormons.

BIBLICAL CITATIONS

All biblical citations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the English Standard Version (2001 edition). But when a citation from an author’s work contains a quoted biblical reference, the translation in that citation is retained.

TRANSCRIPTION VERSUS TRANSLATION

Most publications say Smith “translated” the Book of Mormon from the angel Moroni’s golden plates. But to say he translated them is not really correct, for he did not translate in the sense of how the task of translation has always been understood and done in the scholarly world. It is really more accurate to say he “transcribed” the plates to produce the Book of Mormon. To say transcribe is compatible with the Random House Dictionary’s definition of transcribe, namely, “to write out in another language or alphabet.” Thus, whenever reference is made to Smith’s working with the plates, or to some of his other alleged “Reformed Egyptian” writings, I use the word transcribe instead of translate. This is consistent with an article published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought in 1982. It too uses
“transcribe” in discussing Smith’s producing the Book of Mormon. Interestingly, given that Smith said he produced the Book of Mormon from the angel Moroni’s golden plates, it was in the early years of its appearance sometimes called the “Golden Bible,” especially by critics.

When Smith was transcribing the plates, he had his seer stone and his face inside an old hat (ostensibly to shut out the light). During this activity, at least in its early stages, he sat behind a curtain blanket stretched across the room separating himself from his scribe who recorded his dictation. Then, as the “Reformed Egyptian” characters from the plates reportedly appeared illuminated on his seer stone, he dictated them in English to the scribe. After the dictated words were recorded, they disappeared, and then additional words became visible on his stone. Later, in the transcribing process, he removed the curtain and sat near the scribe. But he continued to keep his face and seer stone in the hat.

Strange as it may seem, when he engaged in transcribing the plates, no plate was ever placed inside the hat, as one might assume. A plate was too large to fit into his hat, because according to Smith, “each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin.” During the transcription process, Richard Lyman Bushman says, “When the plates were not in her [Emma’s]

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22 Although Smith began transcribing Moroni’s plates by using first his wife Emma as a scribe or recorder, he soon had some other scribes. In regard to his producing the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery was his main recorder. In October 1848, Cowdery stated, “I wrote with my own pen, the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the prophet by means of the Urim and Thummim.” See *Millennial Star* (August 20, 1859), 21:544. Cowdery’s words are also found in F. L. Stewart, *Exploding the Myth about Joseph Smith: The Mormon Prophet* (New York: House of Stewart Publications, 1967), 40.


red morocco trunk, they lay on the table wrapped in linen table-
cloth.”

**STYLISTIC NOTATIONS**

Both Muhammad and Smith said they received many revelations
directly from God. In terms of scholarly standards, the word
revelation should really be placed in quotation marks to indicate its
subjective or purported nature. But to place it in quotation marks each
time it is used would appear editorially awkward. Hence, I do not
enclose the word revelation in quotation marks. This is not admitting
that both men received genuine revelations from God, or that they
were real prophets, on par with God’s biblical prophets. The latter, of
course, is what both Smith and Muhammad believed and taught, and
many of their followers believed they were divine prophets, similar to
the prophets in the Bible.

Not placing the word revelation in quotation marks also does not
ignore that some revelations of Smith and Muhammad (as
documented below) contradicted some of their previous revelations.
In addition, many contradicted the biblical revelations of Moses and
other biblical prophets. And it is important to note that neither
Muhammad nor Smith could corroborate their revelations, as Jesus
did, for example, when he challenged people. “If I am not doing the
works of my Father, then do not believe me, but if I do them, even
though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know
and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (John
10:38).

Jesus staked the veracity of his teachings and revelations on his
deeds. Here it is helpful to recall John the Baptist who, while in
prison, had serious doubts whether Jesus was really the promised
Messiah. So he sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus that very
question. He told John’s disciples, “Go and tell John what you hear
and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are
cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up. . . . ”
(Matthew 11:4–5). It was also Jesus’ works that convinced Peter to
declare, “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man
attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that

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God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).

Recently, Richard Lyman Bushman has said even if one sees Smith’s revelations as his own subjective thoughts and ideas rather than those of God, it is best not to insert “a disclaimer every time a revelation is mentioned, no matter how the reader or writer feels about the ultimate source.” He argues that Smith did not see his revelations as conceived by him but received from God. Thus, writers should take into account what he believed regarding his revelations and prophecies and not call attention to their purported nature. Bushman also says that Smith’s followers saw him as a true revelator, and that is one reason that made him “powerful.” Bushman’s argument, however, as indicated above, is not why I use the word revelation without quotation marks.

Bushman’s discussion, however, has several flaws. First, seeing revelations as true because many of Smith’s people saw them as true was never a criterion of authenticity in the biblical era when God gave revelations to his prophets. The Bible makes no mention of prophecies being true because the Israelites saw them as true. Second, there were many Mormons who apostatized when they realized Smith’s revelations were not from God. Some of the apostates even came from his inner circle. Third, many of his revelations turned out to be false. Fourth, some were contradictory. Fifth, some were later changed by him. And finally, as discussed below in more detail, he also admitted that “some [of his] revelations are of the devil.”

There is more. In the Mormon context, revelations were not confined to Smith. Some of his associates said they also had received revelations from God. This included Smith’s brother Hyrum, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Hiram Page. But he never seemed overly concerned whether their revelations were compatible with his. As H. Michael Marquardt (a former Mormon) has shown, Joseph had a broad or liberal view of what constituted a revelation. “For Smith, revelation seemed to come from day-to-day experience, from

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26 Bushman, Rough Stone Rolling, op. cit., xxi.
27 Ibid.
28 See David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ: By a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon (Richmond, MO: David Whitmer, 1887), 31. When Smith admitted this revelation was from the devil, Whitmer was a member of Smith’s inner circle.
interactions with other people and from the study of biblical texts.”

This concept of revelation differs greatly from God’s biblical revelations. Similarly, Muhammad’s revelations were also at odds with the revelations God gave to his prophets in the biblical era. These differences are discussed below in chapter 4, “The Prophet Complex.”

Regarding the nature of Smith’s revelations, it appears his wife Emma at times had doubts about their authenticity. For instance, William Clayton, once a secretary of Smith’s, said, when the revelation that approved the taking of plural wives on July 12, 1843, was read to Emma by Joseph and his brother Hyrum, “she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious.”

Finally, my not accepting Bushman’s defense of Smith’s revelations also applies to Muhammad’s revelations. From a scholarly perspective, and in contrast to what qualified as God-given revelations in the biblical era, it seems appropriate to consider the revelations and prophecies of Smith and Muhammad as having been conceived, not received.

**POLYGyny, NOT POLYGamy**

When a man is married to more than one wife simultaneously, as was true with Muhammad and Smith, I use the term polygyny, rather than the common term polygamy. Polygyny is derived from two Greek words: *poly*=many; *gynos*=wife, hence many wives. Polygamy also comes from two Greek words: *poly*=many; *gamos*=marriage, hence many marriages. Polygamy, however, is less accurate than polygyny, because it does not tell us whether “many marriages” means a man has more than one wife or a woman has more than one husband. Polygyny leaves no doubt as to what is meant.

**A WORD ABOUT THE BOOK’S TITLE**

Readers may wonder why the first part of the book’s title refers to Joseph Smith as The American Muhammad. This designation reflects

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30 See Clayton’s Secret Writings Uncovered: Extracts from the Diaries of Joseph Smith’s Secretary William Clayton (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, n.d.), 20.
Smith’s numerous Muhammad-like parallel activities (shown throughout the book), and it also reveals that he personally called himself “a Second Mohammad,” as documented below in chapter 3.

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INTRODUCTION:
INFORMED BY PARALLELS

As indicated in the preface, this book focuses on seventy-some parallels between Muhammad and Joseph Smith Jr. These parallels are not just broad or vague similarities, as the term parallels is sometimes understood. Rather, the parallels between these two men are specific phenomena that were largely the product of their having had a similar mindset, a like-minded disposition. Awareness of this psychological trait sheds considerable light on Muhammad’s actions as well as on Smith’s. It also aids our understanding of these rather complex and highly atypical individuals who left unusual, indelible imprints in history when each founded a socio-political religion that grew to become a worldwide religion.

Virtually everyone knows something about Muhammad and Smith, for instance, that one founded Islam, and the other founded Mormonism. But as the pages of this book unfold, it also provides readers information pertaining to some attributes of these two individuals. This information is largely a by-product of discussing and analyzing the various parallels that existed between them, and in which they were intensely engaged. By examining the Smith-Muhammad parallels in this book, readers will find considerable information also becomes apparent in regard to some teachings of Islam and Mormonism.

Highlighting the role and value of studying parallels in the lives of some prominent historical figures, the book’s first chapter contends that parallels are important and valid means for gaining insights and understanding of how and why they in many instances in regard to some prominent individuals shaped certain events in history, including how they affected the lives of their followers, non-
followers, and future generations. This is especially true with regard to the Smith-Muhammad parallels.

The second chapter gives a brief biographical portrait of Muhammad and Smith before they proclaimed themselves prophets. This chapter shows that early in each man’s life (while still a teenager), each gained a less-than-positive perception regarding some aspect of Christianity. In both instances, this perception left an indelible mark on both men, which became especially evident after they declared themselves prophets of God; for after that proclamation each saw Christianity as corrupted and evil and in need of restoration. Seeing themselves as prophets, they pursued this goal with a zealous passion in the context of each man’s new socio-political religion.

Smith’s mindset, similar to Muhammad’s, appears to have been reinforced by his having taken the founder of Islam as his role model. Chapter 3 provides corroborating evidence for that argument. For instance, during the Missouri Mormon War, in a speech on October 14, 1838, he publicly likened himself to Muhammad by quoting him in justify his using the sword in this war, and he also identified with Muhammad when he said people belied him, similar to the way they belied his role as prophet, for he saw Muhammad as a true prophet. And not to be overlooked is what observers—both Mormon and non-Mormon—have noted, namely, by his opting for polygyny he in another way showed he had taken Muhammad as his role model.

The book’s first three chapters are a prelude to the chapters that follow, for it is in chapter 4, under its title “The Prophet Complex,” where specific parallels are cited and discussed. The parallels in this chapter range from Muhammad and Smith saying they had experienced angelic contacts to voicing prophecies and revelations directly from God. But interestingly, not all of their revelations came from God, for both admitted having at least once received a revelation from Satan (documented in chapter 4). Still, despite that admission, neither man ever hesitated to tell his followers that all his other revelations came from God. In all, this chapter that reveals additional information not commonly known shows both men who saw themselves as prophets had placed themselves in an entirely different category vis-à-vis all biblical prophets.

Muhammad and Smith had a highly negative view of Christianity’s churches and its members. This stance is apparent when the parallels between Smith and Muhammad are noted in chapters 5
and 6. Muhammad’s teachings in the Koran and Smith’s precepts in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants not only condemn basic biblical teachings, but they also condemn and undermine Christianity, along with their having supplanted the Bible by replacing it with their own sacred book.

Long before the time of Muhammad and Smith, St. Ambrose (337?–397), the bishop of Milan, chastised and excommunicated the Roman emperor Theodosius I for over-reacting to an urban uprising by killing several thousand innocent citizens in Thessalonica in A.D. 390. Ambrose told Theodosius that he was not above the law, and by this demand he set the precedent that no person was above the law. But Muhammad and Smith frequently ignored this moral norm, as their parallel activities reveal in chapters 7 and 8. Both approved of plundering, they lied and deceived, advocated violence, engaged in violent behavior, had bodyguard assassins; craved for many women, sometimes resulting in their taking other men’s wives.

A number of psychological parallels were also operative in the life of Muhammad and Smith, portrayed in chapter 9. Each man was a narcissist, had a powerful alter ego, dominated subordinates, functioned as an authoritarian/autocratic leader, conveyed a lot of personal charisma, and was sometimes spiritually transfixed. For the most part, these were effectively used in getting their adherents to follow them, often in unusual and trying circumstances.

Given that Smith’s and Muhammad’s new religion was a socio-political entity, a number of political parallels played a significant role, as noted in chapter 10. Politically, both men benefited from divided Christendom, prospered financially, and even functioned as military generals. In this role, Muhammad led numerous battles against non-Muslims in his own country, and Smith on a smaller scale treasured being lieutenant general of his state-authorized Nauvoo Legion with its five-thousand armed men. And finally not to be overlooked in the political context is their like-minded theocratic ideology which, as documented in chapter 10, they implemented accordingly.
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