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Early Christianity and 1 Nephi 13–14

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In chapters 13 and 14 of 1 Nephi, the prophet Nephi describes the vision in which he saw the future of the world and its kingdoms as it related to his posterity. Nephi’s vision is the type of revelation known in biblical literature as apocalyptic, and it is represented in the new Testament most fully by the Revelation of John. The revelations of Nephi and John have more in common, however, than merely the apocalyptic form, for Nephi’s vision (see 1 Nephi 14:19–28) anticipates that of John. The two are complementary, centering in part on the same characters and themes: the Lamb and His Church, the Apostasy, the great and abominable church of the devil, and the Restoration of the gospel in the latter days. The purpose of this inquiry is to see whether the descriptions given by Nephi, specifically those of the Apostasy and of the great and abominable church, when added to the information of John and other pertinent scriptures, help us draw some historical conclusions about the nature of the Apostasy and the identity of the great and abominable church.

Before proceeding, however, we must define our terms. The Greek word *apostasia* (apostasy) means “rebellion” or “revolution.” It conveys the sense of an internal takeover within an organization or institution by factions hostile to the intentions of its previous leaders. I personally prefer the translation “mutiny” for *apostasia*, as it calls up the image of a ship being commandeered by those who are not authorized to do so and being taken in a direction the ship was not intended to go. Since early Christians often thought of the Church as a ship, I think “mutiny” conveys exactly the right sense of what Paul and others meant by the term *apostasy*.

We must also analyze and define the component parts of the phrase *great and abominable church*. The word *great* in this context is an adjective of size rather than of quality and (like the Hebrew *gadol* or the Greek *me-gas*)^[1] informs us of the great size of the abominable entity. Secondary meanings might refer to great wealth or power. The term *abominable* is used in the Old Testament to describe that which God hates, which cannot fail to arouse His wrath. In the book of Daniel the abomination of desolation is that thing which is so hateful to God that its presence in the temple causes the divine presence to depart, leaving the sanctuary desolate (see Daniel 11:31; 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:12–20). In the Old Testament the terms translated into English as abominable or abomination (Hebrew roots *shiqqutz*, *ta’ab*, *piggul*; Greek Septuagint and New Testament *bdelugma*) are usually associated with one of two practices—idolrous worship or gross sexual immorality.^[2]

The term *church* (Hebrew *qahal* or *edah*; Greek *ekklesia*) had a slightly broader meaning anciently than it does now and referred to an assembly, congregation, or association of people that bonded them together and commanded their loyalties. Thus, the term was not necessarily restricted to religious associations and in fact was used at Athens to denote the legislative assembly of government.^[3] When we put all this together, it appears that the phrase *great and abominable church* means an immense assembly or association of people bound together by their loyalty to that which God hates. Most likely this will be a religious association involved specifically in sexual immorality or idolatry (that is, false worship—abandoning the God of Israel and worshiping anything else).

While the revelation of John does not use the exact term *great and abominable church*, the entity so described by Nephi is clearly the harlot described by John in Revelation 17–18, since the identical terms *mother of abominations*, *mother of harlots*, and *the whore who sitteth upon many waters* are used by both prophets (see 1 Nephi 14:10–12, 16; Revelation 17:1, 5).

Major characteristics of the great and abominable church in 1 Nephi may be listed as follows:

1. It persecutes, tortures, and slays the Saints of God (see 1 Nephi 13:5).
2. It seeks wealth and luxury (see 1 Nephi 13:7).
3. It is characterized by sexual immorality (see 1 Nephi 13:7).
4. It has excised plain and precious things from the scriptures (see 1 Nephi 13:26–29).
5. It has dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people (see 1 Nephi 14:11).
6. Its fate is to be consumed by a world war, in which the nations it incited against the Saints turn to war among themselves until they destroy the great and abominable church itself (see 1 Nephi 22:13–14).

These same characteristics are also attributed to the whore (Babylon) in the Revelation of John:

1. She is drunk with the blood of the Saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus and of the prophets (see Revelation 17:6; 18:24).
2. She is characterized by the enjoyment of great wealth and luxury (see Revelation 17:4; 18:3, 11–16).
3. She (naturally) is characterized by sexual immorality (see Revelation 17:1–2, 5).
4. She has dominion over all nations (see Revelation 17:15, 18; 18:3, 23–24).
5. Her fate is to be consumed by the very kings who have made war on the Lamb under the influence of her deceptions (see Revelation 17:14–16; 18:23).

It should be noted that one characteristic not common to both prophetic descriptions is Nephi’s statement that the great and abominable church has held back important parts of the canon of scripture. But because John’s record is one of the very scriptures Nephi refers to (see 1 Nephi 14:20–23), this omission in John’s account is not surprising.

It must also be noted that in John’s revelation the whore cannot be equated with the two beasts; they do not represent the same things. The whore and the beasts are motivated by the same evil genius, Satan. The one beast supports the whore (see Revelation 17:3), but the beast and the whore are separate entities with separate functions in the evil empire. The whore of Revelation 17–18 is specifically the satanic counterpart of the woman in chapter 12, who symbolizes the Church of Jesus Christ that was forced into the wilderness (that is, it became inaccessible to human beings). Symbolizing the great and abominable church (the counterfeit) as a whore underscores the nature of her evil—she is physically and spiritually unfaithful; that is, she represents both sexual immorality and idolatry, the twin abominations of the Old Testament. Thus, she is the “mother of abominations.” It seems that in John’s revelation the symbol of the whore is used narrowly to represent false religion, while the beasts, the image of the beast, and the horns of the beast serve to represent other aspects of the kingdom of the devil. Moreover, if the symbol of the virtuous woman of Revelation 12 is intended to represent specifically the true Church of Jesus Christ (as the crown of twelve apostles

and her being driven into the wilderness so indicate), ^[4] it follows that the whore, her counterpart, represents specifically false and counterfeit religion. Satan has more than one institution at his disposal, but the whore is false religion. The whore cannot represent kingdoms or governments—the beast and its horns do (see

Revelation 17:12). ^[5] But she can represent the false beliefs and ideologies that often capture or motivate governments. The whore provides the theory; government provides the muscle. When the false religion represented by the whore is joined to the civil governments (the kings of the earth) represented by the horns of the beast with whom she fornicates, then the wine of their fornication (the results of the union of church and state, or of ideology and police power) plunders the resources of the earth and makes all the world drunk. That is, the power of the state church, or of the church state, seeks to dominate the economy of nations and destroys the spiritual equilibrium and discernment of human beings (see Revelation 17:2; 18:3).

Moreover, because the great and abominable church from 1 Nephi is identified in every aspect with the whore, while the beast is never even mentioned in Nephi’s vision, it follows that when we discuss *the* great and abominable church, we must not confuse the whore which Nephi saw and described with the beast which he did not. There are no references to the beasts of Revelation in Nephi’s vision of the great and abominable church. As both John and Nephi make clear, the nations outlast the whore and eventually destroy her. Both beast and whore are component parts of the kingdom of the devil, but they are *separate* parts even though they sometimes work together.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in Nephi’s description of the great and abominable church is an apparent contradiction between chapters 13 and 14. In 1 Nephi 13 the great and abominable church is one specific church among many. Indeed, Nephi’s description of it as “most abominable above all other churches” (1 Nephi 13:5, 26) is nonsense otherwise. Moreover, it has a specific historical description: it is formed among the Gentiles *after* the Bible has been transmitted in its purity to the Gentiles by the Jews (see 1 Nephi 13:26), and it is the specific historical agent responsible for excising plain and precious truths from the scriptural record. It would appear that in chapter 13 Nephi is describing a specific historical institution as the great and abominable church. To this we must add the information given in Doctrine and Covenants 86:1–4, which states that the great and abominable church did its work after the apostles had fallen asleep; that is, around the end of the first century A.D. Similarly, in the revelation of John the role of the whore has a historical frame. She comes into the picture after the beasts, upon which she rides and which give her support, and she is eliminated from the picture while they yet continue. Again, the great and abominable church (Babylon) is not a term identical with “the kingdom of the devil,” for the whore is only one of the component parts of a larger empire, together with the beasts, the image, the horns, and the false prophet—and also with other false churches. This last idea is clearly brought out in 1 Nephi 22:22–23:

“But it is *the kingdom of the devil*, which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh—

“For the time speedily shall come that *all churches* which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, *all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil* are they who need fear, and tremble” (emphasis added).

Indisputably, the full kingdom of the devil is made up of many churches (or denominations) and will be until the end of the world. Taking 1 Nephi 13 and 22 as our starting points, we might be justified in asking just which of all those false denominations is the *actual* great and abominable church of the devil. The apparent contradiction comes in 1 Nephi 14:10, where we are told that there are only *two* churches: “And he said unto me: Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil.”

How can this be? How can the devil’s church or churches be one and many at the same time? The apparent contradiction actually gives us the solution to the larger puzzle and ultimately our identification of the great and abominable church.

The answer is that the term is used in two different ways in these two chapters. In chapter 13 it is used historically, and in chapter 14 it is used typologically, or apocalyptically. In apocalyptic literature (remember that both Revelation and 1 Nephi 13–14 are apocalyptic in nature) the seer is caught up in vision and sees things from God’s perspective. Time ceases to be an important element. This is why the chronology of John’s revelation at times seems to be scrambled—with God there is no time. Apocalyptic visions are highly symbolic, usually requiring an angelic interpreter for the seer to understand what he sees. But the symbols are inclusive; that is, they stand for archetypal categories into which all specific instances of something can be placed. This is why the whore can be called Nineveh (some of John’s language comes from Nahum’s description of Nineveh in Nahum 3), or Babylon, Sodom, Egypt, Jerusalem, or Rome. It doesn’t matter; the names change, but the character—“that great city”—remains the same in every dispensation. To illustrate, let us take the name of the whore, or great and abominable church, *Babylon*. A literal reading would lead us to believe that some particular city is being described, and we would want to know which city it was. But if we read carefully, we see that Babylon in John’s revelation is not one city but many cities, all of which fall into the larger category of “that great city” which is the antithesis of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, or Zion. Just as Zion is wherever the pure in heart dwell (see Doctrine and Covenants 97:21), so Babylon is where the whore lives. Since Latter-day Saints understand that Zion is a spiritual category, which may in different contexts mean Salt Lake City, Far West, Jerusalem, or the city of Enoch, why do we have such a hard time understanding Zion’s opposite, Babylon, in the same way? It is precisely this variable identity that Jacob teaches to us when he says: “Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; *for they are they who are the whore of all the earth; for they who are not for me are against me, saith our God*” (2 Nephi 10:16; emphasis added).

In other words Babylon, “the whore of all the earth,” is in this context anyone who fights against Zion. In apocalyptic literature the cast of characters is constant in every dispensation; they are these same archetypal categories into which all things can be placed. From the apocalyptic point of view there is only one script, one plot, from the foundation of the world until its end. The characters in the play and the lines they deliver are always the same from dispensation to dispensation, although the individual actors who play the roles and speak the lines may change with time. Therefore, there is always the role of “that great city,” though the part might be played at different times in history by Sodom, Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Rome, Berlin, Moscow, or Washington, D.C. The important thing is to know what the archetypal patterns are and their identifying characteristics. Then we can orient ourselves in any time or place and know who functions *now* in the role of Babylon and where Zion is located.

Once we understand that the term *great and abominable church* has two extensions, the one open, inclusive, and archetypal, and the other limited and historical, the rest is easy. In chapter 14, Nephi describes the archetypal roles themselves: “There are save two churches only” (that is, Zion and Babylon). But in chapter 13 he is referring to the specific institution (the actor, if you will) who played the role of Babylon in the Roman Empire in the second century A.D. Nevertheless, it won’t do us much good in the twentieth century to know who played Babylon in the second. We need to recognize Babylon now, in our time, although the actors have been changed.

Apocalyptic literature is also dualistic. Since it deals with archetypes, it boils everything down to opposing principles: love and hate, good and evil, light and dark. There are no gray areas in apocalyptic scripture. At the very least, everything can be reduced to the opposing categories of A and not-A (“They who are not for me are against me, saith our God” [2 Nephi 10:16]). In the realm of religion there are only two categories: religion that will save and religion that will not. The former is the church of the Lamb, and the latter—no matter how well intentioned—is a

counterfeit. Thus, even a “good” church must still be part of the devil’s kingdom in the sense used in 1 Nephi 14 (“there are save two churches only”), for it cannot do what it pretends to do. Nevertheless, such a church cannot be called the great and abominable church in the sense used in 1 Nephi 13, for its intentions are good and honorable, and quite often such churches teach people enough truth that they can then recognize the true church when they meet it. These churches do not slay the Saints of God, they do not seek to control civil governments, nor do they pursue wealth, luxury, and sexual immorality. Such churches may belong to the kingdom of the devil in the apocalyptic sense, where there are only two categories, A and not-A, but they cannot be called the great and abominable church in the historical sense—the description is just not accurate. Furthermore, individual orientation to the Church of the Lamb or to the great and abominable church is not only by membership but by loyalty. Just as there are those on the records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who belong to the great and abominable church by virtue of their loyalty to Satan and his lifestyle (see 2 Nephi 10:16), so there are members of other churches who will eventually belong to the Lamb by virtue of their loyalty to Him and to His lifestyle, which will lead to their accepting the saving ordinances. The distinction is based on who has your heart, not on who has your records.

It seems to me that many Latter-day Saints have made one of two errors in trying to identify the great and abominable church. The first is to believe that some specific denomination or other, to the exclusion of all others, has been the great and abominable church since the beginning of time. This is dangerous, for if we understand the great and abominable church to be one specific church, some will want to know which one it is, and an antagonistic relationship with that church or denomination will inevitably follow. It might, for example, be argued that Judaism was the great and abominable church. After all, the Jewish religious establishment of that day would seem to qualify on several points. They persecuted the Church and spilled the blood of the Saints. They crucified the Messiah, the Savior of the world. They joined religion together with civil government and used the police power to enforce their religious views. Both Pharisees and Sadducees were reproved by Jesus for their pursuit of wealth at the expense of justice. Jesus told the Pharisees that Satan was their father, and John referred to certain Jewish meetinghouses in Asia as “synagogues of Satan” (Revelation 2:9; 3:9). It was precisely this kind of religious argument—that the Jews were the infidels, the beast, the anti-Christ—that contributed to the Holocaust and that still fans the moral insanity of neo-Nazi religious groups. Has Satan’s hand ever been more clearly discernible in any human undertaking? Latter-day Saints do not want to indulge in witch hunting.

But while Jerusalem in A.D. 30 might have been one manifestation of Babylon (see Revelation 11:8), Judaism cannot be the great and abominable church described by Nephi and John. First, the Jews did not and clearly will not enjoy dominion over all the nations of the earth. Second, Nephi says that the scriptures were complete when they came forth from the mouth of a Jew but were excised by the great and abominable church, which had its formation among the Gentiles. And finally, according to the scriptures, it does not seem to be the fate of the Jews to be utterly consumed by the nations of the earth; it appears quite the opposite.

More often it has been suggested that the Roman Catholic Church might be the great and abominable church of 1 Nephi 13, but this is also untenable, primarily because Roman Catholicism as we know it did not yet exist when the crimes described by Nephi were being committed. In fact, the term *Roman Catholic* makes sense only after A.D. 1054, when it began to be used to distinguish the Western, Latin-speaking Orthodox church, which followed the bishop of Rome, from the Eastern, Greek-speaking Orthodox church, which followed the bishop of Constantinople (in association with others). Indeed, in the period between Peter and Constantine, there were other Christian churches besides the orthodox: Ebionites, Syrian and Egyptian Christians, Donatists, Gnostics, Marcionites, and so on. We don’t know very much about how they were related to each other.

Even if we were to use the term “Roman” Catholic for the church which Constantine began making his state religion in A.D. 313 (and the other orthodox churches would object to this), still the New Testament as we know it (that is, without the excised plain and precious parts) had already been widely circulated by then. In other words, the work of the great and abominable church in slaying the apostles and excising the scriptures had already been done. By the time Constantine joined church and state together in the fourth century, the apostles had been dead for centuries, and the true church and its keys had already been lost. The commonly held notion of shifty-eyed medieval monks rewriting the scriptures as they copied is bigoted and unfair. In fact, we owe those monks a debt of gratitude that anything was saved at all. Besides, in comparison to some of the other Christian groups around, the orthodox Christians had quite a high standard of morality. By this time they had gone to the extremes of asceticism and can hardly be accused (in this period, anyway) of having many harlots and practicing gross immorality. In fact, in some areas of the ancient world, orthodoxy replaced an earlier more corrupt form of Christianity. Finally, during most of the period before 313, the orthodox were hardly in a position to persecute the Saints, as the orthodox were being thrown to the lions themselves.

The Catholic (that is, “universal”) Church of the fourth century was the result of the Apostasy, its end product—

not its cause. To find the real culprits in the case of the excised texts, we need to look at a much earlier period in Christian church history. None of the Presidents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has ever identified Roman Catholicism as the great and abominable church. And, in speaking of Catholic and Protestant faiths, the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“The old Catholic church traditions are worth more than all you have said. Here is a principle of logic that most men have no more sense than to adopt. I will illustrate it by an old apple tree. Here jumps off a branch and says, I am the true tree, and you are corrupt. If the whole tree is corrupt, are not its branches corrupt? If the Catholic religion is a false religion, how can any true religion come out of it? If the Catholic church is bad, how can any good thing come out of it?”^[6]

The character of the old churches have always been slandered by all apostates since the world began.”^[6]

It was Martin Luther, not Joseph Smith, who identified the Roman Catholic Church as Babylon and the pope as the anti-Christ.^[7] Besides, are we really to believe that Satan had no ministers in the world before there were Roman Catholics? Was there no Babylon to oppose Zion in the days of Cain, Nimrod, Pharaoh, or Herod?

Finally, I would like to submit that no single historical church or denomination known to us can be *the* great and abominable church in an exclusive sense. No single organization meets all the requirements:

1. It must have been formed among the Gentiles and must have controlled the distribution of the New Testament scriptures, which it edited and from which it deleted plain and precious things.

2. It must have slain the Saints of God and killed the apostles and prophets.

3. It must be in league with civil governments and use their police power to enforce its religious views.

4. It must have dominion over all the earth.

5. It must pursue wealth, luxury, and sexual immorality and must last until essentially the end of the world.

No one denomination fits the entire description. Neither does world Communism in our own day. The conclusion is inescapable—no *single* entity can be *the* great and abominable church from the beginning of the world to the end. Rather, the role has been played by many different actors in many different times, and the great and abominable church that Nephi described in 1 Nephi 13 is not the same one that crucified Christ or that martyred Joseph and Hyrum.

So the one error, as I see it, is to try to blame some modern denomination for the activities of an ancient great and abominable church described by both Nephi and John. The other error is to go too far the other way and remove the great and abominable church from history altogether. This latter approach does not acknowledge that there ever was or ever will be a historical manifestation of the great and abominable church. It allegorizes the term completely, so that it becomes merely a vague symbol for all the disassociated evil in the world. We cannot accept this in the face of clear and explicit scripture to the contrary, for if we do, we shall not be able to recognize the historical manifestations of the great and abominable church in our own time or in the times to come. On the one hand, we must avoid the temptation to identify the role of the great and abominable church so completely with one particular denomination that we do not recognize the part when it is played by some other organization, but on the other hand we must remember that the role *will* be played by *some* agency. Will we be able to recognize it?

To return to our original topic, can we identify the historical agency that acted as the great and abominable church in earliest Christianity and which Nephi and others describe? I would like to argue that the great and abominable church Nephi describes in chapter 13 had its origins in the second half of the first century and had essentially done its work by the middle of the second century. This period might be called the blind spot of ecclesiastical history, for it is here that the fewest primary historical sources have been preserved. Essentially, what happened is that we have good sources for New Testament Christianity (the New Testament documents themselves); then the lights go out (that is, we have very few historical sources), and in the dark we hear the muffled sounds of a great struggle. When the lights come on again a hundred years or so later, we find that someone has rearranged all the furniture and that Christianity is something very different from what it was in the beginning. That different entity can be accurately described by the term *hellenized Christianity*. The hellenization of Christianity is a phenomenon which has long been recognized by scholars of Christian history, but it is one which Latter-day Saints know better as the Great Apostasy. Hellenization means imposing Greek culture on the native cultures of the East. The result was a synthesis of East and West, with elements of the Greek West predominating, a melting-pot of popular culture that was virtually worldwide.

But in the realm of religion, synthesis means compromise, and when we speak in terms of the gospel, compromise with the popular culture of the world means apostasy from the truth. When Jewish Christianity and Greek culture met head-on in the Gentile mission field in the middle of the first century, the Greeks eventually won, and Jewish Christianity was ultimately “revised” to make it more attractive and appealing to a Greek audience. Primary prejudices of the Hellenistic world were the “absolute” nature of God (that is, he cannot be bound or limited by

anything) and the impossibility of anything material or physical being eternal. In order to accommodate these ideas and thus appeal to a broader Gentile audience, Christianity had to discard the doctrines of an anthropomorphic God and the resurrection of the dead or else “reinterpret” them in a manner that had the same effect.^[8] This is precisely what some Greek Christians at Corinth had already done and against which Paul responds with such force in 1 Corinthians 15:12: “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?”

One assumption necessary to my line of reasoning is that the earliest apostates from the true primitive Church constituted the great and abominable church among the Gentiles. Therefore we need something to link the Apostasy with the great and abominable church, and I think we have such a link in many places, but two will suffice to make my point here. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul says, “That day shall not come, except there come a falling away [literally, an apostasy] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” This man of sin will sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God (see 2 Thessalonians 2:4). The “mystery of iniquity” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) was already under way as Paul wrote, and you will recall that one of the names of Babylon is “mystery” (Revelation 17:5). Paul

mentions that this son of perdition, or man of sin, is the counterfeit for the Man of Holiness—he is Satan.^[9] And the temple in which he sits is the church now desolated of the divine presence by the abomination of apostasy and become

the church of the devil.^[10] The church of the devil is any church that teaches the philosophies of men mingled with scripture, which dethrones God in the church and replaces him with man (2 Thessalonians 2:4) by denying the principle of revelation and turning instead to human intellect. It is for this reason that creeds which are the product of human intellect are an *abomination* to the Lord (see JS-H 1:19), for they are idolatry—men worshiping the creations not of their own hands but of their own minds and knowing all along it is a creation of their intellect that is being worshiped.

Perhaps my point could be made more quickly by citing Doctrine and Covenants 86:3, where the Lord explicitly identifies the whore, Babylon, as the apostate church: “And after they have fallen asleep the great persecutor of the church, the apostate, the whore, even Babylon, that maketh all nations to drink of her cup, in whose hearts the enemy, even Satan, sitteth to reign—behold he soweth the tares; wherefore, the tares choke the wheat and drive the church into the wilderness.”

Clearly, whatever denominational name we choose to give it, the great and abominable church described by Nephi and John and the earliest apostate church are identical. The fact is that we do not really know what name to give it. I have proposed hellenized Christianity, but that is a description rather than a name. Babylon in the first and second centuries may even have been a collection of different movements. The Jewish Christians could not let go of the law of Moses and so eventually gave up Christ instead. The “orthodox” adopted Greek philosophy. The Gnostics wallowed in the mysteries and in unspeakable practices on the one hand or in mysteries and a neurotic asceticism on the other. Tatian and Marcion rewrote the scriptures, the latter boldly chopping out anything he did not like, and all of them together forced the virtuous woman, the true Church of Jesus Christ, into the wilderness.

^[1] See, for example, *gadol* and its cognates in W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 55.

^[2] Where the context is given, a large majority of occurrences of *abomination* and its forms refer to immorality or idolatry. Compare Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 6.

^[3] Originally, the term *ekklesia*, from two Greek words meaning “call” and “out,” referred to those citizens who were called out or summoned to their public meetings by the heralds. Thus, it was an ideal word to represent the body of individuals “called” by God “out” of the world through the Holy Ghost—the Church. The civil dimension of the word can be seen in Acts 19:32, where “assembly” in the Greek text is *ekklesia*, elsewhere translated as “church.” However, we must remember that we don’t know the original word behind “church” on the plates, but whatever it was, Joseph Smith chose to render it *church* and not *assembly* or something else.

^[4] This was also the view of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 12:7 reads: “nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ.”

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Compare also the Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 13:1: “And I saw another sign, in the likeness of the kingdoms of the earth; a beast rise up out of the sea.”

[6] Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 6:478.

[7] One of the many instances which might be cited is found in *Table Talk*, no. 4487 (11 April 1539): “I believe the pope is the masked and incarnate devil because he is the Antichrist. As Christ is God incarnate, so the Antichrist is the devil incarnate.” See also Helmut T. Lehman and Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, eds, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Concordia Fortress Press, 1955–76), 54:346.

[8] An example might be cited in Acts 17:32–33 where the mere mention to the Greeks of the physical resurrection breaks up Paul’s meeting with the Areopagus council.

[9] The Joseph Smith Translation makes this identification even more apparent: “for there shall come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. . . . For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, and he it is who now worketh, and Christ suffereth him to work, until the time is fulfilled that he shall be taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7).

[10] For Lucifer as the man of sin, see Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 3:62–64.