

EPISODE 23 • PART II

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat



D&C 60-62

- John Bytheway: 00:02 Welcome to Part II of this week's podcast.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 00:08 Maybe this is a good place to transition into talking about people who didn't take this advice very well. I mean so one of those is Ezra Booth. Ezra Booth has this miraculous conversion experience, is so disappointed by Zion, even more frustrated by the way home that really a month later, by September, his preaching license is being taken away from him and he's essentially being cut off from the Church. But Ezra Booth does not go quietly into the night.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 00:44 Ezra Booth, he begins writing, I think in part because he's trying to find a way to get back into his ... I mean he used to have a job. It was being a very prominent Methodist minister. Well, one way to lose your job as a Methodist minister is to become a Mormon elder. So that's not his life anymore.
- Hank Smith: 01:04 Trying to get back in.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 01:04 So he's writing back to Ira Eddy who's one of the leaders of the Methodist groups there in Ohio. He is writing to him about this in a very, very, very critical way, essentially saying, "Well, look, I must have been deceived because this is not what we thought," and writing scathing letters against Joseph Smith, against the Church. He really becomes the first concerted effort to put into writing anti-Mormon attacks from a former member of the Church. There had been other people who'd certainly said negative things about Mormons.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 01:46 Eber Howe was writing all kinds of negative stuff in his newspaper there in Painesville, just outside of Kirtland. You'd already had Alexander Campbell dedicate a great portion of his publication to what a fraud the Book of Mormon is and things like that, that Joseph Smith just wrote it, and other arguments that aren't really that great. He hadn't met Joseph, so he didn't realize, "I guess Joseph couldn't have written this." But here you have Ezra Booth who was an Elder and is able to use the fact

that he had insider information to really stir up negativity against the Church.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 02:30 Now, he publishes a series of letters that are published in the *Ravenna Ohio Star* newspaper. You might hear about them at some point, *The Joseph Smith Papers*. We'll quote from them or talk about them multiple times. Ezra Booth's letters are just this real attack from the inside of this former apostate. Of course, we see that happen multiple times going forward, but this is really one of the first concerted efforts. Because it's an internal attack, it ends up being more devastating.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 03:08 He's able to fuel the fires of anti-Mormonism in Ohio, and antagonists of the Church are able to say, "Look, here's someone who was one of their Elders. He'll tell you how he was duped by them." In much the same way antagonists of the Church today who leave it will say the same thing, "I'm an insider. I know what it's like." That's true of anyone who leaves any movement under negative circumstances. They claim that they have the real understanding. It's really a forerunner of what will become the most concerted effort of written anti-Mormonism from the time.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 03:50 That's Eber Howe, that newspaper editor, not only is he going to gleefully repeat the things that Booth has to say but, in early 1833, another very big or important apostate, I mean it seems kind of weird to say it that way. But a guy by the name of Doctor Philastus Hurlbut is going to be excommunicated from the Church for adultery. And then he's going to beg to get back into the Church. He's going to tell Joseph, "I'm so sorry. Please let me back in." So Joseph will let him back into the Church, and then he'll promptly commit adultery again and get cut off again. Now, this time-

John Bytheway: 04:32 Now, hang on. You said, "Doctor." Is he a doctor?

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 04:39 No.

John Bytheway: 04:40 Okay.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 04:41 His parents named him Doctor. This is a really good tip for those of you who are about to have children, if you want your son or daughter to sound like they really succeeded in life, go ahead and give them a name like Doctor. I've always said this would be like naming my son MVP of the NBA Finals Dirkmaat, and then you got to call him that. It's his name. It's his name. And then however he turns out in basketball.

John Bytheway: 05:10 It reminds me of when people used to tell me about the King Follett Discourse when I was a kid-

Hank Smith: 05:12 King Follett, that's what I was just thinking.

John Bytheway: 05:14 I was like, "What was he king of?" That was his name.

Hank Smith: 05:15 King of what? Or what about the framer named Gouverneur Morris?

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 05:21 Yeah, yeah. Gouverneur Morris. Yeah, very well.

Hank Smith: 05:23 That's his name. You're like, "Wow."

John Bytheway: 05:25 So Doctor is his first name.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 05:27 Doctor Philastus-

John Bytheway: 05:28 Philastus.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 05:29 ... Hurlbut, the good Doctor, the good Doctor who's anything but. In fact, his-

John Bytheway: 05:33 He commits adultery again. That's what you said.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 05:35 Yes. It seems to be a pattern. He is going to become very important to Church History because he is going to claim that not only does he have all this insider information, "Because I was an Elder in Mormonism." Not as many men were ordained to the office of Elder then as are now. It wasn't universal. But it was still also a play upon the fact that in the Protestant community generally, an Elder was a pretty big deal in a church, especially in the Presbyterian church. I mean it meant you were in the leadership of the church.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 06:15 Many of the early converts were Presbyterians. You've probably seen this in newspaper reports today. I mean every so often there'll be a Latter-day Saint who commits a crime and the news media will make a really big deal about it. "So-and-so, an elder in the Mormon Church," which to every Mormon-

Hank Smith: 06:40 A High Priest.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 06:41 Yeah, exactly.

Hank Smith: 06:41 A High Priest.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 06:41 A High Priest ... So he was over 50 then? We have a democratized priesthood where essentially every worthy male-

Hank Smith: 06:48 Every male.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 06:48 ... member receives it. But that's just not the case among Protestant churches. People don't have titles unless they actually have large positions-

Hank Smith: 06:56 So when they hear, "I was an Elder, it's ooh."

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 06:58 Yeah. It's a helpful way.

Hank Smith: 07:01 He was second only to Joseph.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 07:03 He has this insider claim, but then he's going to make a much more fantastical claim. He's going to claim that while he was on his mission in Western Pennsylvania, he found the actual source of the Book of Mormon. He is the originator of the claim that a former minister by the name of Solomon Spalding-

Hank Smith: 07:24 Solomon Spalding.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 07:24 ... had actually written the Book of Mormon. Because part of the problem was, again, Alexander Campbell dismissed the Book of Mormon out of hand because it wasn't the Bible and the Bible's all that mattered. So he went through the Book of Mormon to try to find every place where it wasn't the same as the Bible to prove, "See, this can't be true. It's not the Bible." So Campbell, very blithely, like, "Joseph Smith ..." In fact, he says, "It is certainly the work of Joseph Smith himself as Satan is the father of lies." He doesn't know Joseph, so his conclusion is, "Joseph Smith obviously wrote this."

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 08:02 There's a couple of problems. The initial reactions of the Book of Mormon are, "Well, I'm just going to dismiss it because this is obviously garbage," or, "Well, I mean Joseph Smith just sat down and pounded this out apparently." The problem is if you, A) see lots of people reading the book and they start to be convinced by it. It's one thing when it's crazy person you don't know, but what happens when it's your brother or your sister? What happens when it's your wife? The argument, only idiots would believe this is from God, is not as powerful an argument when you know the people that are converting. Now you need a better explanation.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 08:42 Second of all, if you know Joseph Smith, if you know Joseph Smith, it becomes harder to say, "Oh yeah, I'm sure he just wrote this all four years ago and he just put it all out there." I mean it seems beyond his capabilities. Well, Solomon Spalding solves both of those problems. Why is it that people are "falsely," falsely I'm putting in air quotes because it's not falsely, but they're saying falsely, being convinced of this Book of Mormon? How is it that it's as well-written as it is? Well, I know why. Because a former minister who, of course, knew the Bible backward and forward, he wrote a book that he intended to be what they called at the time a romance.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 09:28 That sounds as if it was going to be something that would be on a Lifetime Movie Channel at some point. It's a Hallmark celebration. But that was 19th century terminology for what we would today call a novel. A romance is something that's not ... It's fiction. It's a fiction story, that Solomon Spalding wrote this fictional book. Of course, because he's a minister and knows the Bible backward and forward, he works all kinds of biblical stuff in there and that's the reason why when people read the Book of Mormon they think that it sounds like scripture because this pastor wrote it.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 10:06 Oh, by the way, why is it written in an ability that's well beyond Joseph? Well, because it's this educated pastor who did it. Now, of course, the best part of this claim is that Solomon Spalding is dead. So that makes it impossible to go ask Solomon Spalding. So Hurlbut's claims are apparently he begins making these public rounds. They are very dramatic and, in fact, very ... He makes threats against Joseph Smith.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 10:39 Apparently at one point says that he is going to wash his hands in the blood of Joseph Smith and makes enough threats against him that even in a time when it's very difficult for Latter-day Saints to get any kind of justice in the courts, Hurlbut is actually charged with making threats against Joseph's family and is convicted of it and is essentially placed on probation and has to put up a bond saying that he'll keep the peace. So Hurlbut's going to be hired by Eber Howe, this newspaper editor.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 11:10 He's going to be hired by him to go back to New York and Pennsylvania to collect as many negative affidavits about Joseph Smith as he possibly can. He's going to collect these all in a book, and he's going to publish them in this book called *Mormonism Unveiled*.
- Hank Smith: 11:28 -Unveiled.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 11:29 *Mormonism Unveiled* is the first comprehensive anti-Mormon book. I kind of transition to that from Ezra Booth because Ezra Booth makes his claim in writing and in public, attacking the Church from the inside, and it kind of transitions to a little while later Philastus Hurlbut doing something like that, with him and Eber Howe conspiring to kind of do this on a much more grand scale.

Hank Smith: 11:51 Does Eber use Booth in the book as well?

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 11:57 Not directly. He's not interviewing Booth, no.

Hank Smith: 12:02 But he uses it in his newspaper?

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 12:04 In his newspaper, they're certainly going to reference what's being published in the Ohio Star.

Hank Smith: 12:08 So Hurlbut goes back to Palmyra. Who's there? Anybody who likes Joseph Smith?

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 12:17 It's funny. Why did Joseph leave Palmyra? Because there was so much persecution, he had to get out. And then when you go to Palmyra and ask people about Joseph, surprisingly, people didn't like him. It's a really weird thing.

Hank Smith: 12:29 Shocking.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 12:29 I went to the place where we drove him out of town on a rail, where we were planning to tar and feather him when he left town with Emma. But, luckily, the doctor was able to intervene and stop them from doing that. Their plan was to physically-

Hank Smith: 12:46 That's a different doctor. It's a different doctor.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 12:49 Yeah, different doctor. McIntyre, I think is that doctor. But their plan is to physically assault Joseph is how angry they are. So, look, Philastus Hurlbut is paid to go back to Palmyra and Harmony and get negative affidavits. Surprise, surprise. Being paid to get negative affidavits, the guy comes back with negative affidavits. It's stunning. I'm sure that was a sample set where he asked everybody and, "Every single person I talked to said negative things." I mean he's clearly going to people who already have an ax to grind, and he's having them say things like, "Oh yeah, Joseph Smith told me that he never had any plates and that what he really loved to do is just lie to people."

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 13:40 I mean, frankly, when you read many of the affidavits in *Mormonism Unveiled*, they're really bad. I mean they're just, "Oh yeah, Joseph and his family were totally addicted to lying and they would actually brag to everyone about how good they were at lying." Actually, no, you don't. You're either really, really bad at lying, therefore you brag to people about it. There are just so many things. That book and that Solomon Spalding claim, it provided people with an explanation of where the Book of Mormon came from for years, really throughout most of the rest of the 19th century.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 14:26 Educated people who wanted to have a way of dealing with that book ... They were easily just able to say, "Oh yeah. Sure, it sounds like it's good because it was written by that pastor."
- John Bytheway: 14:37 Minister.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 14:38 There were claims in it like, "Oh yeah. Every name in the Book of Mormon ..." I mean even Solomon Spalding's kids got in on the action. They would later claim to people, "Oh yeah. My dad used to talk about Lehi and Nephi all the time from the book that he had written." And then they eventually found the Solomon Spalding manuscript. They found it and a non-Latter-day Saint compared it to the Book of Mormon and said there's not any names that are the same in both of them.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 15:11 There's no part of the story that's the same and, in fact, said some other explanation of the origin of the Book of Mormon must be arrived at if one's to be had. So for decades, very intelligent people, I mean the halls of Congress talked about the fact that when they were trying to deal with the Mormon problem that it was just a Solomon Spalding forgery. It's all spawned from this era of these earliest apostates attempting to undermine the church. So we don't know. We don't ever know where it is that attacks on our faith are going to come.
- John Bytheway: 15:52 I just think this Philastus Hurlbut, Doctor Philastus Hurlbut, I think the arguments against Joseph today still come from those affidavits.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 16:08 If you're reading something negative about Joseph Smith from his formative years, from when he was getting the plates and the translation, almost all of it is going to come from *Mormonism Unveiled* and the Philastus Hurlbut affidavits, almost all of it.
- Hank Smith: 16:30 From a guy who had been excommunicated for-

John Bytheway:	<u>16:33</u>	Adultery, adulteries.
Hank Smith:	<u>16:35</u>	... multiple adulteries, who has been paid to go back to get dirt and brings it back with him.
Dr. Gerrit Dirk...:	<u>16:41</u>	Eber Howe himself has a dog in the fight. I mean he's not a fan of religion to begin with. He's not a fan of organized religion. He feels like that there's a lot of excesses. So he's making fun of Latter-day Saints when they first show up. I mean when Parley Pratt and Oliver Cowdery show up preaching, he makes fun of them in his newspaper right away. But over the course of time, things become much, much more personal for him. First, his sister joins the Church.
Dr. Gerrit Dirk...:	<u>17:12</u>	Suddenly, again, it's one thing to like, "These crazy idiots. Why would anyone ever believe anything they have to say?" And then my sister joined the Church. And then his wife joins the Church. I don't imagine that the mealtimes at the Howe homestead were ... I mean she not only joins the Church, she's actually one of the women that we have on record as having donated money for the Zion's Camp march to go redeem Zion. So he has a very personal interest in this too. Obviously, we all have personal interest in the fact that we believe and we know people who believe.
Dr. Gerrit Dirk...:	<u>17:49</u>	But when we're dealing with religion, kind of like we talked about the last time I was on, the reality is whether or not Joseph Smith saw an angel is something that you can only know through God. You can read Joseph's account and ask God. If someone says in an affidavit, "Yeah, Joseph told me that he didn't really have the plates, that he made that up and then just told people that he had the plates," that's great. That's wonderful. Thank you for your commentary on it. It can't overturn the fact that Joseph is saying that he had a miraculous experience, and that miraculous experience is that an angel appeared to him.
Dr. Gerrit Dirk...:	<u>18:32</u>	People can say whatever they want. People said that Jesus was a wine bibber and a blasphemer, and they were wrong.
Hank Smith:	<u>18:40</u>	I think it's important for our listeners to understand, anyone who's maybe even new to the Church, that this is no other plausible explanation that anyone has given for the production of the Book of Mormon. There is none. There's no cohesive argument that anyone has made that said, "I know how he produced it." There's all sorts of, "He's a religious genius. He's a crazy whatever." But there's still, to this day, not any cohesive,

"This is when he wrote it. This is where the drafts were." There's not one.

- Hank Smith: [19:14](#) Another explanation does not exist. I think that's an important thing for people to understand.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [19:17](#) There's certainly not one that's universally accepted even by non-Latter-day Saint historians. There are lots of different claims. I mean there are certainly people who say, "Well, Joseph's just a religious genius," in which case, it just becomes much harder to explain why all of his other writing from the time period doesn't reflect that at all. Well, that's because Oliver Cowdery was a religious genius. Okay. Well then how come Oliver Cowdery's other writings from the time doesn't reflect that at all? Well, that's because Sidney Rigdon was secretly already a believer.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [19:44](#) He came to Palmyra. He hatched this plan with Joseph Smith, and then he went back to Ohio. He pretended to get converted, and that's how the Book of Mormon was written, because Sidney Rigdon wrote it. The problem is there's no evidence for that at all, except for it would help you sleep at night. Like I said, I call that Unisom Anti-Mormonism. It's what would help me sleep at night. But that's not what historians do. Historians deal with what facts actually exist. The reality is when you read most books that talk about the history of Mormons from a non-Mormon perspective, they generally try to pass over the actual creation of the Book of Mormon pretty quickly.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [20:28](#) That's because there isn't a really good argument. Now, look, there are obviously books that are written when the specific topic is the origin of the Book of Mormon. But I'm thinking of Daniel Walker Howe's book that he wrote for Oxford on the history of the United States during that time period, when he covered the Book of Mormon and he says, "Look, true or not, this is an impressive literary work." But he doesn't really attempt to try to tell his readers where he thinks it actually came from.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [21:04](#) Joseph is saying that he created it, and I think the historical default has to be, look, outside of some other reason, then Joseph has to be the one who's doing it because that's what he's saying. We don't have any other credible arguments. And then what do you do with the fact that he's clearly not capable of producing that? Well then-
- Hank Smith: [21:27](#) What do you do?

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 21:28 ... it goes to, well, there has to be some other conspiracy. He got it from somewhere else or maybe he fell into some kind of trance-like state and produced it, even though all of our physical witnesses of the translation, they say something the opposite. So I mean even the theory that, well, Joseph Smith was able to somehow ... He ate some bad mushrooms and he hallucinated and was able to create this far beyond his abilities. Even that theory is actually in the face of our existing historical records, because we have records from the people interacting with Joseph Smith at the time and during the translation and that's not what they're saying.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 22:10 So, again, even those theories are more about how can I make these things equal? Because Joseph's a real problem. He, by all the documents you read, Joseph really believes he was called by God, that there's nothing in anything that Joseph has that suggests he doesn't really believe. If he really believes, it becomes much harder to explain how he fabricated the Book of Mormon and the gold plates and everything like that if he really believes. Honestly, a lot of historians simply take a pass on it. They simply say, "Joseph claimed that he had received the gold plates from an angel," and they move on beyond it because the story they're trying to tell isn't the origin of the Book of Mormon. They kind of move past it.
- John Bytheway: 22:57 That Solomon Spalding tided people over for a little bit.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 23:01 I mean all throughout the 19th century. Even now, you'll hear some people say, "Well, maybe there's actually a second Solomon Spalding manuscript."
- Hank Smith: 23:08 No way. Part two.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 23:11 Okay. Yeah. And there was a shooter on the grassy knoll and all kinds of stuff. I mean the reality is that conspiracy theories are always ... They're fun because you don't actually have to have proof for them. But when you're doing history, you need evidence. Evidence really suggests two things, that Joseph Smith really, really, really believed he was called by God, that he wasn't a fraud, no matter how often someone wants to call him that.
- Hank Smith: 23:38 All the evidence points there, right?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 23:39 All the evidence.
- Hank Smith: 23:43 He doesn't have a secret journal, "I can't believe this is working."

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 23:47 It's a case with a lot of religious people from history, that historians are not in the position to judge whether or not they've actually had the experiences with God that they claim. All we can really do is examine whether or not they seem to be legitimately believing the things they're saying. Look, sometimes they're not. It happens that people are two-faced and you can tell from their other records that they deliberately are being that way. It's not a historian's job and therefore it's not a historical argument to have a discussion about whether or not Joan of Arc actually heard the voice of God.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 24:31 She says she did. You can say as a person, "Well, I find that pretty unlikely," especially if you're English, I suppose. "I find that very unlikely that this French general beating the English would hear ..." but, as a historian, you don't really have a reason to say, "That Joan of Arc, she's a liar." Instead, what you can really say is, "Joan of Arc really seemed to believe that she'd heard the voice of Jesus." Now, that doesn't prove that she heard the voice of Jesus, but it does mean she's not a fraud.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 25:09 A fraud is someone who knowingly tells a story to people in order to curry favor that they know they don't deserve. There is a difference between someone who really believes they're acting in the name of God and someone who's saying those words in order to curry favor. There's just no evidence. You can read the 100,000 pages of Joseph Smith documents and you can read them, the 12,000 different ... You can read them all, all the documents. There's nothing in any of them, private, public, that even suggests that Joseph doesn't really believe he's called by God.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 25:48 So you have to deal with him on that level. He really believes he's called by God. He's not a fraud.
- Hank Smith: 25:55 And then he comes up with this book that is pretty incredible, not just pretty incredible.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 26:00 Yeah. That seems to be entirely outside his abilities. But Solomon Spalding manuscript really for a long time, it helped provide that explanation. Why does this seem so good? Why does it confuse so many people to become Mormons? That's because an actual real Christian wrote it and this imposter took it and used it for his own nefarious purposes. So I did not want to tell this story, but I've been impressed upon to tell us, so I will.
- Hank Smith: 26:35 By your friend, Hank, yes.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 26:37 Yeah. Just to do Hank a solid, I'm going to-

Hank Smith: 26:42 This is one of my favorite stories.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 26:45 The reality is you don't actually know when and where you're going to have people attack your faith. I think we live in a time, especially with the Internet, that you're sometimes surprised by it. I mean you will casually post something on Facebook and someone will, in your comments, tell you that you're a Satan worshiper. The reality is there's obviously a lot of vitriol. That's exactly what Joseph was told.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 27:12 We were building a house and so the contractor was a little behind schedule. Because of that, we were kind of transient members of a ward that we were in just temporarily. We were essentially renting month to month in a place and we already knew the new ward that we were going to be in if they ever actually finished our house, which was on the other side of town. So we were actually, at times, attending this other ward that we were going to be in because that's where we were really going to be. So we were not as invested in the ward as we should have been, obviously.

John Bytheway: 27:46 In your rental property ward.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 27:48 Yeah, yeah, exactly. My wife was pregnant and she's super sick when she was pregnant, so she wasn't able to go to church very often. So here we are in this very temporary ward because we'd thought we'd be done in time. It's wasn't. So we had to move somewhere where we could rent very temporarily. I went to fast and testimony meeting one Sunday. Someone goes up and begins bearing a testimony. This person had a stack of papers with him. He began to systematically speak this false ... He began to attack the Church from the pulpit.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 28:32 The stake president comes up and whispers to the guy and the guy, he just keeps right on going. Eventually he runs out of material. I can see that there are a group of them and they're all down there on the first pew ready to go up as soon as this guy's done. But they had one fatal flaw in their takeover of the sacrament meeting plan and that was they hadn't gone to enough of our fast and testimony meetings to realize that you can go sit up on the stand to be the next person in line.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 29:06 So as this guy, as I realize there's a whole group of them, as he starts to finish and their next member of their group down there gets ready to start to come up, I essentially sprint to the ... I'm in

the back of the chapel and I ... all the way up to the front of the pulpit. I get up there first. And then I just proceed to ... I filibuster the whole rest of the meeting. I gave a 35-minute testimony because that way time's taken up. Eventually I get the signal from the people behind me. They're like, "Okay. We can end now." The Stake President stands right up and he closes the meeting and that's it.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 29:50 I mean I'm working through *The Joseph Smith Papers*. So I'm essentially going through point by point and saying, "There are some people who make this claim about Joseph ..." repeating what this guy said. "But they obviously haven't read this. They haven't read this. They haven't read this. They haven't read this. We know from this source and this source and this source that this is the case. I mean I'm just going through the whole thing. So I go to Sunday School and, at the time, I was meeting ... It was a very old building, and I was meeting on the stage with the Gospel Principles class actually. I was in the Gospel Principles class.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 30:27 As I'm in the meeting, I can hear our Stake President had a very distinctive and loud booming voice. I can hear him going around to the various classrooms looking for somebody. It was one of those buildings that had the old dividers that they had in the gym to create classrooms. Anyway, so I can hear him going to each of those and he's looking for someone. The person he's looking for, he thinks is named Dirk Moss. So he keeps knocking on these doors and he's saying, "Is there a Brother Moss in here?" They're like, "No, I don't think we have a Brother Moss." "No, no, a Dirk Moss? Is there a Dirk Moss?" "I don't know a Dirk Moss."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 31:11 I think what happened is he asked the Second Counselor, because I was out like a shot when that thing was gone. I think he asked the Second Counselor, "Who was that?" I mean to that Second Counselor's credit, he had met me one other time and he-
- Hank Smith: 31:30 And he remembered your name.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 31:30 ... remembered my name. He was like, "That's Brother Dirkmaat." So the Stake President thought my first name was Dirk and that my last name was Moss. So he's wandering around the church asking for someone that no one thinks exists because he keeps asking for a Brother Moss and they're like, "We don't have a Brother Moss." "No, we have a Brother Moss. You know the one in the sacrament meeting." "I don't know who that is."

Because they didn't know me because I was never there at church.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 31:59 Anyway, eventually I hear him coming to the stage and I hear the ... the big knock. Like I said, he's got a booming voice. Teacher answers it, "President, what do ..." "Do you have a Brother Moss in your class?" "I don't think we have ..." "No, Brother Moss, a Dirk Moss. Do you have a Dirk Moss in your class?" "President, I don't think ..." And then he saw me in the back and he's like, "Brother Moss," and he comes striding all the way across. I was so far down in my chair like, "Please don't see me. Please don't see me."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 32:34 He comes up and he's like, "Brother Moss." He's like, "I just wanted to come talk to you about what happened in there." He said, "Thank you so much for being willing to stand up and say those things. Brother Moss, how did you know those things you were talking about?" Look, at this point he's said my name wrong, like shouted it wrong about 30 times. At this point you can't be like, "Actually, my name's Gerrit." You let people save face. If someone said your name wrong that many times, you just let it go.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 33:12 "Brother Moss, how did you know those things?" He said, "I've been a member my whole life and there are lots of things that you said that I've never heard before. It seemed like you knew everything there was to know about Joseph Smith from that time period." I mean I was working on *Documents, Volume One* at the time of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, which was the 1828 to the 1831 time period, so everything that this guy was talking about. I wanted the conversation to be over and I didn't want to try to explain it. It had totally interrupted the whole class.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 33:46 So I was like, "I guess I'm just lucky, I guess. I just remembered some of the stuff I've studied." He's like, "Well, I just want to thank you." So the best part about that story that I think the reason why Hank wants me to tell it is not actually part of the story. That part of the story shows that you never actually know when someone's going to challenge your faith and make all kinds of claims.
- Hank Smith: 34:10 Right. That's an important claim, yeah.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 34:10 It happened in my own Fast and Testimony Meeting. But the best part of the story is that we got a call that week that our house was ready, so we actually never went back to that ward again. So what I want to believe, but I don't know, is that that

Stake President was like, "I went back to my office and I looked on the records of my stake and there was no Dirk Moss. There had never been a Dirk Moss in my-

- Hank Smith: 34:41 We never heard from him again.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 34:42 "He was there by himself. He was sitting alone by himself. He seemed to know everything there was to know about Joseph Smith, and then he was gone."
- Hank Smith: 34:51 Almost did.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 34:52 "And then he was gone." So if you ever hear a story about a Three Nephite coming out of Layton, Utah, not true. It was just happenstance of circumstances that the anti-Mormons came to a Fast and Testimony Meeting that I was actually in as they attacked Joseph Smith on the basis of early Joseph Smith history, I think. So yeah. There was no Dirk Moss. I'm sure that that's how Three Nephite stories get started.
- Hank Smith: 35:26 Yeah, exactly. We started here with Ezra Booth who was so disappointed and turns really angry on the prophet.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 35:35 Really angry. You know the sad part about Booth is that while he seems to initially be trying to ingratiate himself back into the Methodist fold, what we learned from another history, this is not a Latter-day Saint history, he actually abandons religion entirely. By the time he dies, he's an agnostic. He just doesn't believe. I mean he's agnostic. He's not atheist, which you couldn't really say you were in the late 19th century anyway. But he's kind of abandoned it.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 36:05 It's a sad thing. I think it happens to a lot of people who do lose their faith, in the sense that it's one of the more unfortunate things. I mean I hope that if people leave our Church, they'll at least still believe that God loves them and that Jesus is their Savior and that there's still truth out there. It's unfortunate when people have kind of lost all hope, and that really is what happens with Ezra Booth.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 36:33 The other reason I told that story is that Sidney Rigdon is going to publicly challenge Ezra Booth and eventually Hurlbut and others to meet him in the public square anywhere, Symonds Ryder, he challenged Symonds Rider, to meet him in the public square and he will debate them on any point of doctrine. He was never taken up on that, but he's more than willing to do it.

Hank Smith: 36:59 Let's finish Section 62. It's, what, the next day, Section 62.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 37:04 It's very brief.

Hank Smith: 37:05 Yeah. They're still on their way back, obviously.

John Bytheway: 37:09 I'm still on the legend of Dirk Moss. I'm still on that.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 37:12 So then they run into this guy named Dirk Moss who seems to ... So what happens is they actually, it's precipitated by the fact that what happens is they run into a group of other Elders because now they're no longer taking the water route because ... They run into a group of Elders that are coming down from that initial missionary call in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 56 that they're going down. So they run into Hyrum [Smith] and others who actually had not made it to Zion yet because these Elders had actually taken seriously what God had commanded them to do, that they were to preach the Word as much as they could along the way.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 37:54 One of the unfortunate aspects of that is they had taken so long to get down there as they preached on their way down that Joseph had arrived, received the revelation of where the temple in Zion was supposed to be built, held their conference that they were supposed to hold, and then went back on their way back-

Hank Smith: 38:16 On their way home. Let's clarify, Gerrit. Let's clarify for our listeners that Joseph wasn't commanded to teach on his way. It was him and Sidney, go. You get there.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 38:26 No, they were supposed to go, but all of the other Elders were supposed to preach along the way-

Hank Smith: 38:29 I just wanted to make sure.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 38:30 Yeah. I mean obviously, I'm sure they did preach where they had the chance. But Hyrum [Smith] and others had taken it very seriously, and so they were weeks behind the other people. They run into each other. As negative as D&C 61 was, this negative near-death experience, D&C 62 is it's kind of this reunion of these beloved friends, but it also precipitates some questions. I mean, "Well, Joseph, if our goal was to preach all the way down to Zion so we could be there for the conference that's held in Zion that you guys had last week, so do we just turn around and go home with you now or do we keep going to Zion?"

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 39:25 So I think there's some cool things to pull out of that. I think verse 3 is something that has every missionary who's ever gone out and felt frustrated has probably had hopefully someone point them to 62:3, "Nevertheless, ye are blessed, for the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon, and they rejoice over you and your sins are forgiven." I mean on just the possibility that my sins could be forgiven if I'm bearing testimony of the truth, I'm going to bear my testimony to every person I meet.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 40:08 I'm guessing that these Elders felt similarly frustrated like everyone else was that this was not the thousands of people marching into the river to be baptized all at once. They'd essentially not been listened to. This had not been successful. It was a terrible, arduous trek, and now they even missed the conference they were trying to get to. The Lord, trying to remind them that, "What you did was follow me and even if you don't convert anybody, what you were supposed to do was be obedient. You were obedient and you're going to be blessed for that obedience even if people didn't follow."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 40:50 So I think that's a beautiful part of that section. And then secondly-
- Hank Smith: 40:54 Helped them to keep going, right?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 40:55 Yeah. Secondly, they get the answer to that question. That's verse 4, "And now continue your journey to Zion." They're going to hold their own meeting there to celebrate the fact they're there. Now, why is it that they are told to continue to go? It's very similar to the same advice that was just given about why the Joseph group, why his party had taken boats even though God obviously knew that they were eventually going to have some problems on the boats. Why? Because I want you to be able to bear a testimony of the experience you had.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 41:32 This is the same thing that these people are told here, that they're going to go and that they're going to be able to bear testimony of that when they go back. "And then you may return," this is verse 5. "And then you may return, to bear record, yea, even altogether or two by two as seemeth you good. It mattereth not to me. Only be faithful and declare glad tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth and among the congregations of the wicked." Well, I guess we do [verse] 6 too. "Beyond I, the Lord, have brought you together that the promise might be fulfilled, that the faithful among you, should be

preserved and rejoice together in the land of Missouri. I, the Lord, promise the faithful and cannot lie."

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [42:18](#) So part of the reason why He still wants them to go is, first of all, they were promised that they'd get to see the land of Zion. Second of all, they're going to not ... When they go back to bear testimony in Kirtland to the main body of the church, they're not going to be able to say, "Yeah, we got most of the way there and then we just kind of turned around." They're going to be able to say, "We saw the spot where the Lord told Joseph Smith the temple as the center of the city of Zion is going to be built. We saw it. It's real. We were there." There's nothing to that.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [42:51](#) There's something to the testimony of that experience that makes it all the more powerful for those who are still wondering about belief.
- John Bytheway: [43:02](#) When I was a Bishop, we had this guy whose wife died, elderly couple, very inactive, went and talked to him. He said, "Well, my wife just had this hang-up with plural marriage. I was a Ward Clerk before." We invited him back and he said, "Okay." He came back to church. Then one day he knocked on my office when I was a Bishop and he just came in and he sat down. He said, "I had a dream last night and she said, 'Take me to the temple.' Now, I can't exactly wrap my head around how cool that is because she was in the temple in the dream. She said, 'Take me to the temple,' and suddenly something made sense. She came walking out and she looked beautiful. She was in front of this white cloudy thing."
- John Bytheway: [43:50](#) So we're like, "I'm going to get you signed up. We're going to get you the temple prep lessons." Okay. He takes the temple prep lessons, finally goes to the temple. Long story short, knocks on my door again. He says, "Bishop," and I kind of gave it away. He said, "Bishop, I went to the temple and when they said, 'We will now reveal the veil of the temple,' that's what it was.""
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [44:09](#) That's awesome.
- John Bytheway: [44:10](#) She was in the temple. Went to the next life with this very bad opinion, confusion, whatever, about plural marriage. But she showed up in the temple, apparently forgiven, apparently everything made sense and said, "You got to take me to the temple," and he did.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [44:30](#) That's awesome.

- John Bytheway: 44:31 Passed away a few months ago, but I'm still wrapping my head around how cool that is that she was in the temple when she came to him and told him, "You got to take me here."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 44:40 It's amazing the experiences that, again, are miracles that there's something beyond. Even just recently with my brother dying, my 12-year-old son, Kai, he was playing basketball in a Comp Basketball League. They played a pretty tough game and they ended up losing at the end. But it was a really late game at night and we're driving home. It's 11:00 at night. Even though I said, "Hey, man, as soon as we get home, you got to get to bed. You got school in the morning. We got to go."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 45:21 So we got home and I was doing the dishes. My wife was in there doing some other things too. He just kind of sat there. He just sat at our counter. He was sitting there and it was just kind of weird. I mean if you had teenagers, you know it's like, "Hm, what's going on with him today?" I said, "Hey, Kai. Man, what you doing? It's time for bed. Go get in bed." He said, "I had to write a biography for school." So I immediately went to the most negative place because that's what parents do because you've been through this rodeo before.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 46:08 So I'm like, "Are you trying to tell me that this is due tomorrow and that you didn't do anything and now we have to spend tonight ..." I mean that was my reaction, which obviously was literally the worst reaction and a demonstration of how un-in tune with the Spirit I was. That's why I was like, "Son, did you not even do it?" He kind of interrupts me. He's like, "I'm doing it on Uncle Brian." That was my brother. "I'm doing a biography on him." He said, "Dad, while I was reading ..." Because he had the obituary. He said, "While I was reading the obituary, I just started crying because I miss him so much."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 46:52 He said, "Dad, I heard a voice. I heard his voice. He said, 'Everything's going to be okay.'" I know my son, and I know my son wasn't making up a story. So I think it's beautiful when we get these connections from the other side. I'm a believer that what we think a chance is here of getting the Gospel is ... I think every single person that God can shove into those kingdoms, He is going to by hook or crook, by all means. He won't exercise any compulsion except that, to force people to take another chance to try because He loves them so much, He wants them to be saved.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 48:00 That's why I mean I love D&C 76 for that very reason. I mean it's just transformative of Christian thought.

- Hank Smith: 48:06 I think our listeners would love to hear your personal thoughts on Joseph Smith, the Restoration and what it has done for you, especially considering all that you've been through recently.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 48:24 Probably I'm not capable of expressing what it is I feel and believe, I think. I don't have the ability to speak with justice to what it is I feel. I've studied Church History I mean my entire adult life. There are obviously other people who are far better scholars than I am and people who are more intelligent than I am, certainly people who probably follow the Gospel better than I do. But I have in studying the life and documents of Joseph Smith and those early men and women who were early Latter-day Saints, I've had the Spirit speak to me multiple times and tell me that this is God's true work.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 49:27 I was working on *The Joseph Smith Papers* on a volume with another colleague. It was interesting. As we were going through the documents, we'd read each of the documents separately next to one another. Then we'd try to figure out, "Okay, we need to annotate this. We need to annotate this." There were multiple times that we'd be reading the document and we would look up at one another at exactly the same time without anything being said and it was because we both felt the same thing at the same time where we expressed what we just read was not written from Joseph Smith.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 50:14 What we just read was a revelation that came from God, and it was truth that came from God and that it was so enlightening. I realized, obviously, I have all kinds of friends that in the Church, out of the Church, on their way out of the Church, hopefully coming on back into the Church. I mean we all have friends in every aspect of our life. Sometimes there are aspects of Church History or doctrine or belief that cause us to struggle and they make us wonder if the whole thing is true.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 50:46 If you're someone who's thinking, "Well, I have a few doubts, so I guess I just don't have a testimony at all," well, if you have a few doubts, it's called being a person. It's called existing at all. The fact that you have questions about things and that you don't have all the answers does not mean that you don't have faith or a testimony. It just means you're like every other person who's ever sought out faith in the history of the world. Sometimes because we can't get all the answers, it causes us to spin a little bit to the point where the thing we can't get the answer to is such that it causes us to forget what it is that we even have.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [51:31](#) It is sometimes a very real frustration. I am not belittling this frustration in any way. I understand why this is a very difficult concept. That is what is marriage going to be like in the next life? I mean it is something that is such a major part of not only our church but our culture in this mortal world and trying to figure out how it's going to work, and then especially when it comes to things like, "Now, wait a minute. My grandmother, she was married to four different men when she was alive. But when we went and did her temple work for her, we sealed her to all four of them but obviously she's not married to all four of them in the next life. So who's my grandmother going to be with? Because I mean I read her journal and I really think she was closest to the second husband that we sealed her to, but they told us to seal her to all of them."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [52:22](#) You can start to see how people start to get really worked up in their mind because they don't understand how it is that marriage is going to work in the next life. Sometimes that frustration that you don't know, that it hasn't been revealed, can get such that it causes people to have a faith crisis. It causes them to say, "I just don't know what to believe anymore." But it's important that when you're in those times that you realize the very reason that you're asking the question is because you believe Joseph Smith's a prophet. Because, frankly, there ain't no Presbyterian wondering who great-grandma's married to in the next life, because the answer is nobody because marriage doesn't exist in the next life.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [53:05](#) The only reason you have a question of who's married to who in the next life or what that marriage is like in the next life is because Joseph Smith's a prophet of God. The moment he stops being a prophet, you don't have to worry anymore about how marriage or eternal families work in the next life because they don't. The moment Joseph stops being a prophet, you don't have to worry about how the Premortal Life factors into our progression because it doesn't because there wasn't a Premortal Life because there isn't a progression.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [53:35](#) I hope that when people struggle with the questions they have, they will realize that the truths that we have, the ones that you can hold onto are so powerful and so important that you're not willing to give them up, not on the basis of a possibility that you don't understand a maybe. At the very least, I hope we can adopt Pascal's Wager, that we can at least say what he said and that is that, look, if you're uncertain about the existence of God, you should always bet on God. You should wager on God. Because the reality is if God doesn't exist and you live your

whole life like God does exist and you die, well, you won't be able to regret the fact that you lived your life like God existed.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [54:29](#) Because if there isn't a God and you die, then you don't exist anymore. So there is no regret. There's no sitting back and like, "Why wasn't I drunk more often? Why did I even follow the Word of Wisdom?" Because you won't exist, so it won't matter. On the other hand, if God does exist, then how we choose to live this life actually does matter. The amount of regret that one might have if they choose to reject and throw away the possible truths because there are great difficulties and trials in this life, that might engender a great deal of regret. So that was probably not what you were looking for at all.
- Hank Smith: [55:10](#) No, no, no.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [55:12](#) I got to tell you-
- Hank Smith: [55:12](#) The very questions we have come from the doctrines revealed to-
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [55:17](#) They come from the fact that Joseph was a prophet. So do we know exactly why X happened or Y? Do we know exactly what happened with the Kirtland Safety Society? Do I understand why God instituted plural marriage? Can I frankly understand all the different aspects of different prophetic utterance? The answer's no. But I can tell you that the reason why I know my brother is still alive, the reason why I believe that Jesus is the Christ is because I know that Joseph Smith saw resurrected Jesus and not just once, but on multiple occasions.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [55:54](#) I'm not giving that up. I've got all kinds of questions I don't have answers to. That's especially frustrating for me because I've dedicated my life to trying to find answers. But I'm not giving that up. I mean I just hope your listeners, if you're struggling with your faith, I hope you will remember what it is that we believe, that we don't believe that people are burning in Hell for eternity, that there's every single person, outside of a few saved people, are suffering in some kind of eternal horrible hell.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [56:26](#) We believe in the eventual salvation of essentially every person who's lived in this Earth. We believe in an equality of people being able to go to the Celestial Kingdom, that every single person who's ever lived in this Earth will have an equal opportunity in this life or the next in order to go to the Celestial Kingdom. We believe that all of the horrible things that have happened to us in this life are going to be made up to us in the

next life. We believe that families can be and will be together forever, that marriage can be forever, and that if you didn't have a chance for marriage in this life, you'll have it in the next life.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 56:58 All of these things that we believe are so beautiful. I hope we won't casually give away what we believe because of the questions that we can't answer. I testify as much as I can that even though I'm a historian and I've studied things from an academic perspective, I have also had the Holy Spirit speak to me and tell me that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God and that Jesus is the Christ. I think that all of us can have that experience. If you had it once and now you're losing it, have it again. Read, spend some time reading the things that Joseph Smith wrote, and not just what people said that he wrote.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 57:43 Go read them. *The Joseph Smith Paper* are all online. Start reading them and the Spirit will speak to you that he's a prophet of God.
- Hank Smith: 57:52 Amen. This is our second episode with you and it was every bit, if not better, than our first-
- John Bytheway: 57:57 Beautiful.
- Hank Smith: 57:59 Yeah, John, I'm with you. Absolutely beautiful.
- John Bytheway: 58:01 And powerful and exactly ... Just brings clarity to think of it that way. I love the way you said that.
- Hank Smith: 58:11 We, of course, want to thank Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat, not Brother Dirk Moss, for being with us today. We want to thank all of you who listened and laughed with us. We're very grateful for your support. We want to thank our Executive Producers, Steven and Shannon Sorensen and our production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Nielsen, Kyle Nelson, Will Stoughton, and Maria Hilton. We hope you will join us on our next episode of followHIM.