

The Mormon Challenge

A presentation of the other side of Mormonism using LDS-approved sources

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Introduction

In recent years, I've been researching questions I've had regarding Mormonism. I began this research when I decided that I could not be an honest seeker of truth when I was deliberately avoiding such research. This document provides my findings, as well as the sources, that you may check the context of each source. This is a very sensitive topic for many people. As you read some of this material for the first time, you may feel a terrible sinking feeling. I've experienced it for myself. It reminds me of how I feel when I find out that something terrible has happened. I will recount some of my experiences to help you out in that regard.

Sources Used

In a recent push for open information, the church has published a series of First Presidency-approved essays on lds.org. The list is provided at [this lds.org link](#).

“The purpose of these essays, which have been approved by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has been to gather accurate information from many different sources and publications and place it in the Gospel Topics section of LDS.org, where the material can more easily be accessed and studied by Church members and other interested parties.”

[lds.org - Gospel Topics Essays](#) ([Deseret News](#) also confirms First Presidency approval)

“I think in the past there was a tendency to keep a lot of the records closed or at least not give access to information. But the world has changed in the last generation—with the access to information on the Internet, we can’t continue that pattern; I think we need to continue to be more open.”

~Elder Snow, Church Historian, 2013

maxwellinstitute.byu.edu - [Truth in Church History](#)

Elder M. Russell Ballard has advised that teachers “know the content of these essays like you know the back of your hand.” His talk regarding these essays is provided by [Deseret News](#).

Another source that will be referenced is an organization called FAIR Mormon ([FAIR](#)). Their goal is to provide faithful answers to difficult gospel topics. [This Deseret News article](#) discusses FAIR and explains that they “engage even the most challenging issues in a faithful manner.” When FAIR provides what I feel are legitimate responses to concerns, I will link to them and discuss their counters.

I will also link to jefflindsay.com, another apologist site, when he provides info that I failed to find on FAIR’s site.

josephsmithpapers.org is run by the Church History Department, as indicated at the bottom of their main page. The site is introduced on [lds.org](#).

The trustworthiness of other sources will be discussed as needed. I can’t say for sure that any of these websites haven’t changed since I accessed them. If any given quote does not match the content on the provided link, insert the full link into <https://archive.is/>. To get the full link and not my abbreviation for it, simply click on it and the full link will appear in your browser. With this method you can find the quote in past versions of each website. Some websites required multiple archive.is links. I will mark such archive.is links as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. I will provide screenshots when archiving was not possible.

The Book of Mormon

Tree of Life Vision

From the journal of Joseph's mother (compare with [1 Nephi 8](#)):

"In 1811, we moved from Royalton Vermont to Lebanon New Hampshire. And shortly after we arrived here, my husband had another very singular Vision; ...

'I thought,' said he, 'I was travelling in an open desolate field.... My guide who stood by me, said; 'this is the desolate world; but travel on.' [I] beheld a beautiful stream of water.... I could see a rope running along the bank, about as high as a man could reach; and beyond me ... stood a tree, such as I had never seen before: ... and it bore a kind of fruit, ... as white, or whiter than snow: ... [I] began to eat of it, and I found it delicious beyond description; ... I said in my heart, I cannot eat this alone, I must bring my wife and children, that they may partake with me. Accordingly, I went and brought the family; ... I beheld a spacious building ... which building appeared to reach to the very heavens. It was full of ... people that were very finely dressed: ... they pointed the finger of scorn at us; and treated us with all manner of disrespect and contempt. But their contumely we utterly disregarded. I soon turned to my guide, and inquired of him, the meaning of the fruit. He told me it was the pure love of God ... He then commanded me to go and bring the rest of my children—I told him we were all there. 'No; he replied, 'look yonder, you have two more' ..."

~Lucy Mack smith

josephsmithpapers.org - [Lucy Mack Smith History - 1845](#) ([1st](#), [2nd](#), [3rd](#))

[FAIR](#) mentions that Lucy dictated the dream in 1845, suggesting that her account was influenced by language used in the Book of Mormon. They also point out that you don't find Joseph's family accusing him of plagiarizing his father's vision.

Response: The detail present in Lucy's account suggests that she had access to Joseph Smith Sr.'s written account. She recounts more of his dreams, each just as detailed. Two of these dreams are provided here. In the [first](#), Lucy (in 1845) even says that she is quoting Joseph Sr.'s dream "in his own words." This shows that Lucy still had access to his written accounts. When she doesn't remember to say "in his own words," like in the [second dream](#) ([1st page](#), [2nd page](#)), Lucy still gives extreme details, such as describing garden walks as 3.5 feet wide. Such details, given decades later, are unlikely if she was recounting these dreams from memory.

Joseph's family could have been led to believe that God gave the same vision to both Lehi and Joseph Smith Sr. Or, maybe they did suspect Joseph of plagiarism, and we don't have a record of it. Whatever the case, this is simply an indicator that either Lehi and Joseph Smith Sr. had the same vision, or Joseph borrowed some of the good material in the Book of Mormon from outside sources.

Evangelical Sources

God may have revealed the Book of Mormon in the language of Joseph's time. There is, however, more than just early 19th century words being used. These Israelites are using the same unique phrases and concepts as 18th/early 19th century evangelicals. It seems that much of the good material in the Book of Mormon was already present in Joseph's region and time period. Could Joseph have heard these phrases and teachings echoed in the congregations of his area?

Example: [The American Tract Society, fourth report](#) (1818)^[1]

"sing the song of praise to Redeeming love, ..."	Alma 5:26 – "if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, ..."
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To "sing the song of redeeming love" is a more uniquely evangelical phrase/concept than something like "rejoicing in redemption."

Jonathan Edwards, Jr. (1745-1801) vs. Alma 42:

Edwards, Jr.	Book of Mormon
"this life is the only state of probation ..."	Alma 42:13 – "on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, ..."
"God must be just as well as merciful."	Alma 42:15 – "a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also."
"[S]in is not imputed when there is no law."	Alma 42:17 – "How could he sin if there was no law?"
"It is generally agreed that murder deserves death. But suppose a law should be made, by which no murderer should be punished by death.... Would not such a law as this ... tend to encourage murder?"	Alma 42:19 – "Now, if there was no law given – if a man murdered he should die – would he be afraid he would die if he should murder?"
"if there were no punishment threatened to the wicked, it would naturally and directly encourage them to persist in vice."	Alma 42:20 – "if there was no law given against sin men would not be afraid to sin."
"the general good requires, that sin be punished according to its demerit,... otherwise God would not appear to be what he really is ..."	Alma 42:22 – "the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God."

[The Confession of Faith](#) (1788) vs. Alma 40-41 and other passages:

Note: This isn't as bad as it looks, as any Christian description of God's plan would appear similar. Doctrinal contradictions here will be discussed on p. 10.

The Confession of Faith	Book of Mormon
<p>32:1-2 – “after death, ... their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, ... waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.... And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day ... all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.”</p>	<p>Alma 40:11-14, 23 – “the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life. And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, ... the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil ... shall be cast out into outer darkness ... thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection ... The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; ...”</p>
<p>33:1 – “God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world, in righteousness, ... all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.”</p>	<p>Alma 41:3-4 – “And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good.... And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil.”</p> <p>Mosiah 4:30 – “if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, ... ye must perish.”</p>
<p>9:4 – “When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.”</p>	<p>2 Nephi 2:27 – “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, ...”</p>

Going back to Jonathan Edwards, here are some additional examples:

Jonathan Edwards, Jr., continued	
<u>"If there be moral good in any of these tempers or actions, there must be moral evil in the directly opposite; and if there be no moral evil in the latter, there is no moral good in the former; as if there were no natural evil in pain there would be no natural good in pleasure."</u>	<u>2 Nephi 2:11</u> – "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad."
<u>"The original state was a state of order, regularity and due subordination, wherein every person and thing were in their proper places; so in this sense all things will finally be brought back to their original state ..."</u>	<u>Alma 41:4</u> – "Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, ..."
Jonathan Edwards, Sr. (1703-1758)	
<u>"the devil, who, because he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy."</u>	<u>2 Nephi 2:27</u> – "the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."
<u>"hardness of heart and blindness of mind."</u>	<u>Ether 4:15</u> – "hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, ..."
<u>"They are enemies to God in their affections. There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God."</u>	<u>Mosiah 3:19</u> – "For the natural man is an enemy to God, ..."
<u>"They subject themselves to him [the devil], ..."</u>	<u>Moroni 7:17</u> – "they who subject themselves unto him [the devil] ..."
<u>"strivings of his Spirit ..."</u>	<u>Moroni 8:28</u> – "the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; ..."
<u>"gulf of woe and misery."</u>	<u>2 Nephi 1:13</u> – "gulf of misery and woe."

<u>“a lively and admiring sense of ...” “sensible of their own guilt, ...”</u>	<u>Mosiah 2:38</u> – “a lively sense of his own guilt, ...”
<u>“suffer the second death.”</u>	<u>Alma 13:30</u> – “suffer the second death.”
<u>“Christ’s condescension ...”</u>	<u>1 Nephi 11:16</u> – “condescension of God?”
<u>“infinite goodness ...”</u>	<u>2 Nephi 1:10</u> – “infinite goodness ...”
<u>“an ignominious death ...”</u>	<u>Alma 1:15</u> – “an ignominious death.”
George Whitefield (1714-1770)	
<u>“whether such a great and almighty change has passed upon any of your souls.” “Has God by his blessed Spirit wrought such a change in your hearts?”</u>	<u>Alma 5:12</u> – “there was a mighty change wrought in his heart.”
<u>“The day he did eat thereof he was not only subject to temporal, but spiritual death; ...”</u>	<u>Alma 42:9</u> – “the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal, ...”
<u>“this life is the only time allotted by Almighty God for working out our salvation, ...”</u>	<u>Alma 34:32</u> - “For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.”
Ray Potter (1795-1858, ordained in 1819) — These last two may have been said after 1830.	
<u>“the day of grace was gone ...”</u>	<u>Mormon 2:15</u> – “the day of grace was passed with them, ...”
Alfred Bennett (1780-?)	
<u>“may the Saviour’s image be impressed on your heart !”</u>	<u>Alma 5:14</u> – “Have you received his image in your countenances?” <u>Alma 5:19</u> – “can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?”

[Jeff Lindsay](#) argues that justice and mercy aren't new topics. He defends the use of the phrases "Justice of God" and "Plan of Salvation," but doesn't address the rest. Most of the above phrases invoke more complicated concepts and are more uniquely evangelical than Lindsay's examples. He mentions that some of the sermons were apparently not in print until 1829 and is honest to remind us that Joseph may have heard them indirectly before then, as these preachers were well-known and influential.

The evangelicals designed their sermons to move churchgoers to repentance. With such rhetoric, the Book of Mormon has produced a similar effect among many members. Could passages like Alma's call to take on Christ's name (Alma 5) or King Benjamin's speech (Mosiah 2-5) be derivations of sermons that Joseph witnessed?

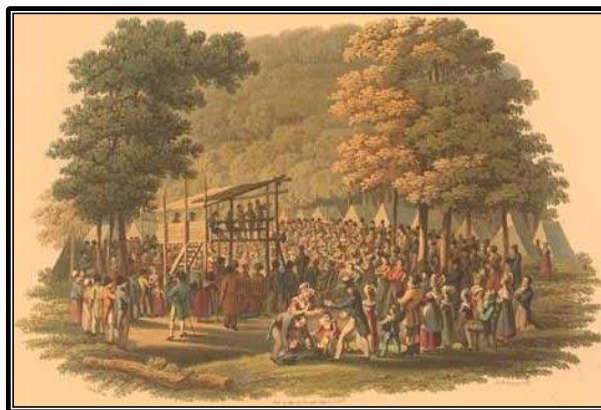


Figure 1 - By Jacques Gérard Milbert (1766-1840) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

The production of the Book of Mormon was mentioned as early as 1827, which provides sufficient time for Joseph to have visited congregations and compile material. Apologists sometimes criticize the quantity of works shown to have possibly influenced the Book of Mormon. In more ancient times, libraries were often destroyed and their works erased from existence. In contrast, published sources available to Joseph (or anyone who helped him) are probably still around today, and any research he did could still be easily identified. We know from FAIR ([p. 66](#)) that Joseph borrowed from the Freemasonry. If he borrowed on one occasion, did he also borrow here? The connection between Jonathan Edwards Jr. and Alma 42 is not weak.

Of additional concern in the Book of Mormon is the preaching of a generic heaven for the righteous and hell for the sinners ([Mosiah 3:24-27](#), [Alma 40:11-14, 23-26](#)). According to those verses, *all are taken home to God right after death* (p. 9). Unrighteous souls then remain in misery until the Resurrection and Judgment, *after which* they are in a state of fire and brimstone-level torment, "from whence there is no return." In Mormonism, after Judgment, most of those who do evil go to the Telestial Kingdom, which is ["far better than this world we now know."](#)

Conviction and Moroni's Promise

While talking about other preachers and religions, I'm going to go hit this topic. Based on [Moroni 10:3-5](#) and scriptures that describe the Holy Ghost, we have learned to rely on feelings of [peace](#), [promptings/impressions](#), [joy](#), [a whispering/still small voice](#), or [a burning in the bosom](#) to determine whether or not something is true. We are also taught to examine whether or not the experience [enlarges our souls](#) and [invites us to do good](#). On the following pages, I have assembled a collection of experiences of those in other faiths. [FAIR](#) reasons that the Spirit confirms the portions of truth found in other religions. These people in other faiths would disagree, especially in those examples I give where they are led specifically to their church, or where they testify for things which contradict Mormonism. They interpret their experiences to mean that they are in God's only church and discuss how their lives have changed for the better (doing good, enlarged souls). If we dismiss their experiences, can we fault them for dismissing ours? Does God work through these feelings, when the results are so conflicting?

Could God, via those feelings, simply be leading us to the religion which would best help us to develop the ability to love and be of service?

Is it possible that part of life's test is that none of the religions are true? This doesn't have to mean that we never get divine inspiration individually.

Can I know something by the power of the Holy Ghost if I'm not sure that it's the Holy Ghost that I felt? "The church says it's the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost says the church is true." What if what the church says is the Holy Ghost is actually something else? The people in the following pages have all felt what I have felt, and for things which contradict Mormonism. Is this a good system for obtaining truth? Is it man trying to interpret powerful feelings produced by the subconscious brain? Can these feelings be manipulated by peaceful settings, uplifting music, and reverent voices? Observe how a church-owned media and broadcasting company, [Bonneville International](#), sold its ability to make people "feel the spirit" to other organizations. They have since removed this passage (hence the archived page).

"Our unique strength is the ability to touch the hearts and minds of our audiences, evoking first feeling, then thought and, finally, action. We call this uniquely powerful brand of creative "HeartSell"® - strategic emotional advertising that stimulates response."

[bonneville.com - Affecting Change archived version](#)

"We partner with you, to help you achieve YOUR objectives, We focus on solutions for you, not simply advertising, but bringing together and activating premium audiences with measurable results. And when it comes to advertising, we air your commercials with unparalleled accuracy to make sure you get what you expected."

[bonneville.com - The Bonneville Difference](#)

Here are some testimonies of those in other faiths:

“When I was around 9 I saw the pope on TV. All of a sudden I had an epiphany that he was our (protestants) pope too! It was so powerful I went outside and just gazed up at the sky... Three months later after leaving the cell church I was in RCIA... That night, while I was lying in bed, **I heard a Voice** and It said “Welcome Home”. **I know with every fiber of my being that It was the Holy Spirit.** I know this sounds like fiction or pretentious fluff, but it isn’t. ... I actually experienced this just as it is written. And I can tell you, to be a Catholic is **the greatest blessing** in the world. God bless.”

forums.catholic.com - post #26

“I think if there's one aspect of the Catholic Faith that should make Atheists, Protestants, and the whole wide world take serious notice, it would be the **countless first class, blatant, overt, authentic miracles** that have taken place only in the Catholic Church. It's the ultimate witness to the existence of God, the validity of the Gospel, and the Catholic Faith. Is there any other faith in the world that can back up and validate their doctrines and teachings with first class miracles?”

catholicforum.com - post #1

“Before I really learned any of the doctrines of the church, I knew that I had an attraction to something about the Eucharist. I knew that it was **transubstantiated**, but I never ‘**knew**’ until that moment during the consecration at the wedding.”

forums.catholic.com - post #30

“As I read these books in a Roman bookstore, and I felt **a burning in my heart** that I should come and investigate.”

medjugorje.we



Figure 2 – By Alessandro Antonelli [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

“The Holy Spirit turned my head slowly towards Rome with **whispers** first, and then shouts.”

whyimcatholic.com - Lutheran Convert

“I also started praying a lot and praying consistently (probably for the first time ever). I realized I couldn't do this on my own, but I recognized the true gravity of this decision, and so I tried to clear my mind of all preconceptions and I honestly prayed (on many occasions over those months) something like this: ‘God, if any Christian sect holds truest to your truth, or if somehow they all do, or certain ones do, please show me so I know how to best worship you. I want your Truth—no matter the cost.’ And I tried to make sure that I meant it. **Each time that I can remember praying that, I got an answer which was along the lines of a “statistical miracle,”** though not quite as grand as the first, and it always pointed towards Catholicism. I would always feel at peace after this was revealed to me, not because Catholicism is the most comforting choice at a glance (is St Leonard of Port Maurice's (private) revelation, or anything for that matter, more comforting than sola fide?) but because the Truth became clear to me, finally.”

forums.catholic.com - post #6

“On a personal level, I have experienced being ‘slain in the Spirit.’ I have seen miracles when we prayed for healing of peoples bodies, or situations. The most powerful are times of praise where you enter into ecstasy with God! It's like being in a warm ocean of love! Nothing can touch that! Some times when I'm reading Scripture, **the Catechism**, or if I hear a great truth of God I feel **a sense of electricity go through my body.** The Holy Spirit is getting my attention! He's saying pay attention! I have this deep sense of **KNOWING** that what I just read or heard is **TRUE!**”

forums.catholic.com - post #17

Note: Of the many Catholic testimonies here, this is one of few compatible with the answer that the Spirit testifies of truth in all religions.

“As I stood there that night after my first confession, I realized that all that was gone. The darkness within me was simply not there anymore. In its place was **peace, and an unmistakable feeling of love**. For the first time, I felt the presence of God.”

whyimcatholic.com - Former Atheist

Note: This person experienced a familiar effect after confessing sins, even though the church leader did not have Priesthood authority

“It took me about 13 years from start to finish--3 years of concerted study--before I was able to disentangle myself from all my misinformation about Catholicism and take the plunge. That was in 1999. What's it been like since then? **grace upon grace upon grace upon grace upon grace..... no regrets**”

forums.catholic.com - post #11



Figure 3 – By Сергей Ильин-Михальский (Sergey Ilyin-Mikhalski) (<http://fotki.yandex.ru/users/sdilyin/album/17739/>) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

“As I sat at my computer playing games or what have you, I was overcome by a need to be at church the next morning. This feeling came from nowhere and was completely at odds with everything going on in my life at the time. Even now, all I can tell you about it was that the Holy Spirit gave me an absolute, **no-doubt knowledge** that I HAD to be at Church the next morning. In the back of my mind, it seemed like it should be a Catholic Church that I attend, but the overwhelming message was that I attend church. At this parish, they offered both the host and the cup. As I received each one, it was almost **like being struck by lightning**. When I say this, I mean that it was an actual physical sensation of electricity as I received each species. It was something that I had never experienced before and I was totally unprepared for it.”

whyimcatholic.com - Methodist Convert

“In the end, there was not a large neon sign saying, “Be Catholic!” on it. Instead, there was a **gentle whisper in my soul**. It's those soft whispers that can have the most dramatic impact on our lives.”

whyimcatholic.com

“I remember feeling something physically different about being in a Catholic church than any other church I had ever been in. I remember feeling **warmth, comfort, peace, and calm** wash over me as I would sit silently.”

whyimcatholic.com

“This process took two years. We did not easily convert. But we were definitely wooed by God. Both of us, at one point, were **spoken to by the Holy Spirit**, Who told us, ‘This is the truth. If you reject it, you are in danger of hellfire. Do you accept My teaching and will you say ‘Yes’ to the Catholic Church? Or will you reject My teaching?’ We accepted the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and in 2004, we were received into the Catholic Church. We love being Catholic! Based on history and theology, we believe that the Catholic Church is the Church that Jesus Christ founded and intended for human beings to be part of. We believe that Protestant churches have a portion of the Gospel and that Protestants have a hope of heaven through their triune baptism and their invincible ignorance. We pray that the Church might one day be ONE, as Jesus prayed in John 17.”

forums.catholic.com - post #9

"I asked the Lord Jesus Christ for a sign to show that the True Jesus Church has the whole truth.... One day, I was sitting under a tree, thinking deeply. I was trying to recall some Bible verses on baptism and praying about a doubt that I had. Suddenly, a miracle happened to me. **It was like a light** that I could not exactly figure out. It **shone on me** and took away the doubt in my mind. It seemed that the darkness in my mind was lifted. The doctrine on infant baptism, which I could not at first accept, suddenly became very clear me. I could then accept it with my mind and heart. Since that incident, each time I read the Bible, that former opinion to oppose and the refusal to believe and accept were gone. Today I believe that infants must be baptized in order to be saved.... Now I **know** and am confident that this is the end of my search for the whole truth. I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for answering my prayer and giving me a sign. I have found the whole truth of my salvation. Glory be given to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!!"

members.tjc.org ([archive.org link](#))

"I remember getting to a point where I wanted to be saved more than anything else in the world. It was at that point that I felt **peace flood over my body**. I asked God if that was it. The peaceful feeling seemed to intensify. I knew I was saved and began to rejoice. This personal experience with God is what will take me to Heaven."

southsidebc.com

Note: Of the Protestant testimonies here, this is the only one compatible with the answer that the Spirit testifies of truth in all religions.

"What makes you think that miracles 'only' happen in the Catholic Church? A very good friend of mine, whom I trust, told me of an occasion which brought him the Christ. He was at a meeting at Notre Dame Univ. which was being given by a Protestant Minister.... As a group left the meeting a dog was hit by a passing car and it almost tore off its leg. The group that had just left gathered around the dog and began to pray. The clouds parted enough for a ray of light to shine down on the group and the group witnessed the dog being healed. The dog then ran off and the group was left in awe of what they had seen. My friend then gave his life over to God and has been a changed person ever since. The Orthodox Church has also [reported] many miracles and [sightings] of the Virgin Mary. Countless healings have been reported and witnessed by Doctors of people who have belonged to many different Churches, Catholic and Protestant."

catholicforum.com - post #3

"On the day I was baptized I **felt like a whole new person**. Since that day, I have been spending more time with the Lord in my everyday life. I am convinced that the decision I made to get baptized was exactly what I needed in my life and I could not be happier. I thank God everyday for all of the wonderful people in my life who have helped me through everything and have supported me through this amazing transition into my new life in Christ."

adventist.org - Testimonies

Note: This is an example of baptism without authority.



Figure 4 – By AuburnPilot (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

"As I slept that night, the Holy Spirit woke me up and the words "rivers of living water" were **impressed upon me**. I **felt prompted** to speak in tongues, which I had previously prayed for but did not know if I had ever received the gift. As I started to speak, the tongues flowed out of me like rivers. My husband woke up and asked me what I was doing. When I told him about it, I was so full of joy I could not stop laughing! Thank you, Pastor Prince, for your messages. They have completely changed my life. I was baptized in the Holy Spirit in my sleep! Praise the name of Jesus!"

josephprince.org

“Alexander embraced Islam and adopted his Muslim name, Hamza, after six years of search for the truth. It was the ‘adan,’ or the call to prayer, which he heard for the first time while he was in an African country that changed his life. ‘It inspired me to search for the truth. It gave me an **inexplicable feeling** that spread throughout my body and I stood astounded for a long time. I am very happy to have embraced the world’s great religion,’ he said.”

arabnews.com

“I would sit and listen to scholars talk, I would listen to the Quran in my car on my way to work, and then something happened. I felt this **overwhelming emotion, goosebumps, and tears**. I knew that these feelings were so right. I took my shahada, then alhumdulillah I became a Muslim and put on hijab.”

[muslimsstories on Instagram](https://muslimsstories.oninstagram.com)

“My soul yearns to live the way Allah (swt) wants me to live, and my entire being yearns to please Him and worship Him. Islam has taught me the meaning of true love and light and beauty and happiness and perfection. Alhamdulillah, I feel like He has taught me how to fly! Now how could that possibly be ‘wrong’? Islam is perfect and Islam is true, and no one can ever convince me otherwise. Subhan’Allah.”

heart-full-of-islam.tumblr.com

“When one strives to spread Islam, they will be in a state of **happiness that cannot be described**. When one saves another from the torment of Hell, it is indeed an amazing feeling.”

archive.org - [The Key to Happiness](http://TheKeytoHappiness.com)



Figure 5 – By Aiman titi (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

“It is difficult to describe to someone who has never felt it how Islam can change and improve one's life. But Islam changed me totally. I now have **no doubt** about our purpose in this world and that I am following the right path, I have a certainty I never knew before, and a **peace** that goes with it. God's plan makes much more sense to me and I feel I have an idea where I belong... **I didn't even really know I was lost before**, but when I found Islam and looked back it was so clear to me that I had been searching for years.”

islamtomorrow.com

“Slowly I was getting deeper and deeper into the Qu'ran. I asked, “**Could a human being be capable of such a subtle, far-reaching book?**” Furthermore, there are parts that are meant to guide the Prophet himself, as well as reprimand him. I wondered if the Prophet would have reprimanded himself... There were days when I would reject every word--find a way to condemn it, not allow it to be true. But then I would suddenly happen upon a phrase that spoke directly to me... I had spent my life longing for a truth in which heart would be compatible with mind, action with thought, intellect with emotion. I found that reality in Islam. With that reality came true self-confidence and intellectual freedom.”

islambasics.com

“During my clean up I found my old Qur'an in Arabic that I had bought while I was a student at Rabat. I had bought it as a study guide to help me learn to read Arabic. It had been many years since I had last read anything in Arabic. I was curious as to if I could still read it. I opened it to Surah Fatiha and the first line literally jumped out at me... It was like the words glowed and completely filled me with **an inner peace I never felt before**... After over 20 years of not speaking Arabic it all flowed back to me. I could not stop reading and I was not simply reading words, the feeling of each ayyat came upon me with **an indescribable warmth and sense of understanding**. I could not stop. I do not know how long I read I know it was for at least 48 hours and I still could not stop the feeling was so powerful and filling me with **a strong sense of love and joy** on the morning of what I believe was the 3rd day I finally set the Qur'an down and knew I was Muslim.”

islamicboard.com

Would Satan be the author of the peace and joy these people feel? Would it be fair of God to allow for such deception in his plan when eternity is at stake?

It could be said that such testimonies are more common in Mormonism. Could that be due to Mormonism's huge emphasis on obtaining such a witness?

"Consider recording the testimony of Joseph Smith in your own voice, listening to it regularly, and sharing it with friends. Listening to the Prophet's testimony in your own voice will help bring the witness you seek."

~Elder Neil L. Andersen, 2014, referring to Joseph's testimony in the Pearl of Great Price

[lds.org - Joseph Smith](https://www.lds.org/joseph-smith)

Of the many testimonies we hear, how many are saying they have a testimony because they feel they have to, hoping to feel something after saying it?

"It is not unusual to have a missionary say, 'How can I bear testimony until I get one? How can I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is true? If I do not have such a testimony, would that not be dishonest?' Oh, if I could teach you this one principle. A testimony is to be found in the bearing of it! Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that 'leap of faith,' as the philosophers call it."

~Elder Boyd K. Packer, who goes on to say that the Spirit witnesses to you after you testify

[lds.org - The Candle of the Lord](https://www.lds.org/the-candle-of-the-lord)

When it seems that everyone around us knows that the church is true, and when it seems that salvation itself depends on it, do we desperately get in the mindset where we will try and use any experience to believe the church is true? I'll give an example of someone using any possible result to reach the same conclusion. In [this talk](#), Elder Holland and his son reach a fork in the road. They pray to know which way to go and both feel strongly to go right. They go right and it's a dead end. Even though they went the wrong way, Elder Holland decides that it's still the Holy Ghost that they felt, for now they can go down the left path with full confidence that it is the correct way.

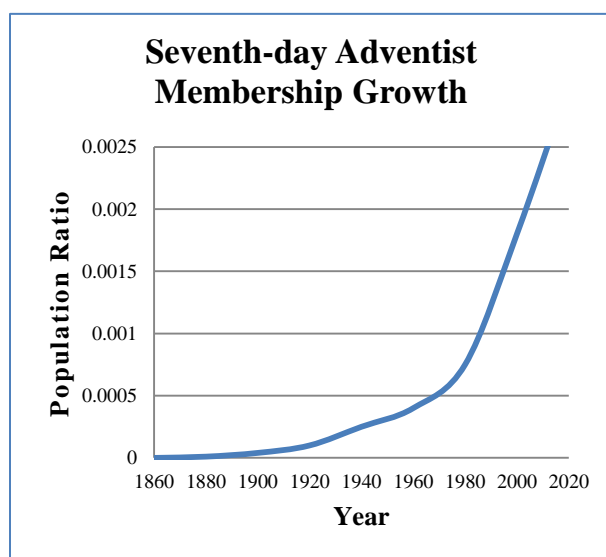
One more testimony. Listen to this FLDS member on thisamericanlife.org (link and text shown below). The section runs from 5:28 until 6:51 in the recording.

"Ya know, I've been searching for a witness of this work and of this church and just tonight I got my witness, and it's burning within my soul of how important this work is and how true it is. I know it is, and it's hard to believe that just a year ago I was in high school. I was in plays. I was a typical teenager, and now I'm in a plural marriage and struggling. I'm not going to lie to you. But I know without a shadow of a doubt that this is the Lord's work, that I have finally found it, and I love you guys and I'm thankful for your prayers and all that you have to offer me. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen."

thisamericanlife.org

Those who have received such amazing spiritual experiences will go to great lengths to maintain their beliefs. A Catholic could use [these miracles](#) or the [actions of their pope](#) to help keep the faith. A Jehovah's Witness could be inspired to keep the faith by considering their [8.2 million "publishers"](#) that are active in missionary work. These people point to the good fruits of their church while ignoring the bad fruits. What may be the bad fruits of Mormonism are discussed throughout Part Two of this document. Imagine being a Seventh Day Adventist and having one of the above spiritual experiences. Their faith is involved in [an incredible amount of charity](#). Given the good fruits and a spiritual witness, why would they leave?

Though begun later, in 1863, their membership has reached 18 million. Members of many faiths often ignore evidence using mantras such as "God was testing our faith," "We cannot know the mysteries of God," "Some questions must wait until the next life," "the elect will be deceived," "they will call good evil and evil good," "the church isn't perfect," "the leaders aren't perfect," and "that's a deception of Satan." Most of those examples were derived from the Bible. Here are examples of people discussing respective "anti" literature and doubts:



Muslims:

"Anti-Muslim activists frequently take quotes from Muslim scriptures out of context to reflect badly on Islam." (www.pfaw.org)

"In the car on our way to the mosque, I told the brother that I was thinking about changing my mind about taking Shahada. He told me that the choice was mine, but to beware of the doubts that Satan puts into one's head.... He explained to me that only Muslims and non-Muslims who are on their way to becoming Muslim are heavily affected by Satan. He said that non-Muslims are generally left alone, because Satan does not need to distract them from God, since they are already far from Him.... Satan put so much doubt in my head in that one night in order to pull me from the Light. This was how desperate Satan was – he knew that I was going to take Shahada the next day and was trying anything to prevent this.... [Three years later:] Since I took Shahada, my life went in a different direction, a positive direction, and I can only thank God for it." (quranadnsuana.art)

Catholics - the following come from forums.catholic.com:

“I get so sad when I read anti-Catholic missives on the Internet. They're usually poorly informed, and prey on people who are troubled.”

“As a Catholic, why would you let yourself be influenced by anti-Catholic sites. Stop engaging these awful videos and turn to Jesus.”

“Get away from these poisonous anti-Catholic-Christians. You need only scratch the surface of these people to find serious issues with their interpretations of the faith.”

“When you are in a spiritual dilemma, do not make it worse by watching anti-Catholic videos... You just don't do that.”

“In many cases, the evidence which supports the lies as being truthful has been faked or mis-represented. However, these lies all appear from somewhere – they must have been made up by people. Exclusively, the genesis of these slanders lies with individuals who have an ax to grind against the Catholic faith... often you will find that the anti-Catholic is quoting incorrectly or out of context.” (catholicbasicttraining.com)

Jehovah's Witnesses:

“The Devil employs innuendos, false accusations, and outright lies in challenging Jehovah's sovereignty, and he uses these same tactics to malign God's loyal servants... The integrity of true worshipers under the scourge of satanic hatred is a living testimony to the rightfulness, deservedness, and righteousness of Jehovah's sovereignty.” (wol.jw.org)

“The Watchtower Society is their ideological opponent, to be defeated at all costs. They comb through old Watchtowers, going back as far as 130 years. They take whatever suits their purpose and ignore the rest. They rip quotes out of their context, attempting to make it look as though they say much more than they actually meant. Why do they do it? They do it because it is their job to do it! In short, they are far from being an objective source of information. Frankly, few Jehovah's Witnesses are likely to be taken in by such chicanery. It is easy to detect an agenda behind this type of mudslinging. Just about anyone who wanted to believe it has already done so. And as for the rest of us, what hasn't killed us has made us stronger.” (jehovah.to)

It is one thing to have a unique system of beliefs. However, when a religion goes to great lengths to convert the rest of the world to those beliefs, it makes sense that resistance would arise. It should be no surprise when the religion then tries to attribute that resistance to the devil. It should also be no surprise when that religion tries to prevent its members from researching what those opposed have to say. In [this short YouTube video](#), a Jehovah's Witness leader warns members about the dangers of reading apostate material on the internet.

Translation

The following is from one of the First Presidency-approved gospel topics essays (p. 4). In [this essay](#), the church establishes as fact that Joseph used a seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon. A picture of the stone is found on [lds.org](https://www.lds.org).

“The other [translation] instrument, [aside from the Urim and Thummim,] which Joseph Smith discovered in the ground years before he retrieved the gold plates, was a small oval stone, or “seer stone.” As a young man during the 1820s, Joseph Smith, like others in his day, used a seer stone to look for lost objects and buried treasure. As Joseph grew to understand his prophetic calling, he learned that he could use this stone for the higher purpose of translating scripture.”

[lds.org - Book of Mormon Translation](#)

Joseph Smith found this stone in the ground “years before he retrieved the gold plates” and used it to try and find buried treasure. He then used that stone, instead of the Urim and Thummim, to translate the Book of Mormon. The essay explains that words would appear on the stone. Elder Nelson also discusses that process.

“Another scribe, Martin Harris sat across the table from Joseph Smith and wrote down the words Joseph dictated. Harris later related that as Joseph used the seer stone to translate, sentences appeared. Joseph read those sentences aloud, and after penning the words, Harris would say, ‘Written.’”

[lds.org - Book of Mormon Translation](#)

“Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.”

~Elder Russel M. Nelson quotes David Whitmer, 1992

[lds.org - A Treasured Testament](#)

This raises a few questions. Did Joseph see words on the stone when he used it to look for buried treasure or was it just a prop? If he was using it as a prop, why would he use this stone instead of the Urim and Thummim to translate the Book of Mormon? If scripture can be revealed via words appearing on a stone, why the need for golden plates? As explained in the intro to [D&C 7](#), Joseph translated a scroll which was on the other side of the world.

Some apologists theorize that Joseph translated the plates into English himself, as that would help explain errors in the text. This is known as the “loose translation theory.” Joseph’s method of seeing words appear on a stone confirms that the Book of Mormon was supposed to be a word-for-word revelation, as opposed to Joseph coming up with his own wording. [Royal Skousen](#), “the foremost expert on the history of the text of the Book of Mormon” and [BYU linguistics professor](#), further validates that the Book of Mormon was a word-for-word revelation:

“Joseph Smith was literally reading off an already composed English-language text, [meaning the words on the stone]. The evidence in the manuscripts and in the language of the text itself supports the hypothesis that the Book of Mormon was a precisely determined text. I do not consider this conclusion apologetic, but instead as one demanded by the evidence.

The opposing viewpoint, that Joseph Smith got ideas and he translated them into his own English, cannot be supported by the manuscript and textual evidence... Joseph Smith is not the author of the Book of Mormon, nor is he actually the translator. Instead, he was the revelator — through him the Lord revealed the English-language text (and by means of the interpreters and the seer stone).”

mormonscholarstestify.org - [Royal Skousen](#)

On a related note, [lds.org](#) confirms that “the villagers of Palmyra and Manchester, New York, where the Smiths lived, sought out Joseph to find lost objects [using a seer stone]...” Again, the essay says he looked for “lost objects and buried treasure.” If this was the case, why did Joseph give a different story about his “money-digging” in 1838? See [JS-H 1:56](#) in the Pearl of Great Price.

[LDS artwork](#) portrays a different version of the translation (such as in [Preach My Gospel](#)). I’ll contrast it below with a picture that matches the gospel topics essay.

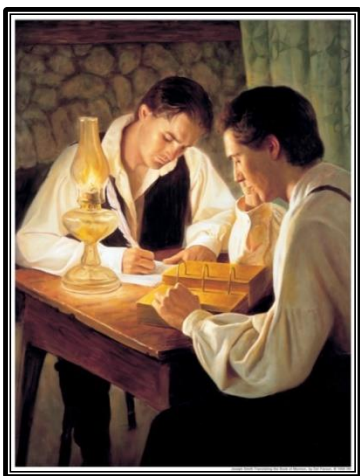


Figure 6 – Translating the Book of Mormon (Joseph Smith Translating the Book of Mormon), by Del Parson; GAK 416; GAB 92; Joseph Smith—History 1:34–35; 1:71, note), [link](#)



Figure 7 – By anonymous relative of User:John Foxe [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY-SA 4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0-3.0-2.5-2.0-1.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

The 1830 Edition

[FAIR](#) admits that there have been thousands of minor changes to the original Book of Mormon. Most involved punctuation. One major change was in 1 Nephi 12:18.

“And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and [Jesus Christ](#), which is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record, from the beginning of the world until this time, and from this time henceforth and forever.”

josephsmithpapers.org - [Book of Mormon, 1830](#)

Joseph changed “Jesus Christ” to “the Messiah” on page 30 of the [1837 edition](#). [Our current edition](#) still says “the Messiah.” Why did Joseph change this? Read Jacob’s revelation, which he received at least 32 years after 1 Nephi 12:18.

“Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that [Christ](#)—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—should come among the Jews, ...”

[2 Nephi 10:3](#)

An angel reveals Christ’s name to Jacob. That would have meant that Nephi, for at least 32 years, never told Jacob the name Jesus Christ. What about the following verse, and the fact that Jacob was writing in Nephi’s small plates, which contained the name Jesus Christ (in 1 Nephi 12:18)? [FAIR](#) doesn’t mention this dilemma.

“And I, Nephi, have written these things unto my people, that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their Redeemer.”

[1 Nephi 19:18](#)

FAIR’s other arguments don’t fit with the seer stone revelation process. Other 1830 edition errors include major grammar mistakes in almost every chapter. How do the following errors fit with Joseph receiving a word-for-word text ([p. 19](#))?

Non-existent words and incomplete sentences ([Alma 56:10](#) – “numeratority” & [Alma 55:7](#) – “Moroni caused that Laman and a small number of men which was appointed to go with him.”)

Switching “was” with “were” and “done with “did” ([Alma 9:32](#) – “they was angry with me,” [3 Nephi 26:11](#) – “I were about to write them all,” [Mosiah 29:41](#) – “and this they done throughout all the land.”). Sometimes the switch worked. In these cases, among many others, the switch does not work.

Our current edition still mixes the plural “ye” with the singular “thou” ([Mosiah 4:22](#) – “[ye](#) put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which [thou](#) hast done.”).

King James Bible

The following cases outline some inconsistencies between material in the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Even if Joseph was not given a word-for-word revelation of the Book of Mormon text ([p. 19](#)), these inconsistencies are still problematic.

Quoting Moses:

[Acts 3:22-23](#) is a much paraphrased quotation of Moses' words, drawing from two separated verses: [Deuteronomy 18:15 & 19](#). The [JST](#) and the [earliest text compositions of the Bible](#) (the [Septuagint](#), and [Masoretic Text](#)) all show Moses' quote in Deuteronomy to be accurate. Similarities between the Book of Mormon and the Bible can often be explained by saying that God wanted the Book of Mormon to match the Bible. That explanation does not apply here. In [1 Nephi 22:20](#), Nephi himself (this is Nephi speaking) says he's quoting Moses. He doesn't give Moses' quote, but instead gives the version in Acts. Both Acts and Nephi omit vs. 18 (which is important) and paraphrase vs. 15 and 19 the same way. Why does Nephi mirror Acts, saying it's Moses, when Acts wasn't written yet?

Moses (Deuteronomy)	Acts
<p>“15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;</p> <p>16 According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.</p> <p>17 And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.</p> <p>18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.</p> <p>19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”</p>	<p>“22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.</p> <p>23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”</p>
	Book of Mormon
	<p>“20 And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.” ~Nephi's words (see vs. 2 and 22 of the chapter), saying that he's quoting Moses</p>

The Red Sea:

2 Nephi changes [Isaiah 9:1](#)'s "the way of the sea" to "the way of the Red Sea."

[2 Nephi 19:1](#) – "Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict by the way of the Red Sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations."

As Isaiah specified, *the way of the sea* "in Galilee" is a road that passes through Galilee. As confirmed by [lds.org](#), this road passes through Capernaum, a Galilean city. The Way of the Red Sea is [different biblical road](#).

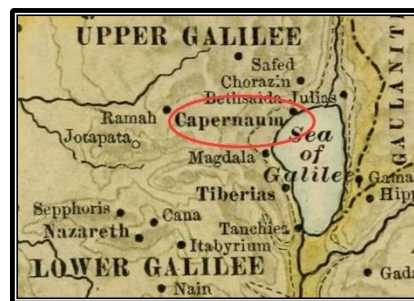


Figure 8 – By Internet Archive Book Images [No restrictions], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, color added. [Link](#)

[FAIR](#) says that Oliver Cowdery may have added the word "Red" during transcription. Response: The RLDS church has the [complete Joseph Smith Translation](#), and [lds.org](#) shows that it is reliable (last page of [this Ensign article](#)). In the JST, Joseph changed "the sea" in Isaiah 9:1 itself to "the Red sea." This means that Joseph intended the change in 2 Nephi. This would also mean that Joseph's Isaiah 9:1 contradicts itself, as the Way of the Red Sea is not in Galilee.

[FAIR](#) quotes an email from D. Charles Pyle, [who is studying to be a theologian](#). Pyle claims that the King's Highway, [which passes near \(not through\) Galilee](#), is part of the Way of the Red Sea, making the error less blatant. Every other source contradicts Pyle, showing that the Way of the Red Sea is far to the south, and is an offshoot or small part of the King's Highway (scroll down one page [here](#) for a map). [Matthew 4:12-15](#) confirms the road in Isaiah 9:1 to be "the way of the sea."

The [Targum](#) (a book known about in Joseph's time) was still being passed down orally for hundreds of years after the composition of the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#), [Septuagint](#), and [Masoretic Text](#) (Isaiah 8:23 in the Masoretic link). Even though these oldest scrolls all contain "the sea," at some point the Targum was altered to "the Red sea." Oral traditions are prone to change, and note how the rest of the Targum verse has also been changed. Even if the Targum was correct, Joseph would have had to change the rest of the verse for it to make any sense.

"For none shall be weary who shall come to oppress them, as at the former time, when the people of the land of Zebulun, and the people of the land of Naphtali went into captivity: and those that were left, a mighty king led into captivity, because they did not remember the power of the Red Sea, neither the wonders of the Jordan, the war of the fortifications of the nations."

[Isaiah 9:1 of the Targum](#) – note that this does not match Matthew 4:15

Copying Paul:

It is understandable that God would want different people on different continents to have the same message. In the following examples, the message is remarkably similar. This shows that even aside from Christ's sermons and the Isaiah chapters, there are many cases where the good material in the Book of Mormon could easily have been borrowed from another source. Was Joseph filling up space, or did Moroni, who [saw our day](#), decide to give us scripture which we already had? Why did Nephi engrave 15 chapters of Isaiah? Why not just tell us to read Isaiah?

Examples: [Ether 12:6-22](#) vs [Hebrews 11](#), [Moroni 7:45](#) vs [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#), [Moroni 10:8-18](#) vs [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#)

KJV vs JST vs BoM:

Again, the full text of the JST (held by the RLDS church) has been [verified as correct](#). We don't have the JST version of the following passage, among others, due to "lack of space" in our index. Here is the original King James verse before Joseph changed it:

[Matthew 5:41](#) – "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

In the [Joseph Smith Translation](#), Joseph didn't just clarify Christ's message. He changed the meaning to be the following (in the JST this content is in verse 43):

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him a mile; and whosoever shall compel thee to go with him twain, thou shalt go with him twain."

In every other translation, Christ says that if you're asked to go a mile, go two (twain). In the JST, Christ is saying to walk only as far as you are asked. The passage in the Book of Mormon remains unchanged. Which is correct, the Book of Mormon or the Joseph Smith Translation?

[3 Nephi 12:41](#) – "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

There are other passages in the Book of Mormon which follow the same pattern. If God simply wants the Book of Mormon to match the Bible, then why doesn't the Book of Mormon match the Bible in many other passages, such as in the Red Sea example on the previous page? The Book of Mormon was supposed to clarify Biblical doctrine, not propagate its errors. Or maybe the JST is in error?

The Visitation of Christ:

There is a pattern in 3 Nephi of one-upping different aspects of Christ's ministry in Israel. Having the Book of Mormon one-up the Bible would be consistent with Joseph's character (see also the 2nd picture of Joseph from byu.edu):

"I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet."

~Joseph Smith, 1844, after referencing [Paul's boastings](#) and claiming to have suffered more than Paul. Joseph goes on to give some of the credit to the Saints.

byu.edu - History of the Church, Vol. 6, Ch. 19, p. 408-409



Figure 9 – Joseph Smith, Jr., by Danquart Anthon Weggeland, [link](#)

A comparison:

New Testament	Book of Mormon
A star in the east	A night without darkness
The sun darkened for three hours	Darkness for three days
A minor earthquake	The destruction of whole cities
Jesus appearing to 500 people after his resurrection with one person touching his wounds	Jesus appearing to 2500 people with all of them touching the wounds
The loaves and fishes	Wine and bread from nothing
Blessing little children	Blessing them with angels encircling them
Strong wind and cloven tongues at Pentecost	Encircled by fire and angels at Pentecost
Jesus being transfigured	A multitude witnessing nine apostles being transfigured
Promised that John would not taste death	Three Nephites receiving that promise

The Law of Moses

We sometimes hear that the Law of Moses was supposed to be harsh in order to better keep the Israelites in line. The scriptures shown below are all part of the Law of Moses (as confirmed by byu.edu). Do we see God's law given to keep people in line, or does this law appear to be created by men in order to own slaves, get women, and discriminate? The [JST](#) clarified some Law of Moses commandments, such as Deut. 14:21, but it does not alter any of these. At the end of this section I will show how these laws pertain to the Book of Mormon.

Beating maids is ok, as long as they survive a day or two (if they don't, the penalty is death), because they are money.

[Exodus 21:20-21](#) – 20 And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished.

21 Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.

People can be “possessions” and “bondmen for ever:”

[Leviticus 25:44-46](#) – “44 Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids.

45 Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession.

46 And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour.”

Regarding women, we have [Deut. 22:23-27](#) – If a woman is successfully raped in a city, it is assumed that she did not cry out for help, and she is to be stoned to death. If she is raped in a field, she is spared, as there was no one to hear her cry for help. [Deut 22:13-21](#) – If a man suspects that his bride is not a virgin, the virgin's parents must prove to the elders that the bedsheets on the wedding night were bloody. If they cannot do this, the bride is to be stoned to death. We now know that women often do not bleed when they lose their virginity. [Lev. 27:1-7](#) – God apparently values women half as much as he values men, rounded up. A one month-old male is valued at 5 shekels, while a female at that age is valued at 3. [Lev. 12:1-5](#) – After giving birth to a male, a woman is unclean for seven days and cannot enter the sanctuary for thirty-three days. After giving birth to a female, a woman is unclean for two weeks and cannot enter the sanctuary for sixty-six days.

A severe penalty for grabbing an attacker's privates to help defend your husband:

[Deuteronomy 25:11-12](#) – “11 When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets:

12 Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her”.

Discrimination against eunuchs, bastards, and the descendants of bastards (if this was to prevent the creation of eunuchs, why not punish those who created them?):

[Deuteronomy 23:1-2](#) – “1 He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.

2 A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.”

Men taking wives from beautiful captive women after a battle:

[Deuteronomy 21:10-13](#) – “10 When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive,

11 And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife;

12 Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails;

13 And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife.

The Book of Mormon says that all things given by God are to typify of Christ, that Christ gave the law, and that that every whit of the law points to the Atonement:

[2 Nephi 11:4](#) – “... for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him.”

[Alma 34:14](#) – “And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, ...”

[3 Nephi 15:4-5](#) – “4 Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses.

5 Behold, I am he that gave the law,...

Did God really command all of the above to point to the Atonement? While we're talking about the Old Testament, would God really command genocide (including the slaying of infants, little boys and girls, the elderly, etc.), as in the first three links here? See [1 Samuel 15:3](#), [Joshua 6:21](#), [Joshua 10:40-41](#), [Numbers 31:17-18](#) and [1 Samuel 27:8-9](#). Which is worse? Idolatry or grown men killing little girls?

Trinitarian Doctrine

The 1830 Book of Mormon had Trinitarian language (common to Protestantism):

[1 Nephi 11:18](#) – “the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, ...”

[1 Nephi 11:21](#) – “behold the Lamb of God, even the Eternal Father!”

[1 Nephi 13:40](#) – “the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world; ...”

Our edition of the Book of Mormon has “the Son of” added to each of those scriptures ([1 Nephi 11:18, 21](#), [1 Nephi 13:40](#)). The original reading is especially problematic when taken with Joseph’s initial recording of the First Vision. In this “1832 account,” unlike his 1838 account, he only sees “the Lord.”

“[I]n the 16th year of my age a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. ...”

josephsmithpapers.org - [letterbook 1](#), the rest of the vision provided at [this link](#)

[FAIR](#) misunderstands Trinitarian teachings, giving examples from the early LDS church that they believe contradict it. [Jesus at God’s right hand](#) in Acts, [God referring to his Only Begotten Son](#), and [the Son being in the Father’s glory](#) are biblical and fit with Trinitarian teachings. FAIR’s Harris and Coltrin quotes were written 50 years after the fact, and their John Whitmer quote was referring to [Lyman Wright](#), not Joseph (FAIR misattributes the quote). This leaves the account of a single bystander (Levi Hancock), which he may have misremembered. Was Joseph’s wording closer to the wording in [Acts](#)? Just some speculation.

FAIR omits crucial details. By 1831, Joseph turned the Father and the Son into the same person in his JST (compare the original [Luke 10:22](#) with the JST’s [Luke 10:23](#)). [The Morning and Evening Star](#) even refers to the “[doctrine of the Trinity](#).” Most importantly, the early D&C revelations have Jesus Christ referring to himself as “mine Only Begotten Son” ([D&C 29:1,5,42,46](#) and [D&C 49:5,28](#)).

[D&C 49:5,28](#) – “5 Thus saith the Lord; for I am God, and have sent mine Only Begotten Son into the world for the redemption of the world, and have decreed that he that receiveth him shall be saved, and he that receiveth him not shall be damned—

28 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, and I come quickly. Even so. Amen.”

Contradictions

Knowledge of the Time of Christ's Birth:

[1 Nephi 10:4](#) – “Yea, even **six hundred years** from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world.” See also [1 Nephi 19:8](#).

[2 Nephi 25:19](#) – “For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh **in six hundred years** from the time that my father left Jerusalem; ...

[Alma 13:25](#) – “And now we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, of his coming; **for the time cometh, we know not how soon.** Would to God that it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice.”

Knowledge of Jesus' Name:

[1 Nephi 12:18](#) – “And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and **Jesus Christ**, which is the Lamb of God, ...”

[2 Nephi 10:3](#) – “Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that **Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—**should come among the Jews...”

As discussed on [page 20](#), the 1830 edition has Nephi knowing the name Jesus Christ 32 years before an angel reveals the name to Jacob. Yet, Jacob was enscribing in plates which already contained Jesus' name. Joseph later changed “Jesus Christ” to “the Messiah,” as he was aware of this contradiction.

Age of Enos:

[1 Nephi 17:4](#) – “And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness.”

[1 Nephi 18:7](#) – “And now, my father had begat two sons in the wilderness; the elder was called Jacob and the younger Joseph.”

[Enos 1:25](#) – “And it came to pass that I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem.”

That puts about 170 years between Jacob's birth and when his son Enos “began to be old.” The 7 generations from Jacob to Amaleki span 470 years. [An expected 7 generation span before modern times would be 140 years.](#)

David's Sin and the Words of Christ:

[Jacob 2:24](#) – “Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.”

[D&C 17:6](#) – “And he has translated the book [of Mormon], even that part which I have commanded him, and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true.”

[D&C 132:39](#) – “David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord.”

Which Year?

[Alma 56:9](#) – “But behold, here is one thing in which we may have great joy. For behold, in the twenty and sixth year, I, Helaman, did march at the head of these two thousand young men to the city of Judea, to assist Antipus, whom ye had appointed a leader over the people of that part of the land.”

[Alma 53:22-23](#) – “22 And now it came to pass that Helaman did march at the head of his two thousand stripling soldiers, to the support of the people in the borders of the land on the south by the west sea.

23 And thus ended the twenty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.”

Age of Amos:

[4 Nephi 1:21](#) – “19 And it came to pass that Nephi, he that kept this last record, (and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi) died, and his son Amos kept it in his stead; and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi also.

20 And he kept it eighty and four years...

21 And it came to pass that Amos died also, (and it was an hundred and ninety and four years from the coming of Christ) and his son Amos kept the record in his stead;”

[4 Nephi 1:47](#) – “And it came to pass that after three hundred and five years had passed away, (and the people did still remain in wickedness) Amos died; ...”

If Amos Sr. received the plates right at birth, then he lived to be 84 years old. *If* Amos Jr. was also born at 84 year-old Amos Sr.'s death, then Amos Jr. lived to be 111 years old (305 minus 194). Both aren't likely, putting Amos Jr.'s age at...? Example: If Amos Sr. received the plates at age 16, he would have died at age 101, making it less likely that he fathered Amos Jr. right before he died.

Shedding of Blood:

[Ether 8:19](#) – “For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man.”

Moroni’s words. At the very beginning of Moroni’s plate compilation is a story in which God commands Nephi to shed blood. What about Moroni’s father leading troops in defense of their lives?

Infant Baptism:

[Moroni 1:1,4,5](#) – “1 An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me, Moroni; and it was written unto me soon after my calling to the ministry. And on this wise did he write unto me, saying:....

5 And now, my son, I speak unto you concerning that which grieveth me exceedingly; for it grieveth me that there should disputations rise among you.

6 For, if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children.”

[Mormon 1:13-14](#) – “13 But wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that the Lord did take away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people.

14 And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief.

15 And I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus.

19 And it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, ...”

The context shows that there were “no gifts from the Lord” and “the Holy Ghost did not come upon any” by the time Mormon had turned 15, which was certainly before he wrote the epistle to his son. The people only became more depraved in the years to come ([Mormon 4:11](#)). If the people were that depraved, it seems like infant baptism wouldn’t be so high on Mormon’s worry list as to grieve him exceedingly.

In contrast, infant baptism was a divisive topic in the early 19th century ([p. 40](#)). If Mormon had specifically directed the message towards Joseph’s day, the situation would make sense. Here, Mormon is directing the message to Moroni in order to correct Nephite behavior.

View of the Hebrews

Have you ever noticed that none of the civilizations in ancient America match the Nephites in the Book of Mormon? For example, the [Classic Period](#) of the Mayans lasted from 250 AD until 900 AD. The [Middle Woodland period](#) of the Hopewell Indians comes close time-wise, but FAIR soundly refutes the Hopewells as a match in these five posts: ([one](#), [two](#), [three](#), [four](#), [five](#)). The lack of a good match to any civilization is evidenced by the inability of Mormon scholars to agree on a setting for the Book of Mormon. FAIR provides [this page](#) with links to [21 hemispheric](#), [43 limited](#), and [9 internal geography models](#) (totalling 73 propositions for where it all took place). This in spite of the following verse:

[Mormon 1:7](#) – “The whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea.”

During Joseph’s time, such a mismatch between the Book of Mormon and archaeology wasn’t thought to be the case. There were popular theories of the time with which he may have aligned his story, theories that Native Americans were descended from Israelites. Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* was a book which helped establish these theories. [This byu.edu link](#) contains the 2nd edition of *View of the Hebrews* (published in 1825). Its publication page (given in the link) shows that the first edition appeared in 1823, meaning that it pre-dates the production of the Book of Mormon by six years. [The introduction to the 2nd edition](#) alludes to the speedy sale of the first edition, which is an indication of its popularity.

[This BYU Studies article](#) ([archived here](#)) shows that Oliver Cowdery’s family lived in Poultney, Vermont during the years that Ethan Smith published *View of the Hebrews* (pp. 109, 111 of the article). Ethan was a minister in Poultney during these years (p. 118). We see that Oliver moved to western New York in 1825, with his family following in 1827 (p. 111). This would put Oliver ([who used a divining rod](#)) into close proximity with Joseph (who used a seer stone to hunt for treasure). We know that Joseph and Oliver met in 1828 (p. 121), and [in 1829](#), but were these their first meetings? Also, it was usually [Joseph and Oliver who said they received visions together](#). To try and connect the dots there would be speculation.

It is important to remember that Joseph did not “copy” *View of the Hebrews*. Ethan’s work is not a story. It is a long thesis which convincingly argued that the lost ten tribes of the Israelites came to the Americas. It appears that Joseph simply made his story fit in with the current exciting theories of his general region.

The following quotation shows the convincing language with which Ethan Smith reasons that the Native Americans are descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel.

“I would only ask the reader to reperuse the quotations from this author; ... and then say whether he can give any rational account of these things short of the American natives being the descendants of Israel? May it not with some confidence be asked, among what other people on earth can such evidence be found of their being the ten tribes of Israel?”

byu.edu - [View of the Hebrews - Convincing Language](#)

Ethan Smith theorized that the American Israelites divided into two tribes. After many wars, the barbaric portion wiped out the civilized portion. Sound familiar?

“It is highly probable that the more civilized part of the tribes of Israel, after they settled in America, became wholly separated from the hunting and savage tribes of their brethren; that the latter lost the knowledge of their having descended from the same family with themselves; that the more civilized part continued for many centuries; that tremendous wars were frequent between them and their savage brethren, till the former became extinct These partially civilized people became extinct. What account can be given of this, but that the savages extirpated them, after long and dismal wars!”

byu.edu - [View of the Hebrews - Civilized vs. Savages](#)

[B. H. Roberts](#), a member of the First Council of the Seventy, [studied the *View of the Hebrews* in connection with the Book of Mormon](#). He sent his findings to Heber J. Grant, now published as *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. Roberts [continued to publicly support the Book of Mormon](#). Below, he discusses the likelihood that Joseph Smith was acquainted with *View of the Hebrews*.

“Did such ‘common knowledge,’ supplemented by Ethan Smith’s book respecting theories of ‘origin,’ and of ‘history’ obtain in the vicinity where Joseph Smith spent his early youth and manhood, and was he a person of sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon from such materials? It will appear in what is to follow that such ‘common knowledge’ did exist in New England; that Joseph Smith was in contact with it; that one book, at least, with which he was most likely acquainted, could well have furnished structural outlines for the Book of Mormon; and that Joseph Smith was possessed of such creative imaginative powers as would make it quite within the lines of possibility that the Book of Mormon could have been produced in that way.”

imgur.com - [Studies of the Book of Mormon - Capabilities of Joseph Smith](#)

Here are some examples from his list of 26 similarities between the two works:

“It not only suggests, but pleads on every page for Israelitish origin of the American Indians.... It emphasizes and uses much of the material from the prophecies of Isaiah, including whole chapters, The savage division utterly exterminates the civilized in Ethan Smith’s book; Ethan Smith’s book assumes unity of race for the inhabitants of America – the Hebrew race, and no other. The Book of Mormon does the same. Ethan Smith’s book assumes that this race (save perhaps, the Eskimo of the extreme north) occupied the whole extent of the American continents. The Book of Mormon does the same for its peoples Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence?”

imgur.com - [Studies of the Book of Mormon - Similarities](#)

[FAIR](#) has a number of responses to the *View of the Hebrews* subject. Many of their arguments are based on the straw-man argument that the Book of Mormon plagiarizes *View of the Hebrews*. They ask, why would Joseph, in 1842, “point out the source of his forgery?” Why did no one accuse Joseph of plagiarizing it during his time period? Response: Joseph did not plagiarize it. He derived his work from its theories so that The Book of Mormon would fit with “the historical record.” He wouldn’t be afraid to mention a text that “proves” the Native Americans were descended from Israelites, as such a text would only support the Book of Mormon. Critics of the time would shy away from bringing it up for the same reasons.

FAIR questions why Joseph wouldn’t copy the large amount of evidences present in *View of the Hebrews*. I ask, why would he need to? *View of the Hebrews* was already circulating the evidences well enough on its own. The Book of Mormon isn’t a collection of evidences. It is a story which takes place in the world which Ethan’s work provides evidences for. It doesn’t look good for that story if Ethan’s evidences prove inaccurate. FAIR states on their page that “virtually all of Ethan’s ‘evidences’ have been judged to be false or misleading.”

FAIR also lists ways in which *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon differ, taking that as a sign that Joseph wasn’t drawing from *View of the Hebrews*. Response: There could be many reasons for such differences. Maybe Joseph didn’t want his work to match up perfectly with Ethan’s (for various reasons). Maybe Joseph didn’t have direct access to *View of the Hebrews*, but heard portions of the theories out in public, as Roberts suggested (see the previous page).

Quote Comparison

“There are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not ... one or two, or half dozen, but many; and it is this fact of many things of similarity and the cumulative force of them that makes them so serious a menace to Joseph’s story of the Book of Mormon origins.”

~B. H. Roberts

imgur.com - [Studies of the Book of Mormon - Similarities](#)

“Failed theories about its origins have been born and parroted and have died—from Ethan Smith [who wrote *View of the Hebrews*] to Solomon Spaulding to deranged paranoid to cunning genius. None of these frankly pathetic answers for this book has ever withstood examination because there is no other answer than the one Joseph gave as its young unlearned translator.”

~Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

lds.org - [Safety for the Soul](#)

Joseph’s father taught school. Was Joseph unlearned, as Elder Holland says?

“[W]e took our 3 oldest children went to Sharon and hired a farm of my father which My husband cultivated in the summer season and in the winter he taught school ...”

~Lucy Mack Smith, 1811

josephsmithpapers.org - [Luck Mack Smith History](#)

Other Potential Sources

The Late War

In the case of *View of the Hebrews* and the evangelical sources, Joseph may have borrowed from the common knowledge of his surroundings. In contrast, it appears that Joseph, or anyone who may have helped him write the Book of Mormon, had access to an actual copy of *The Late War*, written by Gilbert Hunt and published in 1819. The similarity in style and in the war elements is noteworthy. *The Late War* contains the Hebraisms that [defenders of the church use](#) to claim authenticity for the Book of Mormon. Similarities in style and language from the first chapter:

“1 Now it came to pass, in the one thousand eight hundred and twelfth year of the christian era, and in the thirty and sixth year after the people of the provinces of Columbia had declared themselves a free and independent nation;

2 That in the sixth month of the same year, on the first day of the month, the chief Governor, whom the people had chosen to rule over the land of Columbia;

3 Even James, whose sir-name was Madison, delivered a written paper to the GREAT SANHEDRIN of the people, who were assembled together.

4 And the name of the city where the people were gathered together was called after the name of the chief captain of the land of Columbia, whose fame extendeth to the uttermost parts of the earth; albeit, he had slept with his fathers.

5 Nevertheless, the people loved him, forasmuch as he wrought their deliverance from the yoke of tyranny in times past; so they called the city WASHINGTON

8 Lo! the lords and the princes of the kingdom of Britain, in the fulness of their pride and power, have trampled upon the altar of Liberty, and violated the sanctuary thereof:....

12 Inasmuch as they kept the men stolen from the ships of Columbia in bondage many years, and caused them to fight the battles of the king, even against their own brethren! Neither gave they unto them silver or gold, but many stripes.

13 Now the men of Columbia were not like unto the men of Britain; for their backs were not hardened unto the whip, as were the servants of the king; therefore they murmured, and their murmurings have been heard.”

[archive.org - The Late War Ch. 1](#) (1st, 2nd)

[FAIR](#) says that if you strip the Book of Mormon down to short enough phrases and look far enough, you will find similarities in other works. They examine many of the parallels that have been found between the two works. On the next page, I will list some of those that remain significant when the context is included.

Some comparisons:

<i>The Late War</i>	Book of Mormon
19:13 – “weapons of war were of curious workmanship, ...”	Ether 10:27 – “weapons of war ... all manner of work of exceedingly curious workmanship.”
20:11-16 – “the land ... most plentiful... yielding gold and silver, ... all manner of creatures which are used for food, ... the huge mammoth ... It is more wonderful than the elephant; ...”	Ether 9:16-19 – “the land, ... exceedingly rich – ... of gold, and of silver, and ... all manner of ... animals which were useful for the food of man. ... cureloms and cumoms; ... and more especially the elephants ...”
29:20-21 – “smote ... with great slaughter. And the deep ditch that surrounded the fort was strewed with their slain and their wounded.”	Alma 49:21-22 – “slain with an immense slaughter ... instead of filling up their ditches by pulling down the banks of earth, they were filled up in a measure with their dead and wounded bodies.”
32:14 , 33:1,3-4,13 – “near Moravian Town.... And it came to pass ... the army ... were under ... a chief warrior, whom they called Tecumseh, ... a chief captain. ... smote their chief warrior [Tecumseh], and slew him ... he fell to the earth.”	Alma 50:34-35 , Alma 62:36-37 – “people of Morianton; ... And it came to pass ... the army ... was led by a man whose name was Teancum, ... they did pursue Teancum, and slew him. ... he was dead, and had gone the way of all the earth.”
35:5-6 – “two thousand hardy men, who ... fought freely for their country... Now the men of war ... were ... men of dauntless courage.”	Alma 53:18-20 – “two thousand of those young men, ... to defend their country. ... they took their weapons of war, ... were all young men, and they were exceeding valiant for courage, ...”
38:18 “Inasmuch as he put the wise men of the king to their wits end;” 51:7 “the freemen who came to the defense of the city, built strong holds and forts,”	Alma 51-5-6 – “king-men ... were desirous that the law should be altered in a manner to overthrow the free government and to establish a king over the land. And those who were desirous that Pahoran should remain chief judge over the land took upon them the name of freemen; ...”

[Jeff Lindsay](#) mentions that the phrase “curious workmanship” was present in other literary works of Joseph’s era. Here, “curious workmanship” is found in conjunction with many other similarities in style.

If someone was imitating the style of *The Late War* or the Bible, you'd find many Hebraisms present in their work. Here are some Hebraisms from *The Late War*:

Cognate Accusative:	8:21 – “And the great Sanhedrim honored Isaac with great honor , ...”
Using the term whirlwind instead of tornado:	9:1 – “NOW the movements of the enemy were as the motion of a whirlwind , ...”
Negative Questions:	16:32 – “Lo! are we not the faithful servants of the king, our master? Have we not given unto him the one half of our whole substance?”
Construct State:	3:3 – “rod of iron; ...” 19:26 – “walls of stone.”
Compound Preposition:	48:35 – “the host of Britain was compelled to flee from before the city, ...”
Using less adverbs:	7:42 – “with reverence ...”
Repetition of pronoun:	3:9 – “Their oil, and their wheat, and their rye, and their corn, and their barley, and their rice, and their buckwheat, and their oats, and their flax, and all the products of their country ...”

A Key to the Classical Pronunciation of Scripture Proper Names:

[A Key to the Classical Pronunciation of Scripture Proper Names](#) was published in [New York](#) in 1823. It contains a list of every name in the Bible (including the Apocrypha). Among the names in the guide are Abinadab, Amalekites, Ammon, Antipas, Ether, Gilead, Gilgal, Helam, **Ishmael**, Jared, Kish, **Laban**, Lacunus, **Lahman**, **Lehi**, **Lemuel**, Melech, Midian, Molek, Moriah, Nahor, Nahum, **Nephi**, Omer, **Saraiah**, Shiza, Sidon, Shual, Shulamite, Zenas, and Zerahiah. Many of those names have been used to argue that the Book of Mormon contains Hebrew names which Joseph could not have known about. This simply shows that he could have known about them, whether via the Apocrypha, or via this guide.

Chiasmus

In 1820, *Sacred Literature* was published by Rev. John Jebb in London. It talks in great length about “epanodos” in the Bible, describing it as an inverted parallelism. We know epanodos today as chiasmus (Hebrew poetry found in the Bible and Book of Mormon). Here is an example from the New Testament:

“And why do ye transgress the commandment...
 Honour thy father...
 And he who revileth father...
 Whosoever shall say to his father...
 Must also honour his father...
 Thus have ye nullified the commandment, &c.”

~John Jebb, quoting Matthew

unz.org - [Sacred Literature p. 245](#)

[FAIR](#) questions whether Joseph had knowledge of chiasmus. Response: That is unknown. There was plenty of religious activity and discussion in that time period. Even if New York libraries didn’t carry *Sacred Literature*, there was seven years’ time for a priest or minister to bring a personal copy of the book or knowledge of its contents over from London. We don’t know whether or not anyone helped Joseph write the Book of Mormon or if he heard about chiasmus himself. It is also likely that the chiasmus came about by imitating the Bible’s style.

When analyzing the extended chiasms of the Book of Mormon, the constructors will skip large portions of text which they cannot use. They select the elements which fit into their pattern while ignoring the repetitions of the same elements which don’t fit. For example, “deliver” occurs six times in Alma 36. Two of them fit into the pattern and the other four aren’t mentioned in the diagram. The word “pain(s)” appears five times, two of which fit into the pattern. The other three are skipped over.

In such a story where a person compares himself before an event with himself after, it makes sense that there are contrasting elements which appear to match each other on both sides of the event (limbs were paralyzed vs. limbs receiving strength, sought to destroy the church vs. sought to bring people to repentance).

One branch of Mormonism, the Strangites, holds *The Book of the Law of the Lord* to be ancient scripture. The book was published in 1851.

“Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, to whom this Book of the Law of the Lord shall come, that James J. Strang has the plates of the ancient Book of the Law of the Lord given to Moses, from which he translated this law, and has shown them to us. We examined them with our eyes, and handled them with our hands. The engravings are beautiful antique workmanship, bearing a striking resemblance to the ancient oriental languages; and those from which the laws in this book were translated are eighteen in number, about seven inches and three-eighths wide, by nine inches long, occasionally embellished with beautiful pictures.

And we testify unto you all that the everlasting kingdom of God is established, in which this law shall be kept, till it brings in rest and everlasting righteousness to all the faithful.”

SAMUEL GRAHAM, SAMUEL P. BACON, WARREN POST, PHINEAS WRIGHT,
ALBERT N. HOSMER, EBENEZER PAGE, JEHIEL SAVAGE.

strangite.org - [The Book of the Law of the Lord](http://strangite.org)

They believe the chiasmus present in their book serves as proof of its authenticity.

“Thou shalt not TAKE the NAME of the Lord thy God in VAIN:

Thou shalt not USURP dominion

as a RULER; for the NAME of the Lord thy God

is great and glorious ABOVE ALL OTHER NAMES:

he is ABOVE ALL,

and is the ONLY TRUE God;

the ONLY JUST and upright King

OVER ALL:

he ALONE hath the RIGHT

to RULE; and in his NAME, only he to whom he granteth it:

whosoever is not chosen of him, the same is a USURPER, and unholy:

the Lord will not hold him guiltless, for he TAKETH his NAME in VAIN.”

strangite.org - [Chiasmus](http://strangite.org)

Is chiasmus proof of the Book of Mormon’s authenticity?

Sidney Rigdon

There is some evidence that Sidney Rigdon had a hand in the production of the Book of Mormon, whether as an equal partner, as a “mastermind,” or merely as a consultant. This evidence is inconclusive, but it should be taken into account. It should also be noted that even if the book was Sidney’s idea, Joseph still had significant leeway in carrying out the project. Of the sources used here, two are not LDS. One is a church history of Sidney’s former associates (Early History of the Disciples). They did not suspect Sidney of inventing Mormonism. The other source is a debate (Public Discussion) between an RLDS member and a Disciple, who did suspect Sidney of inventing Mormonism. I will forgo discussion of the Spaulding manuscript, a text which Sidney allegedly copied to compose the Book of Mormon. [A BYU study](#) discusses problems with the manuscript theory. A couple details here (marked with red asterisks) are spun a bit to present my point.

1820s – During the early 1820s, Sidney Rigdon announced he would no longer be a Baptist minister, due to their teaching of [infant baptism](#) ([byu.edu](#)). He later began preaching with the Campbellites near Kirtland, Ohio ([byu.edu](#)). According to Parley P. Pratt, at this time Sidney taught “faith in Jesus Christ, repentance towards God, and baptism for remission of sins, with the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (p. 116 of [byu.edu](#)). According to [byu.edu](#) and [A Joseph Smith chronology](#) (recommended by [a church magazine](#)), Sidney believed in having a communal, or “equal communitarian” society. In this he disagreed with Campbell, who upon hearing the idea “turned him away mortified, chagrined and alienated...” (p. 209 of [Early History of the Disciples](#)). All of these beliefs made it into Mormonism ([4 Nephi 1:3](#), [Moroni 8:4-16](#), [D&C 42:30-39](#), [Fourth Article of Faith](#)), with the communal society becoming the law of consecration. Sidney is also mentioned in Book of Mormon prophecy (I’ll get to that one on p. 42).



Figure 10 – See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

April 1830 – In a letter to Dr. Richardson in April 1830, Walter Scott discusses how Sidney Rigdon would take the teachings of others and herald them everywhere (p. 186 of [Early History of the Disciples](#)). Some teachings of Jonathan Edwards Jr. and Sr. made it into the Book of Mormon ([p. 6](#) of this document).

Late 1820s – During the production of the Book of Mormon, Sidney was busy gathering two congregations of those nicknamed “Rigdonites” (history.lds.org).

If Sidney was trying to gather people, it would make sense for him to hold off on preaching divine authority until he could claim it. (p. 116 of byu.edu).

Sidney may have chosen Joseph so the book would come from someone unlearned (by small and simple things are great things brought to pass). This would fit with reports from Joseph’s neighbors. Apparently, Joseph originally said that the gold plates would be translated by his son when he reached the age of three (out of the mouths of babes). The plans changed when his son died during childbirth. FAIR gives the neighbors’ accounts ([Sophia](#), [Joshua](#), and [Willard and Isaac](#)). This would fit with Sidney proclaiming how unlearned Joseph was (“if that was all the education he had” in [A Son's Record of the Life and Testimony of Sidney Rigdon](#) and “ignorant of letters” on p. 210 of [Early History of the Disciples](#)).

[Early History of the Disciples](#) (pp. 210 and 239) and [Public Discussion](#) (pp. 45-46) give testimonies of seven different witnesses who claim that Sidney spoke of a coming Restoration and of a coming book that would teach about the Indians (Dunlap, Bentley, Rudolph, Green, Dille, Atwater, and Clapp). Dunlap and Bentley were relatives of Sidney. Public Discussion also gives the testimonies of four people who claimed to have seen Sidney and Joseph Smith together well before Sidney’s conversion (Tucker, Eaton, McCauley, and Saunders). [FAIR](#) chronicles three more testimonies of such meetings (Chase, Butts, and Gilbert). Public Discussion also gives a testimony that Sidney would disappear for weeks at a time (Rudolpho). None of these testimonies mention the Spaulding manuscript.

August, 1830 – A Rigdonite, Parley Pratt, leaves Ohio for New York on a mission. He abandons his paid boat passage partway to go straight to the Smith residence, where he is converted ([Improvement Era](#) and [Parley’s autobiography](#)).

November, 1830 – Sidney was baptized by Oliver Cowdery on November 8, 1830 (lds.org). He later proclaimed that he “never knew that there was such a book in existence as the Book of Mormon, until it was presented to [him] by Parley P. Pratt” (p. 117 of byu.edu). This contradicts [Van Wagoner](#), an active LDS historian, who says that “there can be little doubt that Sidney, an enthusiastic reader of newspapers, was aware of the book before it was placed in his hands” ([Van Wagoner's biography](#)). Before Sidney’s conversion, he had Pratt preach Mormonism to his congregations (lds.org). A large portion converted (lds.org).

December, 1830 – Within a month of his baptism, Sidney started working with Joseph on the JST, becoming the official scribe of the project until its completion ([D&C 35:20](#)). A few chapters were completed before Sidney joined the church.

December 9, 1830 – A month after his baptism, Sidney is already being spoken of as one of the two leaders of the church, alongside Joseph Smith ([D&C 36:5](#)).

January 2, 1831 – The call came to move the church headquarters to Kirtland (Sidney's locale), where the Saints received instruction to live the United Order, or the law of consecration ([D&C 38:32](#)).

Joseph's role was originally consigned to translation only. In the 1828 revelation, Christ says, "I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift" ([1833 Book of Commandments, Section 4:2](#)). Joseph later added "until it is finished" to Christ's statements ([1835 Doctrine and Covenants, Section 32:1](#)). The Book of Mormon also specifies that Joseph was to be the translator and that someone else was to be the spokesman. In [2 Nephi 3:6-9, 11-15, 18](#), Lehi discusses a prophecy that God would raise a seer to translate the Book of Mormon and that the seer's spokesman would declare the word. In D&C, Sidney is confirmed to be Joseph's spokeman ([D&C 100:9-11](#), [D&C 124:103-104](#)). 2 Nephi 3:17 compares the relationship to Moses and Aaron, with Moses needing Aaron as a spokesman (Moses was not mighty in speaking). This does not fit with Joseph being a "powerful orator" ([lds.org](#)).

February 4, 1831 – Christ commands the church to build Joseph a house, and tells them that "Sidney Rigdon should live as seemeth him good" ([D&C 41:7-8](#)).

February 9, 1831 – All elders of the church, except for Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, are commanded to go on missions ([D&C 42:4](#)). Both would serve missions later.

1832 – [D&C 76](#) was received by both Joseph and Sidney ([josephsmithpapers.org](#)).

May 3, 1834 – Sidney made the successful motion that the church's name be changed to "The Church of Latter-day Saints" ([josephsmithpapers.org](#)).

1835 - Sidney was behind some of the changes to the D&C revelations, such as the removal of the explicit reference to Oliver Cowdery's divining rod ([FAIR](#)). It is now believed that Sidney wrote most of the [Lectures on Faith](#). By this date, Sidney and Joseph were aware of theories that Sidney was the true founder. *In public, Sidney made a show of being Joseph's subservient ([byu.edu](#), p. 115).*

November 2, 1836 – Sidney and Joseph organized a community bank, with Sidney as the president and Joseph as the cashier (josephsmithpapers.org).

Early 1840s – Sidney Rigdon’s influence waned, especially with the introduction of polygamy. Leaders such as the Pratts, originally from Sidney’s congregation, took multiple wives. Sidney later decried polygamy (p. 57 of byu.edu).

October, 1843 – Joseph Smith tried to give Sidney’s First Presidency position to someone else. The congregation would not consent. Joseph then stated, "I have thrown him off my shoulders, and you have again put him on me. You may carry him, but I will not" (p. 49 of byu.edu).

1844 – Sidney was selected as Joseph’s running mate for President of the United States (lds.org). After Joseph died, Sidney competed to take over, proclaiming new visions and threatening to expose the church’s secrets (p. 664 of Oct. 1, 1844: byu.edu). After failing, some Saints followed him into establishing another communitarian society in Pennsylvania (lds.org). This venture also failed.

Between 1863 and 1876 – Sidney claimed to receive revelations, including claims that “the [Eskimos] are descendants of Joseph the son of Lehi.” Sidney proclaimed himself to be the spokesman of 2 Nephi 3, and “claimed to know the contents of the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon” (p. 119 of byu.edu, see footnote 20). The authors of this BYU study believe that Cowdery was the 2 Nephi spokesman, though this contradicts [D&C 100](#) and [124](#) and the fact that [D&C never refers to him as the spokesman](#). They say that Sidney ignored Book of Mormon passages on the sealed portion. Joseph would have ignored [Jacob 2:24](#) when writing [D&C 132:39](#), so either way, this is inconclusive. This “sealed portion” claim does show that Sidney was capable of dishonesty and fraud in producing scripture.

Towards the end of his life, Sidney “believed that nearly everyone else but him had gone astray” (p. 118 of byu.edu). In 1876, Sidney’s wife burned all of his writings after his death (Box 1, Folder 7 of #3 of byu.edu). Two relatives of Sidney (John and Nancy) believe that Sidney was not behind the Book of Mormon (p. 120-121 of byu.edu), while Sidney’s grandson (Walter) claims it was a family secret that Sidney was behind the Book of Mormon ([FAIR](#)). Perhaps John and Nancy didn’t believe it? In Nancy’s account, did Sidney fake his conversion? She quotes his denial, “I do not know where the [Book of Mormon] manuscript came from.” This seems a strange statement from Sidney when he should have believed that the Book of Mormon came from God via the specified process.

Other Points

The Witnesses:

On the three witnesses: There are many accounts which attempt to credit/discredit them. If we believe them, should we believe in the holy scriptures of the Shakers? Around forty people testified they saw angels verifying its truth. Eight women signed the testimony below. More testimonies are found before and after theirs.

“We, the undersigned, hereby testify, that we saw the holy Angel standing upon the house-top, as mentioned in the foregoing declaration, holding the Roll and Book.

Betsey Boothe. Sarah Maria Lewis. Louisa Chamberlain. Sarah Ann Spencer. Caty De Witt. Lucinda McDaniels. Laura Ann Jacobs. Maria Hedrick.”

archive.org - [A Holy, Sacred, and Divine Roll and Book](#)

On the eight witnesses: This is a letter from a doubting member, high priest Stephen Burnett, to apostle [Lyman E. Johnson](#), both of whom later left the church. [FAIR](#) doesn't believe Burnett, due to the eight (usually?) sticking with their story.

“I have reflected long and deliberately upon the history of this church and weighed the evidence for and against it — loth to give it up — but when I came to hear Martin Harris state in public that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver [Cowdery] nor David [Whitmer] and also that the eight witnesses never saw them and hesitated to sign that instrument for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestal gave way, in my view our foundations was sapped and the entire superstructure fell a heap of ruins, ... I was followed by W. [Warren] Parish, Luke Johnson and John Boynton, all of who concurred with me. After we were done speaking, M[artin] Harris arose and said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or handkerchief over them, but he never saw them only as he saw a city through a mountain. And said that he never should have told that the testimony of the eight was false, if it had not been picked out of air but should have let it passed as it was—Now br Johnson if you have anything to say in favour of the Book of Mormon I should be glad to hear it.”

josephsmithpapers.org - [Letterbook 2](#)

The Jaredites:

Sailing in those barges for [344](#) days would require a massive amount of grain for their livestock. Then to think that all of the people, livestock, and food storage are being tossed around... In the end, a whole nation fights itself to the point where aside from Ether, [only the leader of each side remains alive](#). The two leaders then dual in single combat for the final victory.

Laban:

How does this fit with [Ether 8:19](#)? God couldn't just have a deep sleep or coma come over Laban? He couldn't send an angel with a drawn sword? God could reveal scripture by causing words to appear on a stone, according to Joseph Smith. Why the need for bloodshed here?

Prophecies:

The Book of Mormon is very specific with prophecies about America's future before 1830. It is not specific at all for after 1830. Here is a specific prophecy about Joseph himself.

[2 Nephi 3:6,14,15](#) – “6 For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins ...

14 And thus prophesied Joseph, saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise, which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise;

15 And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation.”

Untouched Topics:

It is hard to discuss these topics without heavily consulting non-church sources:

- Anachronisms – the presence of compasses, horses, and more which didn't exist in America during Book of Mormon times. Why would God use new names like “[curelom](#),” but then use the word horse when he means [tapir](#)?
- Archaeology – sources unable to locate Book of Mormon locations
- DNA evidence – shows that Native Americans came over the Bering Strait
- Linguistic studies – show no relation between the languages of the Native Americans and Hebrew

Would someone really be [damned](#) for not believing in the Book of Mormon? What would I conclude if I saw evidence like this against the Quran? I have felt inspired while reading the Book of Mormon. Can that only mean that it is true? Was I inspired because I was in the mode of looking for inspiration?

The Doctrine & Covenants

A few things which stood out to me:

The Rod of Nature

Lds.org shows us that Oliver Cowdery used a [divining rod](#) to receive revelation.

“Oliver Cowdery lived in a culture steeped in biblical ideas, language and practices. The revelation’s reference to Moses likely resonated with him. The Old Testament account of Moses and his brother Aaron recounted several instances of using rods to manifest God’s will (see Ex. 7:9-12; Num. 17:8). Many Christians in Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery’s day similarly believed in divining rods as instruments for revelation. Cowdery was among those who believed in and used a divining rod.”

[lds.org - Oliver Cowdery's Gift](#)

In 1831, the Book of Commandments and Revelations (containing the original revelations now found in D&C) also referred to Oliver’s use of a divining rod.

“O remember, these words & keep my commandments[. R]emember this is thy gift[. N]ow this is not all[,] for thou hast another gift[,] which is the gift of working with the sprout Behold it has told you things Behold there is no other power save God that can cause this thing of Nature to work in your hands for it is the work of God & therefore whatsoever ye shall ask to tell you by that means that will he grant unto you, that you shall know.”

[josephsmithpapers.org - Book of Commandments 7:3](#)

Two years later (1833), the [Book of Commandments](#) changed the above highlighted sections to “the gift of working with the rod” and “this rod of nature.” Does God work through divining rods? Why were the Lord’s words censored in our current version of the revelation to obscure the reference to a divining rod?

[D&C 8:5-9](#) – “5 Oh, remember these words, and keep my commandments. Remember, this is your gift.

6 Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron; behold, it has told you many things;

7 Behold, there is no other power, save the power of God, that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you.

8 Therefore, doubt not, for it is the gift of God; and you shall hold it in your hands, and do marvelous works; and no power shall be able to take it away out of your hands, for it is the work of God.

9 And, therefore, whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, and you shall have knowledge concerning it.”

Isaiah and Esaias

Esaias is the Greek name for Isaiah of the Old Testament. Scripture search on lds.org reveals 21 New Testament and no Old Testament matches for [Esaias](#), along with 32 Old Testament and no New Testament matches for [Isaiah](#). The contexts show that they refer to the same individual. A few examples:

Isaiah 1:9 – “Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”	Romans 9:29 – “And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.”
Isaiah 42:1 – “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”	Matthew 12:17-18 – “17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.”
Isaiah 53:1 – “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”	Romans 10:16 – “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”

Here, Joseph refers to Isaiah and Esaias as two separate individuals:

[D&C 76:100](#) – “These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch;”

Most Biblical scholars should have known that Esaias was Isaiah. Did someone ask Joseph why he referred to them as separate people? From a later revelation:

[D&C 84:13](#) – “Esaias also lived in the days of Abraham, and was blessed of him—“

[Abraham](#) lived about [800 years](#) before Greece existed. The name Esaias didn’t come about until the Greeks modified the Hebrew prophet’s name Isaiah. Why does someone from Abraham’s time have the same name as this Greek modification?

Adam and Michael

Joseph Smith taught that Adam and Michael were the same individual.

“The Prophet Joseph Smith clearly identifies both Adam and Michael as one and the same person, an angel, the chief angel, or archangel, of heaven, the special servant of God and Christ.”

lds.org - [Adam, the Archangel](#)

Here is an excerpt from the original version of the revelation which we now know as D&C 137:

“I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold— I saw father Adam, and Abraham and Michael and my father and mother, my brother Alvin Smith that has long since slept, ...”

josephsmithpapers.org - [Journal, 1835-1836](#)

Notice he refers to two separate people as the same person. Our current version has removed this apparent slip-up without any indication of the censorship:

[D&C 137:4-5](#) – “4 I saw the beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold.

5 I saw Father Adam and Abraham; and my father and my mother; my brother Alvin, that has long since slept;”

What else has the church changed to remove contradiction? Was this Joseph’s mistake simply a scribal error, as [FAIR](#) indicates as a possibility?

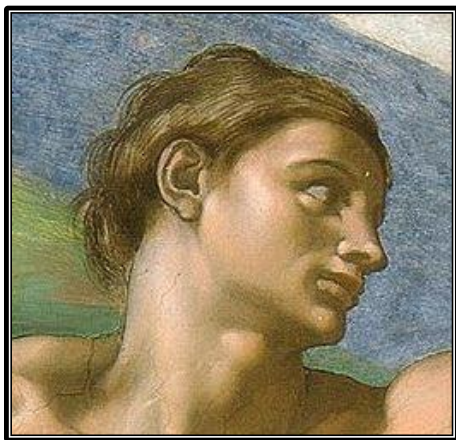


Figure 11 – By Michelangelo Buonarroti [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)



Figure 12 – By Pascal Terjan from London, United Kingdom (IMG_7203 Uploaded by paris 17) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

D&C 19

In D&C 19, Christ reveals that [the hellish suffering of those in spirit prison is temporary, until they pay for their sins](#). He reveals that the scriptures call it endless punishment because it is God's punishment, and God is endless.

[D&C 19:6-7,10,12](#) – “6 Nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written endless torment.

7 Again, it is written eternal damnation; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's glory.

10 For, behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore—

12 Endless punishment is God's punishment.”

In verse 7, Christ explains that he used this wording trick in order to *make it appear* that people suffer in hell forever, that they may be afraid and repent.

There are two problems here. Christ also says that deceiving is against the order of heaven ([D&C 129:7](#)), yet in D&C 19, he is deceiving people to believe that sinners will burn forever. Is Christ deceiving here, or is a theologian trying to twist words around to propose his own ideas? The other problem is that this new doctrine contradicts [Mosiah 3:25](#), which declares that sinners can not return from endless torment. [Mosiah 3:24-27](#) and [Alma 40:11-14, 23-26](#) confirm that Mosiah 3:25 is referring to all sinners, not just the sons of perdition.

[D&C 19:33-35](#) contains Christ threatening Martin Harris to [finance the Book of Mormon](#) or else suffer “the destruction of [himself] and property.”

Pure Language

In the original [Book of Commandments and Revelations](#), Joseph gives us examples of “pure language.” Some examples:

English	Pure Language
God	Awmen
Angels	Awmen-Angls-men
Sun (from Abraham 3:13)	Shinehah

The Book of Abraham

Joseph obtained sections of papyrus and translated them into the Book of Abraham. This will by no means be a comprehensive analysis of the subject. When Joseph obtained the papyrus, portions of the facsimiles were missing. [FAIR](#) shows which missing portions of Facsimile 2 were drawn in by Joseph himself. His version is still in our scriptures.

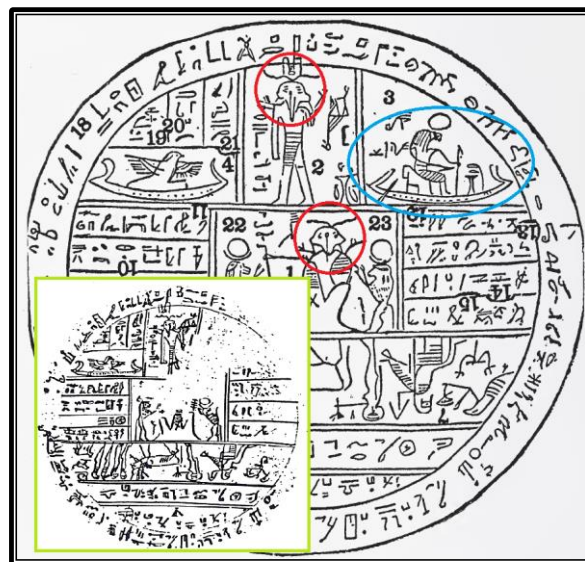


Figure 13 – See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#), merged with By Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia (Transferred from en.wikipedia) [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

As shown by the red circles, Joseph copied the head in the 12:00 position to fill in the middle of the facsimile. This facsimile is referred to as a hypocephalus by [FAIR](#). If you do a [google search](#) for “hypocephalus – Abraham” (the “-Abraham” part removes the results showing Joseph’s filled-in version), you’ll see that every other hypocephalus has a four-headed figure in its center (Figure 14).



Figure 14 – By Unknown. (GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or CC BY-SA 2.5-2.0-1.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5-2.0-1.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, [link](#)

In the 2:00 position (blue oval), Joseph has filled in a figure in a boat. [FAIR](#) reveals that [this figure](#) comes from another portion of Joseph’s papyrus. The source of both fill-ins can thus easily be identified, and one of them doesn’t match the pattern of every other hypocephalus. Joseph saw two blank spots and filled them with two drawings from the same papyrus.



Figure 15 – “Joseph Smith Papyrus IV” by Original uploader was Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

A summary of Facsimile 3:

wikipedia.org - Facsimile No. 3

Wikipedia lists Joseph's translations of this facsimile, which you can confirm in [your scriptures](#). It also lists Egyptologists' interpretations. I will show you how you can somewhat verify those.

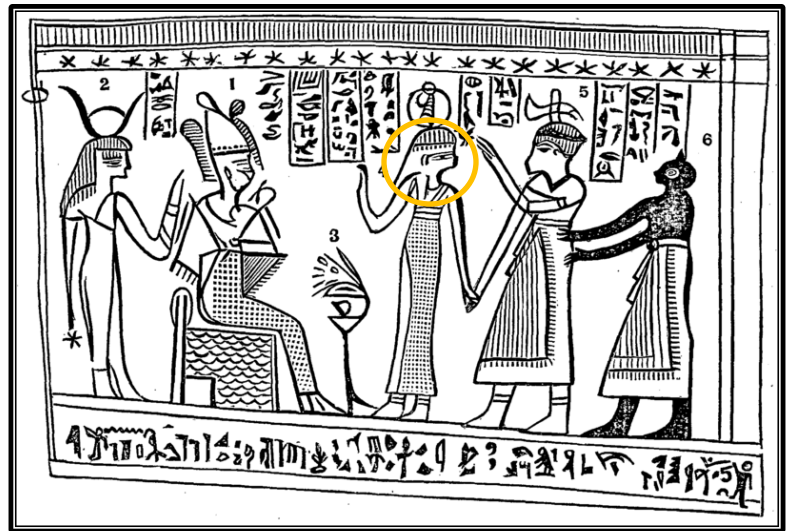


Figure 16 – By Abraham, Joseph Smith, Reuben Hedlock (http://scriptures.lds.org/en/abr/fac_3) [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

In Facsimile 3, Joseph saw one figure that looked like a black man at the end of the line (in the picture above on the right). He explains the man to be “Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.” This matches what someone with an early 19th century American worldview would assume. According to Egyptologists, that figure is [Anubis](#) and is even designated so by the characters above its head (see the above Wikipedia link). You can even see a remnant of the jackal’s ear.

Joseph interpreted the woman in the middle to be the “Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, *as written above the hand.*” According to Egyptologists, the figure is [Maat](#), an Egyptian goddess. Notice the hat that designates her (yellowish-orange ovals):

google.com/search - Egyptian Maat

This is the same hat worn by the central figure. Is that figure a man or a woman? Is it Maat or the Prince of Pharaoh? Egyptologists claim that the characters above its hand indicate it to be Maat. Is the figure behind the throne King Pharaoh, with his headdress (as Joseph says “is given by the characters above his head”) or [Isis](#), an Egyptian goddess? Egyptologists claim that the characters mark her as Isis. Isis can represent [Pharaoh’s power](#), but here Joseph is claiming the figure to actually be Pharaoh. In these cases, Joseph says the characters mean one thing; the Egyptologists say something else, most with no plausible match for representation. This at the very least shows that Joseph thought he was literally translating the Egyptian characters. This makes difficult the argument that the Book of Abraham wasn’t a literal translation, but that the papyrus served as a vehicle for a divine message.

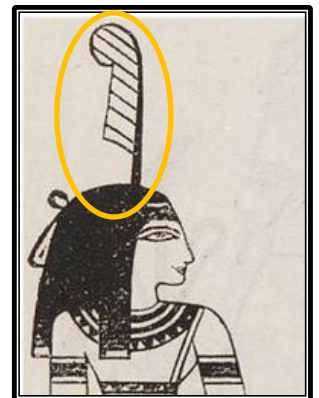


Figure 17 – By Unknown author [CC BY-SA 2.5 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>)], via Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

As further evidence against that “vehicle” argument, Joseph made available the Egyptian character translations in the GAEL, as shown by josephsmithpapers.org. FAIR concedes that his translations “do not match the true Egyptian meanings of those characters.” If the record clearly shows that Joseph made up material, what else might he have invented? Does God require us to trust untrustworthy men?

The church recently released [another First Presidency-approved gospel topics essay](#) (p. 4), based partly on the works of [Kerry Muhlestein](#) and [John Gee](#), where they reveal that the translations don’t match recently-found fragments of papyrus.

“None of the characters on the papyrus fragments mentioned Abraham’s name or any of the events recorded in the book of Abraham.”

lds.org - [Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham](#)

Both sides have much to say on whether the correct fragment was found. Fragments aside, we still have the facsimiles and their meanings. The essay, Gee, and Muhlestein all completely avoid the above-mentioned facsimile problems.

Dr. Ritner ([one of John Gee's Egyptology professors](#)) responded to the Book of Abraham essay [here](#). His response is validated by other Egyptologists, such as [Stephen E. Thompson \(p. 143\)](#) and [Klaus Baer \(p. 109\)](#). Both links lead to Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, a series which publishes any article related to Mormonism. FAIR also references this series.

FAIR, while omitting many things that Joseph got wrong, points out a few of Joseph’s interpretations which weren’t so far off. In at least [one other place](#), Joseph takes the number four to symbolize the four parts of the earth. Joseph also interprets four figures in Facsimile 2 to mean the four parts of the earth. FAIR points out that this is close to one of their possible meanings: the four compass points. FAIR omits that Joseph [misnames these same four figures](#) in Facsimile 1. FAIR also shows that the text of the Book of Abraham contains two details of Abraham’s life which aren’t in the Bible, but which are in other works. FAIR omits the fact that Oliver Cowdery, by that year, had studied [at least one of those two works](#). In Messenger and Advocate, he discusses [The Works of Flavius Josephus](#), which recounts that Abraham taught astronomy to the Egyptians.

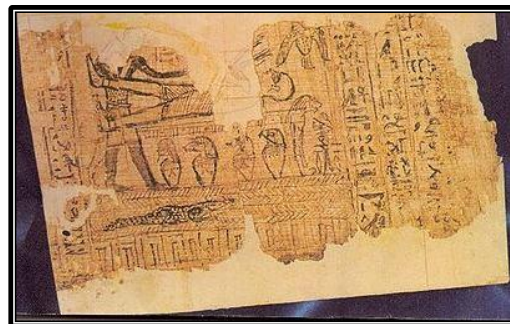


Figure 18 – By Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia (Transferred from en.wikipedia) [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

The Kinderhook Plates

[FAIR](#) explains that the Kinderhook Plates “are a forged set of metal plates that were given to Joseph Smith to translate.” One of the main primary sources that Joseph started translating these plates comes from William Clayton.

William Clayton was Joseph’s [clerk and good friend \(byu.edu link\)](#). He never left the church.

His journals are collected in a book titled *An*

Intimate Chronicle. [BYU gives a good review of the book](#) and it is sometimes used as a reference on [lds.org](#). As explained by FAIR, Clayton was trustworthy enough that his third person accounts were treated as first person accounts (from Joseph Smith’s point-of-view) in *History of the Church*. After spending part of the day with Joseph, William recounted:

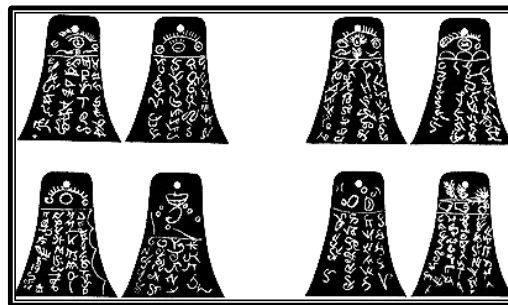


Figure 19 – See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

“President Joseph has translated a portion and says they contain the history of the person with whom they were found and he was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the ruler of heaven and earth.”

[imgur.com - An Intimate Chronicle - p. 100](#)

FAIR shows a relative match between one of the plates’ symbols and a symbol (along with its meaning) in Joseph’s [GAEL](#) (the Egyptian translations published by Joseph, which [FAIR](#) concedes to be completely inaccurate). Combined with the account of a non-member witness, FAIR concludes that Joseph used the GAEL to start his translation. This shows that Joseph either believed the GAEL to be accurate, or that he was trying to maintain some sort of consistency amongst his translated materials. Either way this is problematic, as the GAEL is completely inaccurate. If Joseph gave the Saints false translations here, would we be damned for believing that he probably also fabricated the Book of Mormon?

This all took place in the last year of Joseph’s life. It was a busy year, and there is no record that Joseph made any further progress on translating these plates. Church leaders maintained that the Kinderhook plates were not forged until [proven wrong in 1981](#). An example:

“There are the Kinderhook plates, too, found in America and now in the possession of the Chicago Historical Society. Controversy has surrounded these plates and their engravings, but most experts agree they are of ancient vintage.”

~Apostle [Mark E. Peterson, 1979](#)

[fairmormon.org - Source quotes without commentary](#)

Part Two: The Church

The Restoration

This First Presidency-approved essay ([p. 4](#)) discusses [the First Vision accounts](#).

1832 First Vision Account

The essay admits that Joseph doesn't mention seeing God the Father in this account. However, it ignores a problem in the first paragraph below, where Joseph says that he realized via scripture study that there was no true church.

“by searching the scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostacised from the true and liveing faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament ...

the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to thir ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it [is] written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father ...”

~Joseph Smith

josephsmithpaper.org - [Letterbook 1](#)

This contradicts the 1838 account (our current version):

[JS-H 1:18](#) – “I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.”

The essay points out that Joseph says “the Lord” twice. They suggest that he was referring to God the Father one of the times and referring to Christ the other time. Is that really plausible? “I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord.” Again, this matches the Trinitarian doctrine present in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon ([p. 28](#)).

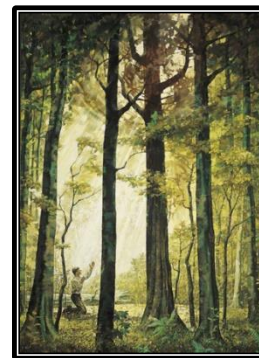


Figure 20 – The First Vision, by Kenneth Riley, [link](#)

1835 Account

The essay also neglects Joseph's account to Erastus Holmes in 1835:

"I commenced and gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from 6, years old up to the time I received the first visitation of Angels which was when I was about 14, years old and also the visitations that I received afterward, concerning the book of Mormon, ..."

~Joseph Smith

josephsmithpapers.org - Journal, 1835-1836

History of the Church changed Joseph's account to read:

"I gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from six years old up to the time I received my first vision, which was when I was about fourteen years old; also the revelations that I received afterwards concerning the Book of Mormon, ..."

~"Joseph Smith"

byu.edu - *History of the Church*, Vol. 2, Ch. 23, p. 312

[FAIR](#) claims that this is not a falsification of data because in an account a few days before this time, Joseph did talk about seeing two personages.

Response: Is it ok to remove a contradiction without any notation? What other quotes did church leaders and historians decide to edit? Why does the gospel topics essay omit this account?

Peter, James, and John

The Melchizedek Priesthood was mentioned early in the church, but why wasn't its bestowal via Peter, James, and John mentioned until 1834, five years after the occurrence? Comparing the [1833 Book of Commandments](#) and the [1835 D&C](#), the revisionist insertion of the event is clear. It was added to a previously recorded revelation. According to [FAIR](#), the only pre-1834 mention of the event was by Orson Pratt in 1829. They don't give a reference for the Orson Pratt quote. I was able to find the reference on lds.org (in footnote 24) and learned that the quote can only be traced back to 1878. Oliver and Joseph were more consistent when talking about seeing John the Baptist and the angel Moroni. For more about Oliver's connection to Joseph Smith and *View of the Hebrews*, see [p. 32](#).

Polygamy and Polyandry

A First Presidency-approved essay ([p. 4](#)) discusses [the subject of polygamy](#).

This essay, though on the [original list](#), has been removed from the [current lds.org list](#). Though buried, it is still accessible through a link on the [generic polygamy essay](#), which skips over the more disturbing details.

Eight of the Kirtland/Nauvoo essay's footnotes reference [Brian Hales](#), one of the church's leading researchers of polygamy. I will reference [Hales' site](#) frequently.

In Practice

Though Joseph is often portrayed as being married to Emma only, the essay confirms that he had between 30 and 40 wives (number is found in footnote 24). The essay adds that these marriages included "the possibility of sexual relations." Hales' website adds insight in revealing that Joseph was sexually intimate with Louisa Beaman, along with about a dozen others or more, as indicated by a chart halfway down [this page](#). The gospel topics essay also discusses polyandry - a term sometimes used for Joseph's sealings to already-married women:

"Following his marriage to Louisa Beaman and before he married other single women, Joseph Smith was sealed to a number of women who were already married. Neither these women nor Joseph explained much about these sealings, though several women said they were for eternity alone."

~From the essay

The essay omits evidence of sexuality in the polyandrous sealings. According to Hales, Joseph was likely intimate with [Mary Heron](#) and [Sylvia Sessions](#) (Fig. 21). In the case of Sylvia, Hales references this affidavit on his site:

"Just prior to my mothers [Sylvia Sessions Lyon] death in 1882 she called me to her bedside and told me that her days on earth were about numbered and before she passed away from mortality she desired to tell me something which she had kept as an entire secret fro me and from others until no but which she now desired to communicate to me. She then told me that I was the daughter of the Prophet Joseph Smith, she having been sealed to the Prophet at the time that her husband Mr. Lyon had was out of fellowship with the Church."

~Josephine Lyon

[josephsmithspolygamy.org - Sylvia Sessions](#)

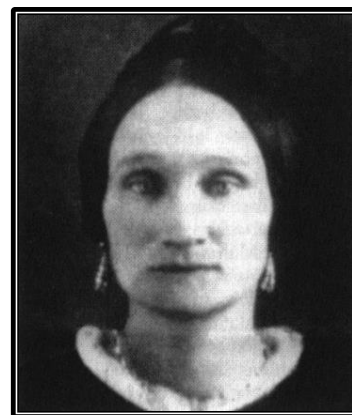


Figure 21 – By artist unknown (Find a grave Sylvia Porter Sessions Lyon Clark) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

Brian's article goes on to explain that Sylvia's husband was excommunicated at the time of Joseph's intimacy, which may have justified it. According to the page, Sylvia already had three children before her marriage to Joseph. How does this fit with D&C 132, which says that the wives you espouse must be virgins?

[D&C 132:61-63](#) – “61 And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

62 And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.

63 But if one or either of the ten virgins, after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed; ...

The essay does not mention D&C 132:61 or the requirement that the women be virgins. Could Joseph have been a fallen prophet? David fell, but he was a king, not a prophet. A Priesthood leader is supposed to be worthy of his office.

The essay does not address Brigham Young's wives. According to these links, Zina Huntington, while married to only Henry Jacobs, gave birth to Zebulon Jacobs (her first child). She was then [sealed to Joseph](#). After Joseph's death, she gave birth to two more children with Zebulon Jacobs. [From a FAIR article](#): After being taken by Brigham Young, she gave birth to her daughter with Brigham: Zina Prescinda Young. How does this fit with the D&C 132:61 requirement that the women be virgins? Otherwise, it is adultery. Zina's profile on [lds.org](#) omits the polyandry. She was sealed to Joseph Smith while married to Henry Jacobs.

Apologists propose that these polyandrous sealings were for “eternity alone,” and not this life. If so, is it ok that Joseph took other men's wives for eternity? From [FAIR](#) (in the Marriage to Brigham Young section): In temple ceremonies after Joseph's death she was called Zina Diantha *Smith*, even in Henry's presence.

Apologists claim that these sealings weren't exactly marriages, and may have existed to connect families together. Can we really say that a man getting sealed to a woman isn't a marriage? As evidence that Joseph wasn't just trying to connect families, Joseph was sealed to [Patty Bartlett](#). Though already connected to the family, he was sealed to Patty's daughter, [Sylvia Sessions](#). Both women already had husbands. Same with [Zina's sister](#). Joseph was sealed to Presendia (a married woman), who was already connected to Joseph through Zina.

The essay states that Joseph's sealing to a 14 year-old (Helen Kimball Mar, Figure 23) wasn't so abnormal during his time period. The essay omits the part where Joseph promised exaltation for not only her, but also her family if she was sealed to him. She stayed true to Mormonism until she died, so it is unlikely that she lied in her journal to try and smear the church. What would I conclude if I heard this about [Warren Jeffs](#)?

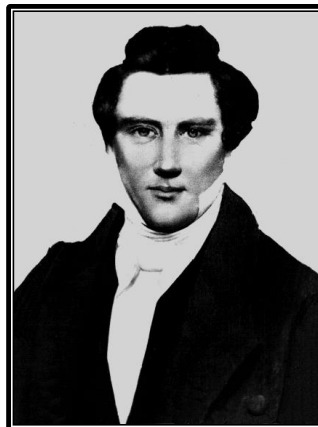


Figure 22 – "Joseph Smith, Jr. (1843 photograph)" by Lucian Foster - <http://comevisit.com/lds/faq-dld.htm>. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#).

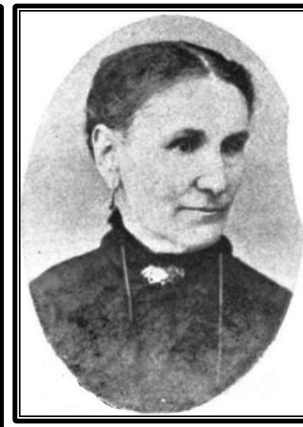


Figure 23 – "Helen Mar Kimball" by Solomon Farnham Kimball - Cropped from: Kimball, Solomon Farnham (1918) Life of David P. Kimball, and other sketches, Salt Lake City, Utah: The Deseret News, p. 43 Retrieved on October 7, 2013. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikipedia Commons, [link](#).

"my father introduced to me this principle & asked me if I would be sealed to Joseph, who came next morning & with my parents I heard him teach & explain the principle of Celestial marriage-after which he said to me, 'If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation and exaltation & that of your father's household & all of your kindred.'

This promise was so great that I will-ingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward. None but God & his angels could see my mother's bleeding heart—when Joseph asked her if she was willing, she replied "If Helen is willing I have nothing more to say." She had witnessed the sufferings of others, who were older & who better understood the step they were taking, & to see her child, who had scarcely seen her fifteenth summer, following in the same thorny path, in her mind she saw the misery which was as sure to come as the sun was to rise and set; but it was all hidden from me."

[byu.edu - Womans View](#)

Joseph was often involved in service and good deeds, but should that absolve him of further scrutiny?

Church presidents after Joseph would also at times marry much younger women. At age 57, Lorenzo Snow (Figure 24) married a 15 year-old (Sarah Ephramina):

[geni.com - Lorenzo Snow](#)

[geni.com - Sarah Ephramina Snow](#)



Figure 24 – Lorenzo Snow. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow (2012), 182. [link](#)

Reasons for Polygamy

Would God command someone to practice polygamy by sending an angel with a drawn sword? This is the sworn affidavit from Lorenzo Snow, referenced in a work by Joseph Fielding Smith and the second counselor of the First Presidency. The quote is from Snow, who is recollecting his conversation with Joseph Smith. The [new essay](#) also discusses this event.



Figure 25 - Bronzino (Public domain or Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

“[Joseph Smith] then and there explained to me the doctrine of plurality of wives;... [he] sought to turn away from the commandment; that an angel from heaven then appeared before him with a drawn sword, threatening him with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment.”

~Lorenzo Snow

[archive.org](#) - [Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage, by Joseph Fielding Smith](#)

What would I conclude if [James Harmston](#) claimed these things? What if Harmston also said that he was at first unwilling, but that he had to or else an angel would destroy him? How does this fit with a God of free agency?

The passage in [Jacob 2:30](#) indicates that the purpose of polygamy is to raise up seed, but the apostle [John Widtsoe](#) points out in the quote below that there were more men than women in Utah and in the church at the time.

“The United States census records from 1850 to 1940, and all available Church records, uniformly show a preponderance of males in Utah, and in the Church.... The theory that plural marriage was a consequence of a surplus of female Church members fails from lack of evidence.... Another conjecture is that the people were few in number and that the Church, desiring greater numbers, permitted the practice so that a phenomenal increase in population could be attained. This is not defensible, since there was no surplus of women.”

~John Widtsoe

[Quote can be found here on fairmormon.org](#)

Was the purpose of polygamy to raise righteous children? According to [FAIR](#), studies in eugenics have shown that children of polygamous families were physically and mentally above average, and that plural households were happier. I could not find these studies, but in the coming Effect on Women section (next page), the wives appear to be significantly unhappier in polygamy. How much access to their father did the 56 children of Brigham Young have? If the wives were so unhappy, how happy were the daughters who realized their fate?

Effect on Women

Apparently a man needed his wife's consent to take another wife, but if she gave no consent, he could proceed without her consent after all. From [the essay](#):

"The revelation on marriage required that a wife give her consent before her husband could enter into plural marriage. Nevertheless, toward the end of the revelation, the Lord said that if the first wife "receive not this law"—the command to practice plural marriage—the husband would be "exempt from the law of Sarah," presumably the requirement that the husband gain the consent of the first wife before marrying additional women."

[FAIR](#) concedes that Joseph "did not always tell Emma immediately about some of his plural relationships." [FAIR](#) also concedes that some women were sealed to Joseph before Emma.

Is Christ really behind that all this? In verse 51, did he really command Joseph to offer something to Emma (Figure 26), and then command Emma to deny the offer? [FAIR](#) speculates on what the offer was, but omits the part where Christ commanded it in the first place. Is Christ behind verse 64, where Emma is threatened with destruction if she doesn't believe and administer unto Joseph? This warning applied to all women in polygamy. All must believe and administer unto their husbands or be destroyed. What would I think if I found this in the Qu'ran?

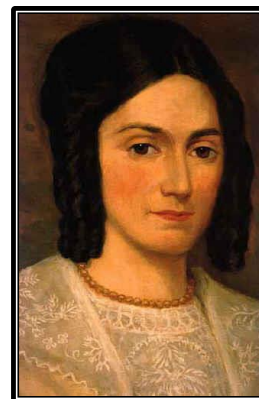


Figure 26 – By Lee Greene Richards (July 27, 1878 – February 20, 1950) Original Publisher and Copyright holder: LDS Church Archives (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

[D&C 132:51, 54, 64, 66](#) – "51 Verily, I say unto you: A commandment I give unto mine handmaid, Emma Smith, your wife, whom I have given unto you, that she stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her; for I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice.

54 And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law....

64 And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her; for I will magnify my name upon all those who receive and abide in my law.

66 And now, as pertaining to this law, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will reveal more unto you, hereafter; therefore, let this suffice for the present. Behold, I am Alpha and Omega. Amen."

The following quotes come from *An Intimate Chronicle* (see [p. 53](#)) for *An Intimate Chronicle* as a source) and shed some light on Joseph's relationship with Emma. If Smith had already reproved her for her evil treatment, what were the harsh measures that he resorted to here?

"President Joseph told me that he had difficulty with E[mma] yesterday. She rode up to Woodworths with him and called while he came to the Temple. When he returned she was demanding the gold watch of F[lora]. He reproved her for her evil treatment. On their return home she abused him much and also when he got home. He had to use harsh measures to put a stop to her abuse but finally succeeded ..."

[imgur.com - An Intimate Chronicle - p. 118](#)

An example of Joseph lying to Emma. No one is perfect, but a lot depends on Joseph's honesty. Would we be damned for rejecting a dishonest man's story?

"Joseph told me that since E[mma] came back from St. Louis she had resisted the P[riesthood, meaning polygamy] in toto and he had to tell her he would relinquish all for her sake. She said she would [have] given him E[liza] and E[mily] P[artridge], but he knew if he took them she would pitch on him and obtain a divorce and leave him. He however told me he should not relinquish anything."

[imgur.com - An Intimate Chronicle - p. 117](#)

[FAIR](#) discusses a conference talk in which Brigham claims that Emma tried twice to kill Joseph and that Joseph called her "the most wicked woman on this earth." He alludes to Joseph drinking coffee. [FAIR](#) explains that the Word of Wisdom was not as stringent then, mentioning Joseph's use of alcohol. The church uses [Joseph's rejection of alcohol during his leg surgery](#) to give a different appearance.

"To my certain knowledge, Emma Smith is one of the damnedest liars I know of on this earth; yet there is no good thing I would refuse to do for her, if she would only be a righteous woman; but she will continue in her wickedness. Not six months before the death of Joseph, he called his wife Emma into a secret council, and there he told her the truth, and called upon her to deny it if she could. He told her that the judgments of God would come upon her forthwith if she did not repent. He told her of the time she undertook to poison him, and he told her that she was a child of hell, and literally the most wicked woman on this earth, that there was not one more wicked than she. He told her where she got the poison, and how **she put it in a cup of coffee**; said he 'You got that poison from so and so, and I drank it, but you could not kill me.' When it entered his stomach he went to the door and threw it off. he spoke to her in that council in a very severe manner, and she never said one word in reply. I have witnesses of this scene all around, who can testify that I am now telling the truth. Twice she undertook to kill him."

~Brigham Young, General Conference, October 1866

Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

These next quotes illustrate what women experienced.

“Now for my proposition; it is more particularly for my sisters, as it is frequently happening that women say they are unhappy. Men will say, ‘My wife, though a most excellent woman, has not seen a happy day since I took my second wife; No, not a happy day for a year,’ says one; and another has not seen a happy day for five years. It is said that women are tied down and abused: that they are misused and have not the liberty they ought to have; that many of them are wading through a perfect flood of tears, because of the conduct of some men together with their own folly.... I am going to give you from this time to the 6th day of October next, for reflection, that you may determine whether you wish to stay with your husbands or not, and then I am going to set every woman at liberty and say to them, No go your way, my women with the rest, go your way. And my wives have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, or they may leave, for I will not have them about me. I will go into heaven alone, rather than have scratching and fighting around me. I will set all at liberty. ‘What, first wife too?’ Yes, I will liberate you all.... Now recollect that two weeks from tomorrow I am going to set you at liberty. But the first wife will say, ‘It is hard, for I have lived with my husband twenty years, or thirty, and have raised a family of children for him, and it is a great trial to me for him to have more women;’ then I say it is time that you gave him up to other women who will bear children.... Do you understand this? I have told you many times that there are multitudes of pure and holy spirits waiting to take tabernacles, now what is our duty?—to prepare tabernacles for them;.... Sisters, I am not joking, I do not throw out my proposition to banter your feelings, to see whether you will leave your husbands, all or any of you. But I do know that there is no cessation to the everlasting whining of many of the women in this Territory;.... Prepare yourselves for two weeks from to-morrow; and I will tell you now, that if you will tarry with your husbands, after I have set you free, you must bow down to it, and submit yourselves to the celestial law. You may go where you please, after two weeks from to-morrow; but, remember, that I will not hear any more of this whining.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 4, pp. 55-57 ([p. 83](#) for the JoD as a source)

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

“And we have women here who like any thing but the celestial law of God; and if they could break asunder the cable of the Church of Christ, there is scarcely a mother in Israel but would do it this day. And they talk it to their husbands, to their daughters, and to their neighbors, and say they have not seen a week’s happiness since they became acquainted with that law, or since their husbands took a second wife.”

~J. M. Grant, apostle, father of Heber J. Grant, Journal of Discourses, Volume 4, p. 50

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

“A few years ago one of my wives, when talking about wives leaving their husbands said, ‘I wish my husband’s wives would leave him, every soul of them except myself.’ That is the way they all feel, more or less, at times, both old and young.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 9, p. 195

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

“Sisters, do you wish to make yourselves happy? Then what is your duty? It is for you to bear children, in the name of the Lord, that are full of faith and the power of God, ... Do you look forward to that? Or are you tormenting yourselves by thinking that your husbands do not love you? I would not care whether they loved a particle or not; but I would cry out, like one of old, in the joy of my heart, ‘I have got a man from the Lord!’ ‘Hallelujah! I am a mother—I have borne an image of God!’”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 9, p. 37

Public Denial

Joseph says that it's contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive:

[D&C 129:7](#) – “Ask him to shake hands with you, but he will not move, because it is contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive; but he will still deliver his message.”

The [new essay](#) discusses how Joseph and other members denied polygamy:

“Participants in these early plural marriages pledged to keep their involvement confidential, though they anticipated a time when the practice would be publicly acknowledged. Nevertheless, rumors spread... The rumors prompted members and leaders to issue carefully worded denials that denounced spiritual wifery and polygamy but were silent about what Joseph Smith and others saw as divinely mandated “celestial” plural marriage. The statements emphasized that the Church practiced no marital law other than monogamy while implicitly leaving open the possibility that individuals, under direction of God’s living prophet, might do so.”

The essay calls them “carefully worded denials.” Members later did [define their actions as polygamy](#). The following denials occurred in October, 1842. When the early members say “the one published in D&C,” they are referring to [Section 101](#) of their edition (Section 132 was not added [until 1876](#)). “One man should have one wife; and one woman, **but** one husband” leaves room for a man having more than one wife as well. They use that section to give a false impression:

“We the undersigned members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and residents of the city of Nauvoo, persons of families do hereby certify and declare that we know of no other rule or system of marriage than the one published from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and we give this certificate to show that Dr. J. C. Bennett's ‘secret wife system’ is a creature of his own make as we know of no such society in this place nor never did.”

S. Bennett, N. K. Whitney, George Miller, Albert Pettey, Alpheus Cutler, Elias Higbee, Reynolds Cahoon, John Taylor, Wilson Law, E. Robinson, W. Woodruff, Aaron Johnson.

“We the undersigned members of the ladies' relief society, and married females do certify and declare that we know of no system of marriage being [practiced] in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints save the one contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and we give this certificate to the public to show that J. C. Bennett's ‘secret wife system’ is a disclosure of his own make.”

Emma Smith, President, Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Counsellor [Counselor], Sarah M. Cleveland, Counsellor [Counselor], Eliza R. Snow, Secretary, ...

[byu.edu - Times and Seasons Vol. 3, Oct. 1, 1842, pp. 939-940, "On Marriage" \(screenshot\)](#)

The next page will show that some of the signers above did know (the names of those individuals are highlighted). If these people were persuaded to deceive for Joseph Smith, can we trust the Book of Mormon witnesses?

[Hales' website](#) reveals that in the spring of 1842 (half a year before the denials), Joseph told members of the Quorum of the Twelve that God was commanding them to take plural wives. Hales quotes John Taylor's reaction. This shows that John Taylor and possibly Wilford Woodruff knew about plural marriage.

According to Hales' second chart on [this page](#), Eliza Snow was sealed to Joseph Smith on June 29, 1842. [The page for Sarah Cleveland](#) (formerly Sarah Kingsley) shows that Sarah witnessed Eliza Snow's sealing.

N. K. Whitney and Elizabeth Ann Whitney knew by July, 1842, according to [Hales' page](#). They gave their permission for their daughter's wedding on July 27.

That would make five or six people, including Emma Smith's entire Relief Society Presidency, who knew about plural marriage before signing the October, 1842 statement. The women said they knew of no other system of marriage "in the church." If individual church members practice polygamy by Joseph's command, is that "in the church?" The men did not include the "in the church" clause. N.K. Whitney and John Taylor signed that they "[knew] of no other rule or system of marriage than the one published from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants."

Joseph also gave such denials. From his sermon on May 26, 1844:

"What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one."

~Joseph Smith

[1850 byu.edu - History of the Church, Vol. 6, Ch. 19, p. 411](#)

[FAIR](#): Polygamy was legal in Illinois if not practiced openly. Response: The members are going beyond "not practicing it openly." They are deceiving others. Also, [the church essay](#) says that "monogamy was the only legal form of marriage."

In the following journal entry (see [p. 53](#)), Smith recommends that Clayton keep his plural wife Margaret hidden from the public eye. If the public were to find out about her, Smith lays out his plan to excommunicate Clayton and then re-baptize him. This fake "scourging" would keep the public at ease. Given this example, can we accept Joseph's [public repudiation of the Danites \(FAIR link\)](#)?

"[President Joseph] said that it was [Emma's] advice that I should keep M[argaret] at home and it was also his council. Says he just keep her at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging and probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptize you and set you ahead as good as ever."

~William Clayton

[imgur.com - An Intimate Chronicle - p. 122](#)

In a self-published pamphlet, John Taylor carefully denies polygamy while serving a mission in France:

“Inasmuch as this Church of Jesus Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”

~John Taylor, 1850 byu.edu - History of the Church, Vol. 6, Ch. 19, p. 411

[archive.org - Three Nights' Public Discussion](#)

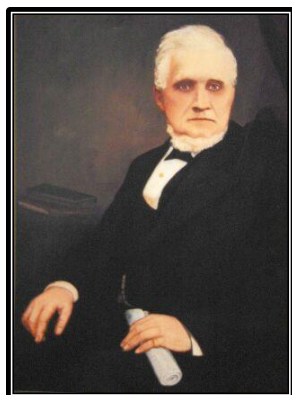


Figure 27 – By UnknownShamrox at en.wikipedia (file log). [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

By 1850, John Taylor (Figure 26) had [several wives](#). How many Saints journeyed from France to Utah under the impression that there was no polygamy being practiced? These Saints would have been unaware of the 1830 Edition errors, Joseph’s seer stone usage, and Oliver’s divining rod. By now, the average church member had come a long way from descriptions of the first Mormon congregations. [This unfriendly account](#) (p. 213), one of the few hostile accounts here, depicts a scene of speaking in tongues, rolling around on the floor, crawling, grimacing, “all the apish actions imaginable,” etc., due to the Holy Spirit.

Orson Pratt was the editor for a paper in England that fully denied polygamy:

“12th Lie. – Joseph Smith taught a system of polygamy.

12th Refutation. – The Revelations given to Joseph Smith state the following:.... ‘Thou shalt love thy wife, and shall cleave unto her, and none else.’”

[byu.edu - Millennial Star Vol. 12, Jan. 15, 1850, "Who is the Liar?" - see Table of Contents for editor](#) ([screenshot](#))



Figure 28 – Charles Roscoe Savage [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

By that date, Orson Pratt (Figure 27) had [at least five wives](#). Did these denials leave room for individuals within the church to practice polygamy? How many Saints traveled from England to Utah under the impression that there was no polygamy being practiced? Some of these people gave up everything to cross the world and join the Saints. Did these people deserve full disclosure? Do today’s converts deserve full disclosure?

The Temple

[FAIR](#) reveals that there used to be penalty tokens in the endowment ceremony, these being removed in 1990. Would Joseph have permitted their removal?

“Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.”

~Joseph Smith

[lds.org - Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith](https://www.lds.org/teachings-of-the-presidents-of-the-church/joseph-smith)

Are tokens and keywords needed to get back to heaven, as learned in the temple?

Christ warns against preaching more than repentance and baptism to enter heaven:

[3 Nephi 11:37-40](#) – “37 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things.

38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

40 And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.”

A theory exists that the LDS temple ceremony is similar to the ceremony in Freemasonry because the Masons obtained the ceremony from Solomon’s temple.

[FAIR](#) concedes that not only did Joseph borrow the ceremony from Freemasonry, but that there is no connection between Freemasonry and Solomon’s temple.

[FAIR](#) on the existence of the Second Anointing, a lesser known temple ordinance

If God speaks through Isaiah with [dual meanings](#), could there be meanings in these scriptures that apply to us? Matthew 24:24 will be discussed on [p. 68](#).

[Matthew 24:23,26](#) – “23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.”

[Acts 7:48](#) – “Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,”

[1 Timothy 1:4](#) – “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.”

“The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands;” might be significant.

Prophets and Revelators

Special Witnesses

Apostles are supposed to be “special witnesses of Christ.” The church hasn’t been clear on whether this means that Christ has actually appeared to them or not.

Here is what Brigham Young had to say ([p. 83](#) for the JoD as a source):

“We have not seen the person of the Father, neither have we seen that of the Son; but we have seen the children of the Father, and the brethren of the Savior who are in every way like them in physical appearance and organization.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 42

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

Prophets

One piece of evidence often cited as being for Mormonism is Joseph’s Civil War prophecy of December 25, 1832.

[D&C 87](#) – “1 Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls;

2 And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place.

3 For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations.

4 And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.

5 And it shall come to pass also that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation.

6 And thus, with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations;

7 That the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies.

8 Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen.”

Josephsmithpapers.org discusses an article (below the D&C 87 text) that appeared about ten miles from Kirtland in Painesville, four days before the prophecy:

“The newspaper also included extensive coverage of the passage of a resolution by a Nullification Convention held in November in South Carolina. This resolution declared the federal tariff acts of 1828 and 1832, which levied high duties against imports, “null and void” in the state. Many South Carolina residents believed the acts were passed solely to protect northern manufacturing at the expense of the South. Not only did South Carolinians claim the right to nullify the law, they also stated their willingness to “organize a separate Government” should the federal government try to enforce the tariffs in the state. The governor called for two thousand men to form a militia “for the defence of Charleston and its dependencies.” President Andrew Jackson responded quickly to this resolution, stating, according to the Telegraph, ‘that the laws and the Union must be maintained, at all events.’ **Because Painesville, Ohio, was only about ten miles from Kirtland, Ohio, it is probable that JS saw or heard about the articles in the 21 December Telegraph within a day or so.**”

josephsmithpapers.org - [Revelation 25 December 1832](#)

From this, Joseph predicted that a war would start in South Carolina. He also predicted that the South would call upon Britain. Verse 4 is inaccurate, as there were [no major slave rebellions \(pbs.org link\)](#). In the Civil War, free African Americans in the North fought for the Union and slaves in the South fought for the Confederacy. Vs. 5 is wrong, as “the remnant,” or Native Americans, fought on both sides. Britain did not call on other nations, and the Civil War had nothing to do with World War I (vs. 3). The “full end of all nations” did not come about because of the Civil War (vs. 6).

Christ warns of false prophets, saying “[Ye shall know them by their fruits.](#)” Was the unhappiness of polygamous women a bad fruit ([p. 62](#))? What if prophets have good and bad fruits? Additional warnings:

[Matthew 24:24](#) – “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

Some have inferred from these scriptures that there will also be true prophets, otherwise Christ would have simply said to not trust prophets at all. The problem is that Joseph Smith and the New Testament define “prophet” differently from us.

[Revelation 19:10](#) – “... for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

“I did not profess to be a prophet any more than every man ought to who professes to be a preacher of righteousness; and that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophesy...”

~Joseph Smith ([byu.edu - History of the Church Vol. 5, Ch. 12, p. 231](#))

Revelators: The Word of Wisdom

A quick search reveals that teaching against [smoking](#) and [drinking](#) was nothing new during Joseph's time. [Simplicity of Health](#), by Hortator, was a product of the temperance movement of the early 1800s and speaks out against hot drinks (pp. 114-115), especially tea (pp. 60-68 and throughout) and coffee (pp. 119-120). Why does the Lord's health code mirror the science of the 1830s? Also see [p. 61](#).

Revelators: The Plan of Salvation

Notice the similarities between the Plan of Salvation and Emmanuel Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* (1758):

"There are [three heavens](#), entirely distinct from each other, an inmost or third, a middle or second, and an outmost or first."

"The Divine that flows in from the Lord and is received in [the third or inmost heaven is called celestial](#), and in consequence the angels there are called celestial angels; ..."

~Swedenborg

[newearth.org - Heaven and Hell Ch. 5](#)

"The world of spirits is not heaven, nor is it hell, but it is the intermediate place or state [between the two](#); for it is the place that man first enters after death; and from which after a suitable time he is either raised up into heaven or cast down into hell ..."

~Swedenborg

[newearth.org - Heaven and Hell Ch. 44](#)

Was Swedenborg actually given a vision from God of the afterlife, which is why it matched what Joseph taught? Yet, other parts of his vision contradict Joseph:

"Nor is true marriage love possible between one husband and several wives.... The angels declare that marrying several wives is wholly contrary to Divine order, ..."

[newearth.org - Heaven and Hell Ch. 40](#)

[FAIR](#) responds, stating that both Joseph and Swedenborg could have borrowed from a third source. Does this remove the problem that Joseph may have borrowed from someone? FAIR argues that the Smith-Swedenborg connection was never brought up until the twentieth century. Could this be because people simply didn't make the connection until then? FAIR points out that there are many differences between the two revelations. Could Joseph have selectively drawn from Swedenborg?

Some questions regarding the Plan of Salvation:

- Would a loving God really separate families in the afterlife? Even those who have lived good lives?
- Where does God draw the line between [valiant in the testimony of Jesus and non-valiant](#)? Is it fair to enact a plan where exaltation is at stake, and participants aren't even sure whether or not they are passing the test?
- Eternity is a long time. Is being unvaliant in this life such a crime that even trillions of years from now, those souls will be damned? Read up on [Graham's number](#). How about after a Graham's number amount of years? Still damned?
- Is it fair for this test to end right at death, with death being such an unpredictable and sudden thing?
- If a third of the hosts of heaven was cast out, aren't there literally billions of people being sent to Outer Darkness? How is that part of a Plan of Happiness?
- Why does a loving, omniscient God set up a test where our eternal fate is on the line, yet our ability to succeed is influenced so much by the actions of others ([Mosiah 27:14](#) – what if Alma's father and the people hadn't prayed for Alma the younger? Also see Helen's quote on [p. 58](#))?
- If God sent an angel to Paul or Alma, why not send an angel to many others who would otherwise repent?
- Why does God let people live through the most righteous periods in their lives [to later fall](#)? If lightning struck David during his youth, David would be exalted. Why does a loving, *omniscient* God create spirits who he knows will be damned?
- Either God is purposefully allowing our earthly test to be harder than it has to be (by not binding Satan and sending him on his way to Outer Darkness and instead allowing him to tempt us here), or his plan from the beginning required that someone fail so others could be tempted. Which is it?
- Why is Western religion so ignorant of the tremendous suffering within the animal kingdom? [Tasmanian devil face cancer](#) for example. Will mosquitos be resurrected as mosquitos? In my opinion, only reincarnation addresses all this.
- Without the belief in a Millennium, isn't there much more incentive to improve the world now, as it's not guaranteed to be fixed for us?

Revelators: The Mouthpiece of God

It appears that LDS presidents interpret impressions to be God's will (see the "rivers of living water" testimony on [p. 14](#)). Here is what Joseph F. Smith, as the prophet, said in the [Reed Smoot hearings](#):

Senator Dubois: Have you received any individual revelations yourself, since you became president of the church under your own definition, even, of a revelation?

Mr. Smith: I can not say that I have.

Senator Dubois: Can you say that you have not?

Mr. Smith: No; I can not say that I have not.

Senator Dubois: Then you do not know whether you have received any such revelations as you have described, or whether you have not?

Mr. Smith: Well, I can say this: That if I live as I should in the line of my duties, I am susceptible, I think, of the impressions of the spirit of the Lord upon my mind at any time, just as any good Methodist or any other good church member might be. And so far as that is concerned, I say yes; I have had impressions of the Spirit upon my mind very frequently, but they are not in the sense revelations.

[archive.org - Reed Smoot Hearing Testimonies](#)

Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

Gordon B. Hinckley essentially says the same thing.

KING: You are the prophet, right?

HINCKLEY: Right.

KING: Does that mean that, according to the church canon, the Lord speaks through you?

HINCKLEY: I think he makes his will manifest, yes.

KING: So if you change things, that's done by an edict given to you.

HINCKLEY: Yes, sir.

KING: How do you receive it?

HINCKLEY: Well, various ways. It isn't necessarily a voice heard. Impressions come. The building of this very building I think is an evidence of that.

There came an impression, a feeling, that we need to enlarge our facilities where we could hold our conferences. And it was a very bold measure. We had to tear down a big building here and put this building up at great cost.

But goodness sakes, what a wonderful thing it's proven to be. It is an answer to many, many needs. And I think it's the result of inspiration.

KING: And that came from something higher than you.

HINCKLEY: I think so.

[transcripts.cnn.com - Larry King Live](#)

Elder Oaks describes the inspiration behind people getting callings:

“I think of the subject of [assigning missionaries](#), and the same principles that apply to your calling of a counselor or a secretary in the Relief Society apply to that. When I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve[,] I was assigned to the missionary counsel, ... and Elder McConkie took me as a younger brother to teach me how to assign missionaries, and so I asked him [after] three or four weeks, ‘Elder McConkie, how do you know where to send them?’ Then he said, ‘You’re the servant of the Lord, and your action is the Lord’s action. You study it out in your mind and you assign ‘em, and they’re assigned by the Lord.’ You see the application of that principle to the bishop?”

[lds.org - Strength Faith in Christ](#), runs from 2:15 until 3:18

Basically, the leaders’ actions are God’s actions. What about when the leader makes mistakes? The Catholic Church hasn’t been alone in molestation cases. Here are three cases involving [local Mormon leaders](#).

On a somewhat unrelated note, here is a comparison of philosophies:

“With or without [religion] you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.”

- [Steven Weinberg](#)

“Morality is doing what’s right regardless of what you’re told. Obedience is doing what is told regardless of what is right.”

~Unknown

“A new study suggests that religious people aren’t more likely to do good than their nonreligious counterparts.”

[livescience.com - Morality vs. Religion](#)

“Religious belief appears to have negative influence on children’s altruism and judgments of others’ actions even as parents see them as ‘more empathetic’”

[theguardian.com](#)

“For secular people, morality is predicated on one simple principle: empathetic reciprocity, widely known as the Golden Rule.”

[latimes.com - Secular family values](#)

“The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God.”

~Wilford Woodruff

[lds.org - Official Declaration 1](#)

“When the prophet speaks, the debate is over.”

~N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor of the First Presidency

[lds.org - The Debate is Over](#)

“if [the President of the Church] ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it.’ Then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, ‘But you don’t need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray.’”

~Ezra Taft Benson, quoting Heber J. Grant

[lds.org - Fourteen Fundamentals](#)

How have the leaders fared on difficult, divisive issues?

Race and the Priesthood

This topic is about more than just the Priesthood. Those of African descent were denied the privilege of being sealed to their families in the temple for well over hundred years of church history. Attitudes have improved in the modern church:

“How can any man holding the Melchizedek Priesthood arrogantly assume that he is eligible for the priesthood whereas another who lives a righteous life but whose skin is of a different color is ineligible?”

~Gordon B. Hinckley

[lds.org - The Need for Greater Kindness](#)

[The new First Presidency-approved essay \(p. 4\)](#) calls the church’s past stance a “policy” twice. George Albert Smith would disagree with calling it a policy. In a First Presidency Statement, he calls it a commandment, which would end “when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood.”

“The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. **It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment** from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. The prophets of the Lord have made several statements as to the operation of the principle. President Brigham Young said: ‘Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the holy priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when all the rest of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood, and receive all the blessings which we now are entitled to.’”

~George Albert Smith, First Presidency Statement, 1949, quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

The essay disavows past “theories” that black skin is a curse, that other races were less valiant in the premortal life, and that mixed-race marriages are a sin. I will go ahead and contrast it with the rest of George Albert Smith’s proclamation.

“Today, the Church disavows the **theories** advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else.”

[lds.org - Race and the Priesthood](#)

“The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality and that while the details of this principle have not been made known, ... the worth of the privilege is so great that spirits are willing to come to earth and take on bodies no matter what the handicap may be ... and that among the handicaps, failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood is a handicap which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth ...”

~George Albert Smith, **First Presidency Statement**, 1949, quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

What about scriptures which say that black skin is a curse? See also [Moses 7:8,22](#).

[2 Nephi 5:21](#) – “And he had caused the **cursing** to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause **a skin of blackness** to come upon them.”

[Alma 3:6](#) – “And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, **which was a curse** upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against their brethren, who consisted of Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, and Sam, who were just and holy men.”

What about these statements by past prophets? ([p. 83](#) for the JoD as a source)

"And after the flood we are told that the curse that had been pronounced upon Cain was continued through Ham's wife, as he had married a wife of that seed. And why did it pass through the flood? because it was necessary that the devil should have a representation upon the earth ... “

~John Taylor, Journal of Discourses, Volume 22, p. 304, quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

“Any man having one drop of the seed of Cain in him cannot receive the priesthood....” (Wilford Woodruff, page 351.) Surely no one of you who is an heir to a body of more favored lineage would knowingly intermarry with a race that would condemn your posterity to penalties that have been placed upon the seed of Cain by the judgments of God.”

~Harold B Lee, 1973

[archive.org - Decisions for Successful Living](#)

“We are unanimous, all of the Brethren, in feeling and recommending that Indians marry Indians, and Mexicans marry Mexicans; the Chinese marry Chinese and the Japanese marry Japanese; that the Caucasians marry the Caucasians, and the Arabs marry Arabs.”

~Spencer W. Kimball, advising against interracial marriage, though not claiming it to be a sin

[byui.edu - Marriage and Child-Bearing](#)

Harold B. Lee, while president of the church, also taught that those with racial or physical limitations (the physically disabled?) were unfaithful/not valiant in the premortal life. He quotes John 9:2, but not [the next verse](#), where Jesus rejects the notion that the man or his parents sinned.

“Is it not just as reasonable to suppose that the conditions in which we now live have been determined by the kind of lives we lived in the pre-existent world of spirits? That the apostles understood this principle is indicated by their question to the Master when the man who was blind from his birth was healed of his blindness, “Master, who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” (John 9:2.) ... The privilege of obtaining a mortal body on this earth is seemingly so priceless that those in the spirit world, even though unfaithful or not valiant, were undoubtedly permitted to take mortal bodies although under penalty of racial or physical or nationalistic limitations....“

~Harold B Lee, 1973

[archive.org - Decisions for Successful Living](#)

Joseph Smith used the Bible to justify slavery. Some of his teachings:

"Having learned with extreme regret, that an article entitled, 'Free People of Color,' in the last number of the Star has been misunderstood, we feel in duty bound to state, in this Extra, that our intention was not only to stop free people of color from emigrating to this state, but to prevent them from being admitted as members of the Church."

[History of the Church, Vol. 1, Ch. 27, p. 378](#)

"Had I anything to do with the negro, I would confine them by strict law to their own species and put them on a national equalization."

[History of the Church, Vol. 5, Ch. 12, p. 217](#)

"I do not doubt, but those who have been forward in raising their voices against the South, will cry out against me as being uncharitable, unfeeling, unkind, and wholly unacquainted with the Gospel of Christ. It is my privilege then to name certain passages from the Bible, and examine the teachings of the ancients upon the matter as the fact is uncontrovertible that the first mention we have of slavery is found in the Holy Bible, pronounced by a man who was perfect in his generation, and walked with God. And so far from that prediction being averse to the mind of God, it remains as a lasting monument of the decree of Jehovah, to the shame and confusion of all who have cried out against the South, in consequence of their holding the sons of Ham in servitude. "And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant ..."

[History of the Church, Vol. 2, Ch. 30, p. 438](#)

Joseph later opposed slavery in Illinois ([FAIR](#)). His successor, Brigham Young, preached that God decreed Africans to be the "servant of servants." He taught that the Abolitionists worked in vain and that the Civil War would not free the slaves. Would we be damned for not believing that these men were his spokesmen?

"In our first settlement in Missouri, it was said by our enemies that we intended to tamper with the slaves, not that we had any idea of the kind, for such a thing never entered our minds. We knew that the children of Ham were to be the "servant of servants," and no power under heaven could hinder it, so long as the Lord would permit them to welter under the curse and those were known to be our religious views concerning them."

~Journal of Discourses, Volume 2, p. 172; Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

"Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed, and that would have put a termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be, and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin. Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then another curse is pronounced upon the same race - that they should be the "servant of servants;" and they will be, until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionists cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree."

~Journal of Discourses, Volume 7, p. 290; Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

"I should never fight one moment about [the issue of slavery], for the cause of human improvement is not in the least advanced by the dreadful [Civil War] which now convulses our unhappy country. Ham will continue to be the servant of servants, as the Lord has decreed, until the curse is removed. Will the present struggle free the slave? No; ..."

~Journal of Discourses, Volume 10, p. 250; Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

Women

Women are often discouraged from pursuing their careers. From a prophet:

“It was never intended by the Lord that married women should compete with men in employment ...”

~Spencer W. Kimball

[lds.org - Women's Divine Roles and Responsibilities](#)

Is this God’s system? Women should stay at home to raise children, so their daughters can stay at home to raise children, so their daughters can stay at home, and only sons escape the cycle and have careers?

If a young woman’s sealed husband dies and that widow wishes to remarry, any children she has with her new husband are [sealed to the original husband \(p. 86\)](#). Most men want to be sealed to their children. Will this not decrease the widow’s chance of remarrying?

Why did it take until the year 2013 for a woman to pray in conference ([Deseret News](#))? To this date, women can’t interpret ordinances for deaf members so long as a Priesthood holder is present ([Section 21.1.26 of the Official Handbook](#)).

Two prophets encouraged women to fight to the death if being raped. This implies that those who are raped lose their virtue.

“Your virtue is worth more than your life. Please, young folk, preserve your virtue even if you lose your lives.”

~Spencer W. Kimball, quoting David O. McKay

[archive.org - Miracle of Forgiveness](#)

Why doesn’t the church ordain women to the priesthood, given that Joseph Smith spoke of women healing the sick and casting out devils?

“[Joseph] ask’d the Society if they could not see by this sweeping stroke, that wherein they are ordained, it is the privilege of those set apart to administer in that authority which is confer’d on them— and if the sisters should have faith to heal the sick, let all hold their tongues, and let every thing roll on.”

[josephsmithpapers.org - Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book](#)

“met the members of the “Female relief Society” and after presiding at the admission of many new members. Gave a lecture on the priesthood shewing how the Sisters would come in possession of the privileges & blesings & gifts of the priesthood— & that the signs should follow them. such as healing the sick casting out devils &c. & that they might attain unto. these blessings.”

~Joseph Smith’s journal entry on April 28, 1842

[josephsmithpapers.org - Journal, December 1841-December 1842](#)

Will the church eventually change and allow women to hold the Priesthood? In the following examples, the church changes commandments and doctrine in spite of declaring that it would not.

“If we were to do away with polygamy, it would only be one feather in the bird, one ordinance in the Church and kingdom. Do away with that, then we must do away with prophets and Apostles, with revelation and the gifts and graces of the Gospel, and finally give up our religion altogether and turn sectarians and do as the world does, then all would be right. We just can't do that, for God has commanded us to build up His kingdom and to bear our testimony to the nations of the earth, and we are going to do it, come life or come death. He has told us to do thus, and we shall obey Him in days to come as we have in days past.”

~Wilford Woodruff, Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 19 ([p. 83](#) for JoD)

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

“Whatever fame Mr. Bierbower may have secured as a lawyer, he certainly will fail as a prophet. The severest persecutions have never followed by revelations changing a divine law, obedience to which brought imprisonment or martyrdom. Though I go to prison, God will not change His law of celestial marriage. But the man, the people, the nation, that oppose and fight against this doctrine and the Church of God will be overthrown.”

~Lorenzo Snow, 1886

byu.edu - [Millennial Star Vol. 48, Feb. 15, 1886, "Address of Apostle Lorenzo Snow" \(screenshot\)](#)

“There are statements in our literature by the early brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things.... All I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world. We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. We have now had added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness, and all the views and all the thoughts of the past. They don't matter any more. It doesn't make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year [1978].”

~Bruce R. McConkie

Quote also found on fairmormon.org - [Understanding pre-1978 statements](#)

On McConkie's statement, what about the doctrinal reasons for the Priesthood ban, now disavowed by the First Presidency? What about statements that the curse of Cain would not be removed until “all the rest of the children” have received blessings in the Priesthood ([p. 66](#))? Many countries remain closed to missionaries.

Homosexuality

Leaders once taught that monogamy would destroy the nation ([p. 83](#) for JoD):

“It is a fact worthy of note that the shortest-lived nations of which we have record have been monogamic. Rome, with her arts, sciences and warlike instincts, was once the mistress of the world; but her glory faded. She was a monogamic nation, and the numerous evils attending that system early laid the foundation for that ruin which eventually overtook her.”

~George Q Cannon, Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 202

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

“Since the founding of the Roman empire monogamy has prevailed more extensively than in times previous to that. The founders of that ancient empire were robbers and women stealers, and made laws favoring monogamy in consequence of the scarcity of women among them, and hence this monogamic system which now prevails throughout all Christendom, and which has been so fruitful a source of prostitution and whoredom throughout all the Christian monogamic cities of the Old and New World, until rottenness and decay are at the root of their institutions both national and religious.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 128

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

We now hear the church saying the same thing regarding homosexuality. Compare the following quote with the above statements:

“This heinous homosexual sin is of the ages. Many cities and civilizations have gone out of existence because of it. It was present in Israel’s wandering days, tolerated by the Greeks, and found in the baths of corrupt Rome.”

~Spencer W. Kimball

lds.org - [President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality](#)

The following countries punish homosexuality severely:

[Somalia](#) (imprisonment for homosexuality), [Sudan](#) (imprisonment), [South Sudan](#) (10 years in prison), [Yemen](#) (flogging, death), [Afghanistan](#) (death), [Iraq](#) (legalized, honor killings still occur, picture at thedailybeast.com), [Pakistan](#) (illegal), [Guinea](#) (illegal), [Nigeria](#) (illegal)

[The Human Development Index](#) shows those countries as among the most dysfunctional in the world. In comparison, eight out of the top ten countries have legalized same-sex marriage, while the other two, Australia and Germany, have progressed in LGBT rights in many other ways.

Regarding the individuals, the church now concedes that same-sex attraction is not a choice. From a church-run website in 2012:

“The experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though individuals do not choose to have such attractions, they do choose how to respond to them.”

www.mormonsandgays.org

A church-published pamphlet in 2007 indicates that “same-sex attraction” comprises love, not just lust, and that at least some people can’t change in this life.

“Same-gender attractions include deep emotional, social, and physical feelings.”

“While many Latter-day Saints, through individual effort, the exercise of faith, and reliance upon the enabling power of the Atonement, overcome same-gender attraction in mortality, others may not be free of this challenge in this life.”

lds.org - [God Loveth His Children](#)

[This study](#) has shown that people with certain DNA have a 40% chance of being gay. [Another study](#) shows that environmental factors, such as the mother’s immune system or hormones, likely play a role on top of that, which in the end leave the individual with no choice regarding what their orientation is.

Homosexuality is actually rather common in nature. [For example](#), among other cases in animals, eight percent of rams seek sex “exclusively with other rams instead of ewes,” putting to rest the phrase “sin against nature.”

Is it right to condemn gay people to a lifetime void of love? Maybe they *will* fall in love, over and over again, but according to the church they can never act on it. They do experience feelings of love, and they are told to reject these feelings.

The church has already changed somewhat here. They used to teach that all homosexuals in general were evil, and that it was a learned trait. In a pamphlet published by the church in 1970, Spencer W. Kimball does not distinguish between those who do act on their feelings and those who don’t.

“Homosexuality CAN be cured, if the battle is well organized and pursued vigorously and continuously.... God did not make men evil. He did not make people ‘that way.’”

connellodonovan.com - [Hope For Transgressors](#), website referenced in these church-friendly websites: northstarlds.org, fairmormon.org - [The Church and gay rights](#)

One year later, the church published another pamphlet, reiterating the statement that homosexuals are evil (on [p. 33](#)) and adding these:

[p. 14](#) – “You might be able for a time to deceive your associates and leaders. But, you cannot lie to yourself nor to your lord, for in spite of all the rationalization, **you know deep in your heart what you are.** You may be able to convince your mind that it is not so wrong but down deep in your heart, you will always be uneasy and unhappy and know that your sin is vicious and base.”

[p. 29](#) – “So long as you tolerate this “gay world” and its degenerate people, you are in a very desperate situation and you are playing with fire just like a child who might be pounding a bomb with a hammer.”

[connelldonovan.com - New Horizons for Homosexuals](#), website referenced in these church-friendly websites: [northstarlds.org](#), [fairmormon.org - The Church and gay rights](#)

In 1995, in [a talk by Elder Oaks \(lds.org\)](#), the church finally began to say that simply having same-sex attraction wasn’t a sin. He began to clarify the difference without officially retracting anything taught beforehand. This was after two decades growth of a culture which believed that same-sex attraction is a choice and that those experiencing it are evil, vicious, and base. How many teenagers and children have [committed suicide \(deseretnews.com\)](#) because of this? God sends an angel with a drawn sword to instate polygamy, but not to correct Pres. Kimball here? How many teens have been [thrown out on the street \(sltrib.com\)](#)? Why were these individuals, desperate for help, being called evil by church leaders?

Maybe Paul was speaking as a man in [these scriptures](#)? Paul also condoned [bondage](#) and [sexism](#). Christ spoke specifically about [divorce](#) in his new law, but not homosexuality. We let widows marry men [who they aren’t sealed to \(p. 85\)](#), *so that they aren’t alone*. Can’t we let LGBT people do the same? They can get sealed in the next life (to whichever gender, depending on if they are made straight and on what God says), as they didn’t have a chance in this one. Must they be alone, or marry straight spouses (meaning two are affected instead of one)? Should we all wait in faith until the next life to understand the mysteries of God while these people are suffering? These are people who were [beaten to death in the Holocaust's concentration camps by their fellow inmates](#). They face persecution from their own families for choosing to experience love. In February, 2015, Elder Oaks refused to apologize for the church’s past rhetoric against homosexuals:

“But Oaks, a former Utah Supreme Court justice, wasn’t sure apologizing for past language on homosexuality would be advisable.

‘I know that the history of the church is not to seek apologies or to give them,’ Oaks said in an interview. ‘We sometimes look back on issues and say, ‘Maybe that was counterproductive for what we wish to achieve,’ but we look forward and not backward.’

The church doesn’t ‘seek apologies,’ he said, ‘and we don’t give them.’”

[sltrib.com - We all can be more civil on LGBT issues, Mormon leader says](#)

I gathered a small collection of accounts of those who lived as gay Mormons:

“I practiced my faith for 38 years and I attended Evergreen (a church-sponsored sexual orientation reassignment program) for 12 years. During this time, **five of the fifteen men in my group committed suicide**. My time in Evergreen and my LDS faith brought clarity to me. I was told I would be cured of homosexuality and I was told that my core self was a sinful choice. But all those years taught me that all I wanted was what they had: A full loving life and family with the right person. And that person had to be male, because I had already been married to a woman for 16 years and I knew clearly that it wasn’t working and it never would. I wasn’t even opposite-sex attracted at all. Ultimately, I was staring suicide in the face. Either it was all going to end, or I was going to embrace the fact that this was not something about myself that anyone could remove; nor should they. And so I went about finding my bliss and leaving any structure or person that impeded my happiness. And as it turned out, that meant I would leave my parents, my siblings, my Mormon friends (only a few out of a lifetime of friends stuck with me) and my faith. And all of the fear that I felt melted away, because those scary stories I was told turned out to be false, and it turned out that following my heart was the right thing to do. And I am now in my tenth year together with my husband and we have found our bliss, and so have our six kids that we raise together.”

rationalfaiths.com - archive.is link

“I really don't understand the people that know it isn't a choice but then call for us to live a life alone. That is the epitome of cruelty. My boyfriend is the most important thing in my life! He is my strength and my passion and he makes the world a brighter place. I also think our love, and the love between all couples, makes the world a better place. There is only good that comes from love and only evil that comes from hate.”

A gay man to a straight man: “Who gave you those feelings (affection, companionship, romance, love and intimacy)? I'm not speaking of the love and affection towards dogs or friends, I'm referring to the most beautiful gift from god, the ability to fall and be in love, to connect on a much deeper level, a soul mate, an intimate deep connection found only in a marriage or a committed relationship. You must agree that God gifted you these beautiful feelings! Who then gave me those EXACT same feelings, the devil? Regarding "sexual expression" in a relationship, I never spoke once about sexual intercourse, I only referred to affection, companionship, romance, love and intimacy, and all the pleasures of a deep committed relationship. How can you, who has all this, tell me that I cannot? How can God give you and me the EXACT same feelings but says you Wayne enjoy, but not you Cel, you can have a puppy and a few friends but no more!”

From comments on www.huffingtonpost.com

“I have had 4 friends of mine and many acquaintances commit suicide... And we are treated this way why? Because we are gay? We feel the same emotions and attractions as you, we just feel it for someone of the same sex. The feelings and desires are the EXACT SAME! We don't want to hurt anyone or make anyone else gay. We don't want to ban heterosexual marriages and relationships. We want to get married and raise a family. We want to love and be loved back. We want to be honest about who we are and not fear for our jobs and housing should someone find out we have a husband or a wife. We want what you want!”

thoughtsofscotthalle.blogspot.com

On November 5, 2015, [a new policy was discovered in the church handbook](#) which prohibits the baby blessing ordinance for children of gay couples. These children can't be baptized until the age of 18, and then only if they disavow same-sex marriage, move out of their parents' home, and obtain permission from the First Presidency. The original wording of the policy applies to all children of gay couples. The church [soon backtracked on this](#), saying it only applies to children whose primary residence is with a gay couple. [Section 5](#) of the handbook explains that minors need parental permission to be baptized. This would mean the new policy only applies to those who do want their children baptized. [Elder Christofferson stated that this policy expands the polygamy policy](#), protects the children from conflicting messages, and protects their family relationships.

These children are still welcome to attend church, where they will still hear conflicting messages. Don't children of apostates, murderers, and fornicators hear conflicting messages about their parents? Now, the church sends the message to these 7 year-olds that they have to wait 10 years, move out, and get First Presidency permission to be baptized because of their parents.

Does it protect family relationships to ask a child to essentially disavow the basis of its parents' marriage? To tell a child (once 18) to move out of its home in order to be baptized? Does it protect relationships when its peers are all getting baptized, and that child can't because of its parents? Will the child not blame its parents?

When most children can get baptized and these children can't, will the policy protect these children from the bullying in Utah and Idaho schools?

The polygamy policy is in [section 5](#) (pages 33-34). It does not make the children wait until age 18. Also notice on pages 31-32 that it does not prohibit the baby blessing ordinance. No other policy does. If this is to keep a membership record from being made, why not give a blessing and simply not create a record number?

In 2015, [Elder Christofferson said that members could support gay marriage](#) "if that's your belief and you think it's right." Yet, children of gay couples must disavow gay marriage?

Between November 5, 2015 and January 28, 2016, there were reports of [LGBT Mormon youth suicides](#). Three weeks after reporting to mourn over it, [the LDS church spoke out against a bill \(bill text\)](#) which would classify violence against LGBT people as hate crimes. Religion is already protected under hate crimes legislation in Utah, which apply to violence against persons, not property.

On Intimacy

There's a strong focus in the church on sexual sin, [the sin next to murder](#). On guilt:

“Consider sin as a spiritual wound that causes guilt or, as described by Alma to his son Corianton, ‘remorse of conscience’ (Alma 42:18). Guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage.”

~Elder Bednar

[lds.org - We Believe in Being Chaste](#)

Why do people still feel guilty after marital sex, as in [these three cases](#), among many others? Are people focusing on sexual sin due to [post-coital tristesse](#)?

The Journal of Discourses as a Source

Apologists try and distance the church from the Journal of Discourses, and with good reason, as the journals include some highly controversial material. Most of the quotes here come from sermons that were reported by [George Watt](#). In the preface to volume I, a First Presidency statement mentions that they assigned Watt to acquire skills in shorthand and that he's been using those skills to record their sermons. Some of these journals were edited and published by Brigham Young and the apostles. Even if there were serious errors in the recordings, church leaders had years to provide retractions. Instead they continuously endorsed the journals as shown in the prefaces below. Volume I:

“Dear Brethren—It is well known to many of you, that Elder George D. Watt, by our counsel, spent much time... to acquire the art of reporting in Phonography, which he has faithfully and fully accomplished; and he has been reporting the public Sermons, Discourses, Lectures, &c., delivered by the Presidency, the Twelve, and others in this city, for nearly two years, ...”

Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - First Presidency Letter](#)

Volume III, edited and published by [Orson Pratt](#):

“Each successive Volume of these Discourses is a rich mine of wealth, containing gems of great value, and the diligent seeker will find ample reward for his labor. After the fathers and mothers of this generation have made them the study of their lives, their children's children will find that they are still unexhausted, and rejoice that this Record has been handed down from their fathers to also aid them in following the way of life.”

The Publisher

[imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume III Preface](#)

[George Q. Cannon](#) edited and published the eighth volume:

“The Journal of Discourses deservedly ranks as one of the standard works of the Church, and every rightminded Saint will certainly welcome with joy every Number as it comes forth from the press as an additional reflector of ‘the light that shines from Zion’s hill.’

We rejoice, therefore, in being able to present to the Saints another completed Volume—the Eighth of the series; and, in doing so, we sincerely commend the varied and important instructions it contains to their earnest consideration.”

The Publisher

[imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume VIII Preface](#)

Brigham Young edited and published the eleventh volume. His preface:

“The ‘Journal of Discourses’ is a vehicle of doctrine, counsel, and instruction to all people, but especially to the Saints. It follows, [then,] that each successive volume is more and more valuable as the Church increases in numbers and importance in the earth, and its doctrines become more abundantly developed and are brought into practical exercise by His peculiar people. Every step of its advancement is fraught with the greatest possible importance to the human family.”

[imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume XI Preface](#)

As a last example, Joseph F. Smith edited and published the eighteenth volume:

“We now present the Eighteenth Volume of the Journal of Discourses to the Saints, and to all lovers of the Truth. We feel confident that the important instructions on principle and doctrine therein contained... will prove as interesting, gratifying and beneficial to the Saints and to posterity, as those that have been previously published through this medium. We regret that the circulation of the Journal of Discourses is so limited. Its importance would warrant a thousand-fold greater extension of this work.”

The Publisher

[imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume XVIII Preface](#)

In our current [Sunday School manual for Brigham Young \(lds.org\)](#), almost every teaching comes from [John Widtsoe](#)’s *Discourses of Brigham Young* (DBY). If you search for “DBY” in each chapter, you’ll find it referenced 33 times in [Ch. 2](#), 33 times in [Ch. 3](#), 27 times in [Ch. 4](#), skipping ahead to 32 times in [Ch. 48](#). In DBY, Widtsoe says that the book takes its material from the Journal of Discourses (JoD). Can we say the journals are unreliable if we use a whole manual based on them?

“All that [Young] said was recorded. Practically all of these discourses were published in the Journal of Discourses.... The discourses, from which this volume has been culled, ...”

~John Widtsoe

[archive.org - Discourses of Brigham Young](#)

Blood Atonement

A memorable sermon from Brigham Young ([p. 83](#) for the JoD as a source):

“What has been must be again, for the Lord is coming to restore all things. The time has been in Israel under the law of God, the celestial law, or that which pertains to the celestial law, for it is one of the laws of that kingdom where our Father dwells, that if a man was found guilty of adultery, he must have his blood shed, and that is near at hand.”

“All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shed[d]ing of their blood? **Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?**

That is what Jesus Christ meant. He never told a man or woman to love their enemies in their wickedness, never. He never intended any such thing; his language is left as it is for those to read who have the Spirit to discern between truth and error; it was so left for those who can discern the things of God. Jesus Christ never meant that we should love a wicked man in his wickedness.

Now take the wicked, and I can refer to where the Lord had to slay every soul of the Israelites that went out of Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua. He slew them by the hands of their enemies, by the plague, and by the sword, why? Because He loved them, and promised Abraham that He would save them. And He loved Abraham because he was a friend to his God, and would stick to Him in the hour of darkness, hence He promised Abraham that He would save his seed....

I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance (in the last resurrection there will be) if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil, until our elder brother Jesus Christ raises them up—conquers death, hell, and the grave. I have known a great many men who have left this Church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them. The wickedness and ignorance of the nations forbid this principle’s being in full force, but the time will come when the law of God will be in full force.

This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind....

Now, brethren and sisters, will you live your religion? How many hundreds of times have I asked you that question? Will the Latter-day Saints live their religion?”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 4, pp. 219-220

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

Here is the same sermon printed in the Deseret News on February 18, 1857. It is PDF 15 of 40:

udn.lib.utah.edu - Deseret News ([screenshot](#))

Footnote 36 of the respective [LDS essay](#) indicates that blood atonement was likely carried out at least once, though not under Brigham's command. The essay (and footnote 36), ignores the above passage, with Brigham stating that Christ never commanded us to love wicked enemies, that blood atonement is for adultery, and that its practice is "near at hand." Compare the above sermon to these scriptures:

[Luke 6:35](#) – "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest:"

[Matthew 5:44](#) – "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"

[Christ forgave the adulterous woman](#). In the quote below, Brigham says he could throw a javelin through an adulterous woman's heart and do it with clean hands. If we throw out Brigham's statements as crazy, then what about the leaders, such as Joseph F. Smith, who continually endorsed his messages? Are these men Christ's representatives? Will we be damned for not believing that they speak for Christ?

"You say, 'That man ought to die for transgressing the law of God.' Let me suppose a case. Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands. But you who trifle with your covenants, be careful lest in judging you will be judged."

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 3, p. 247

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

On those who killed Joseph Smith:

"I will tell you how much I love those characters. If they had any respect to their own welfare, they would come forth and say, whether Joseph Smith was a Prophet or not, "We shed his blood, and now let us atone for it;" and they would be willing to have their heads chopped off, that their blood might run upon the ground, and the smoke of it rise before the Lord as an incense for their sins."

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 2, p. 186

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

One of the few connections between Joseph's teachings and blood atonement:

"I was opposed to hanging, even if a man kill another, I will shoot him, or cut off his head, spill his blood on the ground, and let the smoke thereof ascend up to God; and if ever I have the privilege of making a law on that subject, I will have it so."

~Joseph Smith (according to footnote)

byu.edu - History of the Church Vol. 5, Ch. 16, p. 296

Adam-God Theory

Brigham Young taught that Adam was God the Father ([p. 83](#) for the JoD):

“Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the Archangel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! About whom holy men have written and spoken—HE is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 50

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

“Some have grumbled because I believe our God to be so near to us as Father Adam. There are many who know that doctrine to be true.... Now, if it should happen that we have to pay tribute to Father Adam, what a humiliating circumstance it would be! Just wait till you pass Joseph Smith; and after Joseph lets you pass him, you will find Peter; and after you pass the Apostles and many of the Prophets, you will find Abraham, and he will say, “I have the keys, and except you do thus and so, you cannot pass;” and after a while you come to Jesus; and when you at length meet Father Adam, how strange it will appear to your present notions. If we can pass Joseph and have him say, “Here; you have been faithful, good boys; I hold the keys of this dispensation; I will let you pass;” then we shall be very glad to see the white locks of Father Adam. But those are ideas which do not concern us at present, although it is written in the Bible—“This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, p. 331-332

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

[FAIR](#) reveals that Brigham added Adam-God doctrine into the temple, and “the idea was dropped from the endowment ceremony” after his death.

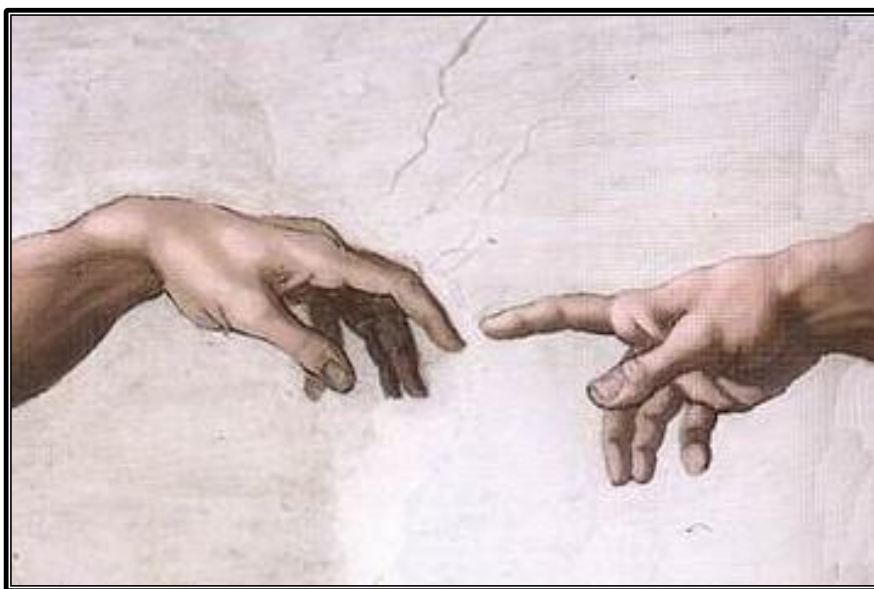


Figure 29 - By User:BardFuse (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped [link](#)

Miscellaneous Quotes

Youth Asks: “What should we pray for to receive the same testimony and/or conversion that Alma the Younger experienced, for our friends who are not members?”

Dallin H. Oaks answers: “I’ve never had an experience like that and I don’t know anyone among the 1st Presidency or Quorum of the 12 who’ve had that kind of experience. Yet every one of us knows of a certainty the things that Alma knew. But it’s just that unless the Lord chooses to do it another way, as he sometimes does; for millions and millions of His children the testimony settles upon us gradually. Like so much dust on the windowsill or so much dew on the grass. One day you didn’t have it and another day you did and you don’t know which day it happened. That’s the way I got my testimony. And then I knew it was true when it continued to grow.”

archive.org

“I say, rather than that apostates should flourish here, I will unsheath my bowie knife, and conquer or die. [Great commotion in the congregation, and a simultaneous burst of feeling, assenting to the declaration.] Now, you nasty apostates, clear out, or judgment will be put to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. [Voices, generally, “go it, go it.”] If you say it is right, raise your hands. [All hands up.] Let us call upon the Lord to assist us in this, and every good work.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 83

Quote also found on fairmormon.org (p. 83 for the JoD as a source)

“The Church and kingdom to which we belong will become the kingdom of our God and his Christ, and brother Brigham Young will become President of the United States. [Voices responded, “Amen.”] And I tell you he will be something more; but we do not now want to give him the name: but he is called and ordained to a far greater station than that, and he is foreordained to take that station, and he has got it; and I am Vice-President, and brother Wells is the Secretary of the Interior—yes, and of all the armies in the flesh. You don’t believe that; but I can tell you it is one of the smallest things that I can think of. You may think that I am joking; but I am perfectly willing that brother Long should write every word of it; for I can see it, just as naturally as I see the earth and the productions thereof.”

~ [Heber C. Kimball](#), Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, p. 219

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

“The use of the syringe strengthens my bowels I am persuaded that in nine cases out of ten the bowels become deranged before the stomach does, and the bowels being deranged soon affect the stomach. I charge the syringe frequently with composition sometimes I mix consecrated oil with it. I have sent for some good olive oil if it can be procured.”

~Brigham Young, March 2, 1860, describing consecrated oil enemas

lds.org - CR 1234 1 b0072 f0005 00045.jpeg on the right column (screenshot)

“What man or woman on the earth, what spirit in the spirit-world can say truthfully that I ever gave a wrong word of counsel, or a word of advice that could not be sanctioned by the heavens? The success which has attended me in my presidency is owing to the blessings and mercy of the Almighty.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 12, p. 127

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

Mark Hofmann

[Mark Hofmann](#) was a forger who tricked the LDS church leaders into buying fraudulent documents. The June 1980 Ensign shows him on the left, meeting with Marion G. Romney, Spencer W. Kimball, Boyd K. Packer, and Gordon B. Hinckley. To see the actual article and picture, find a copy of the June 1980 Ensign (the Orem Library has one). [Lds.org](#) has deleted the article from their records. Where was the [spirit of discernment](#) warning the prophet that this man was a fraud who was soon to [murder two people](#) to cover his tracks? The church ended up paying at least \$100,000 worth in cash and traded materials for 48 of Hofmann's "early church documents."

In his book [Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case](#), [Richard Eyring Turley](#), Assistant Church Historian, discusses the case of Hofmann's forgeries and murders in detail. Here is where Turley discusses what the church purchased from Hofmann and for what price (in cash and in traded goods):

"One week later, the church issued a press release explaining the discovery and return of legal documents and listing forty-eight other documents known to have been obtained by Hofmann... The release also reported that the church had paid out a total of **\$57,100 in cash** for seven of the documents, and that it had traded duplicate materials for the other items..."

[books.google.com - Victims, p. 258 \(screenshot\)](#)

"Relying on Don Schmidt's recollections, Glenn Rowe had estimated the **total value of items traded to Hofmann to be \$82,045...** Wade Lillywhite (of Deseret Book) had appraised the same items on April 4 at **\$110,280.**"

[books.google.com - Victims, p. 470 \(screenshot\)](#)

One side effect of this event was the discovery of the McLellin Collection in the church vaults, collected by Joseph F. Smith in 1908. This is a rare moment where we can actually see that church leaders have kept damaging materials in their vaults, away from prying eyes.

"The Presidency [under Joseph F. Smith] wrote Bennion that the manuscripts... might be the same ones McLellin had mentioned in 1878. 'We hope they are,' the First Presidency wrote, 'as **it would be an act of mercy on our part to purchase them, and thus prevent them from being published by unfriendly hands to the injury of innocent people.**'"

[books.google.com - Victims, p. 249 \(screenshot\)](#)

"The discovered documents did not fall within any of the subpoenas issued to the church, and thus officials were not legally obligated to mention them to anyone. Still, it was apparent they were relevant to the case... Yet disclosing them would not come without cost. Church officials had sought to dispel the notion that they were buying documents to hide them."

[books.google.com - Victims, p. 250 \(screenshot\)](#)

Tithing

A current Sunday School manual vs. the original:

“I plead with you in the name of the Lord, and I pray that every man, woman and child ... shall pay one-tenth of their income as a tithing.”

~the manual

[lds.org - Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow](https://www.lds.org/teachings-of-the-presidents-of-the-church/lorenzo-snow)

“I plead with you in the name of the Lord, and I pray that every man, woman and child **who has means** shall pay one-tenth of their income as a tithing.”

~Lorenzo Snow

[archive.org - 1899 Conference Report](https://www.archive.org/details/1899-conference-report)

It seems that this quote has been edited to increase the amount of tithe payers.

[FAIR](#) states that the City Creek Mall, a real-estate venture in Salt Lake City, has cost Property Reserve, Inc. \$1.5 billion. You’ll also see on the site that Property Reserve, Inc. is the commercial real estate department of the church. The money apparently comes from church-owned businesses and real estate ventures, which were originally started with tithing money. Whether it comes from tithing or not, this is church money being used for these purposes. \$1.5 billion towards a mall. I’ve been there and witnessed the selling of \$80,000 watches. Would Christ be behind that? \$1.5 billion towards a mall when organizations like the Liahona Children’s Foundation exist to feed malnourished LDS children?

liahonachildren.org - Our Story



Figure 30 – By Uncle Alf (Own work) [CC0], via Wikimedia Commons [link](#)



Figure 31 – By Joshua Doubek (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

Anti-Intellectualism

Members are taught their religion from a very young age. [Lds.org](#) lists the nursery age as 18 months – 2 years.

From [the Nursery manual](#) (I acknowledge that the following is with good intent, and I have no wish to mock the efforts of loving parents):

“Show the picture of [Joseph Smith](#) (page 102). Say, ‘This is the Prophet Joseph Smith. Heavenly Father and Jesus talked to Joseph Smith.’ Hand the picture to a child to hold. Tell the children one thing the Prophet Joseph Smith taught us to do ... and invite them to say, ‘Follow the prophet.’ Hand the picture to another child and repeat the activity... After each action, have the children say, ‘Follow the prophet.’ Continue until each child has had a chance to hold the picture. Invite the children to march around the room with you as you sing or say the words to the chorus of ‘Follow the Prophet’... Invite the children to sing with you. Repeat, allowing the children to take turns leading the marching... Have the children say, ‘I will follow the prophet,’ a few words at a time.”

[lds.org - I Will Follow the Prophet](#)

“Invite the children to say, ‘I will be baptized and confirmed,’ a few words at a time. Briefly tell the children how you felt when you were baptized and confirmed.”

[lds.org - I Will Be Baptized and Confirmed](#)

“Invite the children to march with you around the room while you sing or say the following words to ‘The Church of Jesus Christ’... Briefly share your testimony that we belong to the true Church of Jesus Christ.”

[lds.org - I Belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#)

“Have the children repeat the phrase, ‘I love the scriptures.’ Share your love for the scriptures and your testimony that they are true.”

[lds.org - I Love the Scriptures](#)

“Tell the story again. This time, have the children stand with outstretched arms to pretend to be trees in the Sacred Grove. Ask the children to sway as if being blown by the wind while you talk about Joseph praying. Then ask them to stand very still and quiet when you tell them Heavenly Father and Jesus appeared to Joseph.”

[lds.org - Joseph Smith Saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ](#)

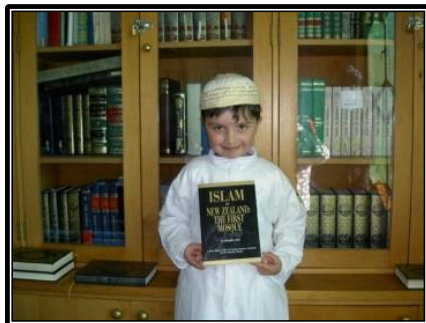


Figure 32 – By Abdullah@xtra.co.nz
(Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

How are members supposed to give other religions fair consideration when they are raised this way? How are they supposed to give their own religion balanced consideration? How are church leaders, having been raised this way, supposed to be open-minded towards controversial issues?

Church leaders seem to be scaring members away from proper research.

“Some have immersed themselves in **internet materials** that magnify, exaggerate, and in some cases invent shortcomings of early Church leaders. Then they draw incorrect conclusions that can affect testimony. **Any who have made these choices can repent** and be spiritually renewed.”

~Elder Quentin L. Cook

[lds.org - Can Ye Feel So Now?](#)

“We might remind the sincere inquirer that **Internet information** does not have a “truth” filter. Some information, no matter how convincing, is simply not true.”

~Elder Neil L. Anderson

[lds.org - Joseph Smith](#)

“President Uchtdorf said that **Satan has caused many members of the Church to stumble when they discover information about the Church that seems to contradict what they had previously learned.** ‘If you experience such a moment, remember that in this age of information there are many who create doubt about anything and everything, at any time and every place,’ he said... President Uchtdorf also reminded listeners that **just because something is printed on paper, appears on the Internet, is frequently repeated, or has a powerful group of followers does not make it true.**”

[lds.org - President Uchtdorf Encourages Young Adults to Discover Truth](#)

As shown earlier, [Jehovah’s Witness leaders say the same thing.](#) Members are discouraged from reading anything critical of the church and from associating with those who speak against the church. What information does the church not want its membership to discover? Is this the reasoning process that God wants us to use?

“I stand here to plead with you, my brethren and sisters, not to permit words of criticism or of unkindness to pass your lips about those whom the Lord has called to lead us. **Do not be found in the companionship of those who would belittle them or weaken their influence among the children of men.** If you do, I can say to you that you will find yourselves in the power of the **adversary.** You will be influenced by him to go as far as possible from the pathway of truth, and if you do not repent you may find when it is too late that you have lost the ‘pearl of great price.’ **Because of your selfishness and your blindness you will have been led away, and your loved ones ... will be sorrowing on the other side of the veil because of your weakness and your folly.**”

[lds.org - Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith](#)

How many families and friendships have been torn apart due to such teachings?

Which should be more important: keeping the faith one was born with no matter what (or trusting in contradictory feelings like those on [pp. 12-15](#) no matter what), or doing all in one’s power to seek out the truth, including researching difficult facts? Will those who get it wrong really be damned, when so much evidence points against the church?

Whitewashing and Dishonesty

Here is a list of instances I found where leaders have whitewashed church history. I'll add in some instances of intentional dishonesty and revisionist history. How many instances remain undiscovered?

- Joseph giving a different version of his “money digging” story in JS-H – [page 20](#)
- Changes to the 1830 Book of Mormon, such as removing “Jesus Christ” – [page 21](#)
- Changing the reference to the divining rod in D&C 8 – [page 46](#)
- Changing the 1835 First Vision account to “my first vision” – [page 55](#)
- Inserting the vision of Peter, James, and John into D&C – [page 55](#)
- Removing the Adam-Michael contradiction from D&C 137 – [page 48](#)
- The instances of members lying about practicing polygamy – [page 63](#)
- [Richard Van Wagoner](#), an active LDS member, researched every journal he could find from the time period and concluded that the story of Brigham Young being transfigured into Joseph Smith during the succession crisis was an urban legend. No one recorded anything about it until over a decade afterwards, when Albert Carrington said that he couldn't tell Brigham from Joseph that day. [His research.](#)
- Wilford Woodruff (Fig. 32) giving contradictory accounts of the Saints' arrival in Utah. Compare his journal account (from right after the event occurred) to his speech thirty-three years after the event:

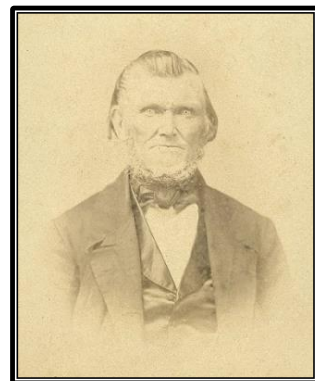


Figure 33 – Charles Roscoe Savage
[Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

Wilford Woodruff on July 24, 1847:

“On this important day after traveling from our encampment 6 miles through the deep ravine valley, ending with the canyon through the last creek, we came in full view of the great valley or basin, the Salt Lake... We gazed with wonder and admiration upon the vast rich, fertile valley... clothed with the heaviest garb of green vegetation in the midst of which lay a large lake of Salt water...”

[lds.org - Presidents of the Church](https://www.lds.org/presidents-of-the-church)

Wilford Woodruff on July 3rd, 1880:

“This kingdom has continued to increase and spread. When we came here thirty-three years ago we found this place a barren desert. There was no mark of the white man here. It was a desert indeed, hardly a green thing to meet the eye. You can see to-day for yourselves. The inhabitants of Zion are a marvel and a wonder to the world.”

~Journal of Discourses, Volume 21, p. 192

Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](https://www.fairmormon.org) ([p. 83](#) for JoD)

- The LDS Church publishing the JS-H as the official First Vision for over a century, without any reference to Joseph's other accounts – [page 54](#)

- The LDS Church depicting the translation of the Book of Mormon with hardly any reference to the seer stone usage – [page 20](#)
- The LDS Church not releasing the information that they held Joseph’s seer stones in their vaults. They finally released a picture of the stone in 2015. – [page 19](#)
- Omitting the 1835 First Vision account from the First Vision essay – [page 55](#)
- The Book of Abraham essay omitting the facsimile mistranslations – [page 52](#)
- The Polygamy essay omitting the “virgin requirement” – [page 57](#)
- The Polygamy essay omitting other disturbing details regarding polygamy, such as specifics regarding Helen Mar, Louisa Beaman, and Sylvia Session – [page 56](#)
- Lds.org omitting Zina Huntington’s polandry – [page 57](#)
- [A current Sunday School manual](#) portrays Brigham Young as a monogamist. In the first chapter, it only records his marriage to Miriam Works and his marriage to Mary Angell after Miriam’s death.
- The Peace and Violence essay omitting that blood atonement was to be for adultery as well, along with other disturbing aspects of Brigham’s talk – [page 86](#)
- Lds.org removing the Mark Hofmann article from their Ensign archives, including the picture of the prophet and some apostles examining a document with Hofmann. – [page 89](#)
- The Race and the Priesthood essay calling the past doctrine a policy – [page 73](#)
- Compare the following quote with the Race and the Priesthood section ([page 73](#)):

"How grateful I am that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has from its beginnings stood strongly against racism in any of its malignant manifestations."

~Elder Alexander Morrison, of the Seventy

[lds.org - No More Strangers](#)

- Dallin H. Oaks omits the fact that Pres. Benson fought the Civil Rights movement:

"There is no doubt that the so-called civil rights movement as it exists today is used as a Communist program for revolution in America just as agrarian reform was used by the Communists to take over China and Cuba."

~Ezra Taft Benson

[scriptures.byu.edu](#)

"The same is true of the Civil Rights movement of the last half-century. These great advances were not motivated and moved by secular ethics or persons who believed in moral relativism. They were driven primarily by persons who had a clear religious vision of what was morally right."

~Dallin H. Oaks

[deseretnews.com](#)

The Mormon Challenge

One must weigh the evidences. Is this how God restores his church? Would God allow all of these things to be so verifiable and then punish someone eternally for coming to certain conclusions?

Would God really condemn sinners to a [thousand years of unimaginable torment](#)? Would God's plan take away the families of [righteous nonmembers](#), take away their gender ([if Joseph Fielding Smith was correct](#)), and make them single forever?

If this life is a test, then does success rest upon doing good, loving others, and improving the world, or does success rest upon the ability to believe things that are more or less proven wrong? Which should be the ultimate measure of a good life?

Perhaps life is more of a growing experience than a test – a stepping stone to whatever comes next. Life is an exciting mystery, and the freedom to live it as one feels best is a valuable gift. Whatever conclusion you come to, I'll leave you with some faith-promoting stories and with a challenge.

[Spanish Fork](#) – three police officers and two firefighters heard a voice which led them to rescuing a baby from a submerged car. I went to their police department and received confirmatory reports that the officers there are trustworthy people.

On a more personal note, I took a long road trip after my change in faith, traveling through the night. Within two hours' time I received six promptings to slow down. Each time, there were deer on or next to the road shortly after the prompting.

A family member and I had close to the same dream around the same time. We were both in it, and both saw it from our own perspective. The theme was my change in religious belief. The overall message was that I wasn't lost in darkness, and this experience helped to ease the pain of those who knew about my research.

The Challenge: Certain things have to change in order for the church to become a complete force for good in the world. I challenge Mormon leaders to use church meetings to foster positive community relations instead of preaching guilt. Use missionaries to focus on humanitarian work instead of conversion. Allow women to serve in leadership positions. Rethink the alienation of LGBT members. One suicide is too many. Become a complete force for good. Whether people leave or join the church for it, do what is right and let the consequence follow. [Just do it.](#)

For questions or comments, email themormonchallenge@gmail.com.