



The Mormon Challenge

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

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Introduction

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

Sources Used

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

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

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

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

~Elder Snow, Church Historian, 2013

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith Sr. and the Tree of Life

In 1811, Joseph’s father had the following dream (josephsmithpapers.org). Years later, the Book of Mormon begins with the same dream. Did Joseph Jr. borrow it?

Joseph Smith Sr.’s Dream	Book of Mormon (1830)
<p>‘I was travelling in an open desolate field...’</p>	<p>1 Nephi 8:9 – “I beheld a large and spacious field.”</p>
<p>“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 ...”</p>	<p>1 Nephi 8:13,20 – “13 I beheld a river of water ...” 20 I also beheld a strait and narrow path ...”</p>
<p>“[I] beheld a beautiful stream of water.... I could see a rope running along the bank, ...”</p>	<p>1 Nephi 8:19 – “I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, ...”</p>
<p>“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. ...”</p>	<p>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; ...”</p>
<p>“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.... ”</p>	<p>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.”</p>
<p>“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 ...”</p>	<p>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)</p>

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.

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

Response: The detail present in Lucy’s account suggests that she had access to Joseph Smith Sr.’s written account. She recounts more of his dreams, each just as detailed. Two of these dreams are also provided at josephsmithpapers.org. In the [first](#), Lucy (in 1845) even 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.



Figure 1 - A painting by Jerry Thompson depicting the tree of life and rod of iron; Primary manual 4-13, [link](#)

Ancient Evangelists

The Israelites in the Book of Mormon use the same unique phrases and concepts as the evangelists of Joseph's region. The production of the Book of Mormon was mentioned [as early as 1827](#), which means that Joseph had several years to visit congregations to compile material before the dictation. Could Joseph have heard these phrases and teachings echoed in the congregations of his area? The connection between Jonathan Edwards Jr. and Alma 42 is particularly striking.

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

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

Jonathan Edwards Jr. vs. Alma 42 (many similarities clustered within ten verses):

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."

Jonathan Edwards, Jr., continued	
<u>"If there be moral good in any of these tempers or actions, there must be moral evil in the directly opposite; and if there be no moral evil in the latter, there is no moral good in the former; as if there were no natural evil in pain there would be no natural good in pleasure."</u>	<u>2 Nephi 2:11</u> – "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad."
<u>"The original state was a state of order, regularity and due subordination, wherein every person and thing were in their proper places; so in this sense all things will finally be brought back to their original state ..."</u>	<u>Alma 41:4</u> – "Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, ..."
Jonathan Edwards, Sr. (1703-1758)	
<u>"the devil, who, because he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy."</u>	<u>2 Nephi 2:27</u> – "the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."
<u>"They are enemies to God in their affections. There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God."</u>	<u>Mosiah 3:19</u> – "For the natural man is an enemy to God, ..."
<u>"hardness of heart and blindness of mind."</u>	<u>Ether 4:15</u> – "hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, ..."
<u>"a lively and admiring sense of ..." "sensible of their own guilt, ..."</u>	<u>Mosiah 2:38</u> – "a lively sense of his own guilt, ..."
<u>"gulf of woe and misery."</u>	<u>2 Nephi 1:13</u> – "gulf of misery and woe."

Was Joseph educated enough to compile material? His father did teach school:

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

~Lucy Mack Smith, 1811

josephsmithpapers.org - Luck Mack Smith History

Conviction and Moroni's Promise

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

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

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

Can I know something by the power of the Holy Ghost if I'm not sure that it's the Holy Ghost that I felt? "The church says it's the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost says the church is true." What if what the church says is the Holy Ghost is actually something else? Does God work through these feelings, when the results are so conflicting? Are we trying to add our own meaning to natural feelings? 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. They have since removed this passage (hence the archived page).

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

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

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

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

3) 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/stilyin/album/17739/>) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

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

whyimcatholic.com - [Methodist Convert](#)

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

whyimcatholic.com

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

whyimcatholic.com

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

forums.catholic.com - [post #9](#)

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

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](https://www.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 alhumdulillah I became a Muslim and put on hijab.”

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

“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**. When one saves another from the torment of Hell, it is indeed an amazing feeling.”

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



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?

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

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

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

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

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

“It is not unusual to have a missionary say, ‘How can I bear testimony until I get one? How can I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is true? If I do not have such a testimony, would that not be dishonest?’ Oh, if I could teach you this one principle. A testimony is to be found in the bearing of it!”

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

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

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

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

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

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

thisamericanlife.org

7) Those who have received such 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 [8.2 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 [18 million](#). 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](#)

8) 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 will follow.

Muslims:

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

“In the car on our way to the mosque, I told the brother that I was thinking about changing my mind about taking Shahada. He told me that the choice was mine, but to beware of the doubts that Satan puts into one's head.... 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.... (quranadnsuana.art)

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 misrepresented. 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)

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

Had we been born in Islam and received an overwhelming answer of its truth, would we have ever left its flock of [1.7 billion people](#), risking damnation?

The Seer Stone and a Precise Text

1) The following is from one of the First Presidency-approved gospel topics essays (p. 4). In [this essay](#), the church establishes as fact that Joseph used a seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon. A picture of the stone is found on [lds.org](#). Joseph Smith found this stone in the ground “years before he retrieved the gold plates” and used it to try and find buried treasure. He then used that stone, instead of the Urim and Thummim, to translate the Book of Mormon.

“The 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? Why were the plates, Urim, and Thummim preserved for any role here when Joseph was already able to 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) [Lds.org](#) confirms that “the villagers of Palmyra and Manchester, New York, where the Smiths lived, sought out Joseph to find lost objects [using a seer stone]...” Again, the essay says he looked for “lost objects and buried treasure.” If this was the case, why did Joseph give a different story about his “money-digging” in 1838? See [JS-H 1:56](#) in the Pearl of Great Price.

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

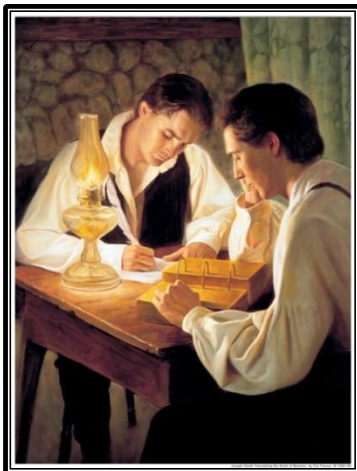


Figure 6 – Translating the Book of Mormon (Joseph Smith Translating the Book of Mormon), by Del Parson; GAK 416; GAB 92; Joseph Smith—History 1:34–35; 1:71, note, [link](#)



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

Changes to the Original Edition

1) [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 the following errors fit with Joseph receiving a word-for-word text ([p. 18](#))?

- Non-existent words and incomplete sentences ([Alma 56:10](#) – “numerority” & [Alma 55:7](#) – “Moroni caused that Laman and a small number of men which was appointed to go with him.”).
- Switching “was” with “were” and “done with “did” ([Alma 9:32](#) – “they was angry with me,” [3 Nephi 26:11](#) – “I were about to write them all,” [Mosiah 29:41](#) – “and this they done throughout all the land.”). Sometimes the switch worked. In these cases, among others, the switch doesn’t work.
- 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.”).

2) Another major change was in 1 Nephi 12:18, which originally used the name “Jesus Christ.” Joseph changed it to “the Messiah” on p. 30 of the [1837 edition](#).

“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.” The original edition made little sense, as Jacob doesn’t know the name Jesus Christ until 32 years after 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 shown on the seer stone?

Testing the Book of Mormon with the Bible

The following cases outline some inconsistencies between material in the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Even if Joseph was not given a word-for-word revelation of the Book of Mormon text ([p. 18](#)), these inconsistencies are still problematic.

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, borrowing from various sources, borrow from the wrong place here?

Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)	Acts 3:22-23 – ≈ 80-90 A.D.
<p>“15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;</p> <p>18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.</p> <p>19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”</p>	<p>“22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. [skips v. 18]</p> <p>23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">1 Nephi 22:20 – ≈ 570 B.C.</p> <p>“... 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)</p>

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 Galilean city. “The Way of the Red Sea” is a [different biblical road](#), which does not pass through Galilee, meaning 2 Nephi contradicts itself.

[FAIR](#) says that Oliver Cowdery, as scribe, may have added the word “Red” during transcription. Response: The RLDS church has the [complete Joseph Smith Translation](#), and [lds.org](#) shows that their JST is reliable (last page of [this Ensign article](#)). In the JST, Joseph changed “the sea” *in Isaiah 9:1 itself* to “the Red sea.” This 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.

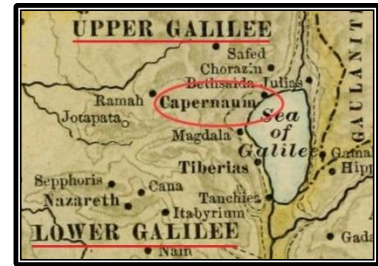


Figure 8 – By Internet Archive Book Images [No restrictions], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, color added, [link](#)

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

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

Copying Paul:

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

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

KJV vs JST vs BoM:

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

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

In the [Joseph Smith Translation](#), Joseph didn't just clarify Christ's message. He changed the meaning (this content is in [v. 43 of the JST](#)). In every other translation, Christ says that if you're asked to go a mile, go two (twain). In the JST, Christ is saying to walk only as far as you are asked.

"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 previous page? The Book of Mormon was supposed to clarify Biblical doctrine, not propagate its errors. Or maybe the JST is in error?

The Visitation of Christ:

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

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

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

byu.edu - [History of the Church, Vol. 6, Ch. 19, p. 408-409](#)



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

A comparison:

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

The Reality of the Law of Moses

There are discrepancies 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](#)). 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?

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 Father are separate beings.

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

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

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

The [1837 edition](#), and our edition of the Book of Mormon has “the Son of” added to each of those scriptures ([1 Nephi 11:18, 21](#), [1 Nephi 13:40](#)). Following this pattern, Joseph only sees “the Lord” in his first account of the First Vision (in 1832), whereas in later accounts he sees two personages. The 1832 account:

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

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

FAIR defends Joseph, giving examples from the early LDS church that they believe contradict Trinitarian doctrine. Some members spoke of Jesus at God's right hand, God referring to his Only Begotten Son, and the Son being in the Father's glory. Yet, these teachings are 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](#)). FAIR's Harris and Coltrin quotes were written 50 years after the fact.

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

[D&C 49:5,28](#) – “5 Thus saith the Lord; for I am God, and have sent mine Only Begotten Son into the world for the redemption of the world, ...”

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

Contradictions

Here are some additional cases of scriptural contradiction in the Book of Mormon.

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.”

Knowledge of Jesus' Name

As discussed on [page 20](#), an angel reveals the name Jesus Christ to Jacob. Yet, Jacob was enscribing in plates which already contained Jesus' name, as the 1830 Edition has Nephi writing Jesus' name down in 1 Nephi 12:18. Nephi's message was [for his people](#), so why didn't he tell Jacob the name of Christ? Joseph later changed “Jesus Christ” to “the Messiah.” It seems like he was aware of this issue.

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

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

Age of Enos

Jacob was born in the wilderness by 591 B.C. 170+ years later, his son Enos “began to be old.” Additionally, the 7 generations from Jacob to Amaleki span 470 years. [An expected 7 generation span before modern times would be 140 years.](#)

[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.”

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 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;"

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."

Infant Baptism:

Mormon lamented the terrible wickedness of his people. Around this time, it grieved him exceedingly that they would dispute baptizing infants. Given the wars, witchcraft, etc., would infant baptism be that high on Mormon's worry list?

[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 ..."

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 ...

19 there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, ..."

[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. "

View of the Hebrews: Israelites in America

1) Have you ever noticed that none of the civilizations in ancient America match the Nephites in the Book of Mormon? 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 73 propositions for where it all took place. This in spite of the following verse:

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

During Joseph’s time, such a mismatch between the Book of Mormon and archaeology wasn’t thought to be the case. There were popular theories of the time with which he may have aligned his story, theories that Native Americans were descended from Israelites. Ethan Smith’s 1823 work, *View of the Hebrews*, was a book which helped establish these theories. It is important to remember that Joseph did not “copy” *View of the Hebrews*. Ethan’s work is not a story. It is a long thesis which convincingly argued that the lost ten tribes of the Israelites came to the Americas. It appears that Joseph simply made his story fit in with the current exciting theories of his general region.

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

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

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

[B. H. Roberts](#), a member of the First Council of the Seventy, [studied the *View of the Hebrews* in connection with the Book of Mormon](#). He sent his findings to Heber J. Grant, now published as *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. His findings:

“It will appear in what is to follow that such ‘common knowledge’ did exist in New England; that Joseph Smith was in contact with it; that one book, at least, with which he was most likely acquainted, could well have furnished structural outlines for the Book of Mormon; and that Joseph Smith was possessed of such creative imaginative powers as would make it quite within the lines of possibility that the Book of Mormon could have been produced in that way.”

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

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

“It not only suggests, but pleads on every page for Israelitish origin of the American Indians.... It emphasizes and uses much of the material from the prophecies of Isaiah, including whole chapters,

The savage division utterly exterminates the civilized in Ethan Smith’s book;

Ethan Smith’s book assumes unity of race for the inhabitants of America – the Hebrew race, and no other. The Book of Mormon does the same.

Ethan Smith’s book assumes that this race (save perhaps, the Eskimo of the extreme north) occupied the whole extent of the American continents. The Book of Mormon does the same for its peoples

Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence?”

imgur.com - Studies of the Book of Mormon - Similarities – Note: Ethan used different Isaiah

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

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

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

The Late War

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

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

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.

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](#)

2) [FAIR](#) examines many of the parallels that have been found between the two works. I will list some cases that remain significant when the context is included.

<i>The Late War</i>	Book of Mormon
19:13 – “weapons of war were of curious workmanship, ...”	Ether 10:27 – “weapons of war ... 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 ...”

<p>29:20-21 – “smote ... with great slaughter. And the deep ditch that surrounded the fort was strewn with their slain and their wounded.”</p>	<p>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.”</p>
<p>35:5-6 – “two thousand hardy men, who ... fought freely for their country... Now the men of war ... were ... men of dauntless courage.”</p>	<p>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, ...”</p>
<p>38:18 – “Inasmuch as he put the wise men of the king to their wits end;”</p> <p>51:7 – “the freemen who came to the defense of the city, built strong holds and forts,”</p>	<p>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; ...”</p>

[Jeff Lindsay](#): the phrase “curious workmanship” was present in other literary works of Joseph’s era.

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

Cognate Accusative:	8:21 – “And the great Sanhedrim honored Isaac with great honor , ...”
Using the term whirlwind instead of tornado:	9:1 – “NOW the movements of the enemy were as the motion of a whirlwind , ...”
Negative Questions:	16:32 – “Lo! are we not the faithful servants of the king, our master?”
Construct State:	3:3 – “rod of iron; ...”
Compound Preposition:	48:35 – “the host of Britain was compelled to flee from before the city, ...”
Using less adverbs:	7:42 – “with reverence ...”
Repetition of pronoun:	3:9 – “Their oil, and their wheat, ...”

The Witnesses

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

The eight witnesses: 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. [FAIR](#) doesn't believe Burnett, due to the eight (usually?) sticking with their story.

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

[josephsmithpapers.org - Letterbook 2](#)

In Perspective

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

The Doctrine & Covenants

A few things which stood out to me:

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.

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

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

Two years later (1833), the [Book of Commandments](#) changed the above highlighted sections to “the gift of working with the rod” and “this rod of nature.” Does God work through divining rods? Why were the Lord’s words further censored in the [1835 edition](#) (and our edition) to obscure the use of a divining rod?

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

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

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

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

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

Isaiah and Esaias – One or Two People?

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. An example:

[Isaiah 53:1](#) – “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

[Romans 10:16](#) – “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”

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

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

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

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

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

Removing Pure Language

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

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

The Book of Abraham

1) Joseph obtained sections of papyrus and translated them into the Book of Abraham. Problems with his translations call his trustworthiness and reliability into question. When Joseph obtained the papyrus, portions of the facsimiles were missing (see the green box below). [FAIR](#) shows which missing portions of Facsimile 2 were drawn in by Joseph himself. His version is still in our scriptures.

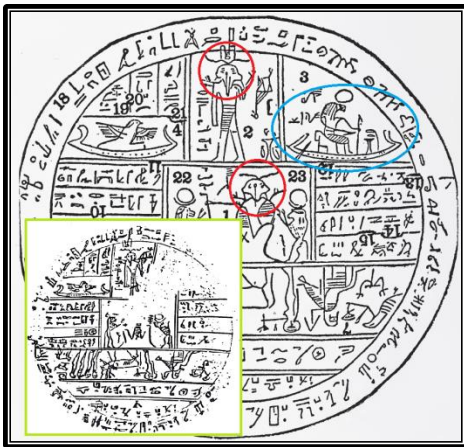


Figure 10 – See page for author (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#), merged with By Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia (Transferred from en.wikipedia) (Public domain), from Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

As shown by the red circles, Joseph copied the head in the 12:00 position to fill in the middle of the facsimile. Notice that the upper half that Joseph drew in is disconnected (and offset to the right) from the lower half of the central personage's torso. A close-up:



This facsimile is referred to as a hypocephalus by [FAIR](#). If you do a [google search](#) for “hypocephalus –Abraham” (the “-Abraham” part removes the results showing Joseph's filled-in version), you'll see that every other hypocephalus has a four-headed figure in its center (Figure 11), making Joseph's two-headed figure in the center inaccurate. Notice that the lower half of the torso in Figure 11 matches the lower half in Joseph's papyrus.



Figure 11 – 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](#)



Figure 12 – "Joseph Smith Papyrus IV" by Original uploader was Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

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

2) A summary of Facsimile 3 can be found [here](#). Wikipedia lists Joseph’s translations of this facsimile, which you can confirm in [your scriptures](#). It also lists Egyptologists’ interpretations. I will show you how you can verify those.

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 even designated so by the characters above its head. You can even see a remnant of the jackal’s ear.



Figure 13 – 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. 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? Egyptologists claim that *the characters above its hand* indicate it to be Maat.

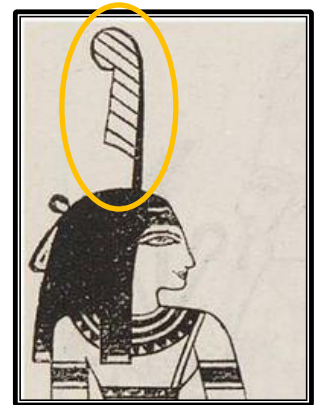


Figure 14 – By Unknown author
[CC BY-SA 2.5
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>)],
via Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

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

3) As further evidence against that argument, the Egyptian character translations are in Joseph’s [GAEL](#) (p. 38 for Joseph’s use of that work). [FAIR](#) concedes that the translations “do not match the true Egyptian meanings of those characters.”

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, would we be damned for believing that he probably fabricated the Book of Mormon? 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 \(byu.edu link\)](#). He never left the church. His journals are collected in a book titled *An Intimate Chronicle*. [BYU gives a good review of the book](#) and it is sometimes used as a reference on [lds.org](#). As explained by FAIR, Clayton was trustworthy enough that his third person accounts were treated as first person accounts (from Joseph Smith’s point-of-view) in *History of the Church*. After spending part of the day with Joseph, William recounted:

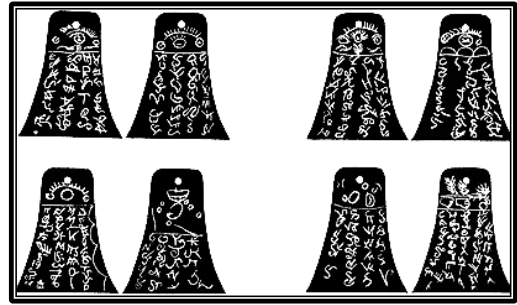


Figure 15 – See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

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

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

FAIR shows a relative match between one of the plates’ symbols and a symbol (along with its meaning) in Joseph’s [GAEL](#) (the Egyptian translations published by Joseph, which [FAIR](#) concedes to be completely inaccurate). Combined with the account of a non-member witness, FAIR concludes that Joseph used the GAEL to begin translation. This shows that Joseph either believed the GAEL to be accurate, or that he was trying to maintain some sort of consistency amongst his translated materials. Either way this is problematic, as the GAEL is completely inaccurate.

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

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

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

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

Part Two: The Church

The First Vision

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

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

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

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

~Joseph Smith

josephsmithpaper.org - [Letterbook 1](#)

This contradicts the 1838 account (our current version):

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

The essay points out that Joseph says “the Lord” twice. They suggest that he was referring to God the Father one of the times and referring to Christ the other time. Is that really plausible? “I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord.”

Again, this matches the Trinitarian doctrine present in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon ([p. 26](#)).

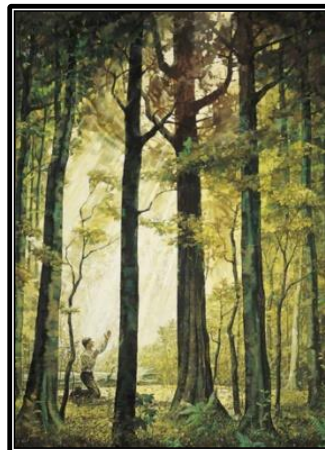


Figure 16 – The First Vision, by Kenneth Riley, [link](#)

Polygamy and Polyandry

A [First Presidency-approved essay](#) (p. 4) discusses the subject of polygamy. The essay was on the [original essay list](#), but has since been removed from the [current lds.org list](#). Though buried, it is still accessible through a link on a more [generic polygamy essay](#), which skips over the more disturbing details. Eight of the Kirtland/Nauvoo essay's footnotes reference [Brian Hales](#), one of the church's leading researchers of polygamy. I will reference [Hales' site](#) frequently.

Does God require us to believe in that which feels morally wrong?

The Lesser-Known Details

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

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

~From the essay

2) The essay omits evidence of sexuality in the polyandrous sealings. According to Hales, Joseph was likely intimate with [Mary Heron](#) and [Sylvia Sessions](#) (Fig. 17). Hales says that Sylvia's husband was excommunicated at the time, making it ok? In the case of Sylvia, Hales references this sworn statement from her daughter:

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

~Josephine Lyon

josephsmithpolygamy.org - [Sylvia Sessions](#)



Figure 17 – By artist unknown (Find a grave Sylvia Porter Sessions Lyon Clark) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons. [link](#)

3) According to [Hales](#), Sylvia already had three children before her marriage to Joseph. How does this fit with D&C 132, which says that the wives you espouse must be virgins?

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

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

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

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

4) The essay does not address Brigham Young’s wives. According to [Hales](#), Zina Huntington gave birth to three children with her husband, Henry Jacobs. She was sealed to Joseph after the first child was born (Zina’s profile on [lds.org](#) omits this case of polyandry) According to [FAIR](#): After Joseph’s death, after her three children with Henry, and while still legally married to Henry Jacobs (divorce was sometimes off the books), Zina was taken as wife by Brigham Young. She gave birth to a daughter with Brigham: Zina Prescinda Young. How does this fit with the D&C 132:61 requirement that the women be virgins? Otherwise, it is adultery.

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

6) Apologists claim that these sealings weren’t exactly marriages, and may have existed to connect families together. Can we really say that a man getting sealed to a woman isn’t a marriage? As evidence that Joseph wasn’t just trying to connect families, Joseph was sealed to [Patty Bartlett](#). Though already connected to the family (through Patty), he was sealed to Patty’s daughter, [Sylvia Sessions](#). Both women already had husbands. It was the same situation with [Zina’s sister](#). Joseph was already connected to the Huntingtons through Joseph’s sealing to Zina. If these sealings were to connect families, why didn’t Joseph say so?

7) The essay states that Joseph's sealing to a 14 year-old (Helen Kimball Mar, Figure 19) 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](#)?

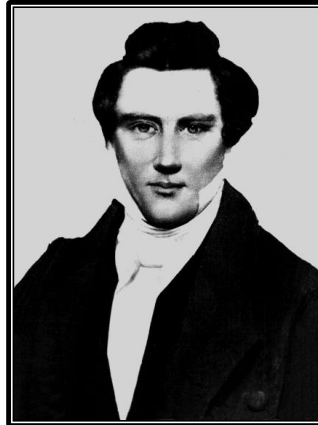


Figure 18 – "Joseph Smith, Jr. (1843 photograph)" by Lucian Foster - <http://comevisit.com/lds/faq-dld.htm>. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)



Figure 19 – "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 marriage-after which he said to me, 'If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation and exaltation & that of your father's household & all of your kindred.'

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

byu.edu - [Womans View](#)

[Hales](#) attempts to discredit Helen by using a later statement of hers that she didn't comprehend *all* that Joseph taught (in general). Hales references two instances that 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.

8) [Joseph married the Partridge sisters](#), neither sister knowing about the other's marriage until afterwards, as "everything was so secret."

Do Joseph's service and good deeds absolve him of further scrutiny?

9) Other leaders also married much younger women. At age 57, [Lorenzo Snow](#) (Figure 20) married a 15 year-old ([Sarah Ephramina](#)).

10) The essay claims that God "did not give exact instructions on how to obey the commandment." [D&C 132:8](#) says that God's house is a house of order. The section does give detailed instructions, which Joseph and Brigham ignored.

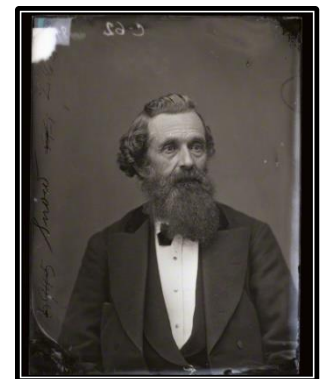


Figure 20 – Lorenzo Snow. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo SNOW (2012), 182, [link](#)

An Angel with a Drawn Sword

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



Figure 21 - Bronzino (Public domain or Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

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

~Lorenzo Snow

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

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

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

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

~John Widtsoe

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

Was the purpose of polygamy to raise righteous children? [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 (next page), the wives appear to be significantly unhappier in polygamy. How much access to their father did the 56 children of Brigham Young have? If the wives were so unhappy, how happy were the daughters who realized their fate?

Women in the Polygamous Church

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

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

[FAIR](#) concedes that Joseph “did not always tell Emma (Fig. 22) immediately about some of his plural relationships.” [FAIR](#) also concedes that some women were sealed to Joseph before Emma.

2) 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, but omits the part where Christ commanded it in the first place. 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?

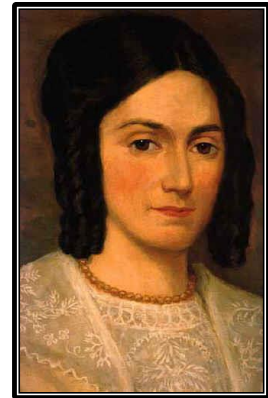


Figure 22 – By Lee Greene Richards (July 27, 1878 – February 20, 1950) Original Publisher and Copyright holder: LDS Church Archives (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

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

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

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

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

3) Some quotes from Pres. Young and an apostle show what women experienced:

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

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 4, pp. 55-57 ([p. 85](#) for the JoD as a source)

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

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

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

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

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

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

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

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

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

Public Denial

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

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

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

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

The essay calls them “carefully worded denials.” Also, members later did [define their actions as polygamy](#). In these denials, the members often referred to [Section 101](#) of their edition (Section 132 was added [in 1876](#)). “One man should have one wife; and one woman, **but** one husband” apparently leaves room for a man having more than one wife as well. They use that section to give a false impression. In this example, John Taylor, while serving a mission in France, uses the Section 101 wording to create an impression of monogamy in his self-published pamphlet.

“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](#)

By 1850, John Taylor had [several wives](#). How many Saints traveled from France to Utah under the impression that there was no plural marriage being practiced? Did they deserve full disclosure? Do today’s converts deserve full disclosure?

2) Here is a denial from Joseph himself. 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](#)

The Temple

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

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

~Joseph Smith

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

2) 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.”

3) A theory exists that the LDS temple ceremony is similar to a ceremony in Freemasonry because the Masons obtained the ceremony from Solomon’s temple. [FAIR](#) concedes that Joseph did borrow the ceremony from Freemasonry, and that there is no connection between Freemasonry and Solomon’s temple. If not, why did Joseph borrow the ceremony from a secret society and call it God’s ordinance?

4) [FAIR](#) admits that the Second Anointing exists, though it was “performed more widely” in early church history.

5) If God spoke through Isaiah with [dual meanings](#), are there meanings in these scriptures that apply to us? Matthew 24:24 is discussed on p. 69 of the full version.

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

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

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

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

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

Prophets and Revelators

Special Witnesses

Apostles are supposed to be “[special witnesses of Christ'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 ([p. 58](#) for the JoD as a source):

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

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 42 (also found on fairmormon.org)

Revelators: The Word of Wisdom

A quick search reveals that teaching against [smoking](#) and [drinking](#) was nothing new during Joseph’s time. *Simplicity of Health*, by Hortator, was a product of the temperance movement of the early 1800s and speaks out against hot drinks (pp. 114-115), especially tea (pp. 60-68 and throughout) and coffee (pp. 119-120). Why does the Lord’s health code mirror the science of the 1830s? A common defense of the church is that it promotes successful living. While this is good, [other religions also do this](#), and people in countries like Japan [enjoy success](#) without the influence of religion.

Revelators: 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?
- 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?
- 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, knowing they [will fall at a later point](#)?

Revelators: The Mouthpiece of God

1) It appears that LDS presidents interpret impressions to be God’s will (see the “rivers of living water” testimony on [p. 12](#)). From an interview with Gordon B. Hinckley on Larry King Live:

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

2) Elder Oaks (below) describes the inspiration behind people getting callings. Basically, the leaders’ actions are God’s actions.

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

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

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](#).

How have the leaders fared on difficult, divisive issues?

Race and the Priesthood/Temple Ban

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

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

~Gordon B. Hinckley, [lds.org](https://www.lds.org) - [The Need for Greater Kindness](#)

1) [A First Presidency-approved essay](#) (p. 4) disavows past “theories” that **A**, black skin is a curse, **B**, other races were less valiant in the premortal life, and **C**, that mixed-race marriages are a sin, and the essay calls the past stance a policy.

“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.”

A) What about scriptures which say that black skin is a curse, which in the case of the Lamanites would be removed on conditions of righteousness?

[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.”

[3 Nephi 2:15](#) – “15 And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites;”

See also Moses 7:8,22. Is this scripture, or a past 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.**”

According to the essay, Brigham Young announced that Africans would have the curse removed “at some future day.” As the essay puts it:

“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 dcms.lds.org (eadview.lds.org is another access point, or the speech text is also available at archive.org), you'll see that Brigham specifies when "some future day" is, 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, until the last of the posterity of Able had received the preisthood, until the redemption 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."

In a First Presidency Statement, George Albert Smith quotes Brigham, affirming that the curse will end "when *all the rest* of the children" have their blessings in the Priesthood. Notice his statement that the stance was not a policy, but doctrine.

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

~George Albert Smith, First Presidency Statement, 1949, quote also found on fairmormon.org

If a past prophet calls something doctrine, and modern prophets disavow his statements, in what instances are today's prophets speaking as men, even when they specifically call something doctrine?

B) Regarding the "past theory" on pre-mortal behavior determining one's race:

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

~George Albert Smith, **First Presidency Statement**, 1949, quote also found on fairmormon.org

"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**.... Any man having one drop of the seed of Cain in him cannot receive the priesthood....' (Wilford Woodruff, page 351.)

~[Harold B Lee, 1973](#). Note: Racial *or physical* limitations. Is he referring to disabled people?

C) Regarding the “past theory” that mixed-race marriages are a sin:

“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 priesthood 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 priesthood upon themselves but the entail it upon their children after them, and they cannot get rid of it. If a man in an unguarded 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, although the true principles of it are not understood.”

Brigham’s [1852 speech](#) (the same speech referred to in the essay)

See [p. 59](#) for more information on the speech’s references to blood atonement.

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

“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. Does God require us to follow men whose predecessors preached such things?

“Cain slew his brother. ... the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin. Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then another curse is pronounced upon the same race - that they should be the "servant of servants;" and they will be, until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionists cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree.”

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

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

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

Women in the Modern Church

1) 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?

2) 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 version of the old manual](#)). [They have removed the reference](#).

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

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](#)

Homosexuality

1) Leaders once taught that monogamy would destroy the nation ([p. 58](#) for JoD):

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

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

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

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

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

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

Were the prophet and apostles wrong about monogamy destroying the nation? Does God require us to believe men who preach such things? We now hear the church saying the same thing regarding homosexuality. Compare the above statements with the following quote:

“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](#)

2) The same warnings, which pose the danger of inflaming hatred, made it into the Proclamation on the Family. This proclamation came about during a time when the church was trying to prove it had a stake in the case when Hawaii was legalizing gay marriage ([law.justia.com](#)). The proclamation document contains inaccuracies about gender being an essential mortal characteristic, as true hermaphrodites exist ([people with XX and XY chromosomes](#)). Based on both their physical bodies and their mental experience, these people aren’t sure what their gender is (three examples: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)). Elder Packer’s reference to the proclamation as a revelation [in General Conference](#) was [censored out](#) for unknown reasons.

3) Regarding the gay and lesbian individuals, 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](#)

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

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 about [divorce](#) in his new law (*and we allow divorce*), but not homosexuality.

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

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

“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.”

scribd.com, pamphlet also referenced by [FAIR](#)

In 1995, in [a talk by Elder Oaks \(lds.org\)](#), the church finally began to say that simply having same-sex attraction wasn't a sin. He began to clarify the difference without officially retracting anything taught beforehand. This was after two

decades growth of a culture which believed that same-sex attraction is a choice and that those experiencing it are evil, vicious, and base. How many have [committed suicide \(deseretnews\)](#) because of this, or due to the loneliness?

Between November 5, 2015 and January 28, 2016, there were reports of [LGBT Mormon youth suicides](#). Three weeks after reporting to mourn over it, [the LDS church spoke out against a bill \(bill text\)](#) which would classify violence against LGBT people as hate crimes. Religion already has hate crime protection in Utah.

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

“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. The church taught me I was evil for it. 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.”

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

rationalfaiths.com - [archive.is link](#)

“I really don't understand the people that know it isn't a choice but then call for us to live a life alone. That is the epitome of cruelty. My boyfriend is the most important thing in my life! He is my strength and my passion and he makes the world a brighter place.”

A gay man to a straight man: “Who gave you those feelings (affection, companionship, romance, love and intimacy)? I'm not speaking of the love and affection towards dogs or friends, I'm referring to the most beautiful gift from god, the ability to fall and be in love, to connect on a much deeper level, a soul mate, an intimate deep connection found only in a marriage or a committed relationship. You must agree that God gifted you these beautiful feelings! Who then gave me those EXACT same feelings, the devil? From comments on www.huffingtonpost.com

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

thoughtsofscotthalle.blogspot.com

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:

“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.’”

[revivalsermons.org](#)

JWs can't celebrate holidays:

“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.”

[caic.org](#)

The Amish aren’t allowed to drive cars:

“I felt guilty [having a car] until I had one for a couple of years, and then the guilt wore off,’ John said.”

[abcnews.go.com](#)

Muslim women must wear a hijab:

“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.”

[dispatch.com](#)

In the next four examples, members of the various religions indicated feeling 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 a very strong focus in the church on sexual sin, [the sin next to murder](#). Why do people still feel guilty after *marital sex*, as in [these cases](#), among many others? Are people focusing on sexual sin due to [post-coital tristesse](#)?

The Journal of Discourses as a Source

Apologists try and distance the church from the Journal of Discourses (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](#)

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). Can we say the journals are unreliable if we use a whole manual based on them?

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

~John Widtsoe

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

Blood Atonement

Below is a memorable sermon from Brigham Young ([p. 58](#) for the JoD). The [LDS essay](#) on blood atonement ([p. 4](#)) ignores the following sermon, in which Brigham states that adulterers can only be saved through their own bloodshed (blood atonement), and that Christ never said to love wicked enemies (see [Luke 6:35](#) and [Matthew 5:44](#), which indicate otherwise). The essay also ignores Brigham's declaration that the practice of Blood Atonement is "near at hand."

"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....

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:

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

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

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

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

Adam-God Theory

Brigham Young taught that Adam was God the Father ([p. 58](#) for the JoD):

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

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

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

“Some have grumbled because I believe our God to be so near to us as Father Adam. There are many who know that doctrine to be true.... Now, if it should happen that we have to pay tribute to Father Adam, what a humiliating circumstance it would be! Just wait till you pass Joseph Smith; and after Joseph lets you pass him, you will find Peter; and after you pass the Apostles and many of the Prophets, you will find Abraham, and he will say, “I have the keys, and except you do thus and so, you cannot pass;” and after a while you come to Jesus; and when you at length meet Father Adam, how strange it will appear to 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 on fairmormon.org

[FAIR](#) reveals that Brigham added Adam-God doctrine into the temple, and “the idea was dropped from the endowment ceremony” after his death. 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. 10-13](#))?

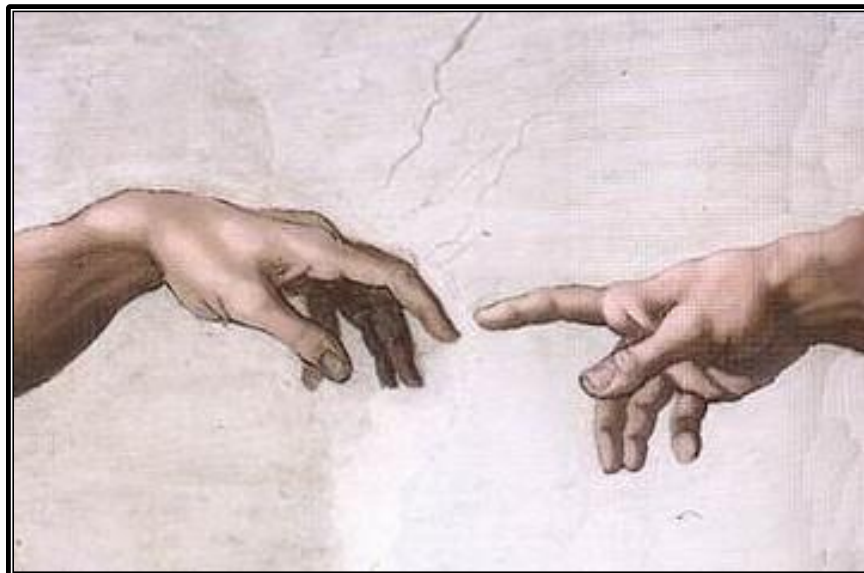


Figure 23 - By User:BardFuse (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped [link](#)

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. Where was the [spirit of discernment](#) warning the prophet that this man was a fraud who was soon to [murder two people](#) to cover his tracks? The church ended up paying at least \$100,000 worth in cash and traded materials for 48 of Hofmann's "early church documents."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tithing and the City Creek Mall

1) A current Sunday School manual vs. the original quote:

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

~the manual

[lds.org - Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow](#)

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

~Lorenzo Snow

[archive.org - 1899 Conference Report](#)

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

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

2) 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. In the article, a church spokesman neither confirms nor denies a leaked document showing the “base living allowance” to be \$120,000/year, though he does confirm that such an allowance exists, and doesn’t come (directly) from tithing. While such an amount is almost thrice the [average American income](#) (not to mention the average income worldwide), the spokesman points out that the allowance is “very modest in comparison with **executive** compensation in industry and the professions.”

"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](#)

Whitewashing and Dishonesty

Here is a list of instances I found where leaders have whitewashed church history. I'll add in some instances of intentional dishonesty and revisionist history. How many instances remain undiscovered?

- Joseph giving a different version of his “money digging” story in JS-H – [p. 18](#)
- Changes to the 1830 Book of Mormon, such as removing “Jesus Christ” – [p. 19](#)
- Changing the reference to the divining rod in D&C 8 – [p. 34](#)
- Changing the 1835 First Vision account to “my first vision” – [long version](#), p. 56
- Inserting the vision of Peter, James, and John into D&C – [long version](#), p. 56
- Removing the Adam-Michael contradiction from D&C 137 – [long version](#), p. 49
- The instances of members lying about practicing polygamy – [long version](#), p. 64
- [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. 24) giving contradictory accounts of the Saints' arrival in Utah. Compare his journal account (from right after the event occurred) to his speech thirty-three years after the event:

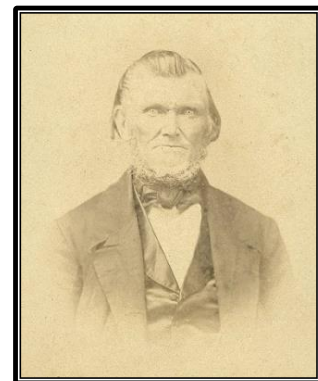


Figure 24 – Charles Roscoe Savage
[Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [Link](#)

Wilford Woodruff on July 24, 1847:

“On this important day after traveling from our encampment 6 miles through the deep ravine valley, ending with the canyon through the last creek, we came in full view of the great valley or basin, the Salt Lake... We gazed with wonder and admiration upon the vast rich, fertile valley... clothed with the heaviest garb of green vegetation in the midst of which lay a large lake of Salt water...”

[lds.org - Presidents of the Church](#)

Wilford Woodruff on July 3rd, 1880:

“This kingdom has continued to increase and spread. When we came here thirty-three years ago we found this place a barren desert. There was no mark of the white man here. It was a desert indeed, hardly a green thing to meet the eye. You can see to-day for yourselves. The inhabitants of Zion are a marvel and a wonder to the world.”

~Journal of Discourses, Volume 21, p. 192

Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#) ([p. 58](#) for JoD)

- The LDS Church publishing the JS-H as the official First Vision for over a century, without any reference to Joseph's other accounts – [p. 39](#)

- The LDS Church depicting the translation of the Book of Mormon with hardly any reference to the seer stone usage – [p. 18](#)
- The LDS Church not releasing the information that they held Joseph’s seer stones in their vaults. They finally released a picture of the stone in 2015. – [p. 17](#)
- Omitting the 1835 First Vision account from the essay – [long version](#), p. 56
- The Book of Abraham essay omitting the facsimiles – [long version](#), p. 53
- The Polygamy essay omitting the “virgin requirement” – [p. 41](#)
- The Polygamy essay omitting other disturbing details regarding polygamy, such as specifics regarding Helen Mar, Louisa Beaman, and Sylvia Sessions – [pp. 40-42](#)
- Lds.org omitting Zina Huntington’s polandry – [p. 41](#)
- [A current Sunday School manual](#) portrays Brigham Young as a monogamist. In the first chapter, it only records his marriage to Miriam Works and his marriage to Mary Angell after Miriam’s death.
- The Peace and Violence essay omitting that blood atonement was to be for adultery as well, along with other disturbing aspects of Brigham’s talk – [p. 59](#)
- Lds.org removing the Mark Hofmann article from their Ensign archives, including the picture of the prophet and some apostles examining a document with Hofmann. – [p. 61](#)
- The Race and the Priesthood essay calling the past doctrine a policy – [p. 50](#)
- Compare the following quote with the Race and the Priesthood section ([p. 50](#)):

"How grateful I am that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has from its beginnings stood strongly against racism in any of its malignant manifestations."

~Elder Alexander Morrison, of the Seventy

[lds.org - No More Strangers](#)

- Dallin H. Oaks omits the fact that Pres. Benson fought the Civil Rights movement:

"There is no doubt that the so-called civil rights movement as it exists today is used as a Communist program for revolution in America just as agrarian reform was used by the Communists to take over China and Cuba."

~Ezra Taft Benson

[scriptures.byu.edu](#)

"The same is true of the Civil Rights movement of the last half-century. These great advances were not motivated and moved by secular ethics or persons who believed in moral relativism. They were driven primarily by persons who had a clear religious vision of what was morally right."

~Dallin H. Oaks

[deseretnews.com](#)

The Mormon Challenge

One must weigh the evidences. Is this how God restores his church? Would God allow these things to be so verifiable and eternally damn those who get it wrong?

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 it rest upon the ability to believe in difficult things?

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.

Near Death Experiences have been fascinating to research. It seems like the majority indicate that love, not religion, is what matters in this life, and that we are all individuals and yet part of a whole (like cells in a body or leaves on a tree).

Perhaps there is a veil of sorts, not for faith, but for taking this life more seriously.

On a more personal note, I took a long road trip after my change in faith, traveling through the night. Within two hours' time I received six promptings to slow down. Each time, there were deer on or next to the road shortly after the prompting.

A family member and I had close to the same dream around the same time. We were both in it, and both saw it from our own perspective. The theme was my change in religious belief. The overall message was that I wasn't lost in darkness, and this experience helped to ease the pain of those who knew about my research.

The Challenge: Certain things have to change in order for the church to become a complete force for good in the world. I challenge Mormon leaders to use church meetings to foster positive community relations instead of preaching guilt. Use missionaries to focus on humanitarian work instead of conversion. Allow women to serve in leadership positions. [Rethink the alienation of LGBT members](#). One suicide is too many. Become a complete force for good. Whether people leave or join the church for it, do what is right and let the consequence follow. [Just do it](#).