The Mormon Challenge

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

Table of Contents

Introduction **4**

Sources **4**

PART ONE: THE SCRIPTURES **5**

The Book of Mormon **5**

Joseph Smith Sr. and the Tree of Life 5

Ancient Evangelists 7

Joseph's Ability 10

Possible Flaws Ch. 1 – Conviction and Moroni's Promise 11

Ch. 2 – A Precise Text 19

Ch. 3 – Testing the Book of Mormon with the Bible 22

Ch. 4 – The Reality of the Law of Moses 26

Ch. 5 – Trinitarian Beliefs 28

Ch. 6 – Contradictions 30

Ch. 7 – View of the Hebrews: Israelites in America 33

Ch. 8 – DNA: The Natives Weigh In 36

Ch. 9 – Contradictions 39

Ch. 10 – Other Flaws in the Story 40

The Importance of the Witnesses 41

Other Potential Sources 42

The Doctrine and Covenants **45**

Obscuring Oliver's Divining Rod 45

The Words of Christ? 46

Removing Pure Language 46

One or Two People? – Isaiah and Esaias 47

One or Two People? – Adam and Michael 48

The Book of Abraham **49**

The Kinderhook Plates **53**

Midway Thoughts **54**

PART TWO: THE CHURCH **55**

The Restoration **55**

1832 – The First Written Account 55

Changing the 1835 Account 56
The Restoration of the Priesthood 57
Joseph's Honesty 57
Polygamy and Polyandry 58
The Beginnings 58
Polyandry 59
Women in the Polygamous Church 61
Public Denial 65
The Temple 68
Prophets and Revelators 70
Special Witnesses of Christ 70
The Mouthpiece of God 70
The Journal of Discourses as a Source 73
Reliability Check Ch. 1 – Prophecy 74
Ch. 2 – The Word of Wisdom 76
Ch. 3 – The Plan of Salvation 77
Ch. 4 – Blood Atonement 79
Ch. 5 – Adam-God Theory 81
Ch. 6 – Race and the Priesthood/Temple Ban 82
Ch. 7 – Women in the Modern Church 87
Ch. 8 – Homosexuality 89
Ch. 9 – Intimacy and Guilt 93
Ch. 10 – Mark Hofmann and the Gift of Discernment 94
Tithing and the City Creek Mall 95
Anti-Intellectualism 96
Whitewashing and Dishonesty 97
Conclusion 100
Appendix A – Additional Cases of Evangelical Influence 101
Appendix B –The Two-Continent (Hemispheric) Model 104
Appendix C – Sidney Rigdon: The Lost Chapter 111
Appendix D – Miscellaneous Quotes 115
Appendix E – The November Policy 119

Introduction

In recent years, I've been researching questions I've had regarding Mormonism. I began this research when I decided that I couldn't consider myself to be an honest seeker of truth when I was deliberately avoiding such research. This document provides my findings, complete with sources, that you may check the full context of each. This is a very sensitive topic for many people. Unpleasant and unwelcome information usually arrives with painful feelings, and I'm sorry to say that some of the information you find here may do the same. I will recount some of my own experiences to help you out in that regard. I don't want to see the church burn. I want to see it improved – but that would require honesty about its past.

Sources

Before launching into the material itself, I'll address the main sources I use. I've archived most of the links at archive.is, in case they change. I will sometimes link to highlighted screenshots on imgur first, to aid in locating the quote.

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. Elder M. Russell Ballard has advised that teachers "know the content of these essays like you know the back of your hand." (his talk is found at Deserert News).

> "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

I'll frequently reference FAIR Mormon (FAIR). Their goal is to provide faithful answers to difficult topics. Deseret News explains that they "engage even the most challenging issues in a faithful manner." jefflindsay.com is another apologist 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 Book of Mormon

It almost goes without saying that for Mormonism to be true, the Book of Mormon needs to be authentic. In this first (and longest) section, I'll cover various cases against the book's authenticity, including possible flaws in the text, sources Joseph may have drawn from, and Joseph's ability to put such a work together.

Joseph Smith Sr. and the Tree of Life

Towards the beginning of my research, I learned that in 1811, Joseph Smith Jr.'s father had a dream which was remarkably similar to Lehi's Tree of Life vision in the Book of Mormon. Josephsmithpapers.org provides us with the dream, which was recorded by Joseph Jr.'s mother, Lucy Mack Smith. The obvious question follows, did Joseph borrow his father's dream for 1 Nephi 8?

Joseph Smith Sr.'s Dream	Book of Mormon (1830)
'I was travelling in an open desolate field…"	1 Nephi 8:9 – "I beheld a large and spacious field."
"I came to a narrow path. This path I entered, and, when I had traveled a little way in it, I beheld a beautiful stream of water …"	1 Nephi 8:13,20 – "13 I beheld a river of water …" 20 I also beheld a strait and narrow path …"
"[I] beheld a beautiful stream of water…. I could see a rope running along the bank, …"	1 Nephi 8:19 – "I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, …"
"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. …"	1 Nephi 8:10-12 – "10 And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy." 11 And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen. 12 And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; …"

"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…. "	1 Nephi 8:26-27,33 – "26 … a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth. 27 And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit. 33 …but we heeded them not."
"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 …"	1 Nephi 11:21-22 – "21 … Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? 22 And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, …" (this is a part of Nephi's vision, not Lehi's)

Aside from minor differences, the dreams are the same, and are even described similarly. Lehi and Joseph Smith Sr. both describe the building as "spacious." Both describe the inhabitants as being finely dressed and pointing fingers.

Apologists: FAIR mentions that Lucy dictated the dream in 1845, and suggest that her account was influenced by language used in the Book of Mormon. They point out that you don't find Joseph's family accusing him of plagiarizing. (screenshot)

My 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 also provided at josephsmithpapers.org. In the first, Lucy (in 1845) specifically says that she is quoting Joseph Sr.'s dream "in his own words." This shows that Lucy still had access to her husband's 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, Joseph Smith Sr.'s vision is simply an indicator that either they both had the same vision (and described it similarly), or Joseph Smith Jr. borrowed from outside sources during the creation of the Book of Mormon.

Ancient Evangelists

As I read the Book of Mormon growing up, it always stood out to me how some of the doctrinal passages went well beyond what Joseph could have written. Given the similarities between the Tree of Life vision and the vision from his father's past, the possibility arises that Joseph borrowed not only Lehi's dream, but other material from the theologians of his area. At the same time, it is noteworthy that the phrasing used by the Israelities in the Book of Mormon matches the phrasing used by these theologians. Could Joseph have heard these phrases and teachings echoed in the congregations of his area?

1) For example, The American Tract Society (1818) compared with Alma 5:

The American Tract Society – "sing the song of praise to Redeeming love, …"	Alma 5:26 – "if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, …"

To "sing the song of redeeming love" is a more uniquely 19th Century-Protestant phrase/concept than something like "rejoicing in redemption."

2) In Alma 42, we find examples of Jonathan Edwards Jr, a famous American theologian, clustered within 10 verses (especially in vs. 17, 19, 20, and 22, continued on the next page). Did Joseph attend a sermon where the topic was the teachings of Jonathan Edwards Jr.?

Edwards Jr. (1745-1801)	**Book of Mormon (1830)**
"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."

3) Some additional samples of both Jonathan Edwards Jr. and his father, compared with Book of Mormon verses. More are provided in Appendix A.

Jonathan Edwards Jr., continued	
"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."	2 Nephi 2:11 – "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."
"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 …"	Alma 41:4 – "Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, …"
Jonathan Edwards Sr. (1703-1758)	
"the devil, who, because he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy."	2 Nephi 2:27 – "the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."
"They are enemies to God in their affections. There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God."	Mosiah 3:19 – "For the natural man is an enemy to God, …"
"hardness of heart and blindness of mind."	Ether 4:15 – "hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, …"

"a lively and admiring sense of …" "sensible of their own guilt, …"	Mosiah 2:38 – "a lively sense of his own guilt, …"
"They subject themselves to him [the devil], …"	Moroni 7:17 – "they who subject themselves unto him [the devil] …"
"gulf of woe and misery."	2 Nephi 1:13 – "gulf of misery and woe."
"full of all manner of wickedness …"	Alma 13:17 – "full of all manner of wickedness …"

4) These wouldn't be the only examples of Joseph doing his research on a topic before publishing a translation. For example, researching Adam Clarke's work when composing the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible. (byu.edu).

5) The production of the Book of Mormon was mentioned as early as 1827, which provides sufficient time (years) for Joseph to have visited congregations to 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. Joseph may have also drawn upon unpublished sermons, which are now lost to us.

The evangelists 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 King Benjamin's speech (Mosiah 2-5) be derivations of sermons that Joseph witnessed? I'll spend one more page on Joseph's abilities before moving on to the book's possible flaws.



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

Apologists: Jeff Lindsay defends the use of the phrases "Justice of God" and "Plan of Salvation," but doesn't address the other examples. Most of the above phrases invoke more complicated concepts and are more uniquely evangelical than his 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. (screenshot)

Joseph's Ability

In LDS literature, Joseph is often described as being unlearned. Given years to compile material, was Joseph up to the task of putting the work together?

William McLellin, an apostle who left the church, gave an account of Joseph's intelligence. After leaving the church, McLellin belonged to the Whitmerites and Strangites. As these groups believed in the Book of Mormon, it is unlikely that McLellin was trying to discredit the book when praising Joseph's retentive mind:

"[Joseph] attended my High school during the winter of 1834. He attended my school and learned science all winter. I learned the strength of his mind as <to> the study and principles of science. Hence I think I knew him. And I here say that he had one of <the> strongest, well balanced, penetrating, and **retentive** minds of any <man> with which <whom> I ever formed an acquaintance, among the thousands of my observation. Although when I took him into my school, he was without scientific knowledge or attainments."

deseretnews.com

While Joseph lacked formal education, he was homeschooled by his father, who was a teacher. Calling him unlearned would be inaccurate.

"My husband cultivated in the summer season and in the winter he taught school …"

~Lucy Mack Smith, 1811

josephsmithpapers.org - Luck Mack Smith History

"Joe was quite illiterate. After they began to have school in their house, he improved greatly."

books.google.com - Millennial Star, Volume 44 Note - From an interview with one of Joseph's

For someone with a very retentive mind and years of preparation, Joseph's dictation of the Book of Mormon becomes less impressive, especially when taking into account the Edwardisms and the upcoming flaws in his work. It should also be noted that Muslims make similar claims about Muhammad's abilities:

"To this day no one has put forward a defensible explanation of how an unlettered caravan merchant of the early seventh century might have been able, by his own devices, to produce a text of such inimitable beauty, of such capacity to stir emotion, and which contained knowledge and wisdom which stood so far above ideas current among mankind at that time. The studies carried out in the West which try to determine the 'sources used by Muhammad', or to bring to light the psychological phenomenon which enabled him to draw inspiration from his 'subconcious', have demonstrated only one thing; the anti- Muslim prejudice of their authors."

twf.org, Roger du Pasquier, Unveiling Islam, pg 53

Possible Flaws Ch. 1 – Conviction and Moroni's Promise

The next thirty pages will discuss some of the more problematic flaws in the Book of Mormon. Moroni's Promise – that we can know through the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is true – may not seem like a flaw at first glance.

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. The following pages contain a collection of experiences where the above feelings confirm doctrines which contradict Mormonism, or confirm that other churches are true. For example, from page 15: "Allah … if you guide me to the truth I'll never leave it, and I knew in my heart … that Islam, that this is true … I knew right there it was the correct religion." This goes against FAIR's argument that the Spirit confirms portions of truth in other religions (screenshot). Those in other religions also hold that their unique beliefs result in them being more righteous, or closer to God, as further shown in the Guilt section on p. 93. One example, from aish.com: "Many Jewish people, some related, cannot understand why we enjoy our Kosher home so much. It just feels right. Little by little my husband and I have become more observant and it is wonderful."

Maybe God does direct people via these feelings to churches that work best for them. Even in this scenario, it is still concerning that we can't trust all of the above feelings to reveal the truth (see the next four pages). This would mean that a fundamental basis of Mormonism – Moroni's Promise – simply is not true.

1) A few thoughts before diving in: 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? Are we trying to add our own meaning to natural feelings? If so, can these natural 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.

> "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 as they have since changed the site)
>
> "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

2) 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

"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

"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

"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 …"

members.tjc.org (archive.org link)

"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.

"There is a general process that God designed that allows us to discover what is truth and what is not...the process would be: ask this God to receive love and then feel about that particular thing and if that particular thing turns off the flow I know it's not true ... And if that particular thing stays flowing I then, **I know it's true**."

1:11:32-1:11:39, 1:36:49-1:37:10 at youtube.com

"Being a Jehovah's Witness gives you an **inner peace** that 'no one' can touch, not Satan nor worldly government or those that persecute us can touch how good we feel about being one of Jehovah's people"

answers.yahoo.com



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

"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

"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 alhumdulilah I became a Muslim and put on hijab."

muslimsstories on Instagram

"It was like the words glowed and completely filled me with **an inner peace I never felt before**… 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 … 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

"When one strives to spread Islam, they will be in a state of **happiness that cannot be described**."

archive.org - The Key to Happiness

"To me hijab is a gift from Allah. It gives me the opportunity to become closer to Allah. "

answers.yahoo.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

"Making supplication, Allah help me, guide me, guide me to the truth, if you guide me to the truth I'll never leave it, and **I knew in my heart, Allah was telling me in my heart** that Islam, that this is true, ya know. And **I knew right there** it was the correct religion." 0:00-0:15

"I could not stop reading it. It was like feeding me, you know. That's when I knew that I wanted to become Muslim." 0:39-0:52

"I said 'Please, God, you are the one who listens, who always listens. Please, who do I have to follow to come to you direct. Christianity? Or the Muslims?**' I was 100% sure that God has answered my question**. What is the right way, the only right way to come to God? Islam." 0:52-1:18

youtube.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?

3) As discussed in Appendix A, the idea of the Holy Ghost bearing witness to truth could have origins from Joseph's Presbyterian family members.

4) Of the many LDS 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!"
>
> ~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

5) In a current LDS manual, the unreliability of this system of truth-seeking is evident. Students are told *not* to ask God if plural marriage is currently his will.

> "Before concluding the lesson, it may be wise to tell students that some people who have apostatized from the Church are practicing plural marriage today. They urge people to pray and ponder about whether it is right to practice plural marriage today. We should not seek to receive revelation that is contrary to what the Lord has revealed through His prophets."
>
> lds.org - Foundations of the Restoration Teacher Manual

6) One more testimony before moving on, from an FLDS member:

> "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 (from 5:28 until 6:51 in the recording)

Summary) Can Mormonism be true if one of its fundamental premises – that we can know something through the Holy Ghost – turns out to be false? Does it make any sense for God to put us among dozens of religions, tell us to trust in various feelings, and then to have those feelings lead people to a wide variety of churches? Are we simply reading too much into our emotions?

If I'm permitted a two-page tangent, I'll take it here on the subject of conviction, as understanding our commonalities helps us to understand human nature. Another site of mine, The Religion Equation, explores additional cases.

1) Those who have received amazing spiritual experiences will go to great lengths to maintain their faith. 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 8.1 million "publishers" that are active in missionary work. The Seventh Day Adventists are involved in an incredible amount of charity, run universities like BYU, and provide free healthcare to poor countries. Though begun in 1863, their membership is at 20 million. Their experiences aren't so different from ours. Their perspective:



"When my twin brother and I were five years old he was run over by a car … my parents, who had grown up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church but were not practicing their religion, called the ministers to pray for his healing. The boy was healed, and even the doctor attributed this healing to divine power. This miracle led directly to our becoming Seventh-day Adventists." ministrymagazine.org (other miracles can be found here, here, and here)

"**The bible says by their fruits you will know them**…. **If Ellen White is a false prophet, the devil oughtta find himself a new false prophet** because the one he has is winning too many people to Jesus." 9:26-9:43 at youtube.com

"Over her lifetime, [Ellen White] is said to have had 2,000 visions, which Adventists believe came directly from God, …" :06-:13 at youtube.com

"Ellen White did make the same, human mistakes in what she said outside of her divine revelations and visions – just as we are capable of making an error. But when Ellen G White went into vision … her advice – her communication – can be counted as direct communication from the LORD." Starts at 10:18 at youtube.com

"I've had people come to me … and they say, 'Well pastor, … I got on the internet and I find out all kinds of negative stuff about your church.' and I say, 'Praise God, because **that's one of the identifying characteristics of the remnant church, because the devil knows that this movement is going to overthrow him … so you would expect a lot of negative reports** and attacks on the gift of prophecy, wouldn't you?" 5:00-5:52 at youtube.com

"Satan is doing everything he can to attack the Seventh Day Adventist movement." adventistreview.org

"Men of talents and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren…. Some will go out from among us who will bear the ark no longer. But these can not make walls to obstruct the truth; for it will go onward and upward to the end." ellenwhite.org

2) Members of many faiths often ignore evidence using mantras such as *God was testing us, We cannot know the mysteries of God, the elect will be deceived, they will call good evil and evil good, the leaders aren't perfect*, and *that's a deception of Satan.* Most of those examples were derived from the Bible. More examples of people discussing respective anti literature and doubts below:

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

"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.… 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.… (islamicboard.com)

Catholics: "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." (forums.catholic.com)

"In many cases, the evidence which supports the lies as being truthful has been faked or mis-represented. …. 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." (catholicbasictraining.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. …. 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)

3) Another commonality we share in our strong desire to believe is our ability to interpret events so that we come out on top. If members experience hardship, God is testing them. If apostates experience hardship, God is punishing them. If members are attacked, it is Satan's persecution. If a gay bar is attacked, then an apostle reminds us to stand in holy places (Elder Rasband's message the night after the Pulse shooting). In this talk, Elder Holland and his son reach a fork in the road. They pray to know which way to go and feel strongly to go right. It's a dead end. Elder Holland decides that it's still the Holy Ghost that they felt, for now they can go left with full confidence that it is the correct way. With this mindset, it becomes impossible for a result to point someone away from any given religion.

Summary) The strong desire to believe is understandable, but we should be wary of mental traps that would have kept us in any faith we were born into.

Ch. 2 – A Precise Text

Refocusing on flaws, a large set become significant when first considering how the Book of Mormon came to be.

1) The main narrative throughout most of church history was that Joseph used the Urim and Thummim to translate the Book of Mormon. In one of the First Presidency-approved gospel topics essays, the church establishes as fact that Joseph used a seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon (picture found on lds.org). Joseph Smith found this stone in the ground "years before he retrieved the gold plates [and Urim and Thummim]" and used it to try and find buried treasure. He then used it, instead of the Urim and Thummim, to translate.

> "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

The essay and Elder Nelson explain that words would appear on the stone:

> "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

2) This raises a few questions. Did Joseph see words on the stone when he used it to look for buried treasure, or was it a prop? If it was a prop, why would he use this stone instead of the Urim and Thummim to translate? If scripture can be revealed via words on a stone, why the need for golden plates? If it wasn't a prop, why were the plates, Urim, and Thummim preserved for any role here when Joseph could already put the same seer stone to use when hunting for treasure?

3) Some apologists theorize that Joseph translated the plates into English himself, as that would help explain errors. 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

4) FAIR admits that there have been thousands of minor changes to the original Book of Mormon. Most involved punctuation. Other 1830 edition errors include major grammar mistakes in almost every chapter. How do such errors fit with Joseph receiving a word-for-word text, which was read back to him by the scribe?

- Non-existent words: Alma 56:10 – "numerority"
- Incomplete sentences: Alma 55:7 – "Moroni caused that Laman and a small number of men which was appointed to go with him."
- Switching "was" with "were:" Alma 9:32 – "they was angry with me," 3 Nephi 26:11 – "I were about to write them all,"
- Switching "done with "did:" Mosiah 29:41 – "and this they done throughout all the land." Sometimes the switches worked. In these cases, they don't.

Our current edition still mixes the plural "ye" with the singular "thou" in several places: Mosiah 4:22 – "ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done."

If someone today were to claim to read God's words off of a stone, and then read off words such as "numerority," how would we take those claims?

5) Another major change was in 1 Nephi 12:18, in which Nephi originally used the name "Jesus Christ." When creating the 1837 edition, Joseph changed "Jesus Christ" to "Messiah" (on p. 30). The original:

> "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, ..."
>
> josephsmithpapers.org - Book of Mormon, 1830

Our current edition still says "the Messiah."

> "And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God, …"
>
> josephsmithpapers.org - Book of Mormon, 1837

The problem here is that the original edition made little sense. In 2 Nephi 10:3, Jacob, Nephi's brother, is just finding out the name Jesus Christ, 32 years after Nephi uses the name in 1 Nephi 12:18.

> 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, …"

This would have meant that Nephi, for at least 32 years, never told Jacob the name Jesus Christ. Yet, Nephi was writing for his people (1 Nephi 19:3,18), and Jacob was writing in the small plates, which contained Christ's name (in 1 Nephi 12:18).

> 1 Nephi 19:3 – "I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the instruction of my people, …" See also v. 18.

Was Joseph aware of the apparent contradiction here when he made the change? Why did he change the original revelation as he received it on the seer stone?

Ch. 3 – Testing the Book of Mormon with the Bible

The following cases outline some inconsistencies between material in the Book of Mormon and the Bible. While already problematic, some of these inconsistencies become far more severe when taking into account that Joseph received the text word-for-word on the seer stone.

Misquoting Moses:

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. Acts 3:22-23 is a much paraphrased quotation of Moses' words, drawing from two separated verses: Deuteronomy 18:15 & 19. 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 altered version in Acts. Both Acts and Nephi omit vs. 18 (which pertains to the passage) *and* paraphrase vs. 15 and 19 the same way. Why does Nephi essentially quote Acts, saying it's Moses talking, when Acts wasn't written yet? If the Book of Mormon were authentic, shouldn't Nephi have given a quote which matched Deuteronomy, not Acts? Did Joseph, while compiling material, borrow from the wrong place here?[1]

<table>
<tr><th>Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)</th><th>Acts 3:22-23 – ≈ 80-90 A.D.</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">"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;

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.

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."</td><td>"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. [skips v. 18]

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."</td></tr>
<tr><td>1 Nephi 22:20 – ≈ 570 B.C.</td></tr>
<tr><td>"… 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. [skips v. 18] 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 v. 22)</td></tr>
</table>

1. Some apologists suggest that Joseph would come across a passage he recognized while translating and would then consult the scriptures, or that he made his translation match the Bible afterwards. Response: FAIR states that "the witnesses of the translation are unanimous that Joseph did not have a book or papers, and could not have concealed them if he did have," so Joseph did not consult the scriptures during the translation. Neither did he change these verses afterwards, as we have the original manuscript of this section. What makes more sense is that he prepared material before the translation (the wrong material in this case), and that the seer stone was a prop. FAIR questions whether Joseph had access to a Bible. He could have used his parents' Bible or the library's while preparing.

KJV vs JST vs BoM:

There are cases where the Joseph Smith Translation contradicts the Book of Mormon. The full text of the JST (held by the RLDS church) has been verified as correct (lds.org, screenshot of quote). 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."

God refers to the JST as the new translation of his holy word. In the JST, Joseph reverses the meaning of one of Christ's messages in the Sermon on the Mount (v. 43 of the JST). In every other translation, Christ says that if you're asked to go a mile, go two. In the JST, Christ is saying to walk only as far as you are asked.

> "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."

The Sermon on the Mount 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."

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

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? 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 (almost an exact match here between Moroni's words and Paul's words from after the time of Christ), and Moroni 10:8-18 vs 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

The Way of the Red Sea:

2 Nephi changes Isaiah 9:1's "sea" to "Red Sea," creating a contradiction.

> 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 Galileen city. "The Way of the Red Sea" is a different biblical road, which does not pass through Galilee, meaning 2 Nephi contradicts itself.

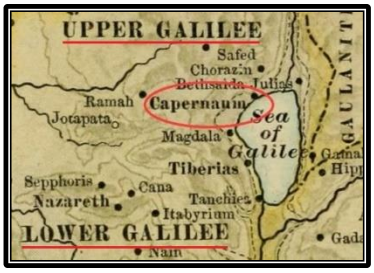


Figure 6 – By Internet Archive Book Images [No restrictions], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, color added, link

Apologists: FAIR says that Oliver Cowdery, as scribe, may have added the word "Red" during transcription.

Response: Again, the RLDS church has the complete Joseph Smith Translation, and lds.org shows that their JST is reliable (lds.org, screenshot of quote). In the JST, Joseph changed "the sea" *in Isaiah 9:1 itself* to "the Red sea." This shows that Joseph intended the change in 2 Nephi. This would also mean that the JST's Isaiah 9:1 is self-contradicting, as the Way of the Red Sea is not in Galilee.

Apologists: 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.

Response: Every other source disagrees with 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* (in this link, hit the blue "next" button twice and scroll down a page for a map). Matthew 4:12-15 also confirms the road in Isaiah 9:1 to be "the way of the sea."

Side note: The Targum (Jewish scripture known about in Joseph's time) does contain "the Red Sea" in that verse. The Targum was still being passed down orally for hundreds of years after the composition of the Septuagint and Masoretic Text. These older scrolls do not call it the Red Sea. Oral traditions are prone to change, and the entire Targum verse is dramatically altered. Even if the Targum was correct, Joseph needed to change the rest of the verse to avoid contradiction.

> "… 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

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 7 – 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

Ch. 4 – The Reality of the Law of Moses

There are discrepencies between what we learn about the Law of Moses and what the law actually demands. We sometimes hear that the Law of Moses was supposed to be harsh in order to better keep the Israelites in line. In addition, the Book of Mormon says that all things in the Law of Moses typify of Christ, that Christ gave the law, and 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,…"

The scriptures shown below are all part of the Law of Moses (as confirmed by byu.edu, screenshot). 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? Do these laws point to the Atonement? The JST clarified some Law of Moses commandments, such as Deut. 14:21, but it does not alter any of these.

- 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."

- 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."

- People can be "possessions" and "bondmen for ever:"

> Leviticus 25:45-46 – "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."

- 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."

Regarding women:

- 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 worth 5 shekels, while a female is worth 3.
- Lev. 12:1-5 – After giving birth, a woman is unclean for seven days and cannot enter the sanctuary for 33 days. Those time periods double if her child is female.

Did God really command all this to point to the Atonement? Speaking of those times, would God really command genocide (including killing infants, little boys and girls, etc.), as in the first three links here: 1 Samuel 15:3, Joshua 6:21, Joshua 10:40-41, Numbers 31:17-18 and 1 Samuel 27:8-9? Would a loving God test a people's obedience by ordering them to slay children? Would God find another way to give them land? Which is worse: idolatry or grown men killing little girls?

Ch. 5 – Trinitarian Beliefs

The 1830 Book of Mormon had Trinitarian language, describing Christ and God as the same being. This was consistent with Joseph's earlier writings. Such teachings are inconsistent with Joseph's later version of the First Vision, from which Joseph should have known that Christ and the Eternal Father are separate beings. The 1830 edition compared with the 1837 and current editions, which have "the Son of" added to each verse:

1830 Edition	1837 Edition
1 Nephi 11:18 – "the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, …"	1 Nephi 11:18 – "the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of the Son of God, …"
1 Nephi 11:21 – "behold the Lamb of God, even the Eternal Father!"	1 Nephi 11:21 – "behold the Lamb of God, even the Son of the Eternal Father!"
1 Nephi 13:40 – "the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world; …"	1 Nephi 13:40 – "the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world; …"

While this Trinitarian language doesn't fit with Joseph's First Vision as we know it, it does fit with his first recorded version, which Joseph wrote in 1832. In this "1832 account," Joseph only sees one personage, not two. The account:

> "[I]n the 16th year of my age a piller 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

Years later, the Trinitarian language is removed from these verses, and Joseph's First Vision story evolved to include his seeing of two personages.

Apologists: FAIR gives examples from the early LDS church that they believe contradict Trinitarian doctrine, as their teachings and quotes describe Christ as being separate from the Father. For example, some members spoke of Jesus at God's right hand, of God referring to his "Only Begotten Son," and they spoke of the Son being in the Father's glory.

Response: The teachings and quotes from early LDS members are actually biblical and don't contradict Trinitarian doctrine, as explained by churches with Trinitarian beliefs: (Jesus at God's right hand, God referring to his Only Begotten Son, and the Son being in the Father's glory). Trinitarian doctrine makes room for these, and the Book of Mormon has similar examples. Such doctrine as a rule is confusing and mysterious. One thing that sets it apart from non-Trinitarian faiths (such as Mormonism today) is when stuff is said like "the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father." FAIR misses crucial details showing Joseph's former beliefs:

1) 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), from 1830-31:

> 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, …"
>
> 28 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, and I come quickly. Even so. Amen."

Jesus calling himself "mine Only Begotten Son" doesn't make sense if he's a separate physical being from the Father, as taught later on in Mormonism.

2) By 1831, Joseph turned the Father and the Son into the same person in his JST:

King James Version	Joseph Smith Translation
Luke 10:22 – "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."	Luke 10:23 – "All things are delivered to me of my Father; and no man knoweth that the Son is the Father, and the Father is the Son, but him to whom the Son will reveal it."

3) A Book of Mormon verse which remains unchanged:

> Alma 11:38-39 – "38 Now Zeezrom saith again unto him: Is **the Son of God** the very Eternal Father?
>
> 39 And Amulek said unto him: Yea, he is **the very Eternal Father of heaven** and of earth, **and all things which in them are**; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last;"

Summary) This doctrinal change raises serious questions as to the validity of our current version of the First Vision, the JST (in Luke), D&C (sections 29 and 49), the Book of Mormon, and Joseph's seer stone story. As in other cases, he has here changed the words that God sent him via the seer stone.

Ch. 8 – Contradictions

Some questions arise when comparing Book of Mormon verses to other scriptures.

1) Knowledge of the Time of Christ's Birth

Did they know when Christ would come? Nephi says yes, Alma says no.

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 and 2 Nephi 25:19	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."

2) Age of Enos

The 7 generations from Jacob to Amaleki span 460 years. An expected 7 generation span before modern times would be 160-190 years (screenshot of quote). While possible, this is very improbable. As part of this, Jacob was born in the wilderness by 591 B.C. 170+ years later, his son Enos "began to be old."

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."

3) David's Sin and the Words of Christ

Were David's wives and concubines "abominable," or given to him by God?

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; …."

4) Changes to Plan of Salvation doctrine

In the Book of Mormon we find 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*. 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."

5) Which Year?

The following verses describe the same event taking place during different years.

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, …"	Alma 53:22-23 – "22 … 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 … 23 And thus ended the twenty and eighth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi."

6) Age of Amos

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 A.D. minus 194 A.D.). Both aren't likely, putting Amos Jr.'s age at…? Ex: If Amos Jr. was born 20 years before his father's death, then he reached the age of 131. If Amos Sr. received the plates at age 16, he would have died at age 101, making it unlikely that he fathered Amos Jr. right before he died.

4 Nephi 1:21 – "19 And it came to pass that Nephi, he that kept this last record, … 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; …"

7) Shedding of Blood

Moroni says that God has never allowed bloodshed. At the very beginning of Moroni's plate compilation is a story in which God commands Nephi to shed blood. What about God ordering the Israelites to commit genocide?

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."

8) Infant Baptism

During the time of Mormon Ch. 1, there were "no gifts from the Lord" and "the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, " all before Mormon had turned 15, which was certainly before he wrote an epistle on infant baptism to his son (found in Moroni Ch. 1). 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 (see Appendix C). 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.

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 1:13-15,19 – "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, …"

Ch. 7 – View of the Hebrews: Israelites in America

The next two chapters will discuss flaws in the Book of Mormon's setting. Some questions do arise when trying to match the Nephites and Lamanites with the ancient civilizations of the Americas, as there seems to be no match. During Joseph's time, such a mismatch between the Book of Mormon and history wasn't thought to be the case. *View of the Hebrews*, which was first published in Vermont in 1823, attempts to establish as fact that the ancient Israelites colonized the Americas, even splitting into two portions: a civilized group, and a barbaric group, which wipes out the civilized group and from which the modern Native Americans are descended. It appears that Joseph was trying to align his story with the evidence of his time.

1) The Book of Mormon people simply do not match the ancient civilizations of the Americas. 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."

2) Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* is a long thesis which argued strongly that the lost ten tribes of the Israelites came to the Americas. This byu.edu link contains the 2nd edition of *View of the Hebrews* (published in 1825). The introduction to the 2nd edition alludes to the speedy sale of the first edition, which is an indication of its popularity.

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

Ethan Smith on the Israelites splitting into two types:

> "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

3) 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 … 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

Roberts suggests that Joseph was in contact with knowledge of the book. One possibility is that Oliver Cowdery informed him of it, as Ethan Smith was a minister in Poultney – Oliver's hometown. A BYU Studies article (archived here, screenshot) provides this information. It was usually Oliver and Joseph who said they received visions together. Oliver was in western New York since 1825. Did he meet Joseph before they originally claimed to meet? Could all be a coincidence.

After compiling a list of 26 similarities between the works, Roberts summarizes:

> "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

From Elder Roberts' 26 similarities:

> "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….
>
> Ethan Smith's book assumes that this race (save perhaps , the Eskimo of the extreme north) occupied the whole extent of the American continents…
>
> Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence?"
>
> imgur.com - Studies of the Book of Mormon - Similarities – Note: Ethan used different Isaiah chapters. Note: Appendix B addresses the Book of Mormon location models.

Apologists and Response: In 1842, Joseph talked of Ethan's work. FAIR asks, why would he "point out the source of his forgery?" Why did no one accuse Joseph of plagiarizing it at the time? 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 his book. Critics of the time wouldn't bring it up for the same reasons.

FAIR questions why Joseph wouldn't copy the large amount of evidence present in *View of the Hebrews*. I ask, why would he need to? *View of the Hebrews* was already circulating the evidence well enough on its own. The Book of Mormon isn't a collection of evidence. It is a story which takes place in the world which Ethan's work provides evidence for. It doesn't look good for that story if Ethan's evidence proves 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).

Summary) Joseph's work is suspiciously close to Ethan's and it does not match past American civilizations or DNA evidence, as the next chapter explains.

Ch 8 – DNA: The Natives Weigh In

DNA evidence conflicts with the LDS and *View of the Hebrews* claim that Hebrews colonized the Americas. DNA from modern Native Americans and from the ancient remains of those who lived in Book of Mormon times/locations confirm that Native Americans originated from Siberia in a single founding population at least 12,000 years ago, rather than from Israelites 2,600 years ago.

Populations have specific DNA types that are unique to them called haplogroups. We'll focus on a type of DNA called mtDNA with its mtDNA haplogroups. Related populations will have similar groups, which are categorized by letters. For example, mtDNA haplogroup H is extremely common in Europe, whereas L is unique to Africa. Within each letter group are numbered subdivisions, such as L1 and L2. The amount and type of differences within these groups and subgroups tell us how far back in time the groups split from each other, allowing us to trace humanity's migration history.

Haplogroups A, B, C, D, and X2a are found throughout the Native American populations. These groups, with their unique mutations, inform us that Siberian populations migrated to the Americas 12,000+ years ago. This is also confirmed by studies of Y DNA. As will be explained, if Israelites colonized the Americas, we'd expect groups H, I, J, T, U, V, W, and a different set of X subgroups.

Haplogroups A-D are still common in East Asia. X has vanished in most of that region, but it is still present in parts of Siberia, confirming that it passed through. Other types of X *are* more common to Europe and the Middle East. Its split occurred *before* the original migration to the Americas took place, and the X2a variant arrived via Siberia along with the other groups 12,000 years ago. In 2015, this was confirmed when X2a was found in the Kennewick man (screenshot), a 9,000 year-old body from the Pacific Northwest. FAIR discusses haplogroup X:

> "As LDS geneticist Ugo Perego put the matter: 'Does [haplogroup x] provide evidence to support a pre-Columbian Israelite migration to Western hemisphere? – No. … Some argue that X shows arrival of Lehi, etc. but this is too easy an explanation. The data seems to indicate it was from an ancient group 12,000 years ago, and Lehi's mtDNA has disappeared.'"
>
> "A February 2008 genetics study on American population migration states: ...the differential pattern of distribution and frequency of haplogroup X led some to suggest that it may represent an independent migration to the Americas. Here we show, by using 86 complete mitochondrial genomes, that all Native American haplogroups, including haplogroup X, were part of a single founding population, thereby refuting multiple-migration models."
>
> Note: There may have been more than one wave from Siberia.

Apologists: The church responds to this matter in a gospel topics essay. One of their arguments is that we do not know what Lehi's DNA looked like.[2]

Response: Haplogroups cover wide populations, not just individuals. We do know what Near-Eastern and Jewish DNA look like. Just as we know the haplogroups common to continents, we know that Near-Eastern DNA contains haplogroups H, I, J, N (which is found on almost all continents), T, U, V, W, and X (but not X2a). It just so happens that a group of Israelites *did* leave Jerusalem around 600 B.C., though they ended up in present-day Iran and Iraq (quote from ncbi.nlm.nih.gov):

> "The Jewish communities of Iraq and Iran constitute the oldest non-Ashkenazi Jewish communities outside the Levant and were established during the 6th century B.C.E."

These communities contain the haplogroups H, J, T, U, and W. The Iraqi and Irani Jews are clearly descended from Near-Eastern people. Israelite haplogroups H, J, T, U, and W are completely absent from Native Americans that lived before Christopher Columbus. Only X is held in common between Near-Easterners and Native Americans, and its X2a variant arrived in America with the founding group. Though the Near-Eastern variants of X had developed by 7,000 years ago, they are absent in the Americas. Europeans mixed in some of their haplogroups post-Columbus, and these are traceable due to their mutations. In other words, any European or Near-Eastern DNA arrived either 12,000 years ago, or after 1492.

The Lehites would have brought over haplogroups H, J, T, U, W, or I, V, or the Near-Eastern X groups. Instead, we find haplogroups A, B, C, D, and X2a.

Apologists: The essay goes on to claim that the Israelites could have been a small group among many other indigenous populations already present in America, and their DNA disappeared overtime via "population bottleneck" and "genetic drift."

Response: Appendix B addresses a long list of evidence that the story was intended to take place across both continents. Yet, such a setting is entirely inconsistent with archaeological and now DNA evidence that both continents were full of Siberian-descendants (plus other ways it doesn't fit the grand history of the continents). Apologists have now split into two main "small group" camps: one in favor of a Mesoamerican model, and one in favor of a Great Lakes model.

The Mesoamerican model is flawed due to Christ calling the eastern Native Americans "Lamanites," Moroni's claim to Joseph that the Indians are descendants of Abraham, Cumorah's location, the Lehites' land including the U.S. (1 Nephi 13:14-19, **esp. 30**), and names in the east like Kishkiminetas (side note below).

2. The essay brings up a possible "founder effect" – that individuals in Lehi's group may have had genes that were uncommon to their place of origin. Response: The families of Lehi, Zoram, Ishmael, Mulek, and those who arrived with Mulek, including the wives of Lehi, Ishmael, Mulek, and those who arrived with Mulek, would each need to have had Y DNA (for the men) and mtDNA (for the women) uncommon to the Middle-East for this to work. Given that the Israelites didn't marry outsiders, this is extremely unlikely. Furthermore, the Siberian DNA throughout the Americas is traced back to before Book of Mormon times (ex: haplogroups D from 8,300 B.C. in the Northwest and A from 6,500 B.C. in South America – Table S1).

Among other reasons (see Appx. B), the Great Lakes model is flawed due to the prophecy in 1 Nephi 13:12 that Columbus would reach the Lamanites. Columbus only reached Mesoamerica and the South American descendants in the Caribbean.

All of the models are flawed in that the Book of Mormon makes it extremely clear that the land was preserved for the Hebrew nations, and kept from all other nations, making difficult the theory that the Lehites dwelt among other groups.

> 2 Nephi 1:8-9 – "8 And behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations; for behold, many nations would overrun the land, that there would be no place for an inheritance.
>
> 9 Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as **those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem** shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and **they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves**..."

This promise doesn't fit with a founding population reaching and spreading across the American continents by 10,000 years ago, whose Siberian DNA is traced through his time. In this example, ancient DNA from 800 B.C., 1200 A.D., and modern DNA show continuity of specific mutations (within A-D's subgroups) in the Northeast. They show that its population has been there at least 3,000 years.

We have the DNA of the remains in each of the proposed areas *from Book of Mormon times*. They were descended from Siberians. Here are links to analyses of ancient human DNA from the Great Lakes area from around 275-75 B.C. (Mound 25) and 250 A.D., Mayans dating back to 200-350 A.D., and a Chilean and Peruvians dating from 50 B.C. and 100-650 A.D. (respectively).[3] With the Two-Continent (hemispheric) model (Appendix B), all of these studies are problematic.

Side Note: From Josephs' works and stories, the existence of the unbiblical names of Kishkumen, Onidah, and Onandagus (Kishkiminetas and Oneida) in real life would be strong evidence for the Book of Mormon, except that they were present in his region. Is it a coincidence that the closest matches (by far) of unbiblical Book of Mormon names to real names were readily available to Joseph? Joseph, who lived by Onondaga County, told of a Lamanite prophet named Onandagus.

Summary) Christ pins the Lehite location to at least the eastern United States. We have the bodies themselves, from Book of Mormon times, of the people who occupied that area of the Americas (as well as the other areas). They tell us a clear story of who their ancestors were. Not only do they not match Israelites, but they do match Siberians. Simon Southerton also responds to the church essay.

3. Of the sixty-one Great Lakes samples between Illinois and Ohio, during Book of Mormon times, sixty are A, B, C, and D, and one is X. The study did not explore which type of X, but X2a is common today in that region. The abundance of the Siberian haplogroups in the heart of Lehite territory is significant, especially given Lehi's promise. The Mayan and South American samples show groups A-D. In this last study, supplementary materials (Table S1) show samples from Lima, Peru and a sample from Juaranga, Chile.

Ch. 9 – Anachronisms

In describing the Book of Mormon setting, the author included some items that were largely, or completely, absent from pre-Columbian America, or were confined to areas which cause other problems for placing the Lehites. Some of the following did not exist in the Americas until the Europeans introduced them:

Donkeys: FAIR speculates that when the Lehites mention donkeys (or asses), they actually mean tapirs (Fig. 8).



Figure 8 - By Sasha Kopf (Own work) [GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html) or CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)], via Wikimedia Commons link

Cattle: FAIR claims that when the writers mention cattle, they meant buffalo. Pre-Columbian bones of a cow may have been found in the Yucatan peninsula.

Horses: FAIR explains how there may have been remnant populations of a prehistoric horse species.

Wheat: FAIR theorizes that when the Book of Mormon talks about wheat, the writers are referring to a grain in Mexico called amaranth.

Silk: FAIR found one case where silk may have been found in a pre-Columbian burial site in Central America.

The Wheel: The Book of Mormon mentions chariots. FAIR theorizes that their chariots must not have had wheels, as Europeans brought the idea of the wheel.

Steel: Though the Book of Mormon mentions steel, which was absent in the Americas, FAIR points out that it is not mentioned post-400 B.C. in the Book of Mormon text. They theorize that the Lehites lost the art of steel-making.

Iron smelting: Though iron is present around the world, the evidence that it was smelted in ancient America is very scant, and only within Mesoamerica, as discussed by FAIR.

There are many other examples, which FAIR does a decent job at explaining as possible, in my opinion.

Summary) Each must weigh the evidence, and some seem more plausible than others. Which is more likely, that the Nephites referred to tapirs as asses, or that Joseph simply listed the animals and objects he was familiar with? In the above Mesoamerican examples, as in other areas, civilizations were already present in the area, which doesn't fit with the promise that the land was preserved for Lehi.

Ch. 10 – Other Flaws in the Story

1) Laban

God commanded Nephi to kill Laban. How does this fit with Ether 8:19, where Moroni says that God never commands bloodshed? God couldn't just have a long-lasting coma come over Laban? If God could reveal scripture via a seer stone, why the need for bloodshed here? Would God really test someone's obedience by asking him to cut off the head of someone who is asleep?

2) Prophecies

The Book of Mormon is very specific with prophecies about America's future before 1830. It is not specific at all regarding the time period after 1830. Here is a specific prophecy where apparently Joseph Jr's very name was prophesied.

> 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."

3) The Jaredites

The whole Jaredite story stretches reality. 36 Jaredites (at the bare minimum) with their herds and livestock boarded 8 barges that were small, the length of a tree, and peaked at the side ends. Sailing in those barges for 344 days would require a massive amount space just for food storage for livestock. In the end, a whole nation fights itself to the point where after 2 million casualties, only the leader of each side remains alive. The two leaders then duel in single combat for victory. It's like a child telling a story where WWII ended with Hitler dueling Roosevelt.

This story of a vast displacement in population (between the Jaredites getting wiped out and the Nephites filling up the land) does not fit with the founding Siberian population filling the Americas and passing their genes to the present.

The Importance of the Witnesses

A few more things, before moving on from the topic of the Book of Mormon. On the three witnesses, who testified they saw an angel: Throughout the rest of this document, cases will be brought up which bring Joseph's honesty into question, as he on several occassions gets people to deceive for him.

If we do believe the three witnesses, 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 in the link below.

> "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 McDoniels. Laura Ann Jacobs. Maria Hedrick."
>
> archive.org - A Holy, Sacred, and Divine Roll and Book

On the eight witnesses, who testified to handling the gold plates: The following is a letter from a doubting member, high priest Stephen Burnett, to apostle Lyman E. Johnson, both of whom later left the church. Apparently Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses, admitted that the testimony of the either was false. The three and eight witnesses did almost always stick 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

There are 14 witnesses which claim that Smith colluded with Sidney Rigdon in creating Mormonism (see Appendix C). The point in this case is that having a lot of witnesses for something isn't so unusual.

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, indicating that the work had a strong influence on Joseph's mind.

The Late War contains the Hebraisms that defenders of the church use to claim authenticity for the Book of Mormon, and so at minimum, we see that if someone was imitating the style of *The Late War* or the Bible, you'd find many Hebraisms present in their work. The Hebraism known as chiasmus will be addressed in "Addressing the Evidence for the LDS Church" at themormonchallenge.com.

Similarities in style and language from the first chapter of *The Late War*:

"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

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 books. They examine many of the parallels that have been found in *The Late War*. Here are some of those that remain significant when the context is included:

The Late War	**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."
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. (screenshot)

Here are some Hebraisms found in *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 – "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; …"
Compound Preposition:	48:35 – "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 …"

Classical Pronunciation and the Apocrypha

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 guide are a large number of names, or near-matches, found in the Book of Mormon: 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 didn't know about. This simply shows that he could have known about them, whether via the Apocrypha, or via this guide. Coincidence or not, every one of the names from Nephi's origin story is found in the Old Testament/Apocrypha.

Moving On) I'll cover issues with scriptures outside the Book of Mormon next, saving a summary of the book for the end of this document's first half.

The Doctrine & Covenants

The greater part of the Doctrine & Covenants is supposed to be the words of Jesus Christ himself. This causes problems when the message sounds very unchristlike, or when Christ's words are revised. Joseph's words also contain formidable errors.

Obscuring Oliver's Divining Rod

Lds.org shows us that Oliver Cowdery used a divining rod to receive revelation. As shown below, this has been censored out of our current D&C.

> "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) referred to Oliver's use of a divining rod.

> "Now 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 …"
>
> josephsmithpapers.org - Book of Commandments 7:3

Two years later (1833), the Book of Commandments changed the above highlighted words to "the gift of working with the rod" and "this rod of nature." Christ's words were further changed in the 1835 edition to "the gift of Aaron." FAIR explains that no one knows why Sidney Rigdon made the initial revision. They argue that as multiple people knew of the change, it's hard to call it a cover up. One effect that I see is that the removal of the divining rod (and seer stone) from church history made Joseph's story more believable to new members.

> D&C 8:6-7 – "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…

The Words of Christ?

1) 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).

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

3) Also in D&C 19, Christ admits to deceiving people so that they repent. In v. 6-12, Christ reveals that the hellish suffering of those in spirit prison is temporary, until they pay for their sins (screenshot). In verse 7, Christ explains that he used a wording trick, calling it endless punishment, in order to *make it appear* that people suffer in hell forever, that they may be afraid and repent.

> 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."

D&C also says that deceiving is against the order of heaven, 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?

Other questionable passages will be saved for later topics.

Removing Pure Language

In the original Book of Commandments and Revelations (removed from our D&C), Joseph gives us examples of "pure language." Is the word for angels in heaven "Awmen-Angls-men" or is someone making something up here?

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

One or Two People? - Isaiah and Esaias

Moving on to Joseph's words, here, Joseph refers to Isaiah and Esaias as two separate individuals, though they are different names for the same person:

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;"

Esaias is the Greek/New Testament 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. Examples:

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?"

Most Biblical scholars should have known that Esaias equals Isaiah. Did someone ask Joseph why he referred to them as separate people? He attempts to clarify in a later revelation, saying Esaias lived in Abraham's time:

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 (lds.org). The name Esaias didn't come about until the Greeks modified the Hebrew prophet Isaiah's name. Why does someone from Abraham's time have the same name as this Greek modification of a Hebrew name?

This isn't the only case of Joseph listing one person as two separate people. These cases call his honesty and reliability into question.

One or Two People? – Adam and Michael

Joseph Smith taught that Adam and Michael were the same individual, yet refers to them as two separate individuals in the earliest version of 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

An example of Joseph teaching that they are 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

Our current version of D&C has removed the Adam-Michael 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 or simply a scribal error, as FAIR indicates as a possibility? (screenshot)



Figure 9 – By Michelangelo Buonarroti [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, link



Figure 10 – 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

The Book of Abraham

Joseph's trustworthiness and credibility is called further into question with his work translating ancient papyrus into the Book of Abraham, especially with his translation of the papyrus' facsimiles. My main focus will be on the second and third of those facsimiles. Facsimile 1 mainly involves name mistranslations.

1) When Joseph obtained the papyrus, portions of the facsimiles were missing (see the green box in the figure on the right). FAIR shows which missing portions of Facsimile 2 were drawn in by Joseph himself. These sections would be the center of the circle and the boat in the upper right.

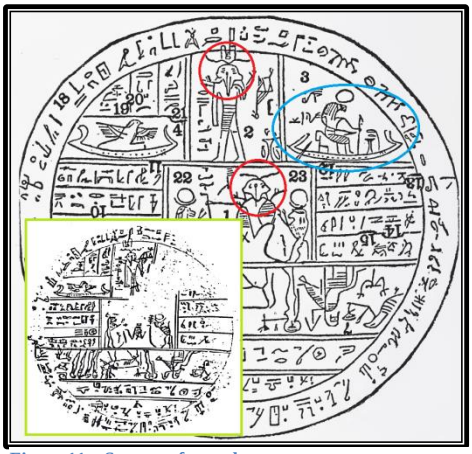


Figure 11 – See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, link, merged with By Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia (Transferred from en.wikipedia) [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, color added, link

As shown by the red circles, when Joseph filled in the center of the figure, he simply copied the two-faced head from the 12:00 position.

In doing so, Joseph actually misdrew the central figure, making the head disconnected from the body. I provide a close-up in the picture on the right.



Joseph also errs in that the central figure of these facsimiles always contain a four-faced head. 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 what I mean about every other hypocephalus having a four-headed figure in its center (Figure 12). Below is a picture of what the central figure should look like. Notice that the lower half of the torso in the figure below matches the lower half in Joseph's papyrus.



Figure 12 – 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

As to the other missing section of the papyrus (the boat in the blue circle), FAIR reveals that the boat comes from a separate portion of Joseph's papyrus (Fig. 13). One other hypocephalus does contain a similar boat in that position, with marked differences to the copied one present in Joseph's papyrus.



Figure 13 – "Joseph Smith Papyrus IV" by Original uploader was Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons, link

The source of both fill-ins can thus easily be identified, and one of them contains a disconnected body that doesn't match every other hypocephalus. Joseph saw two blank spots and filled them with in with drawings from the same papyrus.

2) Wikipedia lists Joseph's translations of the third facsimile, which you can confirm in your scriptures. It also lists Egyptologists' interpretations. Unlike Facsimile 1, the name mistranslations here are easier for us to confirm.

In Facsimile 3, Joseph saw one figure that looked like a black man at the end of the line (in the picture 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 designated so by the characters above its head. You can even see a remnant of the jackal's ear.



Figure 14 – 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

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. Egyptologists claim that *the characters above its hand* indicate it to be Maat. Notice the hat designating Maat (google image search). 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? At least for figure 2, which is the goddess Isis, not pharoah, Isis can represent pharaoh's power. With Maat, the gender swap is more troubling.

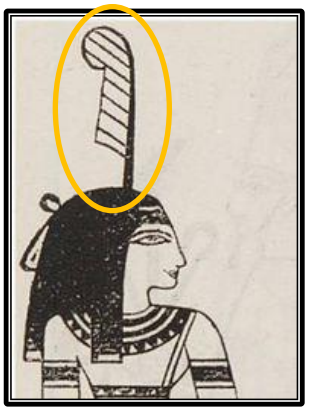


Figure 15 – By Unknown author [CC BY-SA 2.5 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5)], via Wikimedia Commons, color added, link

In these cases, Joseph is telling us what the characters mean. This at the very least shows that Joseph thought he was literally translating the Egyptian characters.

Apologists: The church recently released another First Presidency-approved essay, based partly on the works of Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee, where they reveal that the translations of the entire Book of Abraham don't match the Egyptian on recently-rediscovered fragments of Joseph's papyrus (Fig. 16).

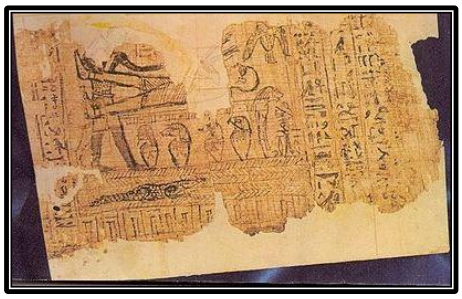


Figure 16 – By Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia (Transferred from en.wikipedia) [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, link

> "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

The essay claims that we may not have the correct fragment. They also propose that the papyrus could have simply been some sort of vehicle for a divine message.

Response: The essay omits the problems with the facsimiles. We don't need papyrus fragments to confirm that the facsimiles are mistranslated.

Dr. Ritner (one of John Gee's Egyptology professors) responded to the Book of Abraham essay here, in which he touches on whether or not the recently-found fragments should be expected to contain the Book of Abraham. His response isn't LDS-friendly, but it 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 (screenshot).

As to the papyrus simply being some sort of vehicle for a divine message, this doesn't address the fact that Joseph was trying to translate actual Egyptian characters (such as in Facsimile 3), and did so falsely. We actually have available a large number of his individual Egyptian character translations in his "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language," provided at josephsmithpapers.com. FAIR concedes that the translations "do not match the true Egyptian meanings of those characters." Again, the characters above figure 4 in Facsimile 3 indicate the figure as Maat, not the Prince of Pharaoh, "as written above the hand."

How just is it for God to expect us to follow Joseph, essentially under threat of damnation, when Joseph does stuff like compiling a work of blatant fabrications? If Joseph was making stuff up here, where else did he make stuff up?

Apologists: FAIR, while omitting many things that Joseph got wrong, points out a few of Joseph's interpretations which weren't so far off.

Response: 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. Their names are Qebehsenuf, Duamutef, Hapy, and Imsety, not Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, and Korash, which have nothing to do with Egyptian names.

Apologists: FAIR also shows that the Book of Abraham contains two details of Abraham's life which are in non-biblical works. (screenshot)

Response: FAIR omits the fact that Oliver Cowdery, by that year, had studied at least one of those two works. How could Joseph have known that other records speak of Abraham teaching astronomy to the Egyptians? In Messenger and Advocate (p. 236), Cowdery discusses The Works of Flavius Josephus, which recounts in Ch. 8 that Abram taught the Egyptians astronomy (screenshot). Cowdery refers to Ch. 2 of Josephus' same work (compare screenshots).

As further evidence that Joseph did his research (and may have uncovered details of Abraham's life from other sources), Joseph studied Hebrew with Joshua Seixas in early 1836 (during the translation process of the first two chapters of Abraham). We know from Seixas' Hebrew manual that Abraham 4 was influenced by these lessons. Abraham 4 is written in Seixas' version of Hebrew. Abraham 4:2 is like Genesis 1:2, except that it uses the phrase "empty and desolate" instead of "formless and void." Abraham 4:6 is like Genesis 1:6 except that it uses the word expanse instead of firmament. In Seixas' manual, on page 78, you can see that Joseph is using Seixas' translation of Hebrew here. You can match the symbols which Seixas equates to empty, desolate, and expanse with a Hebrew version of Genesis (Hebrew reads from right to left, compare screenshots). At a minimum this is evidence that Joseph applied research to his projects. It can also be seen as evidence that in translating the papyrus text into the Book of Abraham, Chapter 4, Joseph was simply taking Genesis and making his own changes to it.

Summary) The Book of Abraham problems, combined with the problems of D&C and the Book of Mormon, establish a pattern of apparent fabrication which is only continued by Joseph's other projects, such as the Kinderhook Plates.

The Kinderhook Plates

FAIR explains that the Kinderhook Plates "are a forged set of metal plates that were given to Joseph Smith to translate." If Joseph started translating a forged artifact, will we be damned for believing that he likely fabricated other works?

One of the main primary sources indicating that Joseph started a translation of these plates comes from William Clayton. William Clayton was Joseph's clerk and good friend (byu.edu link). His journals are collected in a book titled *An Intimate Chronicle*. BYU gives a good review of the book and it is used as a reference on lds.org (screenshot). As FAIR explains, Clayton was trustworthy enough that his accounts were often used in *History of the Church*. He stayed loyal to the church his whole life. After spending part of the day with Joseph, William recounted:

> "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

Church leaders said that the plates were not forged until proven wrong in 1981.

> "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, quote found at FAIR

Apologists: FAIR shows a relative match between one of the plates' symbols and a symbol (along with its meaning) in Joseph's GAEL (Joseph's Egyptian translations, which FAIR concedes to be completely inaccurate). Combined with the account of a non-member witness, FAIR concludes that Joseph used the GAEL to translate this character. This all took place in the last year of Joseph's life, so we don't know how far he would have translated if he lived longer. (screenshot)

Response: FAIR's scenario would mean that Joseph sees a boat shape on one of the plates. In the GAEL, he said that a similar boat shape has to do with the line of Pharaoh and the possessor of heaven and earth. He then tells his followers that *the body by the plates* was a descendant of Pharaoh, who *received his kingdom* from the ruler of heaven and earth. How does Joseph know that the body was a descendant of Pharaoh? Couldn't the symbol simply be talking *about* the line of Pharaoh? In FAIR's scenario, Joseph is still making stuff up to tell his followers.

Midway Thoughts

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? Which book bears more signs of being a fraudulent work? For the Book of Mormon this is a long list of borrowed material, contradictions, textual errors, changing doctrine, and errors in the setting itself. What if Muhammad had a series of other works which also bore signs of fabrication?

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, or was it simply a result of inspiring theologians that Joseph borrowed from?

It is painful to hear all of this evidence against a cherished book. Our brains are association machines. Songs will remind you of this, smells will remind you of that, places will remind you of people, and vice versa. What's occurring throughout all religions is that people develop extremely positive associations with their religious material and figures. For us, happy songs are sung about Joseph's life, beautiful songs about the First Vision, a sad song that reminds us of his death. The sense of community – being among friends – adds to a positive religious experience in any faith. The material itself makes people happy, as it gives them faith in an afterlife with their loved ones. When we deeply believe something and put forth lifelong effort into a religion, our very identity gets caught up in these associations, along with a sense of the identity of our friends and family.

When anything threatens the network of feelings regarding Joseph, Jesus, or the Book of Mormon – and for us they are all associated with each other – pain and discomfort results. We feel like our very happiness and identity are under attack. It becomes almost impossible to look at things objectively and avoid bias.

It helps to at least become aware of what our brains are doing. It will only get more difficult from here on out as we veer away from analyzing words on a page (the scriptures) and go deeper into the lives of actual people (Joseph and other presidents of the church). I believe that peace of mind and hope can be found outside of standard Mormon beliefs, and I'll try and curb some pain with thoughts on that at the end.

The LDS church has changed dramatically since it's early years, and in many ways for the better. In covering various aspects of the church then and now, I'll gradually shift away from evidence regarding the church's truth claims and towards ways that the church can continue to improve.

The Restoration

We are taught that Christ's church was restored through miraculous visions. It is concerning that the accounts of these visions have been shown to be unreliable.

The First Account

One of the new First Presidency-approved essays discusses the First Vision accounts, as there is more than one version of this foundational story.Our current version of the First Vision wasn't written until 1838. The first account was written in 1832. The essay admits that Joseph doesn't mention seeing God the Father in his first account (as discussed in the Trinitarian Beliefs section earlier). The essay ignores a problem in the first paragraph below, where Joseph says that he learned "*by searching the scriptures*" that there was no true church. Christ's words that not one person doeth good are also questionable.

"**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 piller 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

The first paragraph directly contradicts the 1838 account in the JS-H:

> 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

Apologists: The essay points out that Joseph says "the Lord" twice in his 1832 account. They suggest that he was referring to God the Father one of the times and referring to Christ the other time. They also praise the differing accounts as a rich historical record:

> "Some have mistakenly argued that any variation in the retelling of the story is evidence of fabrication. To the contrary, the rich historical record enables us to learn more about this remarkable event than we could if it were less well documented."

Response: Joseph's own words: "I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord." Is it really plausible that he was referring to two different people? Also, the story doesn't just have variance. There is a direct contradiction alongside the omission of God the Father. Again, this matches the Trinitarian doctrine present in the 1830 Book of Mormon (p. 28).

Changing the 1835 Account

The essay also omits the censoring of Joseph's account to Erastus Holmes. *History of the Church* changed "first visitation of Angels" to "first vision."

> "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

> "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,

Apologists: 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 angels alongside Christ and a personage who introduced Christ as the Son of God. (screenshot)

Response: Is it ok to change this quote without any notation? What other quotes did church leaders decide to edit? Why does the essay omit this account?

The Restoration of the Priesthood

Other miraculous encounters were also told unreliably. The two priesthoods were discussed early on, but their bestowals via John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John weren't mentioned until 1834, five years after their occurrences. Comparing the 1833 Book of Commandments and the 1835 D&C, the revisionist insertion of the events is clear. They were added to a previously recorded section.

Apologists: According to FAIR, the only pre-1834 mention of Peter, James, and John was by Orson Pratt in 1829. (screenshot)

Response: FAIR doesn't give a reference for Orson Pratt's quote. I found the reference on lds.org (in footnote 24) and learned that the quote wasn't on record until 1878. I did find a case in 1832 of Joseph referring to receiving the Priesthood by the ministering of angels. This appears to be the first mention of the event, and "ministering of angels" is a vague phrase which can also mean feeling the Holy Ghost. Joseph was much more consistent when talking about seeing the angel Moroni. Were the visits fabricated to give Joseph exclusive claims to authority?

Joseph's Honesty

We often depend on Joseph's word when it comes to church history, and the discrepancies in his stories continue to build (see p. 97 for a more complete list of his dishonesty). In this case, 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 stone]…" The essay says he looked for "lost objects and buried treasure." Joseph tells a different story about his "money-digging" in JS-H 1:56.

In another case, Joseph claimed that he couldn't retranslate the lost 116 pages because if he did, evil men would change the originals and make it appear as if he couldn't retranslate them correctly. The flaw in his story is that even with God planning ahead by 2,500 years and providing a back-up, evil men could still make changes to the story (such as changing names) and make it appear that Joseph retranslated incorrectly. On the other hand, if Joseph wasn't inspired and was dictating a prepared script from memory (for part of the time or the whole time), then he *wouldn't* be able to reproduce a copy of the original. Lastly, it is odd that God would create a plan 2,500 years ahead of time to keep the Book of Mormon looking credible, and then allow so much evidence to mount against the work (pp. 5-44). Additional cases of dishonesty will be covered in the next section.

Polygamy and Polyandry

It has been well-known throughout church history that church members practiced polygamy during the days of Brigham Young through Wilford Woodruff. A First Presidency-approved essay discusses the subject of polygamy, revealing some lesser-known details, while leaving other details out – many of which seem morally reprehensible. The essay reveals that Joseph instituted polygamy. Footnote 24 in the essay confirms that he had between 30 and 40 wives.

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.

Does God require us to believe in that which feels morally wrong? Would he restore his church alongside the following practices?

The Beginnings

Joseph would tell others that he was commanded by an angel to practice polygamy. The angel appeared three separate times over the years, and came with a drawn sword the third time, threatening destruction. Lorenzo Snow recounts:

> "[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

The essay also discusses this event. What would I conclude if James Harmston, an FLDS leader 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?

It is strange that God would send an angel with a drawn sword here, in this of all cases, which would result in the leader of the church having access to many more women. Why was this so important?



Figure 17 - Bronzino [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, link

The passage in Jacob 2:30 indicates that the purpose of polygamy is to raise up seed, but apostle John Widtsoe points out 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

Widstoe claims that 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 "Women in the Polygamous Church" section, 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?

Polyandry

As discussed in the essay, after Joseph's marriage to Louisa Beaman (with whom he was intimate, according to the second chart on Hales' page), Joseph was sealed to several women who were already married. From the essay:

> "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 leaves out evidence of sexuality in the polyandrous sealings. According to Hales, Joseph was possibly intimate with Mary Heron, who already had a husband. Sylvia Sessions (who was sealed to Joseph while already married to Windsor) told her daughter, Josephine, that Joseph was her father. DNA evidence found in 2016 shows that Windsor was the father. This means that either Sylvia was mistaken (due to sleeping with both men), or she spoke figuratively.

Hales admits that the testimony of Mary Heron's intimacy with Joseph is not easily dismissed. She had children before meeting Joseph. How does this fit with D&C 132, which says that the women involved must be virgins, or it's adultery?

> 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 the requirement that the women be virgins. It also fails to address Brigham Young, who also disobeyed "the virgin requirement." He took Zina Huntington to wife, who already had two children with her husband, Henry Jacobs (screenshot). While still legally married to Henry (divorce could have been off the books), Zina gave birth to Brigham's daughter, Zina Prescinda Young (screenshot). Zina Huntington was also sealed to Joseph after her first child with Henry was born. Her profile on lds.org omits this case of polyandry.

According to their own rules, Joseph and Brigham qualify as adulterors. While no one is perfect, adultery would be a big deal for God's chosen representative. 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.

Apologists: The essay claims that God "did not give exact instructions on how to obey the commandment."

Response: The polygamy section states that God's house is a house of order. The section does give detailed instructions, which Joseph and Brigham ignored. The section is very clear that the women need to be virgins.

Apologists: Apologists propose that these polyandrous sealings were for "eternity alone," and not this life.

Response: Aside from the fact that this ignores evidence of sexuality, is it ok that Joseph took other men's wives for eternity? From FAIR (under "Marriage to Brigham Young"): In temple ceremonies after Joseph's death, Zina Huntington was presumably called Zina Diantha *Smith*, even in Henry's presence (screenshot).

Apologists: Apologists sometimes claim that these sealings weren't exactly marriages, and may have been "dynastic sealings" which existed to connect families together.

Response: Can we really say that a man getting sealed to a woman isn't a marriage? Again, evidence of sexuality does exist, such as Zina giving birth to Brigham's daughter. If these sealings were to connect families, why didn't Joseph say so? Why all the secrecy?

As evidence that Joseph wasn't just trying to connect families, Joseph was sealed to Patty Bartlett. Though already connected to the family (through Patty), he was then sealed to Patty's daughter, Sylvia Sessions. Both women already had husbands. It was the same situation with Zina's sister, Presendia. Joseph was already connected to the Huntington family through Joseph's sealing to Zina before he was sealed to Presendia. Presendia and Zina both already had husbands.

Women in the Polygamous Church

An overview of what some of the women experienced:

Emma Smith

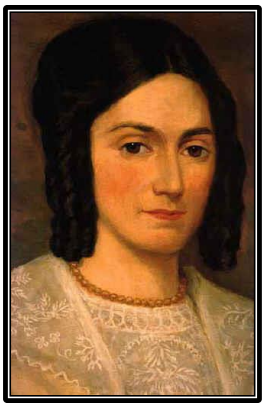


Figure 18 – By Lee Greene Richards (July 27, 1878 – February 20, 1950) Original Publisher and Copyright holder: LDS Church Archives (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, link

1) In LDS literature, Joseph is almost always portrayed as having only one wife: Emma Smith. Though Emma was Joseph's first wife, FAIR conceded that some women were actually sealed to Joseph before Emma. (screenshot)

2) FAIR also concedes that Joseph "did not always tell Emma immediately about some of his plural relationships" (screenshot). Presumably, a man needed his wife's consent to take another wife, but if she gave no consent, he could proceed taking wives 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."

3) Is Christ really behind all of this? In verse 51 (below), did he really command Joseph to offer something to Emma and then command Emma to reject the offer? FAIR speculates on what the offer was, as some have suggested that Joseph offered her the choice of having a man on the side to appease her frustrations with polygamy. FAIR omits the unusual part where Christ commanded Joseph to offer her something, and then turns and commands Emma not to partake of the offer.

D&C 132:51 – "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."

4) Is Christ behind verse 54, where Emma is threatened with destruction if she doesn't believe and administer unto Joseph? This warning applied to all women in polygamy (v. 64). All must believe and administer unto their husbands or be destroyed. What would I think if I found this in the Qu'ran?

D&C 132:54, 64, 66 – "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; …

66 …Behold, I am Alpha and Omega. Amen."

5) In one of the cases of Joseph getting sealed without Emma's consent, he marries their housemaids, Eliza and Emily Partridge. Two months later, Emma actually agrees to pick two of Joseph's wives. She picks Eliza and Emily, not knowing that they've already married her husband. Rather than tell her that he's already married them, Joseph holds a fake ceremony and marries them again:

". . . I was married to Joseph Smith on the 4th of March, 1843, Elder Heber C. Kimball performing the ceremony. My sister Eliza was also married to Joseph a few days later. This was done without the knowledge of Emma Smith. Two months afterwards she consented to give her husband two wives, provided he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble Brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma's presence, she giving her free and full consent thereto. "

archive.org - Historial Record, source discussed at lds.org

Eliza and Emily Partridge

Eliza and Emily did not know that each other were sealed to Joseph until afterwards, as "everything was so secret." These were sexual marriages (Hales).

Helen Kimball Mar

The essay states that Joseph's sealing to a 14 year-old (Helen Kimball Mar, Figure 20) 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?

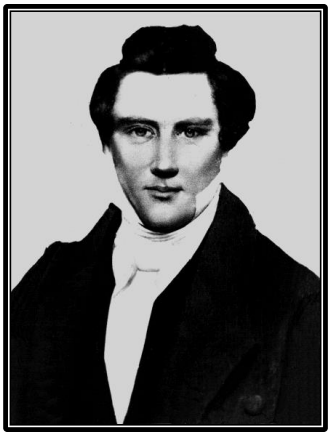


Figure 19 – "Joseph Smith, Jr. (1843 photograph)" by Lucian Foster - http://comevisit.com/lds/faq-dld.htm. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons, link



Figure 20 – "Helen Mar Kimball" by Solomon Farnham Kimball - 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 marrage-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

Hales (screenshot) attempts to discredit Helen by using a later statement of hers that she didn't comprehend *all* that Joseph taught. Hales shows how later in life, Helen's parents did not view salvation as guaranteed. Did they not yet have full faith in Joseph's promise? We must weigh that against Helen's own account.



Figure 21 – Lorenzo Snow. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow (2012), 182, link

Sarah Ephramina

At age 57, Lorenzo Snow (Figure 21) married a 15 year-old.

The Other Women

Some quotes from Pres. Young and an apostle show what women experienced. When Christ warns of false prophets, he tells us "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Seventh-day Adventists (p. 17) believe that Ellen White is a prophet because of her fruits. What if prophets have good and bad fruits?

"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 he 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…. 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…. 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;…. 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. 73 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, … 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!" …"

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

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

Public Denial

The essay discusses how Joseph Smith and other church leaders would deny practicing polygamy. They came up "plural marriage" as a technical term for their practice. They would then publically deny practicing "polygamy," and would use other wording tricks to give the false impression that men couldn't have more than one wife. Ironically, members later did define their actions as polygamy (screenshot). Christ explicitly says that "it is contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive." If people were persuaded to deceive for Joseph, can we trust him or the Book of Mormon witnesses? From the essay:

> "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."

1) 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 added in 1876), which states, "One man should have one wife; and one woman, **but** one husband." This apparently leaves room for a man having more than one wife as well. They use Section 101 to give a false impression. The highlighted people did know about polygamy by this date, as will be shown.

> "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." Note: omits the phrase "in the church"
>
> 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, … Note: includes the phrase "in the church"
>
> byu.edu - Times and Seasons Vol. 3, Oct. 1, 1842, pp. 939-940, "On Marriage" (screenshot)
>
> Note: If individual church members practice polygamy, is that "in the church?"

John Taylor and possibly Wilford Woodruff: Hales' website (screenshot) 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.

Eliza Snow and Sarah Cleveland: According to Hales' second chart here, 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: According to Hales, they gave their permission for their daughter's sealing to Joseph on July 27, 1842 (screenshot).

That would make five or six people, including Emma Smith's entire Relief Society Presidency, who knew about plural marriage before signing the statement.

2) 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

Joseph in February of 1844:

> "Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines."
>
> ~Joseph Smith
>
> byu.edu - Times and Seasons Vol. 5, Feb. 1, 1844, p. 423, under "The Gathering" pic

3) In William Clayton's journal (see p. 53), Smith recommends that Clayton keep his plural wife Margaret hidden from the public. 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 (screenshot)?

> "[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

4) In his own pamphlet, John Taylor denies polygamy while preaching 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

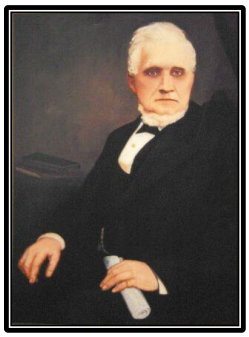


Figure 22 – By UnknownShamrox at en.wikipedia (file log). [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, **link**

By 1850, John Taylor (Figure 22) had several wives. How many Saints journeyed from France to Utah under the impression that there was no plural marriage 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 LDS congregations. This unfriendly account (p. 213) depicts a scene of speaking in tongues, rolling around on the floor, crawling, grimacing, and "all the apish actions imaginable," due to the spirit.

5) 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 , Jan. 15, 1850, "Who is the Liar?" - editor listed earlier (screenshot)



Figure 23 – Charles Roscoe Savage [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, **link**

By that date, Orson Pratt (Figure 23) 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? Did these people deserve full disclosure? Do today's converts deserve full disclosure about the church's polygamous and polyandrous history?

Apologists: FAIR claims that polygamy was legal if not practiced openly.

Response: The members are going beyond "not practicing it openly." They are going out of their way to deceive others. Also, according to the church essay, that "monogamy was the only legal form of marriage."

Again, does God require us to believe in that which feels morally wrong?

The Temple

A peaceful setting, beautiful interior and architecture, along with the association to life events such as marriage, combine to give the temple deep meaning for members. There are some aspects that become morally questionable, given a closer look.

1) While the idea that families can be together forever is hope-inspiring, the implicit threat is that if people don't obey church leaders, including paying tithing, they will be separated from their families for eternity. In many other belief systems, families believe they will be together without these threats in place.

2) FAIR reveals that there used to be penalty tokens in the endowment ceremony, these being removed in 1990. Would Joseph have permitted their removal? Older members will remember that these involve the motion of slitting throats and disemboweling oneself for revealing aspects of the temple. Is Christ behind this?

> "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

3) Are tokens and keywords needed to return to heaven, as learned in the temple? Christ warns against preaching more than repentance and baptism to enter heaven:

> 3 Nephi 11:38-40 – "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."

4) FAIR confirms that Joseph borrowed the endowment ceremony from Freemasonry. A theory exists the Masons obtained the ceremony from Solomon's temple, hence the similarity between their ceremony and ours. FAIR concedes that there is no connection between Freemasony and Solomon's temple. If not, why did Joseph borrow the ceremony from a secret society and call it God's ordinance?

5) FAIR admits that the Second Annointing exists, though it was "performed more widely" in early church history. It has something to do with making one's calling and election secure (screenshot). Does it seem like God's system to have a secret ceremony that almost no one in the general membership even knows exists? How can they work towards attaining it? From a current church manual:

> "Caution: Exercise caution while discussing the doctrine of having our calling and election made sure. Avoid speculation. Use only the sources given here and in the student manual. Do not attempt in any way to discuss or answer questions about the second annointing."
>
> lds.org - Doctrines of the Gospel

In this sort of setting, it seems like it's more who you know that gets you access to this ordinance. As Elder J. Golden Kimball put it:

> "Some people say a person receives a position in this church through revelation, and others say they get it through inspiration, but I say they get it through relation. If I hadn't been related to Heber C. Kimball, I wouldn't have been a damn thing in this church."
>
> ldsliving.com

6) If God spoke through Isaiah with dual meanings, could there be meanings in these scriptures that apply to us? Matthew 24:24 will be discussed on p. 74.

> 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" sounds significant.

Summary) If it turns out that Joseph fabricated the temple ordinances, then immense amounts of time and money are being somewhat wasted. While there are likely benefits to spending time in such a peaceful setting, members are trying to serve the dead with borrowed ordinances while the living could use their help. The doctrinal contradictions and Joseph's borrowings continue the patterns and signs of fabrication discussed throughout Part One of this document.

Prophets and Revelators

The rest of this document will begin to move away from discussing Joseph Smith, examining the reliability of his successors. Before launching into the next series of chapters, in which we'll examine the reliability of LDS leaders on various issues, we'll cover their role in general and The Journal of Discourses as a source.

Special Witnesses of Christ

Apostles are supposed to be "special witnesses of Christ's resurrection." Leaders haven't been clear on whether this means that Christ has appeared to them or not. Here is what Brigham Young had to say:

> "We have not seen the person of the Father, neither have we seen that of the Son; …."
>
> ~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 42
>
> Quote also found on fairmormon.org

The Mouthpiece of God

1) As prophets and revelators, they are supposed to be God's spokesmen. It appears that LDS presidents merely interpret impressions to be God's will:

> 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

Pres. Joseph F. Smith makes similar claims in the Reed Smoot hearings:

> Dubois: Have you received any individual revelations yourself, since you became president …?
>
> Mr. Smith: I can not say that I have…. I can not say that I have not…. 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…"
>
> archive.org - Reed Smoot Hearing Testimonies, quote also found on fairmormon.org

2) The prophets' false statements are excused in various ways, such as claiming that they aren't doctrine. It turns out that *doctrine* has multiple definitions.

Definition 1A: The president of the church reveals God's word, which is ratified by common consent of the church (based on D&C 28:3,13 and D&C 107:91-92). This is the only doctrinal definition. This process does not mention the apostles.

Definition 1B: The president reveals the word, the apostles unanimously agree on it, and the church ratifies it. D&C 107:27 says that apostles must act unanimously, but their approval isn't mentioned as a requirement for the president to receive doctrine. The church has usually followed this definition, though it isn't doctrinal.

Problems with Definition 1A/B: Only the scriptures and two official declarations meet these requirements (ex: 1976 and '78). There has barely been any doctrine revealed since Joseph Smith. The stuff in the endowment is not doctrinal. The forbidding of iced coffee is not doctrinal. People are kept from the temple for non-doctrinal reasons. When the leadership authoritatively affects members to such an extent, should their teachings be dismissed just because they aren't doctrine? Even within this definition, doctrine can change (ex: pp. 30, 31, 68, 82, 83).

Definition 2: In 2007, the church released a Mormon Newsroom statement saying that the president reveals God's word, and the apostles must unanimously agree on it. This definition is even less doctrinal than 1B, as it omits ratification. This statement adds proclamations to the list of doctrine, though they aren't ratified.

Definition 3: The prophet reveals doctrine (the biblical definition). This takes D&C 107, and ignores common consent. With this definition, church presidents have at times used the term "doctrine" for teachings which don't meet Definitions 1-2. This results in more cases of doctrine contradicting doctrine (pp. 82-85).

Note: We have various latter-day prophets disagreeing on what doctrine is, which doesn't fit with the church being a house of order. We are often left with the spirit to decide what is true, and those feelings have been shown to be unreliable.

3) Elder Oaks describes the inspiration behind people getting callings:

> "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 around 2:21 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 (first, second, third).

3) Below is a comparison of philosophies. On the left is the mindset that the chief source of morality is a central spokesman – someone whose beliefs on right and wrong override our own (which may work if he reliably speaks for God). On the right is the mindset that we should look to our own conscience in moral choices.

"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 "When the prophet speaks, the debate is over." ~N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor of the First Presidency "'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 Note: According to Definitions 1 and 2 of doctrine (see previous page), none of the above statements are doctrinal.	"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 "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

Summary) The big question is, do LDS presidents reliably speak for God? Are their thoughts and impressions His word? Are their decisions his decisions?

The Journal of Discourses as a Source

Apologists try and distance the church from the Journal of Discourses (JoD), and with good reason, as the journals include some highly controversial material. 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.

"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."

The Publisher (Orson Pratt), imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume III Preface

"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.'"

The Publisher (George Q. Cannon), imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume VIII 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."

The Publisher (Brigham Young), imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume XI Preface

"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 (Joseph F. Smith), imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume XVIII Preface

Can we say the journals are unreliable if we use a whole manual based on them? 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 dozens of times. In Widtsoe's book, he says that it takes its material from the JoD (quote below).

"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

Reliability Check Ch. 1 – Prophecy

Christ warns of false prophets, saying "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Was the unhappiness of polygamous women a bad fruit (p. 64)? He gives another warning, found between vs. 23 and 26:

> 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 the New Testament defines "prophet" differently from us. With this definition, other churches do believe in modern-day true prophets.

Some examples of the more common definition of prophet:

> 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)

1) One piece of evidence often cited as being for Mormonism is that Joseph, on December 25, 1832, predicted the premise of the Civil War (v. 3). When given a closer look, the prediction doesn't match up with how the Civil War played out.

> "D&C 87:1-6 – "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:

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

> "Not only did **South Carolinians** claim the right to nullify the [1828 and 1832 tariff acts], 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 article, Joseph predicted that a war would start in South Carolina, and that the South would call upon Britain. Verse 4 is inaccurate, as there were no major slave rebellions during the war (pbs.org). In the Civil War, free African Americans in the North fought for the Union and slaves in the South fought for the Confederacy. Britain did not call on other nations, and the Civil War had nothing to do with World War I (v. 3). The "full end of all nations" did not come about because of the Civil War (v. 6).

Apologists find technical ways to get around most of Joseph's false prophecies. In this case it turns out that a prophecy that he got partially right is false as a whole.

2) Heber C. Kimball, apostle and First Counselor in the First Presidency, prophesied that Brigham Young would become President of the United States. Apostles are also supposed to be prophets, seers, and revelators.

> "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 FAIR

Summary) There are many other prophecies which didn't come true, which FAIR claims were conditional upon righteousness. Based on the ones here, were these men false prophets, or should they get a pass?

Ch. 2 – The Word of Wisdom

The Word of Wisdom has become one of the most well-known aspects of Mormonism, and is seen by many as a sign of its truth. How could Joseph have known, before so many others, that smoking was unhealthy? A common defense of the church is that it promotes successful living. While this is certainly good, other religions also do this, and people in countries like Japan enjoy success without the influence of religion. A quick search reveals that warnings against smoking and drinking was actually nothing new during Joseph's time.

1) The American Temperance Society was formed in 1826, and its members preached against alcohol, tobacco, eating meat in excess, and hot drinks, especially tea and coffee. For example, Simplicity of Health (1829) was a product of the temperance movement, and speaks out against hot drinks (pp. 114-115), tea (pp. 60-68 and throughout), and coffee (pp. 119-120).

The temperance movement was very prevalent in Joseph's region. A BYU Studies article explains that the society had a chapter in Kirtland, Ohio:

> "In June, 1830, the Millenial Harbinger quoted ... an article from the Philadelphia 'Journal of Health,'… which article most strongly condemned the use of alcohol, tobacco, the eating intemperately of meats…. On October 6, 1830, the Kirtland Temperance Society was organized with two hundred thirty nine members.... This society at Kirtland was a most active one.... it revolutionized the social customs of the neighborhood…. the Temperance Society succeeded in eliminating a distillery in Kirtland on February 1, 1833, just twenty-seven days before the Latter-day Saint revelation…"
>
> jstor.org - BYU Studies, Winter 1959, pp. 39-40

Why does the Lord's health code mirror the science of the 1830s? The temperance movement and the Word of Wisdom are both partially incorrect. Both failed to provide any warnings about many harmful substances, such as sugar. It turns out that coffee and tea actually have a wide variety of health benefits. The Word of Wisdom is simply the science of the 1830s labeled as Christ's word.

2) FAIR explains that the Word of Wisdom was less stringent in the earlier years of Mormonism, mentioning Joseph's alcohol use. The tightening of the rules came shortly before the Prohibition movement of the1920s (FAIR). The church uses Joseph's rejection of alcohol during his leg surgery to paint a different picture.

Summary) The Word of Wisdom, which claims to be Christ's word, coincides with semi-accurate scientific ideas of Kirtland, Ohio.

Ch. 3 – The Plan of Salvation

1) The plan of salvation, revealed in D&C 76, turns out to contain significant parallels to 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; …"
>
> 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 …"
>
> 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

Apologists and Response: FAIR responds, stating that Swedenborg likely borrowed the term "celestial" from the 1 Corinthians 15. They don't acknowledge that in the New Testament, Paul is talking about three types of bodies, not heavens. Swedenborg's reference to three heavens, with a celestial heaven being the highest, is a close match to Joseph's teachings. FAIR also doesn't address the similarities between Swedenborg's "world of spirits" and Mormonism's "Spirit World." 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 visions. Could Joseph have selectively drawn from Swedenborg?

2) 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 and separated from their families?
- Is it fair for this test to end right at death, with death being such an unpredictable and sudden thing? Maybe instead, experience and progress simply continue?
- 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? Ex: 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. 63.
- 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?
- 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?

Summary) There are many aspects to this plan that do not sound very just or merciful. Other aspects continue what seems to be a pattern of Joseph hearing things he likes and adding them into his religion.

Ch. 4 – Blood Atonement

We run into greater problems when examining the revelations of Joseph's successor, Brigham Young. On several occasions, Brigham taught something called blood atonement – that adulterors and apostates can only be saved through the shedding of their own blood.

1) The First Presidency-approved essay on blood atonement ignores the following sermon, in which Brigham states that blood atonement applies to adulterors, and that Christ never said to love wicked enemies, though the New Testament indicates otherwise:

> 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: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."
>
> 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;"

Footnote 36 of the essay explains that blood atonement was likely carried out at least once, though not under Brigham's command. The essay and footnote ignore Brigham's declaration that the practice of Blood Atonement is "near at hand," as part of the restoration of all things.

The sermon:

> "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….
>
> 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 sermon, continued:

> 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
>
> The sermon is also printed in the Deseret News on February 18, 1857 (screenshot). It is PDF 15 of 40:

2) Christ forgave the adulterous woman. In the quote below, Brigham Young explains that he could throw a javelin through an adulterous woman's heart and do it with clean hands, even if that woman were any one of his wives.

> "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. …"
>
> ~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 3, p. 247
>
> Quote also found on fairmormon.org

Summary) 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?

Ch. 5 – Adam-God Theory

In another case against Brigham Young's reliability, he teaches that Adam was God the Father:

"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 at FAIR

"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 year 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 at FAIR

FAIR reveals that Brigham added Adam-God doctrine into the temple, and "the idea was dropped from the endowment ceremony" after his death. Are current leaders teaching doctrines which are just as false? How can we know, when Holy Ghost-type feelings confirm teachings which contradict Mormonism (pp. 12-15)?

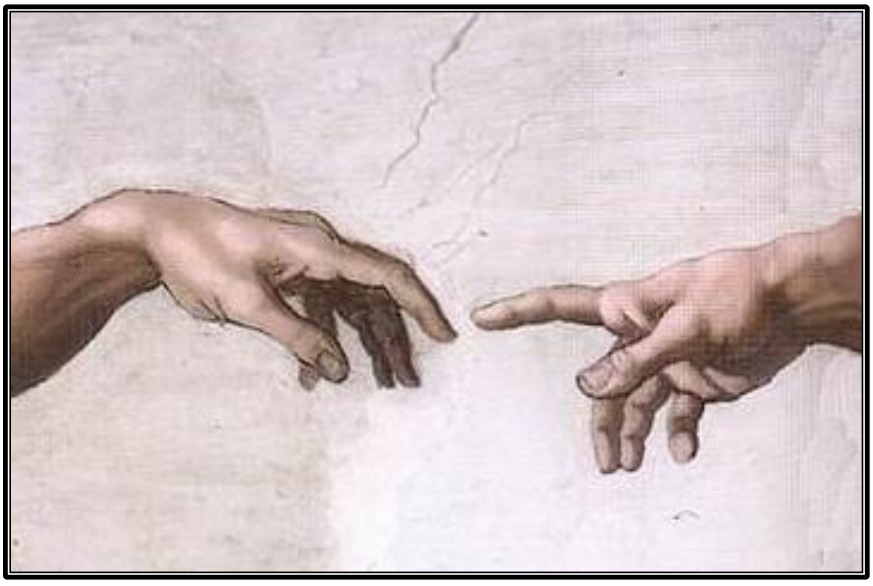


Figure 24 - By User:BardFuse (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped link

Ch. 6 – Race and the Priesthood/Temple Ban

For well over 100 years of church history, people of African descent were barred from holding the Priesthood and attending the temple. They were not allowed temple marriages. They were not allowed to be sealed to their children. The church has now disavowed the doctrines behind the ban, calling those doctrines theories. Were they wrong then or are they wrong now?

As Gordon B. Hinckley puts it:

> "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 First Presidency-approved essay on the topic disavows three specific teachings as past theories, that: 1, black skin is a curse, 2,some races were less valiant in the premortal life, and 3, mixed-race marriages are a sin. The essay also calls the past stance a policy twice and claims that we don't know how it started.

> "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

1) "The Church disavows the theor[y] advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse…" If Africans, not guilty after all of being cursed, were being withheld from temple blessings for over a hundred years, were members being led astray when they defended this stance? God didn't see fit to send an angel with a drawn sword, or prompt the leaders that they were wrong?

Are the modern leaders disavowing scriptures which say that black skin is a curse, such as these regarding the curse of Cain? Is this doctrine or a theory?

> Moses 7:8,22 – "8 For behold, the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.
>
> 22 And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them."

If the scriptures weren't plain enough, some church leaders have elaborated:

> "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, Vol. 22, p. 304, quote also found at FAIR

In the case of the Lamanites, the dark skin would be removed on conditions of righteousness. This has yet to be seen among Native Americans:

> 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."
>
> 3 Nephi 2:15 – "15 And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites;"

The essay is somewhat deceitful when it claims that Brigham Young announced that Africans would have the curse removed "at some future day."

> "In two speeches delivered before the Utah territorial legislature in January and **February 1852**, Brigham Young announced a policy restricting men of black African descent from priesthood ordination. At the same time, President Young said that **at some future day**, black Church members would 'have [all] the privilege and more' enjoyed by other members."

If you go to footnote 9 and read the February 5, 1852 speech at eadview.lds.org, you'll see that Brigham specifies when "some future day" is, and that it's not until the last of Abel's posterity receive the Priesthood. The essay omits this.

> "What is that mark? you will see it on the countenance of every African you ever did see upon the face of the earth, or ever will see. Now I tell you what I know; when the mark was put upon Cain, Abels children was in all probability young; the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the preisthood nor his see[d], until the last of the posterity of Able had received the preisthood, until the redemtion of the earth. If there never was a prophet, or apostle of Jesus Christ spoke it before, I tell you, this people that are commonly called negroes are the children of old Cain."
>
> dcms.lds.org (eadview.lds.org is another access point, or the speech text is also available at archive.org)

In a First Presidency Statement, George Albert Smith affirms that the curse will end "when *all the rest* of the children" have their blessings in the Priesthood, though this has not occurred. Notice his declaration that the stance was doctrine.

"From the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith even until now, it has been the **doctrine** of the Church, never questioned by Church leaders, that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel."

~George Albert Smith, First Presidency Statement, 1947, quote also found at FAIR

"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…. 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 at FAIR

George Albert Smith is using a biblical definition of doctrine (see p. 71), while the current First Pres. is using one of the definitions pieced together from D&C verses. If the current 2007 definition can have any validity (it ignores a D&C verse on ratification), then so could George Albert Smith's definition back in 1949.

2) "The Church disavows the theor[y] advanced in the past that black skin … reflects actions in a premortal life…" Which is correct, the current First Presidency-approved essay, or the past First Presidency Statement?

"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**, quote also found at FAIR

"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? …. 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 Note: Racial *or physical* limitations. Is he referring to disabled people?

3) "The Church disavows the theor[y] advanced in the past that … mixed-race marriages are a sin…" Past prophets were very clear on the issue of inter-racial marriage.

> "Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. **This will always be so.**"
>
> ~Brigham Young , Journal of Discourses, Volume 10, p. 110, Quote also found at FAIR

FAIR theorized that given the context of the above quote, Brigham *may* have been referring to when a white man rapes an African woman. In the same 1852 speech discussed earlier, Brigham explains that when a white man mingles seed with the seed of Cain, then killing the man, woman, and offspring involved would help atone for the sin of bringing the curse upon his children. It does not mention rape.

> "But let me tell you further. Let my see mingle with the seed of Cain, that brings the curse upon me, and upon my generations, - - we will reap the same rewards with Cain. In the preisthood I will tell you what it will do. Where the children of God to mingle there seed with the seed of Cain it would not only bring the curse of being deprived of the power of the preisthood upon themselves but the entail it upon their children after them, and they cannot get rid of it. **If a man in an ungaurded moment should commit such a transgression, if he would walk up and say cut off my head, and kill man woman and child it would do a great deal towards atoneing for the sin.** Would this be to curse them? no it would be a blessing to them. -it would do them good that they might be saved with their Bren. A man would shuder should they here us take about killing folk, but it is one of the greatest blessings to some to kill them, allthough the true principles of it are not understood."

Interracial marriage remained illegal in Utah until 1963:

> "Like most other states, Utah once had a law against interracial marriages. It was passed by the territorial Legislature in 1888 and wasn't repealed until 1963, said Philip Notarianni, director of the Division of State History."
>
> deseretnews.com

Summary) If current leaders are correct in disavowing these past teachings, then how can we be sure that there aren't teachings today that will later be disavowed? All this, and we're not allowed to ask God if their teachings are correct? Should we obey these men or instead follow our hearts? Not only were leaders wrong here, but I'll spend the next page with examples of their past quotes on slavery. Must we follow men who preach such things in order to enter heaven?

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 – Note: A Mormon blog strongly argues that Zebedee Coltrin ordained Elijah Abel, not Joseph. To his credit, Joseph didn't cancel the ordination.

"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.

"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

"The Lord put a mark upon [Cain], 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

Ch. 7 – Women in the Modern Church

Women have come a long way in the church since Brigham Young told them to have children and stop complaining. Since the year 2013, they are now even permitted to pray in conference (Deseret News). There is certainly room for improvement, which one might see if one realizes that prophets erred in the past.

1) Women aren't yet allowed to interpret ordinances for deaf members so long as a Priesthood holder is present (Section 21.1.26 of the Official Handbook).

2) 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?

Children with working mothers have advantages in many regards, such as learning social skills in daycare. At most ages, children aren't home during the day anyways. Some families have the option of grandparents around to help with kids during the day. In other families, the husband prefers to stay home with the children. In careers of all types, women have much to contribute to the world.

3) Two prophets encouraged women to fight to the death if being raped. This implies that those who are raped lose their virtue. Is this God's doctrine?

> "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

The Book of Mormon implies the same thing in Moroni 9:9 – that raped women are deprived of their virtue and chastity. In its discussion on virtue, the Young Women's Personal Progress Manual *used to* direct teenage girls to that verse (here is an archived manual, screenshot). They have removed the reference.

Rape victims have difficulty as is without heaping on guilt.

4) 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 ordaind, 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 priviliges & 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 women eventually be allowed to hold the Priesthood? In these examples, the church changes commandments and doctrine in spite of declaring that it would not. These statements also having bearing on statements regarding LGBT people.

"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…"

~Wilford Woodruff, Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 19, quote also found at FAIR

"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 [polygamy, see note below]. 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) **Note:** D&C 132 refers to polygamy as celestial marriage. The context confirms polygamy to be the subject, as Lorenzo Snow is referring to its illegalization.

"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…. 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 at FAIR

Ch. 8 – Homosexuality

If church leaders are reliable, then we can trust that they've been at the forefront of defending the United States from the evils of homosexuality. If it turns out they are wrong on this topic, then innocent people are being made to suffer. As a correct understanding makes such a difference here, it becomes vital to research the matter for one's self.

1) In 1995, the church issued the Proclamation on the Family, which states that marriage is only between a man and a woman. It came about during a time when the church was trying to prove it had a stake in the Hawaii's gay marriage-legalization case (law.justia.com). Elder Packer's reference to the proclamation as a revelation in General Conference was censored out for unknown reasons.

The proclamation warns that collapse of the family unit will bring about the calamities foretold by prophets. Church members see gay marriage as a step in the collapse of the family. These teachings echo Spencer W. Kimball:

> "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 reliability of church leaders here comes under question when one considers that they used to issue the same warning in regards to monogamy:

> "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 at FAIR
>
> "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 at FAIR

The proclamation also contains inaccuracies about gender being an essential mortal characteristic, as true hermaphrodites exist (people with both XX and XY chromosomes). Based on their physical bodies and their mental experience, these people aren't sure what their gender is (three examples: 1, 2, 3).

Just as true hermaphrodites undeniably exist, brain scans show that transgender individuals experience a life that feels somewhere in between male and female.

The proclamation assumes that sexual species exist only in male and female types, but nature has shown the world to be far more complex. The phrase "sin against nature" is also inaccurate, as 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."

2) Regarding the gay and lesbian 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."
>
> mormonandgay.lds.org

Studies are leaning towards the conclusion that people with certain DNA have a 40% chance of being gay, though nothing conclusive has been found either way. They also show that environmental factors, such as the mother's immune system or hormones, likely play a role on top of that, which in the end would leave the individual with no choice regarding what their orientation is. This would be consistent with the church's above statement.

The church has already changed here. They used to teach that all homosexually-inclined people in general were evil, and that it was a learned trait. In two pamphlets published by the church in 1970 and 1971, Spencer W. Kimball does not distinguish between those who do act on their feelings and those who don't. He repeats this statement in both pamphlets:

> "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.'"
>
> scribd.com, pamphlet also referenced by FAIR

In 1995, the church finally began to say that simply having same-sex attraction wasn't a sin. They began to clarify the difference without retracting anything taught beforehand. This was after decades-growth of a culture which believed that same-sex attraction is a choice and that those experiencing it are evil, vicious, and base (see Appendix E). Why were these individuals, desperate for help, being called evil by church leaders? How many teens have been thrown out on the street (sltrib)? God doesn't whisper to Kimball that he's incorrect?

4) 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

Just as hermaphrodites exist, there can exist varying degrees between gay and straight, in both romance and attraction. The brains of most gay people resemble those of the opposite gender. Love is felt in the brain and gay people do experience romantic love for their same-gender partners.

To understand what they go through in trying to love the opposite gender, consider trying this: Pick someone who you have no romantic pull towards and try forcing yourself to fall in love with that person. Try not feeling guilty if they fall in love with you, when you don't return the feelings (this story for example). Keep trying it with person after person, watching the heartache among those you date. Gay people, who choose to no longer pursue this course, are prescribed celibacy by church leaders (though celibacy doesn't fit into the Proclamation on the Family).

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.

Maybe Paul was speaking as a man when he wrote the "sin against nature" verses? Paul also condoned bondage and sexism. Christ spoke specifically against divorce in his new law (*and we allow divorce*), but not homosexuality. In fact, he preaches against requiring someone to do something that you do not have to do (in this case celibacy), as the pharisees added burdens which were "grievous to be born."

The current stance isn't so central a doctrine when we realize that we let widows marry men who they aren't sealed to (p. 82 here, screenshot), *so that they aren't alone*. Can we let gay people be with those they love, and get sealed in the next life (possibly to the opposite gender)?[4] Must they be alone, or marry someone they don't love, potentially ruining two lives? If we believe the homoromantic ones, they only experience romantic love for their own gender. I gathered a small collection of accounts of gay Mormons (more are here):

"I kept falling in love with close guy friends. There was one best guy friend in particular who I fell in love with. I felt whole around him. I wanted to be with him always. I knew my feelings of love for him were beyond hopeless, and such feelings never came for women. I'd be alone, always. I remember calling my mom. I was away from my apartment and looking around a dumpster for a sharp object as I made the call. I essentially begged her to let me kill myself, me saying something along the lines of "I can't do this to you. Would you be ok if I check out? I can't take this anymore." themormonchallenge.com - My Story

"I was doomed to live an entire lifetime alone. But I was told that it would all be over after this life. And soon the conclusion set in that my best hope was to end my life by my own hand. I had nothing to look forward to. I didn't have a happy life plan like all the kids around me." nomorestrangers.org

I think I have no hope of marrying, so I get depressed and think I have no purpose in my life, so I think of just ending it now. It would make things so much less painful. Just think of having to endure never being intimate physically or emotionally with anyone. …" ~Mormons Building Bridges post, Sep 28, 2014

"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 want to love and be loved back…" thoughtsofscotthalle.blogspot.com

"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**…. 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…. 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

"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." From comments on www.huffingtonpost.com

Summary) While the church has improved in avoiding the more scathing rhetoric, it still prescribes celibacy as a solution. No one would argue that loneliness isn't a contributor to suicide. Should we wait in faith until the next life to understand God's mysteries while these people suffer? Must we take issue with them finding joy, especially if we can't be certain the leaders are correct here?

4. It doesn't even need to be considered a change in doctrine. If the church can have policies allowing divorce, which technically goes against older doctrine, then there can be a policy that allows gay people to be with those they love.

Ch. 9 – On Intimacy and Guilt

LDS leaders teach that guilt is a divine indicator of wrong-doing:

> "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
>
> "That feeling of guilt is to the spirit what pain is to the physical body... Guilt is not erased without pain. There are laws to obey and ordinances to receive, and there are penalties to pay."
>
> ~Elder Packer, lds.org - The Touch of the Master's Hand

Is guilt a divine indicator or is it a result of indoctrination?

> **Seventh Day Adventists can't go to theaters (revivalsermons.org):**
>
> "I do remember going to the movies for the first time. I felt so guilty. I didn't even sit down, but stood in the back and watched about fifteen minutes of 'Ma and Pa Kettle Go To Hawaii.'"
>
> **JWs can't celebrate holidays (caic.org):**
>
> "Since my dad nor anyone from his side of the family were Witnesses, we were still allowed to celebrate holidays and birthdays. But as much as I really loved doing that, I knew in my heart of hearts that they were wrong, and I felt guilty for having truly enjoyed opening my Christmas presents with the other members of my family, eating Thanksgiving dinner and watching Fourth of July fireworks."
>
> **The Amish aren't allowed to drive cars (abcnews.go.com):**
>
> "'I felt guilty [having a car] until I had one for a couple of years, and then the guilt wore off,' John said."
>
> **Muslim women must wear a hijab (dispatch.com):**
>
> "I took off the hijab. Interestingly, every time I took it off, I felt guilty, and I would just want to put it back on."

In the next four examples, members of the various religions indicate feeling very guilty for eating non-kosher beef (Jewish), non-halal beef (Muslim), beef (Hindu), and chicken (vegetarian Hindu). Is it sinful to eat chicken?

There's an especially strong focus in the church on sexual sin. Why do people still feel guilty after *marital sex*, as in these cases (1, 2, 3), among many others? Are people focusing on sexual sin due to a natural feeling called post-coital tristesse?

Summary) In Mormonism, guilt has become a huge basis in determining what's right in one's personal life. If it's unreliable, perhaps empathy works better?

Ch. 10 – Mark Hofmann and the Gift of Discernment

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. The church ended up paying at least $100,000 worth in cash and traded materials for 48 of Hofmann's "early church documents." 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?

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)
>
> "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)

Summary) It is concerning that the First Presidency were lacking in a connection with the divine here. The examples of whitewashing and hiding material also raise questions. What else does the church hide that it does not deem faith-promoting?

Tithing and the City Creek Mall

In determining whether or not the church is God's kingdom on earth, we have the option of examining its finances. Is there room for improvement here?

1) The church financed the City Creek Mall (Fig. 25) in Salt Lake City. FAIR states that the mall cost the church's real estate department, Property Reserve, Inc., $1.5 billion (screenshot). The money comes from church-owned businesses 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. Is Christ behind that? I've been there and witnessed the selling of $80,000 watches. The amount spent on humanitarian aid by the LDS church pales in comparison to both the amount spent on the mall and the amount spent by some other churches (screenshot). The church also owns a large hunting preserve, with permits reaching $8500.

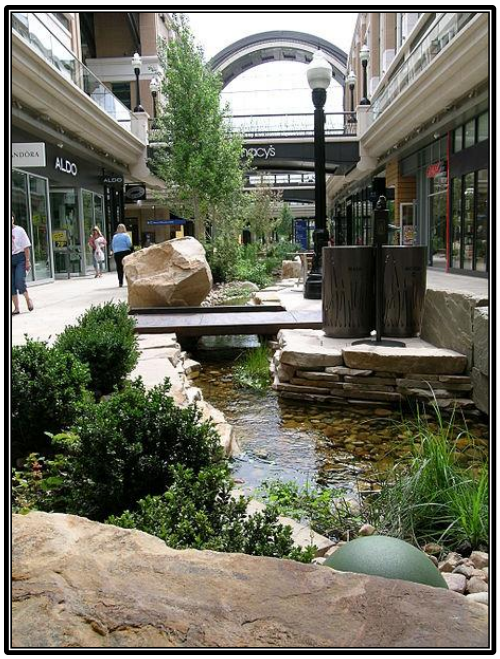


Figure 25 – By Uncle Alf (Own work) [CC0], via Wikimedia Commons link

3) Church leaders are usually found stating that the church has no paid ministry (quotes given below). According to KSL, an LDS-owned news site, General Authorities have divulged on at least two occasions that they do receive a "living allowance" for their full-time work. The article discusses a leaked document showing the "base living allowance" to be $120,000/year. A church spokesman points out that the allowance is "very modest in comparison with **executive** compensation in industry and the professions." $120,000/year is almost three times the average American income. Church leaders paint a different picture:

"I explained also that our Church has no paid ministry and indicated that these were two reasons why we were able to build the buildings then under way, including the beautiful temple at Freiberg."

Elder Thomas S. Monson, lds.org - Our Sacred Priesthood Trust

"Did they also tell you that we have no professional clergy? All of us contribute our time, our talents, our means, and travel—all to help the work. And we're not paid for it in money."

~Elder Boyd K. Packer, lds.org- Where Much Is Given Much Is Required

1 Corinthians 18:17 – "What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel."

Anti-Intellectualism

Church leaders often discourage members from thoroughly investigating them, in some cases even going as far as telling members to avoid people critical of them. In this setting, the leaders have gotten by with portraying Joseph as a monogomist, and in portraying the Book of Mormon translation without the seer stone.

1) The internet has forced the church into being more open (see Snow's quote on p. 4). While failing to acknowledge that anti-Mormons were in many cases more truthful than the church, current leaders often warn about the internet:

> "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

Jehovah's Witness leaders say the same thing. Members are discouraged from reading anything critical of the church. This would work if the church gave the entire picture, but as the next pages show, they often leave out important details.

2) A side effect of trying to control the message is that some leaders have advocated for the shunning of those who leave the church (Appendix E). While more loving quotes do exist, one of the temple recommend questions still puts members in a tough spot, as it's up for interpretation by local leaders:

> "Do you support, affiliate with, or agree with any group or individual whose teachings or practices are contrary to or oppose those accepted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?"
>
> fairmormon.org

Summary) Members should be taught how to research (such as checking for sources and context), instead of being made to fear research.

Whitewashing and Dishonesty

Some of Joseph's dishonesty and questionable moments:

- He compiled a work of mistranslated Egyptian characters (the GAEL). – p. 51
- Joseph told his followers that the corpse interred with the Kinderhook Plates was a descendant of Pharaoh. He may have inferred from the GAEL that a symbol on the plates meant "the line of Pharaoh." Aside from the fact that the GAEL is made-up, it is still a stretch to take a pseudo-translation of one symbol, from several plates, and tell your believers that *the corpse itself* is descended from Pharaoh. – p. 53
- Joseph, who once lived near Onondaga County, told of a Lamanite prophet named Onandagus. – p. 38
- According to Joseph, the words for angels and the sun in the Pure Language are Awmen-Angls-men and Shinehah. – p. 46
- In D&C, Joseph claims that church members need to build him (Joseph) a house, as commanded by Christ. Along with this, Christ says that Sidney Rigdon can live as seemeth him good. Joseph also claims that Christ threatened Martin Harris with destruction if Martin didn't finance the Book of Mormon. – p. 46
- Joseph claimed that an angel with a drawn sword threatened to destroy him if he did not practice polygamy (p. 43). He claimed that Christ commands wives to believe their husband (pertaining to polygamy) and administer to their husband, or else be destroyed (Christ: "for I will destroy her"). Joseph married women without Emma's knowledge (p. 45), married two sisters (sexually), without either knowing her sister was also marrying him (p. 46), publically denied polygamy (p. 47), and told William Clayton that if the public found out about Clayton's wives, he'd excommunicate him (for show) and then re-baptize him (p. 66 of full version).
- Joseph borrowed a Freemasonry ceremony, which has no connection to Solomon's Temple, and told his followers that its tokens, etc., are needed to return to heaven, in spite of the Book of Mormon saying otherwise. – p. 48
- Joseph's 1832 First Vision account contradicts our current version. Did he learn through scripture study (before the vision) that all churches were false, or did he learn this during the vision? The 1832 account leaves out God the Father. – p. 55
- Instead of saying that he used a seer stone to hunt for treasure, Joseph said that his "money-digging" was just him helping Josiah Stoal mine silver (JS-H). – p. 57

- Joseph used the same seer stone he used for treasure hunting (which he found in a well) to translate the Book of Mormon. He claimed that words appear on the stone, which he recited, thereafter having the scribe repeat everything back to ensure it was correct (p. 19). We then find numerous grammar errors, among other mistakes which don't fit with this story (pp. 20-24). He removed the contradiction of the name Jesus Christ appearing in 1 Nephi (p. 21). His story behind the lost 119 pages and the back-up plates isn't entirely sound (p. 57).

  Joseph then essentially says that we're damned if we don't follow him. Given over 150 years without the internet, the church also hasn't always presented the entire picture. We've covered many cases. How many remain undiscovered?

- Rigdon changed the reference to the divining rod in D&C 8. – p. 45
- B. H. Roberts changed an 1835 First Vision account to "my first vision." – p. 56
- The Adam-Michael contradiction is removed from D&C 137. – p. 48
- Other church members denied the practice of polygamy. – p. 65
- 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. 26) gave 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:

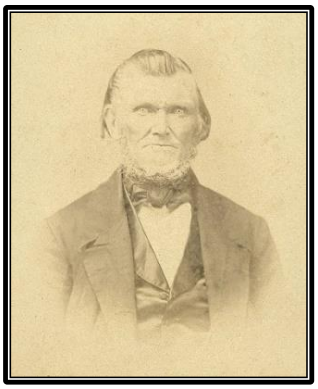


Figure 26 – Charles Roscoe Savage
[Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, link

Wilford Woodruff on July 24, 1847:	Wilford Woodruff on July 3rd, 1880:
"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	"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 FAIR

- The LDS Church published the JS-H as the official First Vision for over a century, without any referencing his other accounts (p. 55) They depict his translation method with hardly any reference to the seer stone, as in Preach My Gospel.
- The LDS Church withheld the information that they held Joseph's seer stones in their vaults. They finally released a picture of the stone in 2015. – p. 19
- The Book of Abraham essay omits the facsimile mistranslations. – p. 51
- The Polygamy essay omits the "virgin requirement" (p. 60). The Polygamy essay omits other disturbing details regarding polygamy, such as specifics regarding Helen Mar, Zina Huntington, and the Partridge sisters. (p. 59).
- A current Sunday School manual portrays Brigham Young as a monogamist. In the first chapter, it only records his marriage to Miriam Works and then only his marriage to Mary Angell after Miriam's death.
- The Peace and Violence essay omits that blood atonement was to be one day restored, along with other disturbing aspects of Brigham's talk. – p. 79
- Lds.org removed the Mark Hofmann article from their Ensign archives, and storing damaging records in their vaults. – p. 94
- The Race and the Priesthood essay calls the past doctrine a policy, and claims that Brigham said the policy would end at "some future day." – p. 82
- Compare the following quote with the Race and the Priesthood section (p. 82):

"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

Conclusion

One must weigh the evidence. 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.

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.

Appendix A – Additional Cases of Evangelical Influence

Continuing Jonathan Edwards Sr. from page 8:

Jonathan Edwards, Sr. (1703-1758)	
"strivings of God's spirit …"	Moroni 8:28 – "the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; …"
"when you and I shall meet before the judgment seat of Christ."	Ether 12:38 – "until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, …"
"on the wicked, as well as the godly …"	Alma 40:19 – "on the wicked as well as the righteous …"
"They are without God in the world."	Alma 41:11 – "they are without God in the world …"
"misery and torment, …"	Mosiah 3:25 – "misery and endless torment. …"
"suffer the second death."	Alma 13:30 – "suffer the second death."
"Christ's condescension …"	1 Nephi 11:16 – "condescension of God?"
"infinite goodness …"	2 Nephi 1:10 – "infinite goodness …"
"an ignominious death …"	Alma 1:15 – "an ignominious death."
"torment of body, …"	1 Nephi 15:31 – "torment of the body …"
"offering up himself a sacrifice for sinners …"	2 Nephi 2:7 – "he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, …" – also used by Paul
George Whitefield (1714-1770)	
"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?"	Alma 5:12 – "there was a mighty change wrought in his heart."

"The day he did eat thereof he was not only subject to temporal, but spiritual death; …"	Alma 42:9 – "the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal, …"
"this life is the only time allotted by Almighty God for working out our salvation, …"	Alma 34:32 - "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."
From *The Eternity of Hell-Torments*: "O that I had never…" "O that I had rejected…" "O that I had taken…' "miserable for ever" "racking" "These are hard sayings, who can bear them?"	3 Nephi 8:24 – "O that we had repented …" 3 Nephi 8:25 – "O that we had repented …" 2 Nephi 2:25 – "miserable forever …" Alma 36:17 – "racked ..." 1 Nephi 16:1 – "thou hast declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear …"
Ray Potter (1795-1858, ordained in 1819) – These last two may have been said after 1830.	
"the day of grace was gone …"	Mormon 2:15 – "the day of grace was passed with them, …"
***Alfred* Bennett (1780-?)**	
"may the Saviour's i mage be impressed on your heart !"	Alma 5:14 – "Have you received his image in your countenances?" Alma 5:19 – "can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?"

Outside of the evangelical world, here is another case of the Book of Mormon using a phrase/concept of Joseph's time:

Isaac Backus (1773)	Book of Mormon
"no tongue nor pen can fully describe …"	Mormon 4:11 – "it is impossible for the tongue to describe, or for man to write …"

Joseph had Presbyterian-leaning family, and was likely familiar with its main work, *The Confession of Faith*. Did that work influence the Book of Mormon?

The Confession of Faith	Book of Mormon
1:5 – "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority [of the scriptures], is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."	Moroni 10:5 – "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."
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." Note: Any Christian description of God's plan would appear similar. Doctrinal contradictions here were discussed on p. 31.	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; …"
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."	Alma 41:3-4 – "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." Mosiah 4:30 – "if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, … ye must perish."
9:4 – "[God], by his grace alone, enables [men] 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."	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, …"

Appendix B – The Two-Continent (Hemispheric) Model

The DNA chapter already established that Lehites were at least in the eastern states (Christ's reference, Moroni's claim, the Hill Cumorah, a prophecy of the land including the U.S., and names in the region – which were available to Joseph). This appendix will show that they were intended to be present in Central America as well. The final points will show why they were also intended to be in South America.

As lightly touched on in the DNA chapter, the two-continent (hemispheric model) *was* the accepted model for the Book of Mormon. For example, from "A Proclamation of the Apostles" in 1845:

> "We also bare testimony that the 'Indians' (so called) of **North and South America** are a remnant of the tribes of Israel; as is now made manifest by the discovery and revelation of their ancient oracles and records."
>
> books.google.com - Millennial Star

What changed was that their model didn't fit with the grand scheme of civilization which occurred on both continents. A few examples:

1) There wasn't ever a continuous civilization which filled up North America (and parts of South America), as Helaman 3 would indicate, given a hemispheric model. The Mayans, North American tribes, pre-Incans, etc. were each different civilizations, with different timelines.

2) The presence of natives throughout both continents through 600 B.C. makes God's promise to Lehi incredibly problematic. The continents were already occupied (though the limited geography regions were as well).

3) The DNA of ancient new world inhabitants was Siberian. This is especially an issue if both continents were full of Israelites (though it's an issue no matter what, as each region contained Siberian DNA).

4) As some apologists point out, the impassibility of parts of Panama would cause the Nephites problems – if that was the narrow neck of land. This knowledge wasn't common enough for the apostles to question anything in their statement.

With all of this, apologists had to ignore statements such as the apostles' proclamation and divide into the two regional models, though neither work. Each camp points out the faults of the other.

First, we'll rule out why most of the potential narrow necks of land in the Great Lakes area don't qualify as THE narrow neck of land.

1) The narrow passage was supposed to be between the Land Northward and the Southward (Alma 50:34, Mormon 2:29). With the passage to the right, it can hardly be described as a passage between the land northward and southward. Both sides extend far northward and southward.



Note: Pictures used in this section come from here, here, here, and here.

---

2) The Hill Cumorah is north of the narrow passage (Alma 22:30, Ether 15:11, Mormon 2:29), eliminating this potential land bridge.



---

3) Our remaining candidate so far is the land bridge shown to the right.



On why they Lehites also had to be in Central America (the DNA section already touched on Columbus' visit to the Lamanites in 1 Nephi 13:12, and how he only visited Mesoamerica and the South Americans in the Caribbean).

1) It stretches reason to say that the Lehites crossed the entire ocean and *then* sailed hundreds of miles upriver before disembarking and colonizing the new world. It also stretches reason to say that the Lehites landed at the seashore, familiarized themselves with the land (such as the Northeast United States), and then started referring to a single narrow neck of land between the land northward and the land southward. This is more concerning given that the Lehites landed on a western shore (see #2).



vs.

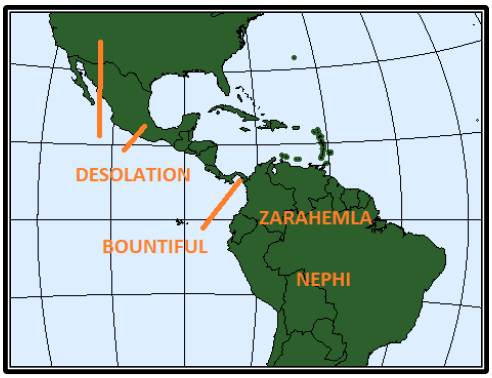


---

2) The land Bountiful is on the south side of the narrow neck of land (Alma 22:31-32). The land of Zarahemla is south of the land Bountiful (Alma 22:29). The land of Nephi is south of the land of Zarahemla (Alma 22:27). The passage describes the narrow neck of land and then says (Alma 22:32) "and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward." In the Great Lakes model, those lands aren't surrounded by water at all. As part of all this, it says that Lehi landed in the shore of the west sea, west of the land of Nephi, putting them in the Pacific Ocean, far away from the Great Lakes (Alma 22:28).

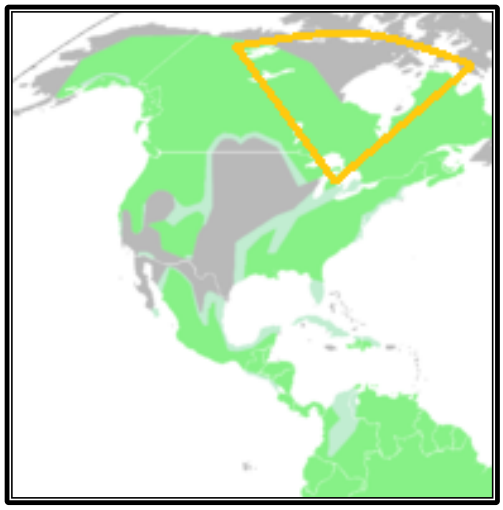


vs.



3) Timber was "exceedingly scarce in the land northward" (Helaman 3:10, also vs. 3-9 of that chapter), with the unforested land still being habitable – as they built "many cities" there of cement (Helaman 3:11).

This doesn't work at all for the Great Lakes theory, which is mostly forested – with a small percentage being uninhabitable tundra. It fits perfectly for the hemispheric model, and for the Mesoamerican model. The green sections of the maps below show today's forests, while the bluish-green sections show how the forests were bigger in 2000 B.C.



vs.



---

4) The mention of "many cities of cement" in Helaman 3:11 (in the unforested land *northward*) fits with the well-known cities of the Pueblo peoples (picture), discovered by the Spanish in the 16th century – in the arid southwestern United States – well south of the Great Lakes models.





5) The Nephites had the Lamanites blocked in the Land Southward (Alma 22:33). With the Great Lakes model, Lamanites could still get to the Land Northward.



vs.



---

6) The Nephites travelled "an exceedingly great distance" northward from the narrow passage, eventually reaching "large bodies of water." Four verses later, they mention a single "sea north" (red circle below) as something different from multiple large bodies of water. The Great Lakes model can be made to work with this text, though if the Nephites were used to the Great Lakes, it would be odd for them to emphasize reaching large bodies of water, when they already lived surrounded by large bodies of water.

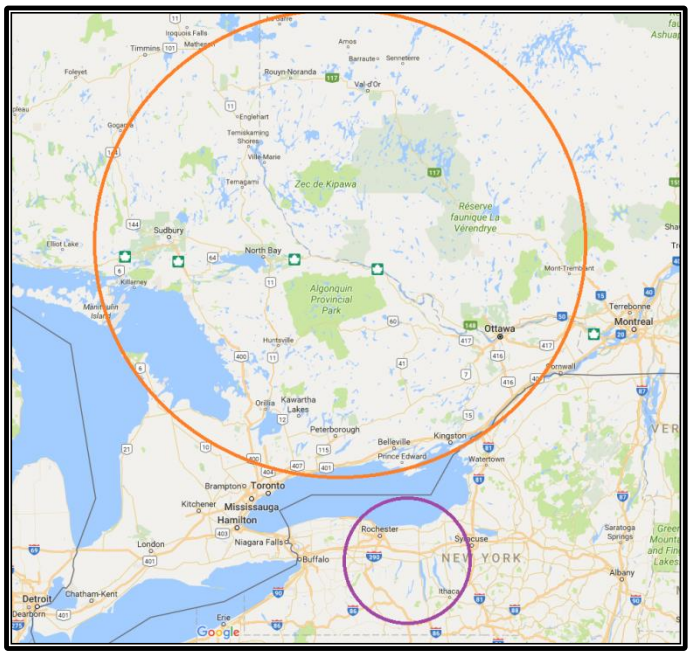
The hemispheric model works here, keeping the same sea north. While the Mesoamerican-theory apologists would rail at the ridiculous distance on the right, they already have to deal with that distance due to the evidence of the Lamanites being in the Northeast. It is the same naïve story-telling as having two nations go extinct on the same hill. The apostles in 1845 didn't question the extreme distances. It didn't seem so extreme to them, or to Joseph, if he wrote it.



vs.



7) While discussing those waters, it would be strange for Mormon to refer to the Hill Cumorah area as a land of many waters (Mormon 6:4, purple circle on the right), when the Nephites had already spread through the northern terrain to an exceedingly great distance, given the amount of lakes throughout their territory (orange circle).



---

8) The Nephites "began to cover the face of the whole earth" from a sea to each the north, south, east, and west. This works well with the hemispheric model, which lets the Nephites expand to the sea south in spite of the Lamanites occupying the land to the south of the Nephites. This doesn't fit as well with the Great Lakes model, with more than one potential sea to the south, east, and west.



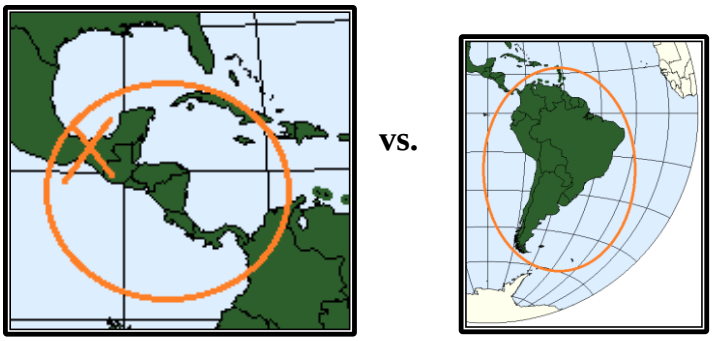
vs.

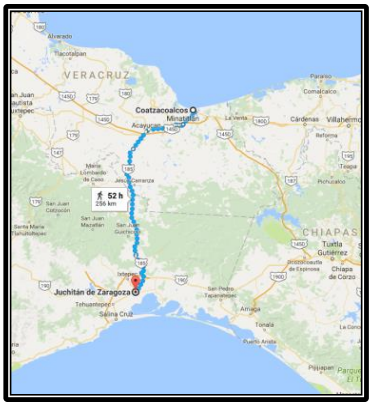


On why they Lehites also had to be in South America:

1) As described earlier, the land southward was completely surrounded by water except for the narrow neck of land. While the Great Lakes model doesn't come close, the Mesoamerican model does, and so wording becomes more important. "… and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward" is worded with the narrow neck as the reason that those lands are only nearly surrounded, and not completely surrounded by water. It doesn't say "they were nearly surrounded, there being small necks of land on both sides."

While Mesoamerican-theory apologists may be upset by the ridiculous distance to the south here, their model already faces those distances to reach the Lamanites in New York and the Hill Cumorah. The hemispheric model just shows that the naïve story-telling goes in both directions. Even if their territory only stretches far northward, DNA and archaeological evidence still become far more problematic.





2) The narrow neck of land needs to be a day-and-a-half journey from the "east [sea] to the west sea" (Alma 22:32). The word "sea" after the word "east" is implied, and is confirmed by the word "thus" when saying it was a small neck of land. "It was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite … from the east to the west sea; and **thus** the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla **were nearly surrounded by water, there being a small neck of land** …" The neck of land in the Mesoamerican model (the X above) is 150 miles long. It stretches reason pretty far to say that it's a day-and-a-half journey to travel 150 miles. The width also diminishes its oft-emphasized strategic value.

Appendix C – Sidney Rigdon: The Lost Chapter

There is some evidence that Sidney Rigdon (Fig. 27) 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. In some places the ice is thin, and guesswork is required. Other parts are more concrete. 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.

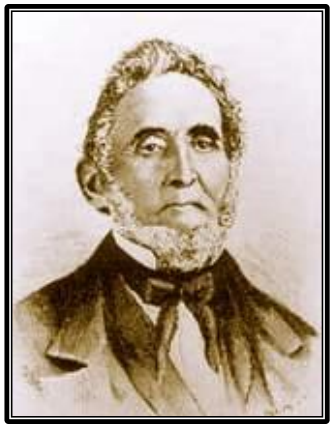


Figure 27 – See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, link

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." (byu.edu, screenshot). According to byu.edu, Sidney believed in having a communal, or "equal communitarian" society and was developing one near Kirtland. In this he disagreed with Campbell, who upon hearing the idea "turned him away mortified, chagrined and alienated…" (pp. 209, 298 of *Early History of the Disciples* Note: this occurred shortly before Sidney's baptism in 1830). 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 (see p. 113).

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. 7 of this document).

Late 1820s – During the production of the Book of Mormon, Sidney was busy gathering two congregations of "Rigdonites" (history.lds.org). If Sidney was gathering people to eventually become LDS, it would make sense for him to hold off on preaching divine authority until he could claim it (byu.edu, screenshot).[5]

Early History of the Disciples (p. 239) and *Public Discussion* (pp. 45-46) give testimonies of six witnesses who claim that Sidney spoke of a coming Restoration and of a coming book that would teach about the Indians (screenshots: Dunlap, Bentley, Rudolph, Green, Dille, and Atwater). 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).

Note: Both Joseph (in Harmony) and Sidney worked near Pittsburgh in 1825-1826 (byu.edu and lds.org), as Harmony is 30 miles from Pittsburgh. Maybe Joseph's seer stone reputation caught Sidney's attention as someone who could carry out the project. According to Joseph's neighbors (FAIR: Sophia, McKune, Willard & Isaac, screenshots), the first plan was a translation of the plates by Joseph's son at the age of three. This changed when his son died in childbirth. Sidney may also have chosen Joseph so the book would come from someone less educated. Sidney would proclaim how unlearned Joseph was ("if that was all the education he had" in *A Son's Record* and "ignorant of letters" on p. 210 of *Early History of the Disciples*). Joseph may also have attended a sermon of Sidney's near Pittsburgh. [6]

Aug., 1830 – A Rigdonite, Parley Pratt, leaves for NY to preach. He abandons his paid boat passage partway and heads reaches the Smith's, where he is converted (*Improvement Era* & his autobiography, screenshot). He later returns to Rigdon.

November, 1830 –Sidney apparently 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 allowed Pratt preach Mormonism to his congregations (byu.edu). A large portion converted (lds.org). lds.org makes it sounds like the allowance came after his conversion.

5. According to the article, Pratt complained that Sidney did not preach divine authority – "the authority to minister in holy things."
6. If Joseph and Sidney didn't meet until 1825, wouldn't it have been after the First Vision and Moroni's visit? There is actually no mention of the First Vision (FAIR), Moroni's visit (FAIR), or the golden plates anywhere before 1827. Joseph could have made it up then, though this would require that his mother lied on his behalf in her 1844-1845 biography of his life, as she recounts hearing of the Angel Moroni event in 1823. Other people lied on Joseph's behalf in regards to polygamy, but with Lucy in this case it would be quite an elaborate lie. Another possibility is that Joseph conceived of the golden plates idea himself in 1823, and talked with Sidney about it in 1825. The alternate possibilities and speculation can go on and on. In my opinion, it is ok to conclude, "Maybe, maybe not."

December, 1830 – Weeks after his baptism on Nov. 8, Sidney began 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 project.

December 9, 1830 – *A month after his baptism*, Sidney was 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).

Note: 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). Someone (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, except for Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, are commanded to go on missions (D&C 42:4). Both served 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 made changes to D&C, such as removing the explicit reference to Oliver's divining rod (FAIR). Sidney likely wrote most of the "Lectures on Faith". By now, Sidney and Joseph were aware of theories that Sidney was the founder. In public, Sidney made a show of being Joseph's subservient (byu.edu, p. 115).[7]

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

7. According to the BYU article, there were a couple of cases in public where Sidney was seen deferring to Joseph's wisdom.

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, screenshot).

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, screenshot).

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 revelation and threatening to expose the church's secrets (p. 664 of Oct. 1, 1844: byu.edu). The secrets were likely polygamy-related, due to his reference to iniquity. After failing, some followed him into establishing another communitarian society in Pennsylvania (lds.org). This venture, like the one in Kirtland, failed.

Between 1863 and 1876 – From byu.edu: Sidney announced new revelations, including a claim that "the [Eskimos] are descendants of Joseph the son of Lehi" (screenshot). Sidney declared himself to be the spokesman of 2 Nephi 3 (screenshot), and "claimed to know the contents of the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon" (screenshot). The authors of the article believe that Cowdery was the spokesman, though this contradicts D&C 100, 124, and the fact that D&C never refers to Oliver 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 fraud in producing scripture.

By the end of his life, Sidney "believed that nearly everyone else but him had gone astray" (byu.edu, screenshot). In 1876, Sidney's wife burned all of his writings after his death (Box 1, Folder 7 of #3 of byu.edu, screenshot). Two relatives of Sidney (John, Nancy) believe that Sidney was not behind the Book of Mormon (p. 120-122 of byu.edu, screenshot), 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.

Was Sidney's motive to improve upon Christianity, as his grandson claims?

Appendix D – Miscellaneous Quotes

The section has bearing on the reliability and honesty of church leaders.

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 (p. 53 in this document for info on this source)

In the situation below, if Smith had already reproved Emma for her evil treatment, what were the harsh measures that he resorted to?

"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

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. See page 76 on the Word of Wisdom.

"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 here 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

On Joseph being elected their king in the Council of Fifty:

"This organization was called the Council of Fifty or Kingdom of God,… In this Council was President Joseph chosen as our Prophet, Priest and King by Hosannas."

~William Clayton, An Intimate Chronicle pp. 153-154,

On Joseph and Brigham teaching that the moon is inhabited:

"Who can tell us of the inhabitants of this little planet that shines of an evening, called the moon?... When you inquire about the inhabitants of that sphere you find that the most learned are as ignorant in regard to them as the ignorant of their fellows. So it is in regard to the inhabitants of the sun. Do you think it is inhabited? I rather think it is. Do you think there is any life there? No question of it; it was not made in vain."

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 271, quote also found at FAIR

"As far back as 1837, I know he [Smith] said the moon was inhabited by men and women the same as this earth, and that they lived to a greater age than we do – that they live generally to near the age of 1000 years. He described the men as averaging near six feet in height, and dressing quite uniformly in something near the Quaker style. **In my Patriarchal blessing**, given by the father of Joseph the Prophet, in Kirtland, 1837, I was told that I should preach the gospel before I was 21 years of age; that I should preach the gospel to the inhabitants upon the islands of the sea, and – to the inhabitants of the moon, even the planet you can now behold with your eyes."

~Oliver B. Huntington, The Young Women's Journal Vol. 3, March 6, 1892, pp. 263-264 pic

Brigham Young on driving out apostates:

"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 at FAIR

Brigham Young, on polygamy as a requirement to enter heaven:

"The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy. Others attain unto a glory and may even be permitted to come into the presence of the Father and the Son; but they cannot reign as kings in glory, because they had blessings offered unto them, and they refused to accept them."

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 269, quote also found at FAIR

Note: The final phrase shows that he wasn't just talking about believing in polygamy.

Brigham Young describing a consecrated oil enema:

"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 (address has since been deleted). screenshot

George Albert Smith denying evolution in a current manual:

[Adam] could not transgress, and by doing so bring death into the world; for, according to this theory [of evolution], death had always been in the world. If, therefore, there was no fall, there was no need of an atonement, hence the coming into the world of the Son of God as the Savior of the world is a contradiction, a thing impossible. Are you prepared to believe such a thing as that?"

~George Albert Smith

lds.org - Old Testament Student Manual

George Albert Smith on shunning apostates, along with a similar statement:

"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."

~George Albert Smith

lds.org - Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith, still in use

"Avoid those who would teardown your faith. Faith-killers are to be shunned. The seeds which they plant in the minds and hearts of men grow like cancer and eat away the Spirit."

~Elder Carlos E. Asay

lds.org - Opposition to the Word of God

Joseph Fielding Smith saying that we'll never get a man into space:

"We will never get a man into space. This earth is man's sphere and it was never intended that he should get away from it. The moon is a superior planet to the earth and it was never intended that man should go there. You can write it down in your books that this will never happen."

Fairmormon.org

Spencer W. Kimball on gay people:

"The many **perverts** will claim to have great 'love' for someone with whom they've been involved, especially if there has been a sustained relationship…"

scribd.com, p. 4, pamphlet also referenced by FAIR

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."

scribd.com, pp. 14, 29, pamphlet also referenced by FAIR

Dallin H. Oaks refusing to apologize for past rhetoric on gay people:

"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

Dallin H. Oaks on how he received a testimony, saying that current leaders haven't had the kind of experience like Alma the Younger had in seeing an angel:

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

"For millions … the testimony settles upon us gradually … One day you didn't have it and another day you did *and you don't know which day it happened*." This sounds less like the spirit bearing witness and more like how belief develops.

Appendix E – The November Policy

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 applied 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. Minors have always needed parental permission to be baptized (section 5 of the handbook). This would mean the new policy only applies to those who *do* want their children baptized.

Apologists: Elder Christofferson stated that this policy expands a policy for polygamy, protects children from conflicting messages, and protects relationships.

Response: The polygamy policy is in section 5 (pp. 33-34). It does not make the children wait until age 18. Also notice on pp. 31-32 that it does not prohibit baby blessings. 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?

These children are still welcome to attend church (as Christofferson says), where they will hear conflicting messages. Now, the church sends the message to these children that they have to move out and get First Presidency permission to be baptized because of their parents. Do children of apostates, the divorced, and murderers hear conflicting messages about their parents? In accord with Christ's teachings, they aren't barred from baptism. In church-going gay families, where the parents and children *want* the baptism to occur, the child is *still going to church* (as Christofferson indictates) and holding LDS beliefs. They are simply agreeing to follow its rules, which would be far less difficult of a thing than if the child had unbelieving parents who drank, slept around, shopped on Sunday, etc.

Does it protect family relationships 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?

Apologists: Some have speculated that those in a gay marriage have a more difficult time changing their situation than a fornicator or an exmormon, hence the difference in treatment.

Response: According to the policy, even if a parent "has ever lived" in a same-gender cohabitation or marriage, the child still has to move out in order to get baptized. So, even if the parent does change the situation and fully gets in line with what the church leaders teach, the child still can't be baptized.

With that aspect of the policy, the requirement for the individual to receive First Presidency permission, and the requirement to disavow same-sex marriage, the real reason behind this policy appears to be fear that pro-gay ideas are infecting the church. Keeping children from baptism – which in doing so denies the child access to remission of sins and the Gift of the Holy Ghost – would be the cost paid to prevent that.

Surrounding Events: The church supported a bill in early 2015 that achieved a balance of sorts between LGBT rights and religious freedom. The legislation prevents LGBT people from being fired or evicted in most circumstances (outside of religious institutions). LGBT communities have been lobbying for these kind of rights for decades, and having the LDS church finally on board was a welcome change for many. After these positive steps were taken, the November Policy caught many people off guard.

Between the exposure of this policy on November 5, 2015 and January 28, 2016, there were reports of LGBT Mormon youth suicides. Three weeks after reporting to mourn with those who mourn, the LDS church spoke out against a new bill (text of the bill here) which would classify violence against LGBT people as hate crimes. Religion is already protected under hate crimes legislation in Utah, where such legislation currently applies to violence against persons, not property. The bill would have expanded protections for religion to apply to property as well, and would have expanded protections for both persons and property to cover LGBT people – which is why the LDS church spoke against it, saying it would alter their balance of religious liberty and LGBT rights attained in 2015.

Hate crime laws increase the punishment for a crime by one degree when it is proven that the crime was committed out of hatred of the victim's race, religion, etc. Such laws exist because these crimes threaten the whole community associated with the individual, and because the perpertrator, led by hate, is very likely to commit the crime again. There are believing LGBT members as well, committed to the church's policies, who may act feminine/masculine but can't help it. They also need these protections. From The New York Times: L.G.B.T people are more likely to be targets of hate crimes than any other minority group.