

The Mormon Challenge

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

The Short Version

See the longer version at www.themormonchallenge.com for a deeper explanation of each topic, including the apologetics.

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

Sources

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

In a recent push for open information, the church has published a series of First Presidency-approved essays on lds.org. The list is provided at [this lds.org link](#). Elder M. Russell Ballard has advised that teachers “know the content of these essays like you know the back of your hand.” His talk is found at [Deseret News](#).

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

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

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

~Elder Snow, Church Historian, 2013, [maxwellinstitute.byu.edu - Truth in Church History](#)

I'll frequently reference FAIR Mormon ([FAIR](#)). Their goal is to provide faithful answers to difficult topics. [Deseret News](#) explains that they “engage even the most challenging issues in a faithful manner.” [jefflindsay.com](#) is another apologist site. [josephsmithpapers.org](#) is run by the Church History Department, as indicated at the bottom of their main page. The site is introduced on [lds.org](#).

The Book of Mormon

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

Joseph Smith Sr. and the Tree of Life

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

Joseph Smith Sr.'s Dream	Book of Mormon (1830)
'I was travelling in an open desolate field...'	1 Nephi 8:9 – "I beheld a large and spacious field."
"I came to a narrow path. This path I entered, and, when I had traveled a little way in it, I beheld a beautiful stream of water ..."	1 Nephi 8:13,20 – "13 I beheld a river of water ..." 20 I also beheld a strait and narrow path ..."
"[I] beheld a beautiful stream of water.... I could see a rope running along the bank, ..."	1 Nephi 8:19 – "I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, ..."
"and beyond me ... stood a tree, such as I had never seen before: ... and it bore a kind of fruit, ... as white, or whiter than snow: ...[I] began to eat of it, and I found it delicious beyond description; ... I said in my heart, I cannot eat this alone, I must bring my wife and children, that they may partake with me. ..."	1 Nephi 8:10-12 – "10 And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy." 11 And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen. 12 And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; ..."

<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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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.

Joseph Smith Sr.’s vision is simply an indicator that either they both had the same vision (and described it similarly), or Joseph Smith Jr. borrowed from outside sources during the creation of the Book of Mormon.

Ancient Evangelists

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

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

The American Tract Society – “sing the song of praise to Redeeming love, ...”	Alma 5:26 – “if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, ...”
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To “sing the song of redeeming love” is a more uniquely 19th Century-Protestant phrase/concept than something like “rejoicing in redemption.”

2) In Alma 42, we find examples of [Jonathan Edwards Jr.](#), a famous American theologian, clustered within 10 verses. Did Joseph attend a sermon where the topic was the teachings of Jonathan Edwards Jr.? More cases are found in Appendix A of the whole version of this document.

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?”

<p><u>"if there were no punishment threatened to the wicked, it would naturally and directly encourage them to persist in vice."</u></p>	<p>Alma 42:20 – "if there was no law given against sin men would not be afraid to sin."</p>
<p><u>"the general good requires, that sin be punished according to its demerit,... otherwise God would not appear to be what he really is ..."</u></p>	<p>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."</p>
<p><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></p>	<p>2 Nephi 2:11 – "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad."</p>
<p><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></p>	<p>Alma 41:4 – "Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, ..."</p>

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

4) The production of the Book of Mormon was mentioned [as early as 1827](#), which provides sufficient time (years) for Joseph to have visited congregations to compile material. Apologists sometimes criticize the quantity of works shown to have possibly influenced the Book of Mormon. In more ancient times, libraries were often destroyed and their works erased from existence. In contrast, published sources available to Joseph (or anyone who helped him) are probably still around today, and any research he did could still be easily identified. Joseph may have also drawn upon unpublished sermons, which are now lost to us.

The evangelists designed their sermons to move churchgoers to repentance. With such rhetoric, the Book of Mormon has produced a similar effect among many members. Could passages like King Benjamin's speech (Mosiah 2-5) be derivations of sermons that Joseph witnessed? I'll spend one more page on Joseph's abilities before moving on to the book's possible flaws.

Joseph's Ability

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

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

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

deseretnews.com

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

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

~Lucy Mack Smith, 1811

josephsmithpapers.org - Luck Mack Smith History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Based on [Moroni 10:3-5](#) and scriptures that describe the Holy Ghost, we have learned to rely on feelings of [peace](#), [promptings/impressions](#), [joy](#), [a whispering/still small voice](#), or [a burning in the bosom](#) to determine whether or not something is true. The following pages contain a collection of experiences where the above feelings confirm doctrines which contradict Mormonism, or confirm that other churches are true. For example, from page 15: “Allah ... if you guide me to the truth I’ll never leave it, and I knew in my heart ... that Islam, that this is true ... I knew right there it was the correct religion.” This goes against FAIR’s argument that the Spirit confirms portions of truth in other religions ([screenshot](#)). Those in other religions also hold that their unique beliefs result in them being more righteous, or closer to God, as further shown in the Guilt section on p. 65. One example, from [aish.com](#): “Many Jewish people, some related, cannot understand why we enjoy our Kosher home so much. It just feels right. Little by little my husband and I have become more observant and it is wonderful.”

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

1) A few thoughts before diving in: Can I *know* something by the power of the Holy Ghost if I’m not *sure* that it’s the Holy Ghost that I felt? Are we trying to add our own meaning to natural feelings? If so, can these natural feelings be manipulated by peaceful settings, uplifting music, and reverent voices? Observe how a church-owned media and broadcasting company, [Bonneville International](#), sold its ability to make people “feel the spirit” to other organizations.

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

[bonneville.com - Affecting Change](#) ([archived version](#) as they have since changed the site)

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

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

2) Here are some testimonies of those in other faiths:

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

forums.catholic.com - post #26

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

catholicforum.com - post #1

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

forums.catholic.com - post #30

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

medjugorje.we



Figure 1 – 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 2 – 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 3 – 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**.”

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

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

answers.yahoo.com



Figure 4 – 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](https://www.youtube.com)

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

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

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

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

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

lds.org - [The Candle of the Lord](#)

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

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

lds.org - [Foundations of the Restoration Teacher Manual](#)

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

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

thisamericanlife.org (from 5:28 until 6:51 in the recording)

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

If I'm permitted a tangent, I'll take it here on the subject of conviction, as understanding our commonalities helps us to understand human nature.

1) Those who have received amazing spiritual experiences will go to great lengths to maintain their faith. A Catholic could use [these miracles](#) or the [actions of their pope](#) to help keep the faith. A Jehovah's Witness could be inspired to keep the faith by considering their [8.1 million "publishers"](#) that are active in missionary work. The Seventh Day Adventists are involved in [an incredible amount of charity](#), run universities like BYU, and provide [free healthcare to poor countries](#). Though begun in 1863, their membership is at [20 million](#). Their experiences aren't so different from ours. Their perspective:



“When my twin brother and I were five years old he was run over by a car ... my parents, ... 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](#)

“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.... Some will go out from among us who will bear the ark no longer. But these can not make walls to obstruct the truth; for it will go onward and upward to the end.” [ellenwhite.org](#)

2) Members of many faiths often ignore evidence using mantras such as *God was testing us, We cannot know the mysteries of God, the elect will be deceived, they will call good evil and evil good, [the leaders aren't perfect](#), and that's a deception of Satan*. Most of those examples were derived from the Bible.

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

Ch. 2 – A Precise Text

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

~Elder Russel M. Nelson quotes David Whitmer, 1992

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

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

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

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

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

mormonscholarstestify.org - [Royal Skousen](#)

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

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

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

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

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

“And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and Jesus Christ, which is the Lamb of God, ...”

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

[Our current edition](#) still says “the Messiah.”

“And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God, ...”

josephsmithpapers.org - [Book of Mormon, 1837](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Misquoting Moses:

Similarities between the Book of Mormon and the Bible can often be explained by saying that God wanted the Book of Mormon to match the Bible. That explanation does not apply here. [Acts 3:22-23](#) is a much paraphrased quotation of Moses' words, drawing from two separated verses: [Deuteronomy 18:15 & 19](#). In [1 Nephi 22:20](#), Nephi himself (this is Nephi speaking) says he's quoting Moses. He doesn't give Moses' quote, but instead gives the altered version in Acts. Both Acts and Nephi omit vs. 18 (which pertains to the passage) *and* paraphrase vs. 15 and 19 the same way. Why does Nephi essentially quote Acts, saying it's Moses talking, when Acts wasn't written yet? If the Book of Mormon were authentic, shouldn't Nephi have given a quote which matched Deuteronomy, not Acts? Did Joseph, while compiling material, borrow from the wrong place here?¹

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>

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

KJV vs JST vs BoM:

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

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

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

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

The Sermon on the Mount passage in the Book of Mormon remains unchanged. Which is correct, the Book of Mormon or the Joseph Smith Translation?

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

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

Copying Paul:

It is understandable that God would want different people on different continents to have the same message. In the following examples, the message is remarkably similar. This shows that even aside from Christ's sermons and the Isaiah chapters, there are many cases where the good material in the Book of Mormon could easily have been borrowed from another source. Was Joseph filling up space? Why did Nephi engrave 15 chapters of Isaiah? Why not just tell us to read Isaiah?

Examples: [Ether 12:6-22](#) vs [Hebrews 11](#), [Moroni 7:45](#) vs [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#) (almost an exact match here between Moroni's words and Paul's words from after the time of Christ), and [Moroni 10:8-18](#) vs [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#).

The Way of the Red Sea:

2 Nephi changes [Isaiah 9:1](#)'s "sea" to "Red Sea," creating a contradiction.

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

As Isaiah specified, *the way of the sea* “in Galilee” is a road that passes *through Galilee*. As confirmed by [lds.org](#), this road passes through Capernaum, a Galilean city. “The Way of the Red Sea” is a [different biblical road](#), which does not pass through Galilee, meaning 2 Nephi contradicts itself.

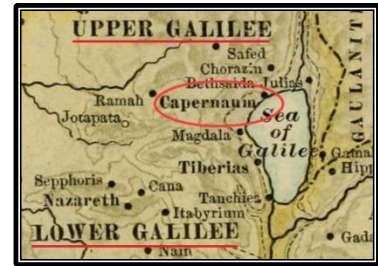


Figure 5 – By Internet Archive Book Images [No restrictions], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, color added, [link](#)

Apologists: [FAIR](#) says that Oliver Cowdery, as scribe, may have added the word “Red” during transcription.

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

Apologists: [FAIR](#) quotes an email from D. Charles Pyle, [who is studying to be a theologian](#). Pyle claims that *the King’s Highway*, [which passes near \(not through\) Galilee](#), is part of the Way of the Red Sea, making the error less blatant.

Response: Every other source disagrees with Pyle, showing that the *Way of the Red Sea is far to the south, and is an offshoot or small part of the King’s Highway* (in [this link](#), hit the blue “next” button twice and scroll down a page for a map). [Matthew 4:12-15](#) also confirms the road in Isaiah 9:1 to be “the way of the sea.”

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

“... those that were left, a mighty king led into captivity, because they did not remember the power of the Red Sea, neither the wonders of the Jordan, the war of the fortifications of the nations.”

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

The Visitation of Christ:

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

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

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

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

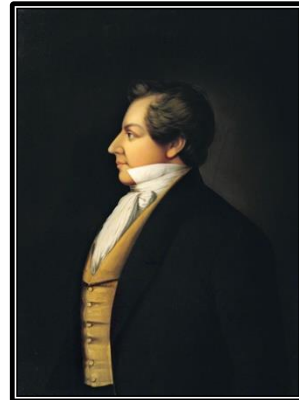


Figure 6 – Joseph Smith, Jr., by Danquart Anthon Weggeland, [link](#)

A comparison:

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

Ch. 4 – The Reality of the Law of Moses

There are 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, screenshot](#)). Do we see God’s law given to keep people in line, or does this law appear to be created by men in order to own slaves, get women, and discriminate? Do these laws point to the Atonement? The [JST clarified some Law of Moses commandments, such as Deut. 14:21](#), but it does not alter any of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Leviticus 25:45-46](#) – “45 Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession.

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

- Men taking wives from beautiful captive women after a battle:

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

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

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

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

Regarding women:

- [Deut. 22:23-27](#) – If a woman is successfully raped in a city, it is assumed that she did not cry out for help, and she is to be stoned to death. If she is raped in a field, she is spared, as there was no one to hear her cry for help.
- [Deut 22:13-21](#) – If a man suspects that his bride is not a virgin, the virgin’s parents must prove to the elders that the bedsheets on the wedding night were bloody. If they cannot do this, the bride is to be stoned to death. We now know that women often do not bleed when they lose their virginity.
- [Lev. 27:1-7](#) – God apparently values women half as much as he values men, rounded up. A one month-old male is worth 5 shekels, while a female is worth 3.
- [Lev. 12:1-5](#) – After giving birth, a woman is unclean for seven days and cannot enter the sanctuary for 33 days. Those time periods double if her child is female.

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

Ch. 5 – Trinitarian Beliefs

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

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

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

“[I]n the 16th year of my age a 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](#)

Early D&C revelations have Christ referring to himself as “mine Only Begotten Son” ([D&C 29:1,5,42,46](#) and [D&C 49:5,28](#)). By 1831, Joseph turned the Father and the Son into the same person in his JST (compare his [Luke 10:23](#) with [the original](#)) Years later, most Trinitarian language is removed from the Book of Mormon, and Joseph’s First Vision evolved to include seeing two personages.

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

Ch. 6 – 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.”

2) Age of Enos

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

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

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

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

3) David’s Sin and the Words of Christ

Were David’s wives and concubines “abominable,” or given to him by God?

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

[D&C 132:39](#) – “David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion;”

4) Changes to Plan of Salvation doctrine

In the Book of Mormon we find the preaching of a generic heaven for the righteous and hell for the sinners ([Mosiah 3:24-27](#), [Alma 40:11-14, 23-26](#)).

According to those verses, *all are taken home to God right after death.*

Unrighteous souls then remain in misery until the Resurrection and Judgment, *after which* they are in a state of fire and brimstone-level torment, “from whence there is no return.” In Mormonism, after Judgment, most of those who do evil go to [the Telestial Kingdom](#), which is [“far better than this world we now know.”](#)

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?

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

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

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

[Mormon 1:13-15,19](#) – “13 But wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that the Lord did take away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people.

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

15 And I, being fifteen years of age ...

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

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

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

1) The Book of Mormon people simply do not match the ancient civilizations of the Americas. For example, the [Classic Period](#) of the Mayans lasted from 250 AD until 900 AD. The [Middle Woodland period](#) of the Hopewell Indians comes close time-wise, but FAIR soundly refutes the Hopewells as a match in these five posts: ([one](#), [two](#), [three](#), [four](#), [five](#)). The lack of a good match to any civilization is evidenced by the inability of Mormon scholars to agree on a setting for the Book of Mormon. FAIR provides [this page](#) with links to [21 hemispheric](#), [43 limited](#), and [9 internal geography models](#) (totalling 73 propositions for where it all took place). This in spite of the following verse:

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

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

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

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

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

Ethan Smith on the Israelites splitting into two types:

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

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

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

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

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

~B. H. Roberts

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

From Elder Roberts’ 26 similarities:

“It not only suggests, but pleads on every page for Israelitish origin of the American Indians....

It emphasizes and uses much of the material from the prophecies of Isaiah, including whole chapters,

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

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

Ethan Smith’s book assumes that this race (save perhaps , the Eskimo of the extreme north) occupied the whole extent of the American continents...

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

imgur.com - [Studies of the Book of Mormon - Similarities](#) –Ethan used different Isaiah chapters. Appx B (see the full version) addresses the Book of Mormon location models.

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

Ch 8 – DNA: The Natives Weigh In

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

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

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

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

“As LDS geneticist Ugo Perego put the matter: ‘Does [haplogroup x] provide evidence to support a pre-Columbian Israelite migration to Western hemisphere? – No. ... Some argue that X shows arrival of Lehi, etc. but this is too easy an explanation. The data seems to indicate it was from an ancient group 12,000 years ago, and Lehi's mtDNA has disappeared.’”

“A February 2008 genetics study on American population migration states: ...the differential pattern of distribution and frequency of haplogroup X led some to suggest that it may represent an independent migration to the Americas. Here we show, by using 86 complete mitochondrial genomes, that all Native American haplogroups, including haplogroup X, were part of a single founding population, thereby refuting multiple-migration models.”

Note: There may have been [more than one wave from Siberia](#).

Just as we know the haplogroups of whole continents, we know that [Near-Eastern DNA contains haplogroups H, I, J, N \(found across Eurasia\), T, U, V, W, and X \(but not X2a\)](#). A certain group of Israelites *did* leave Jerusalem around 600 B.C.:

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

ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

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

We have the DNA of the remains in each of the proposed areas *from Book of Mormon times*. They were descended from Siberians. Here are links to analyses of ancient human DNA from the [Great Lakes area from around 275-75 B.C. \(Mound 25\)](#) and [250 A.D., Mayans dating back to 200-350 A.D.](#), and [a Chilean and Peruvians dating from 50 B.C. and 100-650 A.D.](#)² Given [Christ’s D&C reference, Moroni’s claim](#), Lehte names in the Northeast, and [given that "the land" included the U.S. region](#), the DNA in at least the Great Lakes area should have been Israeli. With the Two-Continents model, which was intended as the setting for the story (full version, Appendix B), all of these studies are problematic, especially given [God's promise to Lehi](#) that the land would be preserved for the Israelites.

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

Summary) We have the bodies themselves, from Book of Mormon times, of the people who occupied possible Book of Mormon regions. They tell us a who their ancestors were. Not only do they not match Israelites, but they do match Siberians.

2. Of the sixty-one Great Lakes samples between Illinois and Ohio, during Book of Mormon times, sixty are A-D, and one is X. The study did not explore which type of X, but X2a is common today in that region. The abundance of the Siberian haplogroups in the heart of Lehte territory is significant, especially given Lehi’s promise. The Mayan and South American samples show groups A-D. In the S. American study, [supplementary materials](#) (Table S1) show samples from Lima, Peru and a sample from Juaranga, Chile. Furthermore, aside from the Kennewick man, the Siberian DNA throughout the Americas is traced back to before Book of Mormon times (ex: haplogroups D from [8,300 B.C. in the Northwest](#) and A from [6,500 B.C. in South America](#) – Table S1).

Ch. 9 – Anachronisms

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

Donkeys: [FAIR](#) speculates that when the Lehites mention donkeys (or asses), they actually mean tapirs (Fig. 7).



Figure 7 - By Sasha Kopf (Own work) [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons [link](#)

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

Horses: [FAIR](#) explains how there may have been remnant populations of a prehistoric horse species.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Doctrine & Covenants

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

Obscuring Oliver's Divining Rod

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

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

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

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

“Now this is not all[,] for thou hast another gift[,] which is the gift of working with the sprout Behold it has told you things Behold there is no other power save God that can cause this thing of Nature to work in your hands for it is the work of God ...”

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

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

[D&C 8:6-7](#) – “6 Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron; behold, it has told you many things;

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

The Words of Christ?

- 1) Christ(?) commands the church to build Joseph a house, and tells them that “Sidney Rigdon should live as seemeth him good” ([D&C 41:7-8](#)).
- 2) [D&C 19:33-35](#) contains Christ(?) threatening Martin Harris to [finance the Book of Mormon](#) ([screenshot](#)) or else suffer “the destruction of [himself] and property.”
- 3) Also in D&C 19, Christ admits to deceiving people so that they repent. In v. 6-12, Christ reveals that [the hellish suffering of those in spirit prison is temporary, until they pay for their sins](#) ([screenshot](#)). In verse 7, Christ explains that he used a wording trick, calling it endless punishment, in order to *make it appear* that people suffer in hell forever, that they may be afraid and repent.

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

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

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

12 Endless punishment is God’s punishment.”

D&C also says that [deceiving is against the order of heaven](#), yet in D&C 19, he is deceiving people to believe that sinners will burn forever. Is Christ deceiving here, or is a theologian trying to twist words around to propose his own ideas?

Other questionable passages will be saved for later topics.

Removing Pure Language

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

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

One or Two People? - Isaiah and Esaiias

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

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

Esaiias 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 [Esaiias](#), along with 32 Old Testament and no New Testament matches for [Isaiah](#). The contexts show that they refer to the same individual. Examples:

<p>Isaiah 42:1 – “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”</p>	<p>Matthew 12:17-18 – “17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaiias the prophet, saying, 18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.”</p>
<p>Isaiah 53:1 – “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”</p>	<p>Romans 10:16 – “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaiias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”</p>

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

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

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

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

The Book of Abraham

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

1) When Joseph obtained the papyrus, portions of the facsimiles were missing (see the green box in the figure on the right).

[FAIR](#) shows which missing portions of Facsimile 2 were drawn in by Joseph himself. These sections would be the center of the circle and the boat in the upper right.

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

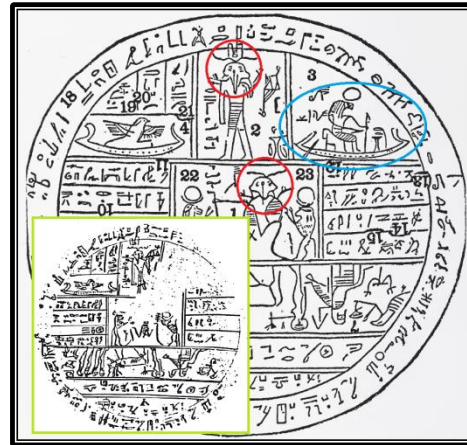


Figure 8 – See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#), merged with By Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia (Transferred from en.wikipedia) [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

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



Joseph also errs in that the central figure of these facsimiles always contain a four-faced head. This facsimile is referred to as a hypocephalus by [FAIR](#). If you do a [google search](#) for “hypocephalus –Abraham” (the “-Abraham” part removes the results showing Joseph's filled-in version), you'll see what I mean about every other hypocephalus having a four-headed figure in its center (Figure 9). Below is a picture of what the central figure should look like. Notice that the lower half of the torso in the figure below matches the lower half in Joseph's papyrus.



Figure 9– By Unknown. [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or CC BY-SA 2.5-2.0-1.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5-2.0-1.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, [link](#)

As to the other missing section of the papyrus (the boat in the blue circle), [FAIR](#) reveals that [the boat](#) comes from a separate portion of Joseph's papyrus (Fig. 13), which he directly copied into the gap in Facsimile 2. [Another hypocephalus](#) does contain a similar boat in that position.



Figure 10 – "Joseph Smith Papyrus IV" by Original uploader was Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

Joseph saw two blank spots and filled them with in with drawings from the same papyrus. One fill-in resembles one other hypocephalus, while the other contains a disconnected body that doesn't match any other hypocephalus.

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

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



Figure 11 – By Abraham, Joseph Smith, Reuben Hedlock (http://scriptures.lds.org/en/abr/fac_3) [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

Joseph interpreted the woman in the middle to be the "Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, *as written above the hand.*" According to Egyptologists, the figure is [Maat](#), an Egyptian goddess. Egyptologists claim that *the characters above its hand* indicate it to be Maat. Notice the hat designating Maat ([google image search](#)). This is the same hat worn by the central figure. Is that figure a man or a woman? Is it Maat or the Prince of Pharaoh? At least for figure 2, which is the goddess [Isis](#), not pharaoh, Isis can represent pharaoh's power. With Maat, the gender swap is more troubling.



Figure 12 – By Unknown author [CC BY-SA 2.5] (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>), via Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

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

Apologists: The church recently released [another First Presidency-approved essay](#), based partly on the works of [Kerry Muhlestein](#) and [John Gee](#), where they reveal that the translations of the entire Book of Abraham don't match the Egyptian on recently-rediscovered fragments of Joseph's papyrus (Fig. 13).

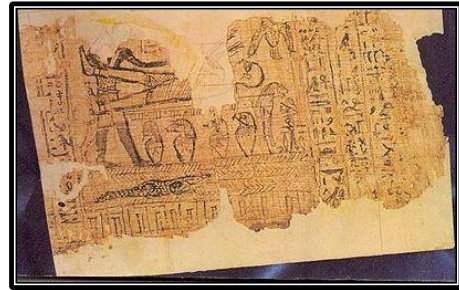


Figure 13 – By Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia (Transferred from en.wikipedia) [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

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

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

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

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

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

How just is it for God to expect us to follow Joseph, essentially under threat of damnation, when Joseph does stuff like compiling [a work of blatant fabrications?](#)

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

The Kinderhook Plates

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

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

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

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

Church leaders said that the plates were not forged until [proven wrong in 1981](#).

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

~Apostle [Mark E. Peterson, 1979](#), quote found at [FAIR](#)

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

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

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

The Restoration

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

The First Account

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

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

the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age a 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

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

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

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

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

Response: Joseph’s own words: “I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord.” Is it really plausible that he was referring to two different people? Also, the story doesn’t just have variance. There is a direct contradiction alongside the omission of God the Father. Again, this matches the Trinitarian doctrine present in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon (p. 25).

The Restoration of the Priesthood

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

Joseph’s Honesty

We often depend on Joseph’s word when it comes to church history, and the discrepancies in his stories continue to build (see p. 67 for a more complete list of his dishonesty). In another case, [lds.org](#) confirms that “the villagers of Palmyra and Manchester, New York, where the Smiths lived, sought out Joseph to find lost objects [using a seer stone]...” [The essay](#) says he looked for “lost objects and buried treasure.” Yet, Joseph tells a different story about his “money-digging” in [JS-H 1:56](#). Additional cases of dishonesty will be covered in the next section.

Polygamy and Polyandry

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

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

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

The Beginnings

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

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

~Lorenzo Snow

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

The essay also discusses this event. What would I conclude if [James Harmston](#), an FLDS leader claimed these things? What if Harmston also said that he was at first unwilling, but that he had to or else an angel would destroy him?

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



Figure 14 - Bronzino [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

Polyandry

As discussed in the essay, after his marriage to Louisa Beaman (who Joseph was intimate with, according to [Hales' chart](#)), Joseph was sealed to several women who were already married. From the essay:

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

~From the essay

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

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

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

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

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

The essay does not mention the requirement that the women be virgins. It also fails to address Brigham Young, who also disobeyed “the virgin requirement.” He took Zina Huntington to wife, who [already had two children](#) with her husband, Henry Jacobs ([screenshot](#)). While still legally married to Henry (divorce could have been off the books), [Zina gave birth to Brigham’s daughter](#), Zina Prescinda Young ([screenshot](#)). Zina Huntington was also sealed to Joseph after her first child with Henry was born. Her profile on [lds.org](#) omits this case of polyandry.

According to their own rules, Joseph and Brigham qualify as adulterers. While no one is perfect, adultery would be a big deal for God’s chosen representative. Could Joseph have been a fallen prophet? David fell, but he was a king, not a prophet. A Priesthood leader is supposed to be worthy of his office.

Women in the Polygamous Church

An overview of what some of the women experienced:

Emma Smith

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

2) [FAIR](#) also concedes that Joseph “did not always tell Emma immediately about some of his plural relationships” ([screenshot](#)). Presumably, a man needed his wife’s consent to take another wife, but if she gave no consent, he could proceed taking wives without her consent after all. From [the essay](#):

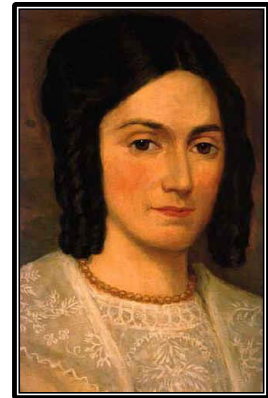


Figure 15 – By Lee Greene Richards (July 27, 1878 – February 20, 1950) Original Publisher and Copyright holder: LDS Church Archives (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

“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.”

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

[D&C 132:54, 64, 66](#) – “54 And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law....

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

66 ...Behold, I am Alpha and Omega. Amen.”

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

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

[archive.org - Historical Record](#), source discussed at [lds.org](#)

Eliza and Emily Partridge

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

Helen Kimball Mar

The essay states that Joseph’s sealing to a 14 year-old (Helen Kimball Mar) 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.

“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](#)

Public Denial

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

“Rumors prompted members and leaders to issue **carefully worded denials** that **denounced spiritual wifery and polygamy but were silent about what Joseph Smith and others saw as divinely mandated “celestial” plural marriage**. The statements emphasized that the Church practiced no marital law other than monogamy while implicitly leaving open the possibility that individuals, under direction of God’s living prophet, might do so.”

1) Joseph himself gave such denials. From his sermon on May 26, 1844:

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

~Joseph Smith

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

Joseph in February of 1844:

“Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines.”

~Joseph Smith

[byu.edu - Times and Seasons Vol. 5, Feb. 1, 1844, p. 423, under "The Gathering" pic](#)

2) In his own pamphlet, John Taylor denies polygamy while preaching in France:

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

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

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

By 1850, John Taylor had [several wives](#). How many Saints journeyed from France to Utah under the impression that there was no plural marriage being practiced?

The Temple

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

- 1) While the idea that families can be together forever is hope-inspiring, the implicit threat is that if people don't obey church leaders, including paying tithing, they will be separated from their families for eternity. In many other belief systems, families believe they will be together without these threats in place.
- 2) [FAIR](#) reveals that there used to be penalty tokens in the endowment ceremony, these being removed in 1990. Would Joseph have permitted their removal? Older members will remember that these involve the motion of slitting throats and disemboweling oneself for revealing aspects of the temple. Is Christ behind this?

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

~Joseph Smith

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

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

[3 Nephi 11:38-40](#) – “38 And again I say unto you, **ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.**

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

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

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

Prophets and Revelators

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

Special Witnesses of Christ

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

“We have not seen the person of the Father, neither have we seen that of the Son; ...”

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

Quote also found on fairmormon.org

The Mouthpiece of God

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

KING: You are the prophet, right?

HINCKLEY: Right.

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

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

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

HINCKLEY: Yes, sir.

KING: How do you receive it?

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

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

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

KING: And that came from something higher than you.

HINCKLEY: I think so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Elder McConkie took me as a younger brother to teach me how to assign missionaries, and so I asked him [after] three or four weeks, 'Elder McConkie, how do you know where to send them?' Then he said, 'You're the servant of the Lord, and your action is the Lord's action. You study it out in your mind and you assign 'em, and they're assigned by the Lord.' You see the application of that principle to the bishop?"

[lds.org - Strength Faith in Christ](#), runs from around 2:21 until 3:18

In this case, leaders are taught that their actions are as if God himself is acting.

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

The Journal of Discourses as a Source

Apologists try and distance the church from the Journal of Discourses (JoD), and with good reason, as the journals include some highly controversial material. Some of these journals were edited and published by Brigham Young and the apostles. Even if there were serious errors in the recordings, church leaders had years to provide retractions. Instead they continuously endorsed the journals.

“Each successive Volume of these Discourses is a rich mine of wealth, containing gems of great value, and the diligent seeker will find ample reward for his labor.”

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

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

The Publisher ([George Q. Cannon](#)), [imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume VIII Preface](#)

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

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

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

The Publisher (Joseph F. Smith), [imgur.com - Journal of Discourses - Volume XVIII Preface](#)

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

In our current [Sunday School manual for Brigham Young \(lds.org\)](#), almost every teaching comes from [John Widtsoe](#)’s *Discourses of Brigham Young* (DBY). If you search for “DBY” in each chapter, you’ll find it referenced dozens of times. In Widtsoe’s book, he says that it takes its material from the JoD (quote below).

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

~John Widtsoe

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

Reliability Check Ch. 1 – Prophecy

Christ warns of false prophets, saying “[Ye shall know them by their fruits.](#)” What may be bad fruits of the church are discussed in later sections. Christ gives another warning, found between vs. 23 and 26:

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

Some have inferred from these scriptures that there will also be true prophets, otherwise Christ would have simply said to not trust prophets at all. The problem is that the New Testament defines “prophet” differently from us. With this definition, [other churches](#) do believe in modern-day true prophets.

Some examples of the more common definition of prophet:

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

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

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

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

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

~ [Heber C. Kimball](#), Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, p. 219, quote also found on [FAIR](#)

Summary) There are many other prophecies which didn’t come true, which [FAIR](#) claims were conditional upon righteousness. Based on this one, were these men false prophets, or should they get a pass?

Ch. 2 – The Word of Wisdom

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

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

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

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

[jstor.org - BYU Studies, Winter 1959, pp. 39-40](#)

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

2) [FAIR](#) explains that the Word of Wisdom was less stringent in the earlier years of Mormonism, mentioning Joseph's alcohol use. The tightening of the rules came during the Prohibition movement of the 1920s ([FAIR](#)). The church uses [Joseph's rejection of alcohol during his leg surgery](#) to paint a different picture of his life.

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

Ch. 3 – The Plan of Salvation

1) The plan of salvation, revealed in D&C 76, turns out to contain significant parallels to Emmanuel Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* (1758):

“There are **three heavens**, entirely distinct from each other, an inmost or third, a middle or second, and an outmost or first.”

“The Divine that flows in from the Lord and is received in **the third or inmost heaven is called celestial**, and in consequence the angels there are called celestial angels; ...”

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

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

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

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

2) Some questions regarding the Plan of Salvation:

- Would a loving God really separate families in the afterlife? Even those who have lived good lives?
- Where does God draw the line between [valiant in the testimony of Jesus and non-valiant](#)? Is it fair to enact a plan where exaltation is at stake, and participants aren't even sure whether or not they are passing the test?
- Eternity is a long time. Is being unvaliant in this life such a crime that even trillions of years from now, those souls will be damned?
- 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](#)? If lightning struck David during his youth, David would be exalted. Why does a loving, *omniscient* God create spirits who he knows will be damned?
- Is it fair for this test to end right at death, with death being such an unpredictable and sudden thing? Maybe instead, experience and progress simply continue?

Ch. 4 – Blood Atonement

On several occasions, Brigham taught something called blood atonement – that adulterers and apostates can only be saved through the shedding of their own blood. The [First Presidency-approved essay](#) on blood atonement ignores the following sermon, in which Brigham states that blood atonement applies to adulterers, that Christ never said to love wicked enemies, and 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 at FAIR

Ch. 5 – Adam-God Theory

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

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

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 50, Quote also found at [FAIR](#)

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

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, p. 331-332, Quote also found at [FAIR](#)

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

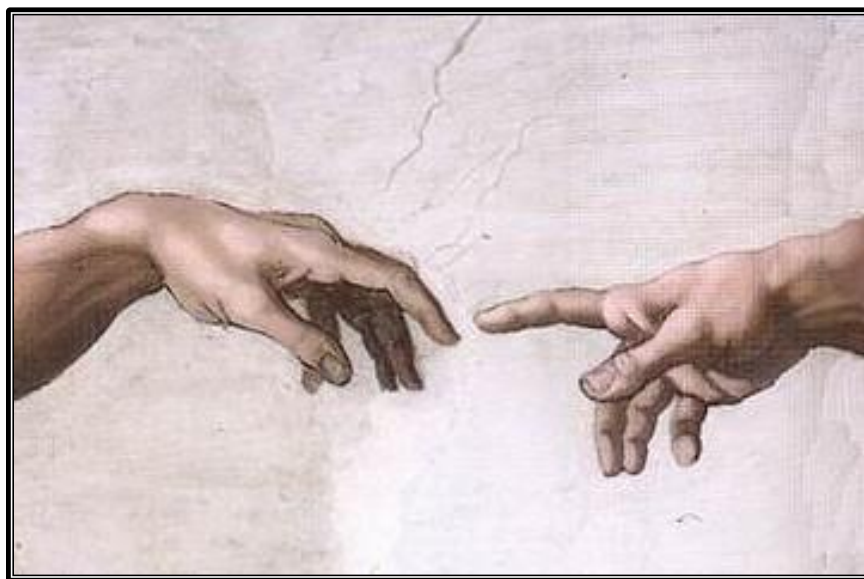


Figure 16 - By User:BardFuse (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped [link](#)

Ch. 6 – Race and the Priesthood/Temple Ban

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

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

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

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

1) “The Church disavows the theor[y] advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse...” If Africans, not guilty after all of being cursed, were being withheld from temple blessings for over a hundred years, were members being led astray when they defended this stance? Are the modern leaders disavowing scriptures which say that black skin is a curse, such as these regarding the curse of Cain? Is this doctrine or a theory?

[Moses 7:8,22](#) – “8 For behold, the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.

22 And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them.”

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

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

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

The essay is somewhat deceitful when it claims that Brigham Young announced that Africans would have the curse removed “at some future day.” If you go to footnote 9 and read the February 5, 1852 speech at eadview.lds.org, you’ll see that Brigham specifies when “some future day” is, and that it’s not until the last of Abel’s posterity receive the Priesthood. The essay omits this.

“What is that mark? you will see it on the countenance of every African you ever did see upon the face of the earth, or ever will see. Now I tell you what I know; when the mark was put upon Cain, Abels children was in all probability young; the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the preisthood nor his see[d], until the last of the posterity of Able had received the preisthood, until the 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.”

dcms.lds.org (eadview.lds.org is another access point, or the speech text is also available at archive.org)

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

“From the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith even until now, it has been the **doctrine** of the Church, never questioned by Church leaders, that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel.” (1947)

“The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. **It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment** from the Lord, on which is founded the **doctrine** of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. ... President Brigham Young said: ‘Why are so many of the inhabitants of the earth cursed with a skin of blackness? It comes in consequence of their fathers rejecting the power of the holy priesthood, and the law of God. They will go down to death. And when **all the rest** of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, ...’” (1949)

~George Albert Smith, First Presidency Statements, 1947 and 1949, quotes found at FAIR

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

“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 ... failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood is a **handicap** which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth ...”

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

From another prophet:

“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.... President Brigham Young made this remark... ‘Any man having one drop of the seed of Cain in him cannot receive the priesthood....’”

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

3) “The Church disavows the theor[y] advanced in the past that ... mixed-race marriages are a sin...” Past prophets were very clear on the issue of inter-racial marriage. [In the same 1852 speech](#) discussed earlier, Brigham explains that when a white man mingles seed with the seed of Cain, then killing the man, woman, and offspring involved would help atone for the sin of bringing the curse upon his children. He has at least [one other quote](#) echoing this one.

“But let me tell you further. Let my see mingle with the seed of Cain, that brings the curse upon me, and upon my generations, - - we will reap the same rewards with Cain. In the preisthood I will tell you what it will do. Where the children of God to mingle there seed with the seed of Cain it would not only bring the curse of being deprived of the power of the preisthood upon themselves but the entail it upon their children after them, and they cannot get rid of it. **If a man in an 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.”

Interracial marriage remained illegal in Utah until 1963:

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

deseretnews.com

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

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

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

[History of the Church, Vol. 1, Ch. 27, p. 378](#) – Note: A [Mormon blog](#) strongly argues that Zebedee Coltrin ordained Elijah Abel, not Joseph. To his credit, Joseph didn't cancel the ordination.

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

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

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

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

Joseph later opposed slavery in Illinois ([FAIR](#)). His successor, Brigham Young, preached that God decreed Africans to be the "servant of servants." He taught that the Abolitionists worked in vain and that the Civil War would not free the slaves.

"We knew that the children of Ham were to be the "servant of servants," and no power under heaven could hinder it, so long as the Lord would permit them to welter under the curse and those were known to be our religious views concerning them."

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

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

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

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

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

Ch. 7 – Women in the Modern Church

Women have come a long way in the church since Brigham Young told them to have children and stop complaining. There is certainly room for improvement, which one might see if one realizes that prophets erred in the past.

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?

Children with working mothers [have advantages in many regards](#), such as learning social skills in daycare. At most ages, children aren’t home during the day anyways. Some families have the option of grandparents around to help with kids during the day. In other families, [the husband prefers to stay home with the children](#). The church could improve in not pressuring individuals into a set route.

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](#)

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

“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](#)

Ch. 8 – Homosexuality

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

1) The [Proclamation on the Family](#) warns that collapse of the family unit will bring about the calamities foretold by prophets. Church members see gay marriage as a step in the collapse of the family. These teachings echo Spencer W. Kimball:

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

~Spencer W. Kimball

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

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

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

~George Q Cannon, Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 202, quote also found at [FAIR](#)

“this monogamic system which now prevails throughout all Christendom, and which has been so fruitful a source of prostitution and whoredom throughout all the Christian monogamic cities of the Old and New World, until rottenness and decay are at the root of their institutions both national and religious.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 128, quote also found at [FAIR](#)

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

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

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

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

mormonandgay.lds.org

The church has already changed here. They used to teach that all homosexuals in general were evil, and that it was a learned trait. Spencer W. Kimball:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The current stance isn't so central a doctrine when we realize that we let widows marry men who they aren't sealed to ([p. 82 here, screenshot](#)), *so that they aren't alone*. Can we let gay people be with those they love, and get sealed in the next life, as they didn't have a chance in this one?³ Must they be alone, or marry someone they don't love, potentially ruining two lives? If we believe the homoromantic ones, they only experience romantic love for their own gender.

5) I gathered a small collection of accounts of gay Mormons (more are [here](#)):

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

theloveacceptanceproject.wordpress.com

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

nomorestrangers.org

“I practiced my faith for 38 years and I attended Evergreen (a church-sponsored sexual orientation reassignment program) for 12 years. During this time, **five of the fifteen men in my group committed suicide**.... But all those years taught me that all I wanted was what they had: A full loving life and family with the right person. And that person had to be male, because I had already been married to a woman for 16 years and I knew clearly that it wasn't working and it never would. I wasn't even opposite-sex attracted at all. Ultimately, I was staring suicide in the face. Either it was all going to end, or I was going to embrace the fact that this was not something about myself that anyone could remove; nor should they. And so I went about finding my bliss.... it turned out that following my heart was the right thing to do. And I am now in my tenth year together with my husband and we have found our bliss, and so have our six kids that we raise together.”

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

Summary) No one would argue that loneliness isn't a contributor to suicide. Should we wait in faith until the next life to understand God's mysteries while these people suffer? Must we take issue with them finding joy, especially if we can't be certain the leaders are correct here?

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

Ch. 9 – On Intimacy and Guilt

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

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

~Elder Bednar, [lds.org](https://www.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](https://www.lds.org) - [The Touch of the Master's Hand](#)

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

Seventh Day Adventists can't go to theaters (revivalsermons.org):

“I do remember going to the movies for the first time. I felt so guilty. I didn't even sit down, but stood in the back and watched about fifteen minutes of ‘Ma and Pa Kettle Go To Hawaii.’”

JWs can't celebrate holidays (caic.org):

“Since my dad nor anyone from his side of the family were Witnesses, we were still allowed to celebrate holidays and birthdays. But as much as I really loved doing that, I knew in my heart of hearts that they were wrong, and I felt guilty for having truly enjoyed opening my Christmas presents with the other members of my family, eating Thanksgiving dinner and watching Fourth of July fireworks.”

The Amish aren't allowed to drive cars (abcnews.go.com):

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

Muslim women must wear a hijab (dispatch.com):

“I took off the hijab. Interestingly, every time I took it off, I felt guilty, and I would just want to put it back on.”

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

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

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

Tithing and the City Creek Mall

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

1) The church financed the City Creek Mall (Fig. 17) in Salt Lake City. [FAIR](#) states that the mall cost the church’s real estate department, Property Reserve, Inc., \$1.5 billion ([screenshot](#)). The money comes from church-owned businesses ventures, which were originally started with tithing money. Whether it comes from tithing or not, this is church money being used for these purposes. \$1.5 billion towards a mall. Is Christ behind that? I’ve been there and witnessed the selling of \$80,000 watches. The [amount spent on humanitarian aid by the LDS church](#) pales in comparison to both the amount spent on the mall and [the amount spent by some other churches](#) ([screenshot](#)). The church also owns [a large hunting preserve](#), with permits reaching \$8500.

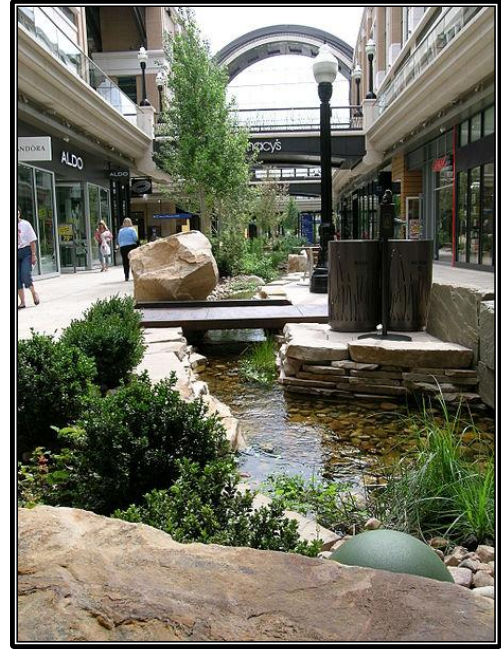


Figure 17 – By Uncle Alf (Own work) [CC0], via Wikimedia Commons [link](#)

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

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

Elder Thomas S. Monson, [lds.org - Our Sacred Priesthood Trust](#)

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

~Elder Boyd K. Packer, [lds.org- Where Much Is Given Much Is Required](#)

[1 Corinthians 18:17](#) – “What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may **make the gospel of Christ without charge**, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.”

Whitewashing and Dishonesty

Some of Joseph's dishonesty and questionable moments:

- He compiled a work of mistranslated Egyptian characters (the GAEL). – p. 39
- Joseph told his followers that the corpse interred with the Kinderhook Plates was a descendant of Pharaoh. He may have inferred from the GAEL that a symbol on the plates meant “the line of Pharaoh.” Aside from the fact that the GAEL is made-up, it is still a stretch to take a pseudo-translation of one symbol, from several plates, and tell your believers that *the corpse itself* is descended from Pharaoh. – p. 40
- Joseph, who once lived near Onondaga County, told of a Lamanite prophet named Onandagus. – p. 32
- According to Joseph, the words for angels and the sun in the Pure Language are Awmen-Angls-men and Shinehah. – p. 35
- In D&C, Joseph claims that church members need to build him (Joseph) a house, as commanded by Christ. Along with this, Christ says that Sidney Rigdon can live as seemeth him good. Joseph also claims that Christ threatened Martin Harris with destruction if Martin didn't finance the Book of Mormon. – p. 35
- Joseph claimed that an angel with a drawn sword threatened to destroy him if he did not practice polygamy (p. 43). He claimed that Christ commands wives to believe their husband (pertaining to polygamy) and administer to their husband, or else be destroyed (Christ: “for I will destroy her”). Joseph married women without Emma's knowledge (p. 45), married two sisters (sexually), without either knowing her sister was also marrying him (p. 46), publically denied polygamy (p. 47), and told William Clayton that if the public found out about Clayton's wives, he'd excommunicate him (for show) and then re-baptize him (p. 66 of full version).
- Joseph borrowed a Freemasonry ceremony, which has no connection to Solomon's Temple, and told his followers that its tokens, etc., are needed to return to heaven, in spite of the Book of Mormon saying otherwise. – p. 48
- Joseph's 1832 First Vision account contradicts our current version. Did he learn through scripture study (before the vision) that all churches were false, or did he learn this during the vision? The 1832 account leaves out God the Father. – p. 41
- Instead of saying that he used a seer stone to hunt for treasure, Joseph said that his “money-digging” was just him helping Josiah Stool mine silver ([JS-H](#)). – p. 42

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

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

- Rigdon changed the reference to the divining rod in D&C 8. – p. 34
- Roberts changed “visitation of angels” to “my first vision.” – full version, p. 56
- The Adam-Michael contradiction is removed from D&C 137. – full version, p. 48
- Other church members denied the practice of polygamy. – p. 47
- [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. 18) gave contradictory accounts of the Saints' arrival in Utah. Compare his journal account (from right after the event occurred) to his speech thirty-three years after the event:

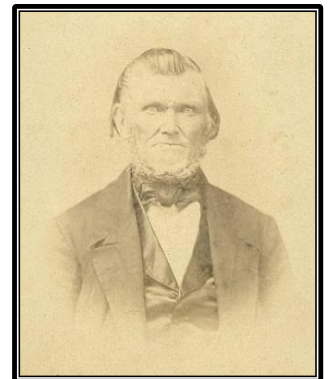


Figure 18 – Charles Roscoe Savage
[Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

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](https://www.lds.org) - [Presidents of the Church](#)

Wilford Woodruff on July 3rd, 1880:

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

~Journal of Discourses, Volume 21, p. 192, quote also found on [FAIR](#)

- The LDS Church published the JS-H as the official First Vision for over a century, without any referencing his other accounts (p. 42) They depict his translation method with hardly any reference to the seer stone, as in [Preach My Gospel](#).
- The LDS Church withheld the information that they held Joseph’s seer stones in their vaults. They finally released a picture of the stone in 2015. – p. 17
- The Book of Abraham essay omits the facsimile mistranslations. – p. 39
- The Polygamy essay omits the “virgin requirement” (p. 43). The Polygamy essay omits other disturbing details regarding polygamy, such as specifics regarding Helen Mar, Zina Huntington, and the Partridge sisters (p. 43).
- [A current Sunday School manual](#) portrays Brigham Young as a monogamist. In the first chapter, it only records his marriage to Miriam Works and then only his marriage to Mary Angell after Miriam’s death.
- The Peace and Violence essay omits that blood atonement was to be one day restored, along with other disturbing aspects of Brigham’s talk. – p. 55
- Lds.org removed the Mark Hofmann article from their Ensign archives, and storing damaging records in their vaults. – full version, p. 94
- The Race and the Priesthood essay calls the past doctrine a policy, and claims that Brigham said the policy would end at “some future day.” – p. 58
- Compare the following quote with the Race and the Priesthood section (p. 57):

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

~Elder Alexander Morrison, of the Seventy

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

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

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

~Ezra Taft Benson

[scriptures.byu.edu](#)

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

~Dallin H. Oaks

[deseretnews.com](#)

Conclusion

One must weigh the evidence. Is this how God restores his church? Would God allow all of these things to be so verifiable and then punish someone eternally for coming to certain conclusions?

Would God really condemn sinners to a [thousand years of unimaginable torment](#)? Would God's plan take away the families of [righteous nonmembers](#), take away their gender ([if Joseph Fielding Smith was correct](#)), and make them single forever?

If this life is a test, then does success rest upon doing good, loving others, and improving the world, or does success rest upon the ability to believe things that are more or less proven wrong? Which should be the ultimate measure of a good life?

Perhaps life is more of a growing experience than a test – a stepping stone to whatever comes next. Life is an exciting mystery, and the freedom to live it as one feels best is a valuable gift. Whatever conclusion you come to, I'll leave you with some faith-promoting stories and with a challenge.

[Spanish Fork](#) – three police officers and two firefighters heard a voice which led them to rescuing a baby from a submerged car. I went to their police department and received confirmatory reports that the officers there are trustworthy people.

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

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

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

For questions or comments, email themormonchallenge@gmail.com.