

Full Exit Statement

of Francis Nelson Henderson

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The fantastical claims of Joseph Smith could be just what they appear to be – False. Smith claims he translates Golden Plates and is believed. Smith prophetically assures depositors and investors their money is safe in his illegal Kirtland bank, then it collapses. He seduces teenage girls and other men's wives saying God or angels have commanded they must marry him. He copies from the Nauvoo Masons their signs and tokens to invent the Temple endowment commanding Obedience using fear to [extort donations](#) (1:50)

March 20, 1826, 20-year-old Joseph Smith is arraigned before Judge Albert Neely in Bainbridge NY and tried as an imposter. Employed as a treasure-digging “seer,” he scams those who trust him, never finding any treasure. Smith uses a “seer” stone ¹ (56:20). He then uses that same stone placed in his hat and his hat over his face (0:51) when dictating the entire Book of Mormon (BofM) to his scribes, Oliver Cowdery and Emma Smith. Church leaders know that if the BofM is not a historical record, then the Mormon Church is founded on a lie.



Smith's Stone

Church leaders know the BofM skin shames Native Americans. Smith used a false Indian origin story by adopting the speculative hypothesis of his day into the BofM, that Indians originated from a lost tribe of Israel (Lehi from Jerusalem).

Church leaders ignore Church Historian, B. H. Roberts 1922 warning that 1823 *View of the Hebrews* is a menace to Joseph Smith's account of BofM origins because of similarities, “Not a few things merely, one or two, or a half dozen, but many.”

Since 1967 the Church has possession of the Egyptian papyri, the Book of Abraham source document Smith falsely claimed are written by the hand of Abraham himself. The papyri date to 2000 years after the time of Abraham and the contents of the papyri have no relationship what-so-ever to the Book of Abraham.

Church leaders teach for over a century that dark skin is a curse from God, and that people of color were “less valiant” in the pre-existence. The BofM provides Native American church members with a wholly fictitious identity as Lamanites.

Smith falsely claims to being a monogamist while he married and likely had sex with over 30 women in his lifetime. Surviving letters reveal Smith's incredibly abusive techniques to coerce both teenage girls and other men's wives into acceding to his polygamous advances, and to silence those who dared speak out openly. *Happiness Letter* ¹ (46:17)

Joseph Smith's conduct in secretly marrying teenage girls living in the Smith household asserting the marriage is a duty, represents not just a betrayal of his wife Emma, but a disturbing abuse of spiritual authority. Conducted without Emma's knowledge and under the pressure of alleged divine command, illustrate a pattern of coercion, dishonesty, and manipulation that calls into question the moral legitimacy of Smith's prophetic claims.

¹ ¹ Symbol used linking to a backup copy of the primary link because internet content is notoriously transient.

These were not marriages of mutual affection and informed consent; they were compliance under duress masked as religious obedience. His actions created a closed system in which he alone interpreted God's will, positioned himself as the sole gatekeeper to salvation, and justified the exploitation of young women under the pretense of divine revelation.

Furthermore, Joseph's deception toward Emma cannot be dismissed. His elaborate lies, including a "sham" second wedding ceremony on May 11, 1843 to the Partridge sisters in Emma's presence, allowing her to believe she was witnessing the original ceremony, rather than a cover-up of a prior betrayal. He inflicted emotional trauma and undermined the very trust of his legal wife that forms the foundation of ethical marital conduct.

Joseph Smith's actions constitute a severe abuse of pastoral authority. They violate principles of informed consent, transparency, and respect for the dignity and autonomy of others. The marriages to Emily and Eliza Partridge stand as a stark illustration of how spiritual power, when unchecked by moral accountability, can become a tool of personal gratification and systemic harm.

In Joseph Smith's case, "obedience" was weaponized to override the personal autonomy of young women; he reframed their right to choose as a test of faith. Once a religious leader like Smith discovers that obedience can compel behavior, suppress dissent, be a mechanism of subjugation, promote stability and supremacy of the hierarchy, and veil exploitation, it becomes an intoxicating source of power. Smith enshrined "Obedience" and its cousin "Sacrifice" into the evolving Temple ceremony where it remains to this day doing its dirty work: muzzling dissent, coercing compliance, undermining authenticity, corroding the character of its leaders, violating core religious values of informed consent, human dignity, and personal autonomy.

However, similar to the ethics of contract law, Smith's ^{As moral} Temple Covenants are invalidated because he employs secrecy, pressure, and deception. "Fraud in the inducement" is the crime when getting Church members to submit to Temple Laws of Obedience, Sacrifice, and Consecration.

The innate immorality of the Secret Temple "Oath of Vengeance" and "Law of Obedience" are witnessed in 1857 when Temple Covenant's defeated individual conscience. The Cedar City Utah Stake Presidency and High Council instructed Bishop John D. Lee that the Fancher wagon train be sent "over the rim of the canyon." Fifty-five (55) priesthood holders then attacked and murdered more than 120 emigrants at the Mountain Meadows Massacre after promising them safety.

A sampling of damaging LDS doctrines and policies are discussed such as withholding meaningful authority and leadership opportunities from women and girls in the Church and providing girls/women with a stunted vision of their potential. Teaching children, youth and adults extremely damaging messages regarding sexuality, and personal worthiness. Teaching gay and lesbian Mormons that their core identity is evil and encouraging incredibly damaging "remedies." Striving to impose its religious beliefs and practices on the non-Mormon public through legal initiatives such as: Defeating the Equal Rights Amendment or Supporting Proposition 8 in California, which attempted to deny California Gay or Lesbian citizens the right to marry. Perfectionism is challenged, the teaching, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Using all their power to hide the truth, even excommunication does not silence the brave who speak honestly and publicly. Exposed by the free flow of information on the internet, the leadership's story is not sustainable, hence forcing carefully worded admissions in the "Gospel Topics Essays."

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Introduction

This Statement is derived from my experience as a fully participating and contributing member of the LDS Church. [△]² I was born into the Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, the eldest of nine (9) children to Francis ‘Marion’ Henderson and Nellie ‘Jane’ Taylor. My mother, Jane, is of Utah pioneer heritage. Her ancestors include LDS Church President John Taylor, his son Apostle John W Taylor, and Provo Utah Mayor, Provo Stake President, and BYU board member, Thomas Nickolas Taylor.

My father, Marion, was a founding church leader in Raleigh NC, 1940’s – 1960’s. He served as Raleigh branch president, district president, and councilor in the first ever North Carolina Stake. He led the fund raising and construction of the first Branch chapel at Raleigh. During my upbringing, he was seated on the podium. Similar to a Pastor’s eldest son, my attendance was near perfect in this small 1950’s college town congregation.

I was baptized at age eight (8) into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), which is commonly known as the Mormon Church. I served an honorable mission, married in the Temple, graduated BYU (Physics), taught Elders quorum, taught Gospel Doctrine Sunday School class. I am the father of five (5) good and successful children.

In my teenage years I wondered why my Church was said to be True when the rest of the world did not think so.³ I was influenced at Church by the ideas of North Carolina State College Professors and graduate student lay speakers. I remember being stunned by a few good Church talks whose ideas are still present in this statement.

For example, *the idea of autonomy, or the ability to self-govern being a fundamental condition of free agency*. I grew up misunderstanding that the authoritarian nature of Mormonism means that its leadership feels justified violating my *free agency*⁴.



² [△] Symbol is used linking to archived backup copies because internet content is notoriously transient

³ [Richard Packham](#), [△] Stories of Mormon faith transitions. Packham’s calm, reasoned, statement is on video [here](#). [△]

Richard Packham [website](#) – A good source on many Topics by linguist, teacher, attorney, farmer, and Father, Richard Packham who founded the exmormon foundation in 2001.

⁴ [THE AUTHORITARIAN TEMPTATION](#), Francis Nelson Henderson. Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium, 27-30 July, 2005, Session #325, Saturday 30 July, 10 - 11 AM .

My First Time Temple Experience



The willful, intentional, unmistakable abuse of my *free agency* occurred at my Temple endowment at Salt Lake City, 1962, in missionary training in route to the Southern California Mission. The Priesthood leader refused to disclose beforehand the secret Covenants of **Obedience, Sacrifice, and Consecration** benefiting the Church at my expense which were sprung upon me. I was half out of my seat to [leave](#), [△](#) but having just completed my missionary farewell, I would not be welcomed home. Worse was being led into repeating Satanic oaths of three ways I should “**suffer my life to be taken**,”⁵ to the harmless, but laughable secret Masonic handshakes and clasps that Smith copied from Free Masonry in Nauvoo.

In those secret Temple Covenants Church leaders conspire to gain for the Church the promise that one’s time, labor, and life choices shall satisfy whatever they may require. However, no obligation of secrecy can exist to protect a religious conspiracy that immorally dominates people’s lives. Its sins are to declare its Temple Laws secret in a covert attempt to compel Obedience, and to restrict “informed choice” by deceptively manipulating information about itself.

I am told some of the worst parts of the LDS Temple ceremony are removed in the years 1990 and again in 2018. First removed are the satanic penalties threatening one’s life (imitation of three (3) penalties - first slitting your throat from ear to ear, your chest, your abdomen). Also changed is the husband’s patriarchal rule of the wife. I don’t know if the half-necked Washing and Anointing is removed, but it should be. However, the Covenants of **Obedience, Sacrifice, and Consecration** are retained. Those three (3) Laws establish Mormonism’s authoritarian character which are an assault on *free agency*.

Apostle Bednar confirms the accuracy of this interpretation when he says that after being Temple Covenanted, one is not a *free agent* anymore.⁶ Examples of [extorting Tithing from the poor are seen here](#)⁷ [△](#) (1:50) that **if not paid, one shall be burned**.



⁵ In April 1990, the LDS Church eliminated from the [endowment ritual](#) [△](#) gestures representing "execution of the [penalty](#)." [△](#) Previously, temple participants were required to simulate having one's throat cut, one's chest torn open, and one's body cut asunder. Under church president Heber J. Grant's Good Neighbor policy was reform eliminating from the Temple ritual (Feb 15, 1927) and suggestions in church literature, sermons, and ordinances that its members should seek vengeance on US citizens or governments, for the assassinations of its founder Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum. The oath of [vengeance](#), removed from the temple endowment ceremony, required participants to agree to be bound by the following oath:

"You and each of you do covenant and promise that you will pray and never cease to pray to Almighty God to avenge the blood of the prophets upon this nation, and that you will teach the same to your children and to your children's children unto the third and fourth generation."

⁶ [36](#) Elder Bednar argues that Mormons do not enjoy "free agency" after Baptism and Temple Covenants because one is only [free to obey](#) [△](#) an “enlarged” agency in a Christian family by keeping covenants. He calls this “Moral Agency.” In this double-speak, he demeans individuals choosing anything other than Obedience as merely doing what one “wants” without acknowledging individual conscience. He fails to resolve a classic conflict between individual vs community values.

⁷ Brother Holland and Bednar are former BYU presidents; therefore, their abuse of power is not out of ignorance but is intentional. Holland wrongly says Tithing is not a charitable gift to the Church but is a debt owed to God. His false premise is that the giver has not earned his income, but that one’s income is a gift therefore tithing is owed. If so, this makes God responsible for the injustice that rich and evil men are blessed with great wealth while hardworking poor people are cursed with poverty. His premise that God is the

Temple Laws are intentionally made and administered in order to coerce obedience, for example, to the Law of Tithing. Church leaders teach that the Law of Tithing is NOT making a gift but is discharging a debt. The idea that Tithe paying should be voluntary is explicitly denied. Hammering home that Temple Law's like Tithing are coercive: Church leaders' extortion of the poor is witnessed as they threaten that if not paid, we shall be "burned."

I still get upset recalling how I was manipulated going into the temple as a 20-year-old. I think that I always *should* feel angered reflecting on it. I do not think I want to become emotionally indifferent to injustice and that anger still should be my response even though I choose not to ruminate about it.

The necessary saving ordinances of the LDS Temple nowhere exist in the BofM which seems to indicate Joseph Smith was making things up as he went along? The BofM makes no mention of Temple Endowments, Sealing, Ordinances, Covenants, Celestial marriage, Baptisms for the Dead, Temple garments, or Plan of Salvation.

Although temples (such as the Nephite temple in 2 Nephi 5:16) are mentioned, their function is more like those of the Old Testament. In Nauvoo Smith copied grips and symbols into the LDS Temple ceremony he learned on March 15, 1842, when he was initiated, passed, and raised to the degree of Master Mason "on sight" in a single day at Nauvoo, Illinois.



Growing up I could name all 13 Temples. Now the Church has 265 Temples⁸ announced or under construction or operating. "A Covenant People" is a new phrase appearing in Church publications about 2005 that I think is derived from Temple Covenants. These facts are no coincidence. I think the explosion in Temple building reveals an intent to leverage Temple Covenants even more in the future.

However, since one may wish to be the **author of one's own life**, one may claim that entitlement for oneself where it belongs, rather than allowing the Church to use Covenants to justify deciding for its own benefit how one's time shall be used. By attending the Temple, submitting to Temple worthiness interviews, granting an interrogation at year-end tithing settlements, we give away our power.

Why would one do so if not in the false hope that something outside of us will fulfill our need to accomplish great things or fulfill our need to belong or fulfill our need for self-worth to be judged worthy in the next life. When instead we are better to reclaim our power, to recognize that we are **never separated from our inner divinity**, and to take responsibility for ourselves.

source of the tithe payer's wealth fails spectacularly to account for what is otherwise God's indifference to starvation among innocent children. Bednar's sin is worse, he sides with [Satin's Plan](#) in the Mormon Myth of a War in Heavin saying we do not have *free agency* anymore.

⁸ Church News, By Scott Taylor, Jan 22, 2022 "[See the locations of the Church's 265 temples across 6 maps](#)" [△](#)

Contracts and Covenants

In our law which is just, self-ownership (personal sovereignty⁹) must exist if one is to be free, hence subject to judgement under the law. Contracts, similar to Covenants, are nullified in law when the person entering the contract is: 1.) Uninformed. 2.) Pressured. 3.) Deceived. Temple Covenants are invalidated for any one or all of those same reasons:

- 1.) When Secret because the new candidate on entering into the Temple “Covenants” is uninformed. In other words, one must fully understand what are the Temple Covenants that one will make *before deciding*¹⁰ to go on a Church mission or *before deciding* to be Temple married for which the Church requires the “Covenants” be taken. They cannot be secret.
- 2.) When Pressure of any kind exist, then the Covenants are invalid. The Church has an incentive to use pressure because it is a beneficiary of each new Covenant faithfully lived. It gains for itself the promise that one’s time, labor, and life choices shall satisfy whatever it may require of the inductee.

While creating and administering the Covenants to new missionaries and to new couples married in the Temple, the Church is creating pressure by claiming that it is the only right and true Church, and that its Temple Covenants must be entered into if one is to gain exaltation in the next life.

- 3.) When the Church Misrepresents itself to the Temple candidate, the Covenants are invalidated. The Church is a party to the Covenants, it benefits from them, it creates and administers them. It therefore has an obligation to the other party, the Temple candidate, who trusts the Church’s representation to be honest about its authoritarian agenda and its history. Unfortunately, the Church has a conflict of interest that it fails, by manipulating the Candidate, by hiding information about itself, by giving false and deceptive and misleading and incomplete information, thereby invalidating the Covenants because consent is uninformed.

⁹ The word “Sovereignty” itself means: Autonomy, independence, self-government, self-rule, home rule, self-determination, freedom or: Supreme "power" or independent authority. By personal sovereignty is meant the “power within” to say no. Meaning we claim our own power over our own lives and allow others the right to do the same. To be accountable requires we be in this place of true, authentic, and self-generated power. Individual sovereignty is incompatible with Temple Covenants of Obedience, Sacrifice, Consecration which threaten to defeat sovereignty.

¹⁰ Full disclosure of all Temple Covenants or promises must occur "*before deciding*" because otherwise one is put under the pressure of reversing a decision others are relying upon. Secrecy, therefore, can nullify Temple Covenants or promises. Disclosure after a decision is made but before administering the Covenants does NOT satisfy requirements for validity. Full unprejudiced objective disclosure must precede the Temple candidate’s decision.

	<p><u>Invalid</u> Covenants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Obedience</i>• <i>Sacrifice</i>• <i>Consecration</i> <p><u>Invalid</u> Because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Secrecy▪ Pressure▪ Misrepresentation	
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The trap is constructed by teaching that Celestial exaltation cannot be achieved unless one is Temple “Endowed” and complies with its Covenants. Placing these laws in the Temple is a deliberate attempt to compel, using the Covenants “before God, angels, and these witnesses” that you give “your time” and “everything” to the Church.

Rather than persuasion, when Church leaders threaten the Eternal Wellbeing of believing Church members using Temple Covenants or Biblical verse to scare or coerce Church members into Tithe paying Obedience, they are revealing their own personal immorality they have wrongly adopted on becoming High Priest or Apostles. They mistakenly perpetuate an Authoritarian organizational type that Joseph Smith created.

Solemnly read below Bishop John D. Lee’s confession of the tragic consequences when he subordinated his conscience by obediently submitting to his Temple Covenants. Fifty-five Priesthood holders did the same, leading to the murder at [Mountain Meadows](#) of more than 120 men, women and children of the Francher wagon train:

“I am called a vile criminal and have been sentenced to be shot for deeds committed by myself and others, nearly twenty years ago. I have never willingly committed a crime. I have acted my religion, nothing more. I have obeyed the orders of the Church. I have acted as I was commanded to do by my superiors, and if I have committed acts that justify my execution, what should be the fate of the leaders in the Church who taught me to believe I could not and would not commit sin while obeying orders of the priesthood? My sins, if any are the result of doing what I was commanded to do by those who were my superiors in authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”¹¹

What are the implications about a religion that recommends distrusting one's own self or one's own conscience, but instead to solely trust and to rely on one’s church and its leaders? This question has profound implications for any religious belief system.

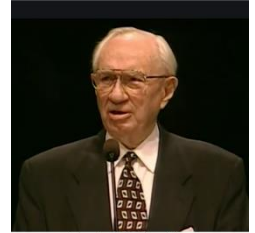
If a religion teaches that you cannot trust your own conscience but must completely trust the Church or its Priesthood leadership, it is using circular logic arguing that one should cease being responsible for their own choices. Delegating that responsibility to an authority (religious or otherwise) is abdication, not virtue:

¹¹ [Mormonism Unveiled: Or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee](#), St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company. New York: W. H. Stelle & Co., 1877, Chapter 1, p 36

- Your inner doubts are viewed as untrustworthy or even sinful.
- Your inner convictions are only valid if they align with church teachings.
- Therefore, the church becomes the only arbiter of truth, even over your own moral compass.

This doctrine is Moral Abdication. It pressures adherents to surrender personal moral responsibility to the Church. The implications are that it undermines personal autonomy and creates a form of epistemic dependency — where people defer to external authority over their own critical reasoning or moral instincts as it did for John D Lee. It is still taught today:

1. *“The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray.”*¹²
2. *“Follow the leadership of the Church. God will not permit His prophet to lead this Church astray.”*¹³
3. *“The prophet will never lead the Church astray.”*¹⁴
4. *“We are blessed to be led by a living prophet today. The Lord will never allow the President of the Church to lead us astray.”*¹⁵



Gordon B. Hinckley

These statements seek the abdication of individual moral responsibilities because these leaders are wrongly placing themselves above one’s conscience. “Being Right” is a coercive act which conflicts with the principle that moral virtue must be freely chosen, not institutionally imposed.

Therefore, Endowed Temple goers might not realize that Temple Covenants, like the Law of Obedience, are attacking their freedom to choose. Temple Laws are intentionally made and administered in order to coerce obedience, for example, to the Law of Tithing. Church leaders teach that the Law of Tithing is NOT making a gift but is discharging a debt. The idea that Tithe paying should be voluntary is explicitly denied. Hammering home that Temple Law’s like Tithing are coercive: Church leaders extortion of the poor is witnessed as they threaten that if not paid we shall be “[burned](#)”[△].

“None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
German poet, novelist, scientist, statesman.
1749 – 1832

The coercive intention is reinforced, for example, when requiring that all employees at Church schools be Temple worthy on penalty of lost employment. Even students who do not conform to the honor code or who doubt the Church is True, or do not pay Tithing, are expelled. Everyone at Church schools like BYU must have their ecclesiastical endorsement verified annually. Dismissal or expulsion are the threats used to enforce compliance/obedience.

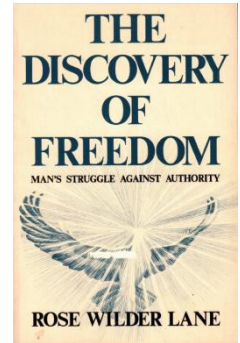
¹² Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff (2004)

¹³ President Gordon B. Hinckley (October 1994, General Conference)

¹⁴ President Ezra Taft Benson, in his famous talk “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet” (Feb 1980, BYU Devotional)

¹⁵ Church Manuals and Study Materials this doctrine is reiterated in "Gospel Principles" (2011, Chapter 9: Prophets of God)

In The Discovery of Freedom,¹⁶ Rose Wilder Lane argues that freedom is the source of moral responsibility and human dignity. She insists that authority, whether ecclesiastical or political, often undermines individual conscience, suppresses creativity, and imposes obedience rooted in fear rather than understanding. For Lane, true virtue arises from free will, not from coerced conformity.



The power of religious organizations is maintained by the cooperation of its members. Claim your power. A person who can be given their freedom doesn't have it to begin with. Lane wants us to discover freedom. Courage is required to take it.

¹⁷First, we must argue for the right to argue, freely and publicly. As attorney Jerry Spence puts it, Argument is the affirmation of our being.¹⁸ “We commit homicide against the self when we deliver our authority to others – to the church, to a political party, to a creed, ... who advise us what our experience of joy and the meaning of our lives should be. Having abdicated our own authority ... what is left of us? ... “¹⁹

Some of us must sacrifice membership to argue for change from outside the church. As Spence says, “ ... we may have an obligation to argue directly into the face of the prejudice, even though there is no chance to win. If someone argues that ... women are less qualified than men to hold responsible positions, [or because God is opposed], we incur an obligation to ourselves, the duty to argue against the prejudice with all our skill and our power – whether we can win or not.”²⁰

“It is a curious sight ... “, Spence says, “ – we ourselves – locked in our closets with the key to our freedom clasped tightly in our fists. The key, of course, is permission, our permission to peer out of our closets, ... to ask questions, to demand respect, to share our creativity, our ideas, to speak out, to search for love, to seek justice – to be.”²¹

Lane contrasts centralized power (be it church, state, or ideology) with the individual's God-given right to choose and to act. Her thesis aligns with thinkers like Kierkegaard and [Fromm](#), who also see authentic moral life as contingent upon the freedom to choose good or evil, uncoerced by institutional control.

Temple Covenants only do their job when they compel obedience. However, the covenants do harm when causing an inauthentic motive because such a motive can invalidate the virtues lived. Inauthenticity is unhealthy. It can make us sick. Furthermore, as slavery illustrates, there is no moral virtue found in obedience for its own sake. Nor is there virtue in the actions of a Latter-Day Saint whose compliance is motivated by the Law of Obedience with the artificial goal of attaining the Celestial Kingdom. The Temple Law of Obedience is so deeply corrupting to one's motives that true virtue is often lost.

¹⁶ "[The Discovery of Freedom: Man's Struggle Against Authority](#)", 1943, By Rose Wilder Lane, who is joined by Søren Kierkegaard, and [Erich Fromm](#): True morality and authentic freedom begin with the individual's inner choice—not obedience to an external authority.

¹⁷ [THE AUTHORITARIAN TEMPTATION](#), Francis Nelson Henderson. Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium, 27-30 July, 2005, Session #325, Saturday 30 July, 10 - 11 AM, p 19

¹⁸ Gerry Spence, [How to Argue and Win Every Time](#), 1995, ISBN 0-312-14477-6, p 5, 12,

¹⁹ [How to Argue](#)

²⁰ [How to Argue](#), p 92

²¹ [How to Argue](#), p 13

The LDS mythical story of a pre-existent “war in heaven” is a useful idea because it identifies individual freedom of choice as a settled issue when those favoring forced Obedience were defeated. Many Temple Endowed Church members correctly understand that the Temple Covenant to Obey attacks and flat out contradicts the principal of “[free agency](#)”. The abuse is seen when [extorting tithing](#) from the poor.

“The most common form of despair is not being who you are.”

Soren Kierkegaard

Danish philosopher and poet. 1813 - 1855

It should be clear by now that the innate immoral [coercive](#) purpose of the Temple Covenants is the 4th and final reason they are invalid. Neither religion nor baptism nor Temple Covenants are needed in order to live virtuously and to be blessed for it. Contrary to the power claim Mormonism wrongly makes that the natural man is “carnal, sensual, and devilish”²², the great majority of people are naturally good.

Submission to Temple Covenants is the **unhealthy** way of responding to our need to belong. It is tempting to accept the invitation to become part of somebody or something bigger than oneself and to experience one’s identity in connection with the power to which one has submitted.

Accepting the will of their leaders²³, followers lose their freedom, the spontaneous expression of the infant’s, the child’s, the adolescents, and eventually the adult’s will, their thirst for knowledge and truth, their wish for affection. The growing person²⁴ is forced to give up most of his or her autonomous, genuine desires and interests, and his or her own will, and to adopt a will and desires and feelings that are not autonomous but superimposed by the authorities who create the Covenants to which followers must submit.²⁵

The **healthy** way of meeting our need to belong is in the opposite direction away from Covenants towards spontaneity, authenticity, genuine delight. “There is only one passion which satisfies man’s need to unite himself with the world and to acquire at the same time a sense of integrity and individuality, and this is love. Love is union with somebody, or something outside oneself under the condition of retaining the separateness and integrity of one’s own self. It is an experience of sharing, of communion, which permits the full unfolding of one’s own inner activity. ... Love is in the experience of human solidarity with our fellow creatures, it is in the erotic love of man and woman, in the love of the mother for her child, and also in the love for oneself as a human being; it is in the ... experience of union. In the act of loving, I am one with All, and yet I am myself, a unique, separate, limited, mortal human being.”²⁶

²² For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil. (Book of Mormon: Mosiah 16:3).

²³ Mormons revere a scripture which states that “whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.” (D&C 1:38) This [video](#) [is](#) a review and analysis of how that scripture is used in Mormonism in order to subjugate the membership.

²⁴ Orion Taraban, Psy.D. PsychHacks, How to SAVE YOUR MIND: learn [what no one teaches you](#). [is](#)

“People only truly gain the capacity for critical, independent thought when they’re 25 years old. Unfortunately, by the time people reach this age, their minds are so full of nonsense that they could literally spend the rest of their lives sifting through the concepts, beliefs, and ideas that were functionally put there without their consent.”

²⁵ A Gospel Centered Approach to Mental Health is delusional because it is based on the Spirit, God or Jesus, reading the Scriptures. The misdirection can harm people. LDS therapists are [taught](#) [to](#) rely on their moral character and spiritual preparation, the spiritual doctrines and moral values of the Gospel inform them of the concepts and methods of treatment, and a belief that it is God and Jesus Christ who do the healing.

²⁶ Erich Fromm, [On Disobedience: and Other Essays](#), 1981, 2

Free Will, Free Agency – Coercion

In order to make the case that administering the Covenant of *Obedience* in the LDS Temple is an act attempting to compel, one must first realize that coercion is not just the threat of physical force in compelling a person to act. *But, coercion also is the threat of “moral force”, or duress, or reprisal, or loss, or creating a perceived threat in this life or an afterlife, or controlling the circumstances of a person so that, to avoid a greater perceived evil, the person is compelled to act not according to a voluntary plan of one’s own, but to serve the intentions of another whether or not those intentions are noble.* Coercion is the threat or fear of any perceived harm or loss that is used by one upon another to gain compliance.



Power always rests on the acquiescence of the subject. Therefore, the use of power comprises anything that establishes and maintains the control of one person over another. *Thus, power covers all religious and social relationships, which serve the end of a person (or a church) to control another, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another.*

Seeking submission from its followers, Mormonism is wrongly re-defining what coercion, or *free agency* means. The definitions are easily understood using the simple example of physical coercion, such threatening someone's safety to compel action. Even in this situation, the person being coerced still has and must make use of “free will.” Even if it is known that the choice is between death or injury and some alternative such as giving over one’s purse, this is still a choice, (although made under duress).

Because of the threat, it is not really a “free choice” at all. With courage one may exercise “free will” by rejecting the coercion, by calling the coercer's bluff or by fighting back. Although the probability of a successful outcome may be low, disobedience to the one(s) making the threat is an adult’s innate *free will*. However, *free will* is not *free agency* because *free agency* can only exist absent duress (absent the gunman’s threat). *Free will* and *free agency* are different.

I hear Church members confuse *free will* with *free agency*.²⁷ This mistaken idea is used saying, “You are free to choose to obey, to live the commandments, to “Follow the Brethren,” or to suffer the consequences. It is your choice. That is your *free agency*. (Not meaning natural consequences, but consequences imposed by church

²⁷ *Free agency* and freedom of expression are fundamental to the dignity, the social nature, and the growth of the human person. One must have [immunity](#) from coercion as well as psychological freedom.

Complying with authoritarian guidance to “Follow the Brethren” is likely to produce cognitive dissonance at times. It is the psychological discomfort people experience when they hold conflicting beliefs, values, or attitudes, or when they engage in behavior that is incongruent with their beliefs. It is often seen as something to be avoided because it can lead people to engage in irrational or defensive behavior, such as denying the evidence of their own senses or trying to convince others to believe something that they know may not be true.

Finally, avoiding cognitive dissonance can be beneficial because it allows people to align their beliefs and actions with their values and principles, which can increase their sense of coherence and well-being. By being aware of and addressing any discrepancies between their beliefs and behaviors, people can live more authentically and with greater integrity.

officers.)²⁸ However, this Rhetorical sleight of hand wrongly equates *free will* to mean *free agency*. *Free will* can require courage to defeat coercion, which by definition means such a choice is not freely made.

Worse, Church leaders are now saying we individuals are not free to choose anymore²⁹ after being Endowed in the Temple. The term *free agency* is diminished by saying it is not scriptural. The confusing term *moral agency* is used instead to mean we do not choose individually for ourselves but are choosing to conform to a larger Christian community. It is not individual *free agency* anymore, but community that is chosen.

It is quite shocking to see the reversal of these definitions taking place as [Brother Bednar illustrates](#) [△] when he says wrongly that after baptism and Temple Covenants, one no longer has a choice. He demeans acting on one's conscience or any choice other than to Obey as merely doing what one "wants."

However, being a *free agent* and true to oneself, out of respect for oneself and one's conscience, one does not yield to any other person (or church) or community that is seeking the authority to stand between oneself and one's God. Such attempts by David Bednar or the LDS community Temple system of Covenants, are unholy claims to power. His attempt is to separate us from our individual inner divinity, the authority of our individual conscience, on which we take responsibility for ourselves. "To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment"³⁰

This means I am responsible for accepting Mormonism into my life at age eight (8) (despite my parent's complicity). However, I outgrew the Churches authoritarian claims and repent³¹ of my membership in it.

It interferes with and harms my Temple marriage³² in ways that are important to me. It excommunicates my friends for telling the truth. It hides from me the facts of Joseph Smith's dozens of sexual relationships. It conceals Smith's trial in Judge Neely's court as a treasure digging "imposter," when soon afterward he claimed to digging up the Book of Mormon golden plates.

Covenants, Manipulation, Exploitation: Bednar – You do not have a choice

The Davis County Stake 1st Counselor asked, "*Do you have a choice whether to serve a mission? I'm going to tell you why you don't. It's because when you were baptized you signed on to the Lord's plan which is giving up free agency*"³³ This Stake Councilor abuses his religious position to exploit teenage Church members who as children were baptized at age eight (8). The Councilor is unchallenged when saying falsely that baptism is a promise to become a missionary.

²⁸ If determinism is true, then all a person's choices are caused by events and facts outside their control. If so, everything one does is caused by those events outside their control, then they cannot be the ultimate cause of their actions. Therefore, they cannot have *free agency* or *free will*, hence are unaccountable.

²⁹ Church schools like BYU maintain a policy to expel all post-Mormon students meaning the student cannot graduate if their choice is to resign from the Church. "Disaffiliation from [The Church] automatically results in the withdrawal of the student's ecclesiastical endorsement and the loss of good Honor Code standing. Disaffiliation is defined for purposes of this policy as removal of an individual's name from the official records of the Church." [Withdrawn or Denied Ecclesiastical Endorsements](#) [△], [CES Standards and FAQ](#) [△].

³⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson on Self-Reliance

³¹ Aligning one's beliefs and actions with one's values and principles, increases one's sense of coherence and well-being. By being aware of and addressing any discrepancies between one's beliefs and behaviors, people can live more authentically and with greater integrity.

³² Growing from the exit. A [Nashville](#) [△] Mormon Story – Darian and Jennifer Ellsworth Rogers Ep. 1912

³³ Full Video [Mormon Covenants: the Road to Serfdom](#) [△] (12:53) at [Mormon Rescue](#). Ironically, Bednar's use of temple Covenants is condemned as an abuse of power in the BofM where it calls "secret oaths and combinations most abominable and wicked above all, in the sight of God." (Ether 8:18)"



In the same [video clip](#) (00:49), Brother Bednar affirms what the Brethren are intending when repeating the new slogan, “We are a Covenant People” while building new Temples totaling more than 265³⁴. Bednar discloses his Brethren’s *motive* when asking rhetorically, “*Do we have the option not to pay our tithing? No, it's breaking a covenant ...*” he says. Bednar is manipulating³⁵ religious followers by invoking Temple Covenants to gain compliance.³⁶ Financial exploitation happens when Apostle Bednar uses his position to pressure followers into making substantial financial contributions or donations, even when it puts followers in financial distress.

It took me a long time to realize that using its Temples the Church intends to expand upon making immoral claims on people’s lives for itself: claims to one’s time and to one’s earnings. The leverage used is fear of eternal loss if one fails to satisfy the **secret** Temple Law of **Consecration**, Law of **Obedience**, Law of **Sacrifice**, “before God, angels, and these witnesses” that you give “yourselves, your time, talents, and everything” to the Church.

I believe Temple Covenants are sworn to secrecy because otherwise such manipulation is exposed for what it is for all the world to see.

Evidence – A Short List

The Church has a conflict of interest in being both the creator of the Temple Covenants and a beneficiary. Therefore, it has an incentive to act fraudulently. It did so by knowingly, intentionally, misrepresenting itself to me by hiding evidence they knew is contrary to their Truth claims. Self-consciously aware of their hiding historical evidence, the sincerity of their belief should be doubted.

For example, can the Pastor’s belief in a resurrection be sincere, if he has the un-resurrected body hidden in his basement? Likewise, can Church leader’s belief be sincere when they are hiding evidence because they know it is not “faith promoting.” That talk by Apostle Boyd K Packer³⁷ to Church Educational System (CES) employees,

³⁴ Church News, By Scott Taylor, Jan 22, 2022 “[See the locations of the Church’s 265 temples across 6 maps](#)” [△](#)

³⁵ For any young Mormon thinking about serving a Mormon mission:

1. [You always have a choice](#) [△](#). Run away from any human saying you don't have a choice or saying they know what God wants for you. It is for you to figure out what is healthiest for you.
2. When you were baptized you were far too young to make such a decision. Your brain doesn’t fully develop till age 25. Your baptism was likely not a choice. Instead, it was something you did to please those you loved.
3. You are not given all the information you need. As a matter of informed consent, you should know that in 2022 many Mormon missionaries came home early due to depression, anxiety, and disbelief because they were not told the truth about the Church when they were growing up.

What would cause a faithful LDS young woman to question her belief after returning home early from her mission. [Leaving Early From My Mormon Mission](#) [△](#) - Brinley Jensen Pt. 2, [40% leaving Church](#) within six (6) months after mission. [△](#)

³⁶ Elder Bednar argues that Mormons do not enjoy “free agency” after Baptism and Temple Covenants. He argues that one is only [free to obey](#) [△](#) an “enlarged” agency in a Christian family by keeping covenants, calling it “Moral Agency.” In Bednar’s double-speak, he demeans individuals choosing anything other than Obedience as merely doing what one “wants.”

³⁷ Boyd K. Packer, “The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect,” presented on 22 August 1981 to Seminary, Institute, and Brigham Young University religion instructors, and published in [Brigham Young University Studies](#), 21

plus the Gospel Topics Essays show leaders have known all along about the evidence hidden in their basement, so to speak.

Evidence is abundant discrediting Church claims to *power*, that it is *trustworthy* or that it is *right* or *True*. For an educated person to claim the “Church is True” is intellectually dishonest and a [willful deceit](#)³⁸ [△](#) (45:40) given only that one or two the facts below are correct. For example, if the Book of Mormon is not a [Historical document](#)³⁹ [△](#) (53:43), the Church is founded on a lie:

1. Because [DNA evidence](#) shatters the claim made that the Native Americans are the “principal” ancestors of the Lamanites, in 2006 the Church was forced by undeniable evidence to change the Book of Mormon’s own description of itself to say Book of Mormon peoples were “among the ancestors of the American Indians.”

Church historian B. H. Roberts presented a [study](#)⁴⁰ of the Book of Mormon (BoM) to the leadership of the Church and a group of Mormon intelligentsia in January of 1922⁴¹ fundamentally challenging the entire premise of their religious beliefs. The BoM story line, that native Americans are a lost tribe of Israel is a mistaken contemporary Protestant speculation popular at the time of Joseph Smith. That mistaken speculation became the BoM story which as B.H. Roberts points out, is described earlier by neighboring Pastor Ethan Smith in his book, [View of the Hebrews](#)⁴², from the county adjacent to the Smith family.

The Urim and Thummim and Spectacles are also described earlier in Pastor Smith’s book. Young Joseph greatly embellishes the ideas while also copying the racial prejudice of his day by skin shaming Native Americans (Lamanites) in his story of Lehi’s migration from Jerusalem. I read a draft copy of Robert’s study in 1979 that was ignored for over sixty years until University of Utah historian Brigham D Madsen published it in 1985.

2. Similarly, Brother Packer, Oaks, Bednar, Nelson, Monson, Hinckley, Holland⁴³, all know the Book of Abraham is no translation of Abraham from [papyri](#)⁴⁴ written by “his own hand.” The Brethren have the papyri scrolls in their possession since 1967. The papyri contain the Book of Breathings for a man named Hor, a priest of Amon-Ra, who died about 100 BC, far from the time of [Abraham](#).
3. The Brethren know there are no Lamanites because [DNA](#)⁴⁵ testing from hundreds of native American groups shows they are not Middle East Israelites migrating from Jerusalem but are Southeast Asian.

³⁸ Video: ["Top 15 Evidences of Deceptive LDS Leadership"](#) [△](#) (45:40), Mormon Discussion Inc.

³⁹ Video: ["The Top 15 Evidences Against Book of Mormon Historicity,"](#) [△](#) (53:43), Mormon Discussion Inc.

⁴⁰ B. H. Roberts, ["Studies of the Book of Mormon"](#), 1985, Signature Books, SLC Utah, ISBN 1-56085-027-2

⁴¹ Shannon Caldwell Montez, ["The Secret Mormon Meetings of 1922"](#), 2019, Master of Arts in History thesis, U of Nevada Reno

⁴² [View of the Hebrews: or, The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel in North America](#), by Ethan Smith

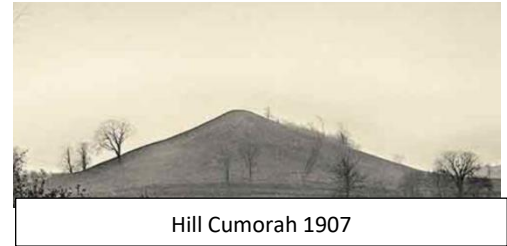
[View of the Hebrews](#) by preacher and theologian Ethan Smith puts forth the notion that the Native American tribes are descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. The idea that the distant forebears of the Native American tribes had somehow arrived in North America long ago from Israel, was a popular belief in the USA during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Lacking an alternative explanation for the tribal peoples, the preachers of the era advanced this Israelite theory, which gained currency especially among pious Christians in the fledgling United States. Concepts that Ethan Smith and others advanced were later discredited by anthropologists, who determined that ancestors of the Native American peoples had in fact migrated across the frozen plains of Alaska. Despite being disproven by later research, [View of the Hebrews](#) remains interesting for insights into popular beliefs and suppositions of religious scholars at the time.

⁴³ Commentary on [BBC Interview](#) [△](#) with Elder Jeffrey R Holland from 2012.

⁴⁴ Charles M. Larson, ["By His Own Hand upon Papyrus : A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri"](#), 1990 ISBN: 0962096326

⁴⁵ Simon Southerton, ["DNA Genealogies of American Indians and the Book of Mormon"](#), 2000

4. The Brethren know of the other [First Vision](#)⁴⁶ accounts, like Smith's earliest 1832 handwritten version, that differ significantly from the 1838 version they promote.
5. The Brethren know the Book of Mormon Golden Plates were said to be dug out of the ground September 1827, not ignorant of the facts that Joseph Smith conducted many (at least 18) treasure digs between [1822-1827](#). Treasure digging for hire was a known superstitious fraud in Smith's Day resulting in Smith's arraignment March 20, 1826, before [Judge Neely](#) in Bainbridge, New York and Smith's trial as a "disorderly person and an imposter."⁴⁷ Smith testified on his own behalf, insisting in his defense that he used a "seer" stone to help others look for "hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth," despite never once having found any. His arraignment⁴⁸ was brought by Josiah Stowell's nephew, Peter Bridgeman, after watching Joseph Smith's methods in being the "seer" of the money digging party⁴⁹. Following Smith's March 1826 trial as an imposter when selling himself for [treasure digging](#) employment to Josiah Stowell, Smith would then go on to claim digging up the BofM [Golden Plates](#) soon afterward in September 1827.
6. Benjamin Franklin⁵⁰ described the treasure digging scam long before Joseph Smith practiced it, arising from the account of Captain Kidd,⁵¹ of buried treasure fame in Smith's Day that the Captain had hidden buried treasure in the American East. And, that in Kidd's travels he sailed to the port city "Moroni" on the island of "[Cumorah](#)" (the Comoros Islands near Madagascar). These names are familiar to Latter-day Saints because Smith named the spirit guarding the buried gold plates, "Moroni," and the [buried treasure](#) location, the hill "Cumorah."
7. The Brethren know Smith did not use Golden Plates to produce the BofM. Instead, he placed his treasure digging "seer" stone in a hat and his [face in the hat](#) (0:51) while dictating the entire BofM to his scribes, Emma Smith and Oliver Cowdrey, who describe his method. He did not translate from any Golden plates.
8. The Brethren have halted annual production of "Hill Cumorah Pageant." Stopping the Pageant is a forward looking decision because the pageant is indefensible when Church leaders know that a [great war](#) killing several hundred thousand Nephite and Jaredite armed



⁴⁶ Grant Palmer, [An Insider's View of Mormon Origins](#), 2002, Signature Books, SLC Utah, ISBN 1-56085-157-0
Hiding Church History - The Deception around Joseph Smith's [First Vision](#), Mormon Discussions, Radio Free Mormon
John Larsen Describes How Joseph Smith Never Mentioned the [First Vision](#) to Anyone in the Church, LDS Discussions

⁴⁷ Joseph Smith's 1826 Trial ([Pt 1](#)) - The Verdict - Dan Vogel ([Transcript Pt1](#)), ([Pt 2](#))

⁴⁸ [Joseph Smith and the Criminal Justice System](#) [o](#). Joseph Smith was charged with approximately thirty criminal actions during his life, and at least that many financial civil suits. Another source reports that Smith was arrested at least 42 times, including in the states of New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois.

In 1844, Smith was killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois, while in jail awaiting trial on charges of inciting a riot for ordering the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor, a newspaper critical of Smith for practicing polygamy, and for treason against the State of Illinois for calling out the Nauvoo Legion contrary to the orders of the Governor of Illinois.

⁴⁹ "Book of Mormon: Joseph Smith and Treasure Digging", <https://www.ldsdiscussions.com/treasure-digging>
Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith, The Pirate Captain Kidd, [Treasure Digging](#), The Book of Mormon, John Dehlin [summary](#).

⁵⁰ Benjamin Franklin, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin 1: 134-39

⁵¹ Mormon Stories: LDS Nuclear Submarine Commander, [Full Part 3 Episode 1468](#), Captain Kidd, buried treasure at Cumorah (Madagascar), [Capital City Moroni](#) - 10 min clip at 50:30 Minutes.

warriors at that site⁵², as told by Smith in the [Book of Mormon](#), could not have occurred while leaving no trace of it.

9. The Brethren are leaving off the gold-plated Moroni statue from new temples. This could also be seen as forward looking because the statue of Moroni is a discrediting reminder of Smith's treasure digging expeditions and trial. Like the Hill Cumorah name, the Angel seems to be named after the Capital city of Cumorah, Moroni. Spirits guarding buried treasure is eerily like Smith's methods used on his treasure digging scams.

10. The Brethren know of Isaac Hale's [affidavit](#)⁵³ [△](#) (Emma Hale Smith's Father) in which Hale confirms the accounts of Smith's occupation as a "money digger;" describing it as "... seeing or pretending to see by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure." They know of Hale's conclusion that the Book of Mormon is gotten up "... with a design to dupe the credulous and unwary -- and in order that its fabricators may live upon the spoils of those who swallow the deception."



11. A photo of Abraham Lincoln using a cell phone is an anachronism.⁵⁴ A coin inscribed with the date 46 BC is an anachronism. Here are compelling [anachronisms](#) [△](#)⁵⁵ that challenge the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon showing that it is a contemporary creation. For example:



*What are 1769 King James Version edition errors doing in the Book of Mormon, a purported ancient text? Why are errors which are unique to the 1769 edition that Joseph Smith owned doing in the Book of Mormon?*⁵⁶

*Why are there so many anachronisms in the Book of Mormon? "Why does The Book of Mormon quote Isaiah before Isaiah was written? Why does it mention the Bible a millennia before the Bible even existed? Why has The Book of Mormon preserved the errors in the King James translation such as 'virgin' for 'young woman'? Why is 'Christ' used when it is a Greek word, not the Israelite word Messiah?"*⁵⁷

12. In November 1836 the "audible voice of God" instructed Joseph Smith to establish a bank⁵⁸. However, the Ohio State legislature refused the Kirtland Safety Society a charter upon which the bank was founded anyway, changing its name to the "Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company." It was unlawful, but worse, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were incompetent bankers. There was never the slightest chance that the Kirtland *anti-bank* company could succeed. It could "scarcely have suffered a more devastating blow" than was administered to it by its founders. Rather than a modest project befitting its relative worth and ability to pay, Smith launched a gigantic company nearly half the size (4.0/9.3) of all the banks in Ohio.

⁵² Book of Mormon, Mormon 6:11, "... from the top of the hill Cumorah"

⁵³ [Isaac Hale Statement](#) [△](#) on Joseph Smith, Jr.

⁵⁴ Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon | [Ep. 1609](#) | LDS Discussions Ep. 08

⁵⁵ How the Book of Mormon was Composed | [Ep. 1615](#) | LDS Discussions Ep. 10

⁵⁶ [CES Letter](#)

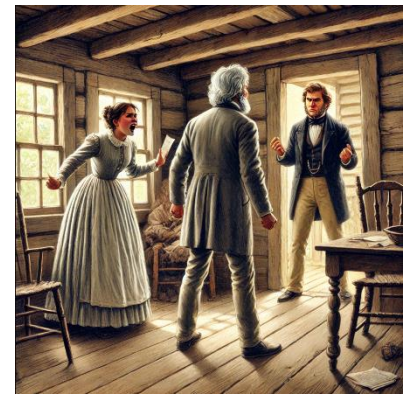
⁵⁷ Mormon Think: "[It Started with Science](#)," [△](#) By Dianne Chryst Ormond, Resignation letter.

⁵⁸ Audible revelation: [Joseph Smith's Kirtland Bank Failure](#). [△](#)

At first the bank notes circulated wildly. However, within months the bank became insolvent when merchants and businessmen who were more sophisticated than the Mormons began to redeem their notes. The toppling of the Kirtland *anti-bank*⁵⁹ loosed a hornets' nest which as a side effect, caused the great Kirtland apostasy of Smith's Church followers. Creditors swarmed in upon Smith armed with threats and warrants. In April 1837 Joseph went into hiding without seeing Emma before he left. ([Mormon Enigma](#), pp. 62) The blame for the bank failure and investor loses fell squarely on Smith. He had issued a formal invitation to his followers to take stock in the venture and the institution had been organized outside the law. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were tried in court for violating the law, found guilty, and fined \$1,000.



13. The Brethren know of Smith's sexual predation on believing female followers⁶⁰ such as Smith's [Happiness Letter](#)⁶¹ to 19-year-old Nancy Rigdon, or by Brigham Young on 17-years-old [Martha Brotherton](#). These two (2) are examples where the coercive tactics used are documented⁶². It is fortunate that to Nancy, Smith left written evidence in his own words of his pathological manipulative behavior and language for us all to see. It is quite amazing that no sentence was without obvious manipulation and no sentence had only one manipulative tactic in it. It's also good to be reminded that we are all vulnerable to certain manipulative tactics and that it doesn't take stupidity to fall for it but a skillful manipulator who knows the sensitivities and weaknesses of their target audience.



14. The Brethren are transferring emphasis in General Conference to Jesus, away from Joseph Smith. This decision could be forward looking because Joseph Smith's character is indefensible⁶³.

If you are a believing member, Smith's *Happiness Letter* to Nancy Rigdon may make you feel extremely uncomfortable, but that discomfort is not Satan trying to lead you away: It's the realization that what Joseph Smith

⁵⁹ Wikipedia - [Kirtland Safety Society](#) [△](#) Robert Kent Fielding historian: "As it was projected, there was never the slightest chance that the Kirtland Safety Society anti-Bank-ing Company could succeed. Even though their economy was in jeopardy, it could scarcely have suffered such a devastating blow as that which they were themselves preparing to administer to it. ... The Safety Society proposed no modest project befitting its relative worth and ability to pay. Its organizers launched, instead, a gigantic company capitalized at four million dollars, when the entire capitalization of all the banks in the state of Ohio was only nine and one third million. Such presumption could not have escaped the notice of bankers who would have been led to examine its capital structure more closely. ..."

⁶⁰ [List of the wives of Joseph Smith](#) [△](#), Smith lied when he publicly denied he taught or practiced polygamy. The first publication of a list of Smith's plural wives was in 1887, when assistant LDS church historian Andrew Jenson procured signed affidavits from 27 women besides Emma Smith.

⁶¹ The Happiness Letter to 19-year-old Nancy Rigdon ([Sunstone video](#) [△](#)) - A Study in Religious Manipulation. (Text of [Smith's letter](#) [△](#)); Joseph's Proposition to Nancy Rigdon - [LDS Discussions](#) [△](#) Ep. 28

⁶² Martha Brotherton [Affidavit](#), [△](#)

Five individuals—Joseph Smith, Heber C. Kimball, Elizabeth Brotherton, Parley P. Pratt, and Brigham Young—each besmirched the character of 17-years-old Martha Brotherton denying her claim that she was propositioned for a polygamous marriage by Brigham Young, aided by Heber C. Kimball and Joseph Smith. However, the actions of these five individuals—who either were practicing polygamy at the time of their denunciations or would go on to participate in polygamy—would ultimately vindicate the substance of [Martha's story](#) [△](#) and hence her character at the expense of their own reputations.

⁶³ Joseph Smith Jr. | Founder of Latter Day Saints | [Mental Health & Personality](#) [△](#) (15:11) by Dr. Todd Grande

did as prophet to entice young women to marry and have sex with him is no different than what other sexual predators have done throughout our history in the name of God. Not only do other self-proclaimed prophets use these methods, but the women that enter into these relationships report the same spiritual witnesses and visions that some of the women entering into polygamy with Joseph Smith later claimed. [[Jonathan Streeter](#) △]

Civil judgement does not require conviction to be “beyond doubt,” but in which direction does the balance of evidence tip the scales.

Certain kinds of evidence weigh heavier, for example that witnesses have hidden evidence in their possession. In other words, the witnesses (the Brethren) have lied by hiding evidence throughout my upbringing, hidden it from my parents, hidden it throughout my church service as a missionary, hidden it during my Temple marriage, hidden it throughout my callings to teach others; is their conscience beyond shame when their manipulation is discovered? These members of the Church Board of Directors intentionally, knowingly, fraudulently hide, deny, manipulate, spin, falsify information that misleads their followers and prospective converts.



The lie cannot be sustained.⁶⁴ The Brethren are disgraced trying to conceal the lie while they slowly remove the worst parts put into the Temple ceremony or remove from the Book of Mormon Smith’s racist explanation for Native American origins (Lamanites) or conceal Smith’s sexual conquest on young girls and other men’s wives. The evidence is clear, Joseph Smith was a liar, a fraud, a lecher, and a wicked man who deceived many. The religion he founded is based on lies.

If there is a God, you will someday stand in judgment before him, and he will ask you, "My dear child, why did you refuse to look? Why didn't you ask more questions? How could you fall for such a scam? Why would you not listen to the many who showed you the way out? What do you think the brain I gave you was for?" Not only would God ask, but one’s children or grandchildren will have those same tough questions of you who gave life to the lie.

I presume your testimony is based on your feelings, on a "burning in the bosom," on answered prayers about what you were trying to believe is true. Such testimonies are like those of believers in all religions - the same kind of emotional "evidence" that proves to them that their religion is true, not yours.

The nature of truth is that its discovery comes together in a clean coherent way. However, as I document in this Statement, every single part of Joseph Smith’s fantastical story is unworthy or a falsehood. None of it is coherent. All of it requires endless rationalization and repair. Not a few things merely, everything!

My Resignation

My resignation is rooted in my Conscience, not a *Faith Crisis*. I outgrew the Law of Obedience. I repent of my membership in the LDS Church and redirect my life in a more authentic, honest, self-determined direction.

I discovered the authoritarian nature of Mormonism means that its leadership justifies to itself violating my free agency. I discovered the Temple Covenants are willful, intentional, unmistakable abuse of religious power benefiting the Church at my

⁶⁴ LDS Bishop Speaks Out At His Own Disciplinary Court. It was never the bishop who was on trial. “It was the Church who was on trial, [its integrity, its honesty.](#)”△

expense. I discovered that it intends to make demands on my time for its own benefit about how my free time shall be used. I discovered that its Truth claims are about its power, not Truth. I discovered that emotions are not a valid way to discern Truth.

From the [Gospel Topics Essays](#) I discovered what Church leaders knew but hid from me. I discovered from their changes made to Book of Abraham and Book of Mormon that Church leaders should always have known the racist ideas in those books were wrong. Yet they repeat with absolute certainty those books are divine. I discovered the Church has a conflict of interest. It knowingly, intentionally, misrepresents itself while promoting its own self-interest at my expense. My experience is that it harmed my marriage and wasted my time.

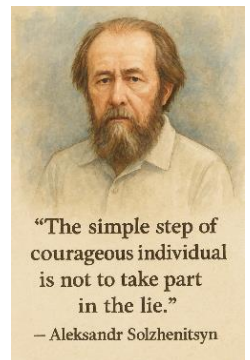
[What good reasons justify leaving the LDS Church?](#) The most common reply is to refute Church Truth Claims. However, two higher reasons are: The Church is unhealthy to the human soul because in its Temples it diminishes individual sovereignty, it works to defeat individual free agency, and it undermines authenticity by demanding Obedience and conformity. Second, is dishonesty by Church leaders from its beginning until now, seeking to empower their claim of "being right." However, that claim is actually a Power claim, not a Truth claim.

None of the most important reasons for my exit from the Church are because Mormonism's Truth claims are demonstrably False. Rather, my exit is about abuse of power. Because the Church knowingly misrepresents itself in order to gain control over my life claiming to be right. Administering Temple covenants: Obedience, Sacrifice, Consecration is an unholy claim to Power.

Church leaders intentionally, systematically, knowingly, misled me.⁶⁵ They are opposed to me choosing how my life shall be lived, instead of them. They hold authoritarian beliefs about Obedience which, in the Temple, prohibits my freedom of public expression to oppose that type of power. The authoritarian power they advocate is an inherently immoral, disqualifying, and unhealthy core value for any religion to hold.

I discovered Church leaders are intellectually dishonest, self-aggrandizing, delusional, homophobic, erotophobic, unapologetic, unrepentant, superstitious and secretive. Isn't this speaking ill of the "Lord's Anointed?"⁶⁶ No, because this Statement is truthful, based on evidence, not merely my opinion. I define "Speaking ill" to mean to slander with falsehoods, not as Smith or Oaks who say any criticism, True or False, is persecution.

I believe Church leaders know all the evidence in this Statement from which a reasonable person would conclude Joseph Smith is a Fraudster, a Lier, and a Letcher. They perpetuate Smith's fraud, his methods of domination, manipulation and control like the Temple endowment, Fast and Testimony meetings.⁶⁷ Their failure to act when they should have taken action to protect the membership from Smith's cultish methods is a breach of duty, "negligence."



⁶⁵ [Behavior Of Leaders-Loss of Confidence-Ability To Command](#)⁶⁵ (4:12) Mormon Stories [Ep. 1862](#)

⁶⁶ [Criticism in the Church - From Oaks to Eyring](#) [△](#)

[Sam Harris' All-Time Most Powerful Critique of Religion](#) [△](#) In this video, Sam Harris calls for a shift from uncritical respect for faith to rational evaluation, urging us to confront the real-world impact of religious doctrines.

⁶⁷ [Wellbeing Of Members Vs Tithing](#) (2:34) Mormon Stories [Ep. 1862](#)

All Church leaders are approaching the precipice requiring them to disavow, refute, and come clean if they are to retain a sliver of respect.

Where are their confessions? Not once in my lifetime has there ever been any apology ⁶⁸ or any public act of repentance acknowledging their mistakes. Not when denying the priesthood to black males was rescinded; not when making racism a central tenant in the Book of Mormon skin shaming Native Americans (Lamanite dark skin curse); not when hiding church history; not when removing awful parts of the Temple ceremony; not when Book of Abraham papyri was found, dated, and translated; not when being so deadly wrong about homosexual attraction or affection.

My decision to resign is based on the lived experience of what I know the Church to be⁶⁸, in my lifetime, separate from discovering the invalidity of historical truth claims its leaders make. A key reason is discovering that Church leaders are knowingly, willfully, intentionally, dishonestly hiding information from me.

My resignation is because at its core the LDS Church is Authoritarian; seeking power by claiming to be “right” and by claiming to be the “Only True Church.” Those claims are refuted⁶⁹ in this Statement.

Temple Covenants establish an unhealthy Authoritarian foundation. The Covenants are exposed in this Statement for what they are: domineering, manipulative, controlling - hence inherently invalid religious principles.

Throughout the half century of my church membership, officers of the Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have hidden and misrepresented its history and have conducted a sustained, organized, willful misrepresentation, misinterpretation, and omission of vital information in their possession about the credibility, the character, the superstitions of founding church leader Joseph Smith while at the same time seeking my promise in the Temple that I entrust to them my life, my tithing, my time.

This Statement is not a balanced investigation such as a journalist may attempt by bringing conflicting views into consideration because Church leaders already make use of their own forums and publications while excluding from consideration counter facts such as those in this Statement. Church leaders wrongly teach their followers to be “willfully blind” by avoiding internet searching, and to avoid former members like me who will not “leave it alone” after discovering the betrayal⁷⁰. We are driven by a responsibility to our Brothers and Sisters, Sons and Daughters, who we love to hold Church leaders accountable.⁷¹

Solving the Problem it Creates.

⁶⁸ [Finances - Institution over Individual](#) (4:52) Mormon Stories | [Ep. 1964](#)

⁶⁹ [Letter For My Wife](#) ⁶⁹ husband explaining how he came to the conclusion that the Church is not all it claims to be. [CES Letter](#) ⁶⁹, Jeremy Runnells questions to a Church Educational System (CES) director. [BYU Survival Guide](#)

⁷⁰ Gretchen Day - LDS [Resignation Letter Template](#)

⁷¹ John Larsen, Mormon Stories [Episode 1780](#), The Church’s stance on honesty at 00:09:37.

Accountable for what? For making clear to Church leaders that there is a bi-directional “social contract” requiring honesty from them worthy of our trust. Their deceit knowingly, intentionally puts the self-interest of the Church above that of the individual church member. Naïvely believing the Church’s power claim that it is “Right”, Church members Sacrifice their individual integrity and authenticity in order to Obey.

For example, while asking me to be honest, loyal, obedient, and to give my time and tithing, Church policy throughout my membership was that the only Mormon history told should be a so-called “faith promoting” history⁷¹ which conceals controversies and difficulties of the Mormon past and present. The existence of this policy is in itself, alone, a violation of my trust.

The doctrine of “willful blindness” allows judges to instruct juries that they may convict a defendant when it is determined the defendant intentionally “closed his eyes” to what otherwise would have been apparent to him; that there was a deliberate attempt to avoid learning all of the relevant facts.

Mormonism attempts to separate us from our inner divinity, then once separated, it promises to solve the problems it has created. If one can be persuaded that he/she is innately evil⁷², or has made mistakes, or that one has no privacy because God is always watching, then individual sovereignty can be undermined by destruction of one's belief in their inner goodness, worthiness, and power.

Joseph Smith, Mormonism's founder, knew how to employ Christian claims to power:

1. Asserting wrongly to self-doubting people that by nature they are "fallen."
2. Promising relief (forgiveness) to conscientious people troubled by their mistakes.
3. Promising eternal life to those who fear death.

For the price of submission to Mormon Church authority, paying tithing, and giving one's time, the Church claims to be the sole provider of solutions to the very fears it loves to remind us of.

Furthermore, Mormonism's attack on the personal integrity and the conscience of Church members, using excommunication⁷³ as a weapon, is a threat one must always be aware of. It establishes the reality that the Temple "Law of Obedience" is enforced⁷⁴. However, those Covenants are first an abuse of power, and secondly corrupt our motives for being good. The sovereign person therefore must be aligned in opposition to the Temple system that is behind such attacks on our morality and [integrity](#).

"Our life always expresses the result of our dominant thoughts."

Soren Kierkegaard
Danish philosopher and poet. 1813 - 1855

Abominable Apostolic Oath

Apostle Hugh B Brown, in his book [An Abundant Life](#) (page 126-127) describes an "*Apostolic Charge*" upon his admittance to the Quorum of the Twelve. In Brown's words, "Always be willing to subjugate one's own thoughts and accept the majority opinion not only to vote for it, but to act as though it were his own original opinion after it has been approved by the majority of the Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency." In other words, the Apostles have made this oath, this "*Apostolic Charge*," that they will always, once the consensus is agreed upon, pretend in their rhetoric and their language that they also were in agreement.

This unholy authoritarian oath is an abomination in my opinion because it dishonestly conceals differing views we need to know about, pretending unity when there is not. The result can be disastrous. For example, the *Apostolic Charge* is a contributing reason, in my opinion, to why hundreds of our gay LDS Brothers & Sisters,

⁷² [Book of Mormon](#) Mosiah 16:3 "For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.

16:4 Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state.

16:5 But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore, he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God."

⁷³ This Exit Statement renounces the Church's practice of excommunicating Truth tellers: Church Educational System (CES) employees like [Grant Palmer](#) [\(video\)](#), BYU professor [Dr David Wright](#), historians like [D. Michael Quinn](#) [\(video\)](#), attorney's like [Paul Toscano](#), women like [Maxine Hanks](#), [Lynne Whitesides](#), [Lavina Fielding Anderson](#).

⁷⁴ Elder Dallin H. Oaks 2024 PowerPoint presentation [instructing local leaders](#) to use excommunication. [\(video\)](#)

sons & daughters have taken their own lives⁷⁵ because they were told, apparently in unison, there is no place for them.

President Monson at that time was incapacitated by dementia. Hence, the Apostles had already removed his executive power. Yet all the other Apostles held their silence about the one and only Apostle Nelson, who in January 2016 described in detail witnessing how the policy of Exclusion was Revelation⁷⁶ from Monson. Keeping silent, by failing to refute the sole claim made by Senior Apostle Nelson, all are party to hundreds of LDS deaths by suicide. The Apostles loyalty to the artificial *Apostolic Charge* is no virtue but is a sin they covenant among themselves to commit.

Many hundreds of gay church members took their own lives while the Church's damning curse of exclusion would not be reversed until 3 ½ years later, April 2019. Their claim of "Being Right" with absolute certainty is not about Truth but is an authoritarian power claim. The Apostles silence about Monson's revelation, as told by Apostle Nelson, wrongly places the appearance of unity above the wellbeing of their gay members. Contrary to the "*Apostolic Charge*," my belonging to any Church requires honesty, regardless of the implications.

Likewise, my freedom to choose is never at any time yielded or consigned to the Church; not at baptism⁷⁷, not in the Temple. Hence, changing or withholding information, is willful *manipulation* of my ongoing right to an informed choice.

LDS Recommendation – RLDS Example

Everyone who reads has a small number of books that one treasures above all others. Milton Mayer's [On Liberty: Man v. The State](#) is one of mine. Mayer takes examples of individual liberty, one after another, then argues persuasively in each case that every State whose existence is threatened by those liberties must necessarily act to preserve the well-being of the State above that of its citizens. Thus, every State is a potential Leviathan, and no amount of constitution-writing, power checking-and-balancing, or other methods of limiting its power can really be trusted.



I grew up as a Church leader's oldest Son. Conscientious, dutiful, responsible at NC State, Raleigh.



Photo is between 1st and 2nd marriage 1984
L-R: Jeff, Brent, me, Mary, Deborah. By this time, I had read the draft of B.H. Roberts "Studies or the Book of Mormon" and Book of Abraham "By His Own Hand upon Papyrus." I had reached a conclusion. It was obvious.

⁷⁵ Mormon Stories #1625 Part2 Going Deeper After Mormonism, Gay [Uncle of Ellee Duke](#) suicide snippet at 58 min (10 min)

Mormon Stories #1153: Donna Showalter: Former Relief Society President Pt. 4, [Lost lives](#) snippet at 42:55 min (6.7 min)

⁷⁶ November 5, 2015, policy of [Exclusion](#)

⁷⁷ Mormon Discussion: 369: The [Death of Free Agency](#) in Mormonism

Mayer's thesis applies to religious institutions, except the conflict between individual liberty and religious institutional power is more acute than with the State. When religion puts its own interest above individual freedoms, then that loss of liberty risks corrupting the person's motives, hence undercutting their morality because a person's actions are without moral merit if not freely chosen.

Reading Mayer in 1970, and understanding the tie between one's liberty and morality, I made the demand upon my Church that "no power or influence can or ought to be maintained"⁷⁸ that seeks to dominate or control my life.

Despite Mayer's thesis that institutions will favor self-preservation above all else, I see the counter example to Mormon leadership's half-truths and deception. That of the Reorganized LDS (RLDS) church leadership that some could say acted against its own interest, when in 2001 they chose honesty about Joseph Smith, demoted the Book of Mormon, corrected its patriarchal subordination of women, abandoned the century-long repression of homosexual individuals by accepting that their sexual orientation is biologically innate, and reformed itself. Given the evidence, RLDS leadership acted with integrity even though they were surely aware of the risk that conservative RLDS members would schism, as they did.

Tithe paying, participating, Temple Recommend holding Church members are *stake holders* who have a claim on the Church and its leadership beyond those self-interested limits its present leadership imposes. *Stake holder* claims lead the LDS Church unavoidably into following the example of the RLDS church which reformed itself and renamed itself to become "The Community of Christ". An ethical agreement between *stake holders* and leaders of the Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, requires at minimum beginning with the following:

"When we speak untruths, we are guilty of lying. We can also intentionally deceive others by a gesture or a look, by silence, or by telling only part of the truth. Whenever we lead people in any way to believe something that is not true, we are not being honest."

LDS Definition of Honesty

Honesty and Authenticity: Transparent leaders do not hide or manipulate information, ensuring that their actions align with the principles of Honesty they preach. For example, The "Apostolic Charge" is expunged because it does not align.

- **Trust and Transparency:** Leaders vow to cultivate an environment of trust and transparency. They communicate openly and honestly with their followers such as they have begun with the "Gospel Topics Essays." Leaders, share information regarding the organization's decisions, and finances to ensure accountability. Leaders make information easily accessible to their followers such as publishing financial reports, disclosing salaries or compensation for leaders, donations and operating expenses.

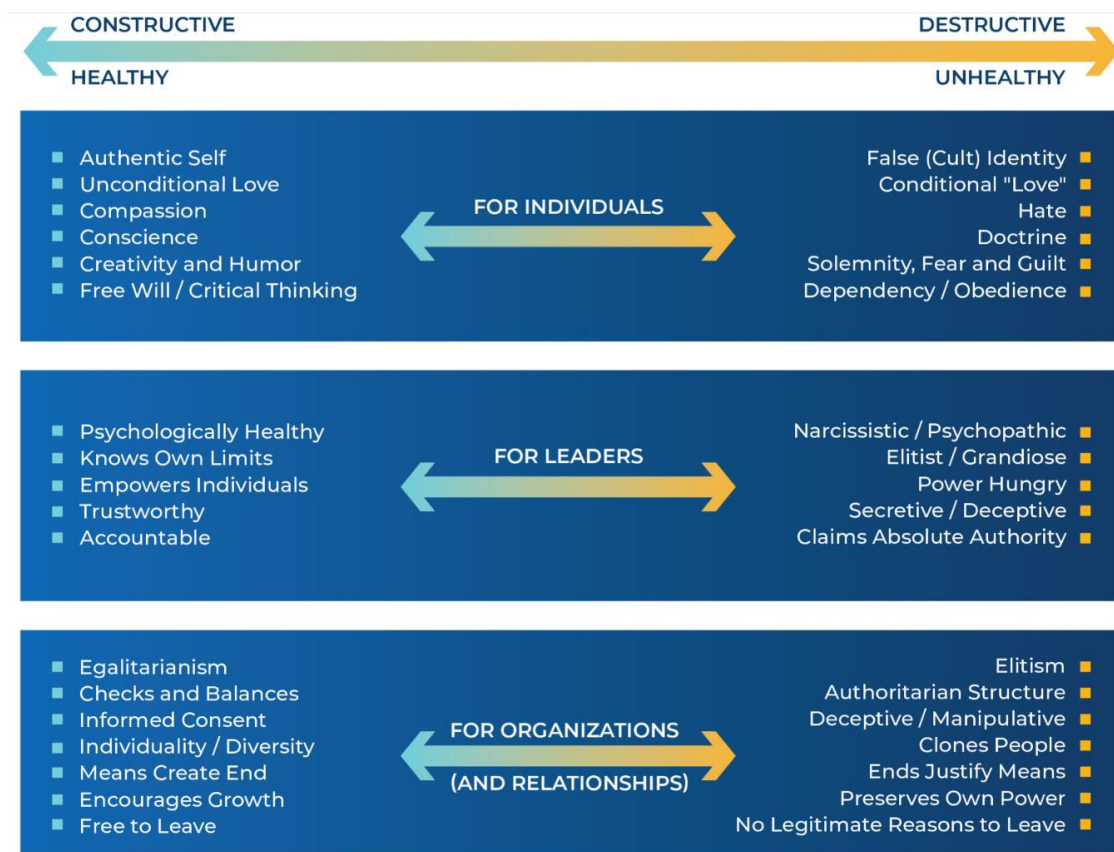
⁷⁸ Doctrine and Covenants [121:41–43](#) Verse 41 "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned." In my opinion there can be no violation of this principle by religious powers claiming to act for God because of how the ethics of Morality constrains the use of any kind of force upon sovereign individuals even though Verse 43 wrongly attempts to make such an exception. Use of force was the issue settled in the Mormon myth of a pre-existent "War in Heaven," that we shall not be compelled to obey God. The use of power comprises anything that establishes and maintains the control of one person over another. Thus, power covers all religious and social relationships, which serve the end of a person (or a church) to control another, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another.

- **Accountability and Redress:** Leaders accept accountability for their decisions and actions. They establish mechanisms for followers to address grievances, ensuring a fair and just process for resolving conflicts of interest.
- **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Respectful leaders create an inclusive environment that embraces diversity. They celebrate differences in beliefs, cultures, and perspectives, fostering a sense of belonging for everyone within the community. Leaders actively listen to their followers, valuing their input, opinions, and feedback. Open lines of communication are established, allowing for dialogue and exchange of ideas without fear of retribution or dismissal.

Influence Continuum: **Healthy/Constructive** <==> **Unhealthy/Destructive**

Dr Steven Hassan explains that “From the moment we are born, we are constantly being influenced by all kinds of people, ideas, and forces. Some of this influence is healthy, and promotes our ability to grow into independent, fulfilled, authentic adults.

Other forms of influence instill dependency and obedience, at times even indoctrinating people to harm themselves and others. There is a wide spectrum of healthy and unhealthy influences. Individual experiences vary within the same organization based on how the individual conforms to the norms of the group. For example, a lesbian teen in a homophobic church will be subject to a different degree of undue influence than a straight man who is married with children in the same church.”⁷⁹



⁷⁹ Dr Steven Hassan, [Freedom of Mind](#) -Resource Center, M – F 10:00 – 5:00 PM ET (617) 396-4638

Dr Steven Hassan's *Influence Continuum*, above, organizes compactly what my *Exit Statement* is saying. Therefore, I refer back to the *Influence Continuum*, throughout, using two (2) color codes, [Healthy](#) - [Unhealthy](#).

For example, Church claims to *being right* is a *Power Claim*, not a Truth claim.⁸⁰ Every LDS Fast and Testimony meeting attempts to bind us to its *Authoritarian* claim to being right by using group emotions and Testimonies. However, a major purpose of this Exit Statement is to break those Truth Claims with the [evidence](#) that is abundant but hidden by the Church.

The *Influence Continuum* helps one to see for what it is: That claim to power is based on the premise that *man's nature is fallen* (evil). That same destructive claim is taught in the Book of Mormon (BoM) teaching that the "Natural man is an enemy to God, ... carnal, sensual, and devilish."⁸¹

These unhealthy self-beliefs are the underlying premise behind every LDS Baptism, every weekly Sacrament, every Temple Endowment. However, it is an inherently unhealthy and destructive core belief which disqualifies LDS Church claims to moral "Authority." Rather, the great majority of human persons are [naturally good, trustworthy, compassionate, and have an innate divinity with a conscience](#) to be relied upon above LDS exclusive claims to authority.

The *Influence Continuum* places [Unconditional Love](#) where it belongs as a settled issue, except in Mormonism. LDS Apostle Russel M. Nelson argues *God's love is conditional* in his Feb 2003 Ensign article "Divine Love."⁸² Tithing is a condition for church employment or for Temple marriage.

High control groups like Mormonism show up on the *Influence Continuum* teaching its adherents there is "[No Legitimate Reason to Leave](#)." We saw this in Russell M Nelson's "Think Celestial" talk in which he said that Law of Chastity violations are one of the biggest ways to create doubt about Mormonism's validity. His talk is completely in line with how high control groups use shaming to keep people under their thumb. President Nelson's talk implies that when people start doubting the group's tenants or stepping away, remaining members can automatically minimize or completely ignore the validity of that person's reasoning and experiences because they must obviously be doing something wrong.



⁸⁰ Propping up the claims to "being right" as a source of Priesthood power and authority leads to all kinds of [dishonesty](#), half-truths and deception, documented in this Statement. The misuse of truth claims, and the abuse of Testimony insult the intellectual integrity of all Mormon men and women and demands public opposition from all who are aware of the deception.

However, active public opposition is prohibited, thus exposing one to the threat of banishment from the religious community and possibly separation from one's family relations among the devout. For example, "The Proclamation On the Family" is as empty as a drunkard's whiskey bottle if one [marriage](#) partner exits the Church without the other.

⁸¹ *Book of Mormon* Mosiah 3:19, Mosiah 16:3, Alma 42:10

⁸² By *Common Consent*, Paul J Toscano [Rebuttal to Devine Love](#), Newsletter of the Mormon Alliance, Vol 9, No. 3 July 2003.

The *Influence Continuum* identifies **Elite/Grandiose** power claims as unhealthy organizational traits. Like Joseph Smith, who claimed to be a Prophet, "seer", and Revelator comparing himself to Jesus,⁸³ so do modern Church leaders. They understand the power their claims give them and protect it fiercely.

However, few modern revelations exist, except when the United States government took possession of all Church property in 1890 before the "*Manifesto*" was revealed. Except when a bomb blew the doors off the Salt Lake temple in 1978 when nationwide racial turmoil preceded revelation granting the Priesthood to black males. Except when "*The Proclamation on the Family*" became a revelation arising from a lawsuit in Hawaii where the Church was denied standing as a friend of the Court opposing gay marriage because it had no official doctrine on the Family.

The *Influence Continuum* shows how Mormonism uses its Temples to make claims on my life for itself: to my time and to my earnings. The leverage used on faithful Temple worthy Latter-day Saints is fear of eternal loss if one fails to satisfy the **secret** Temple Law of **Consecration**, Law of **Obedience**, Law of **Sacrifice**, "before God, angels, and these witnesses" that you give "yourselves, your time, talents, and everything" to the Church.

Like the mythical pre-existent war in heaven, these secret Temple [rituals](#) are immoral because like Lucifer's plan, the **Covenants** compel **Obedience**.⁸⁴ For example, when one chooses freely to live what the Church is choosing for oneself, the Covenants are unnecessary. Covenants only do their job when controlling someone who otherwise would not freely make that choice.

From a Mental Health Perspective

Good emotional health demands that one hold organizations accountable who intentionally mislead and deceive their members. Recommend you do not let anyone shame, intimidate, or gaslight you into [silence](#). In fact, it is odd and unhealthy to simply walk away from a "high demand" religion like Mormonism without significant efforts to learn, discuss, and emotionally process this change with the people that you love most. From a mental health perspective, Dr John Dehlin advises he is far more worried about someone who walks away quietly.

Inside the cocoon

I was born into, studied, taught inside the Mormon Church cocoon. My critique offered here is intended for your benefit. Recommend against the unhealthy teaching that an almighty all-knowing God and Jesus are aware of one's every action, every deficiency, and every thought. Believing this, then one has no privacy. I think exposing one's children to such a teaching is being complicit in child abuse.

Recommend against adopting the frequent crazy making repetition at Church, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

⁸³ Joseph Smith's Boast: "Come on! ye prosecutors! ye false swearers! All hell, boil over! Ye burning mountains, roll down your lava! for I will come out on top at last. I have more to boast of than ever any man had. 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....When they can get rid of me, the devil will also go" (History of the Church, Vol. 6, p. 408).

⁸⁴ Brother Bednar discloses the plan's *motive* when asking rhetorically, "Do we have the option not to pay our tithing? **Nope**, it's breaking a covenant. It is [not the exercise of agency anymore](#)," he says.

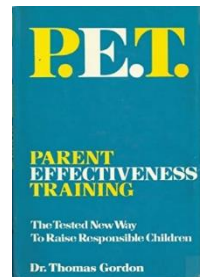
*Dallas Jensen, a licensed psychologist practicing in Provo Utah says, Perfectionism — “the damaging belief that one’s worth is inherently attached to always doing or being their absolute best,” — is often a factor that negatively affects his patients’ mental health.*⁸⁵ .

Recommend in favor of claiming the creative freedom to be the author of one’s own life. Eldest of nine (9), my personality has the birth order traits of the first child, minister’s son, conscientious, meaning I do not benefit from additional external expectations.

Recommend understanding there are those among us who seek and who are drawn to the domination and control of the Church. These authoritarian personalities comprise 30% of all populations. They feel most comfortable when they and others are constrained, for example, by lives of military service where the values of order, obedience, and sacrifice to a system of controls are accepted as superior to autonomous self-definition and personal liberty such as Thomas Jefferson identifies in the Bill of Rights. Ironically, the most adamant political demands for freedom come from these members of the military and conservative churches.

Recommend against the Book of Mormon (BoM) teachings, “The natural man is an Enemy to God, . . . carnal, sensual, and devilish.” I think this BoM teaching is an awful premise on which to view oneself, one’s children, and others. To believe such a dangerous teaching from a young age is to [outsource](#) one’s conscience to the Church, hence failing to develop one’s own.

Recommend against the Church teaching to young people and adolescents that consensual sex is akin to murder. I was taught at Church that even thinking about sex is evil. In high school, on a mission, in college, I tried unsuccessfully to eliminate my sexual nature, not to have sexual thoughts and feelings. I could not avoid being attracted to the beauty of women, including their sexuality. I liked to kiss. None-the-less, I was a 24-year-old virgin at marriage.



Recommend as parents that one accepts the responsibilities that are ours alone to parent in a way that is “good” in our judgement, requiring that Church teachings support the healthy development of our children. Not the harmful indoctrination of contemporary and ancient ignorant ultraconservative religious men.

Recommend against seeking eternal exaltation. It is ultimately an empty self-defeating goal to live by because it makes us artificial. Autonomy, independent of the institutional Church, makes us responsible for shaping our own life according to our distinctive character, conviction, and authentic interest. Autonomous authenticity⁸⁶ allows us to lead our own lives rather than be led along them, so that each of us can be what he has made of himself.

The Psychological Effects of the Mormon Church on its Members⁸⁷

Through Mormon Church activity, however, Church members compromise their authentic self. Active members live in an exclusive, self-affirming social order proclaiming their way is the one true path to God to which all different kinds of people are supposed to conform. Membership requires passing worthiness interviews for baptism and for Temple ordinances where secret covenants to Obey and to Sacrifice are taken if one is to be exalted in the next life, the Celestial Kingdom. Holding true to these constructions results in the manipulation and control of one’s life by obligating members to become so “active” in the

⁸⁵ (BYU [Daily Universe](#) student newspaper. Feb 5, 2018)

⁸⁶ Basic Human Needs of Attachment and [Authenticity](#) youtube @ mormonstories, John Dehlin [△](#)

⁸⁷ “Psychological Effects of the Mormon Church on its Members” are documented at the site, [Mormonism 101](#) . The author is unidentified but says he has well over 30 years active church membership. Disclosing one’s identity could result in excommunication, a threat to one’s marriage or income.

group that one has little free time to pursue individual interest. Members testify, “The Church is my life.” Indeed, that is its intention.

Please see [Appendix A](#) about undue influence over the emotions, thoughts, and behavior of Church members. Why the more neutral term “undue influence” rather than “manipulative”? After all, in a manipulative group, the process of exerting influence is not reciprocal. The interests of the group supersede the interests of the individual. The individual has little to no influence over the leadership of the group while the leaders, on the other hand, dictate the personal lives of the members down to the most minute details (food, clothing, entertainment, etc.). It is this asymmetry between the leadership of the group and the members that makes a group manipulative rather than merely influencing.

Obedience

In my experience the emphasis on *obedience* to the Prophet came after the passing of Church President David O. McKay. However, I have learned that obedience was also supremely important in the days of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Clearly, obedience to church authority, before conscience, is deeply rooted in Mormon history and scripture. Despite a minimum number of verses to the contrary, these early leaders were ruthless, even brutal at times to enforce their will on the membership, in God’s name. For example, put yourself in Emma Smith’s place on the issue of Joseph’s polygamy threatened with destruction, “And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, ... For I am the Lord thy God, and ye shall obey my voice; ... 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.”⁸⁸ These are hardly words of “gentleness and meekness, and ... love unfeigned”⁸⁹ Neither are these commands to Emma “without hypocrisy, and without guile”⁹⁰ because Joseph, both before and after the date of these threats, married other women without her knowledge.

It was Joseph Smith who organized the Danites, the Council of fifty, adopted the violent oaths of the Temple, and nurtured the notorious Orin Porter Rockwell (strong arm for both Smith and Young). The physical danger to property and to the lives of dissenting church members, branded apostates, was real.⁹¹

Brigham Young continued the tradition forcefully in Utah. First notice of mission calls was sometimes learned by public announcement at conference. “Refusal to serve a mission in the 1860s was tantamount to apostasy. As Heber C. Kimball of the First Presidency had warned in 1856: ‘When a man is appointed to take a mission, unless he has a just and honorable reason for not going, if he does not go he will be severed from the Church’ (Journal History, 24 Feb. 1856).”⁹² Family assignment to distant settlements was Young’s prerogative. It was a tyrannical rule. The Journal of Discourses, confession of John D. Lee, [Confession of Bill Hickman](#), Orin Porter Rockwell [Man of God Son of Thunder](#), and Justice Baskin’s [Reminiscences of Early Utah](#) are startling disclosures illustrating the sometimes ruthless nature of life in Utah under Young.



⁸⁸ Joseph Smith, Section 132:52-54, [Doctrine and Covenants](#), 1959 Edition, 244

⁸⁹ D&C 121:41

⁹⁰ D&C 121:42

⁹¹ Kenneth H. Winn, ““Such Republicanism as This’: John Correll’s Rejection of Prophetic Rule,” [Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History](#), 1994, 60 - 69

⁹² Richard S. Van Wagoner, “Sarah M. Pratt: The Shaping of an Apostate,” [DIALOGUE](#), Vol. 19, No 2, Summer 1986, 90
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Authoritarian abuse was tamed by the struggle for Utah statehood, but the religious tradition is still forcefully present in church government. These values, however, are not only un-American, they rob the membership of its authenticity. “Have you ever noticed this? How little love there is among the Latter-day Saints? There is obedience, of course, and service. There is sacrifice and restraint. We are responsible, clean, conscientious, a little clannish, hard-working and healthy, righteous and reliable, often sentimental and sometimes naïve. Many non-Mormons say that we make good neighbors, but poor friends. Chiefly, we are known for being nice. Not for being loving.”⁹³ If so, then why?

The inauthentic Mormon character that I noticed in me, arises because we try to comply with how we think we should behave towards others, rather than just honestly learning to be ourselves. Some of us let stand, unopposed, the teaching that God is always watching, and is aware of our every action, even our thoughts. Or, let stand the awful idea we should become perfect persons.

When setting these psychoses inducing religious expectations, Church leaders demonstrate a willingness to make free with our lives. The most valuable things we possess are threatened. We give our time to church attendance and to service and our money to tithing. We feel guilty for exploring our own unique personal choices about career, family, lifestyle, instead of a “one size fits all” conformity. We are unsure whether our own self-discovery and self-empowerment are in bounds. However, if successfully overcoming religious barriers, we discover one of the transcendent experiences of joy, or ecstasy, is the experience of escape from expectations, the deep realization that we are okay just as we are and reawakening to one’s own worth and beauty⁹⁴.

Mormon indoctrination is harmful to children because it is fundamentally shaming their personality by associating doubt or disobedience with disloyalty, weakness, faithlessness, sinfulness, and therefore unworthiness. Mormonism seeks to associate the wholesome human instinct for autonomy and free thinking with the dangers of wandering from the fold, or with the sins of pride, rebellion, apostasy, and ultimately wickedness. It shames young people for their natural developing desires for sexual pleasure as being bad, shameful, or inappropriate.⁹⁵ Making children believe they are being watched all the time, that the Devil and demons exist, or they themselves are inherently evil and must fight their instincts are forms of child abuse.



Deborah, Francis Nelson Henderson, Bertha Mae, Brent, Francis Marion Henderson

I came into my thirties (30’s) not realizing how much work I’d be doing on myself arising out of my own childhood indoctrination. I was busy in those years involved in two successful startup companies as well as teaching Elders Quorum and Gospel Doctrine classes. Astronomy and Cosmology fascinated me along with intense work I did on myself and the marriage, including a lot of self-help reading and counseling. With some exceptions Church lesson materials seemed pitiful. When teaching at Church, I used lesson material in class discussions to make counter points so that I stayed within the manual as requested. I used the preparation time for deconstructing my own childhood indoctrination. The classes were lively and interesting. I came to believe,

⁹³ “Salt Lake Tribune”, 28 Nov 1993, notice of support for those excommunicated.

⁹⁴ Thomas A. Harris, I’M OK – YOU’RE OK, Avon Books, 1973, 268

⁹⁵ Thomas Riskas, [Deconstructing Mormonism](#), 2011, lxxi-lxxii

as I still do, that the authoritarian Parent (God) to Child (follower) relationship is unhealthy. In contrast, the Adult-to-Adult relationship emphasizes the worth of the person. For example, because I am important; you are important. If I devalue you, I devalue myself. In his bestselling book, [I'm OK-You're Ok](#), Thomas Harris says, "Returning man to his rightful place of personhood is the theme of redemption, or reconciliation, or enlightenment central to religion."

In my opinion, the next four (4) sections are fundamental concepts explaining how Authoritarianism in my religion lead me to the inauthenticity I intended to change. Erich Fromm and Carl Jung's writings are powerful because they describe my state of being, explain how it happened, and once understood show me the correction. Many other political and religious writers (including Mormon excerpts) express these same concepts no church can afford to ignore.

Love, Union, Integrity

First is the **healthy** way of meeting our need to belong stated by Erich Fromm. Mankind "... is aware of his aloneness and separateness, of his powerlessness and ignorance, of the accidentalness of his birth and of his death. He could not face this state of being for a second if he could not find new ties with his fellow man ... There is only one passion which satisfies man's need to unite himself with the world and to acquire at the same time a sense of integrity and individuality, and this is love. Love is union with somebody, or something outside oneself under the condition of retaining the separateness and integrity of one's own self. It is an experience of sharing, of communion, which permits the full unfolding of one's own inner activity. ... Love is in the experience of human solidarity with our fellow creatures, it is in the erotic love of man and woman, in the love of the mother for her child, and also in the love for oneself as a human being; it is in the ... experience of union. In the act of loving, I am one with All, and yet I am myself, a unique, separate, limited, mortal human being."⁹⁶

Adopted Will

Second, is the **unhealthy** way of meeting our need to belong. Erich Fromm describes alternate ways "... in which this union can be sought and achieved. Man can attempt to become one with the world by submission to a person, to a group, to an institution, to God. In this way he transcends the separateness of his individual existence by becoming part of somebody or something bigger than himself and experiences his identity in connection with the power to which he has submitted. Another possibility of overcoming separateness lies in the opposite direction: man can try to unite himself with the world by having *power* over it, by making others a part of himself, and thus transcending his individual existence by domination. ... Both persons involved have lost their integrity and freedom ... The ultimate result of these passions is defeat."⁹⁷

"What is restricted is the free, spontaneous expression of the infant's, the child's, the adolescent's, and eventually the adult's will, their thirst for knowledge and truth, their wish for affection. The growing person is forced to give up most of his or her autonomous, genuine desires and interests, and his or her own will, and to adopt a will and desires and feelings that are not autonomous but superimposed by the social patterns of thought and feeling."⁹⁸ Church, and family "has to solve a difficult problem: *How to break a person's will without his being aware of*

⁹⁶ Erich Fromm, [On Disobedience: and Other Essays](#), 1981, 2

⁹⁷ Ibid, 2

⁹⁸ Erich Fromm, [To Have or To Be](#), 1976, 165,6

it? Yet by a complicated process of indoctrination, rewards, punishments, and fitting ideology, it solves this task by and large so well that most people believe they are following their own will and are unaware that their will itself is conditioned and manipulated.”⁹⁹

“...but, in so far as society itself is composed of de-individualized persons ... People go on blithely organizing and believing in the sovereign remedy of mass action, without the least consciousness of the fact that the most powerful organizations can be maintained only by the greatest ruthlessness of their leaders and the cheapest of slogans. [Follow the Brethren] ...

...the very Churches whose care is the salvation of the *individual* soul ... they too do not appear to have heard anything of the elementary axiom of mass psychology, that the individual becomes morally and spiritually inferior in the mass, and for this reason they do not burden themselves overmuch with their real task of helping the individual... It is, unfortunately, only too clear that if the individual is not truly regenerated in spirit, society cannot be either, for society is the sum total of individuals in need of redemption. I can therefore see it only as a delusion when the Churches try – as they apparently do – to rope the individual into a social organization and reduce him to a condition of diminished responsibility, instead of raising him out of the torpid, mindless mass and making clear to him that he is the one important factor and that the salvation of the world consist in salvation of the individual soul.”¹⁰⁰

Escape from Freedom¹⁰¹

Eric Fromm explains that many people are as eager to surrender their freedom as their fathers were to fight for it. He presents authoritarianism as a significant mechanism for the escape from individual freedom and responsibility. Authoritarianism, he says, is the tendency to give up the independence of one’s own individual self and to fuse oneself with somebody or something out-side of oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking.

By becoming part of a bigger and more powerful whole which is felt as unshakably strong and eternal, one participates in its strength and glory. One surrenders one’s own self to a leader, church, nation, institution, or God, and renounces all strength and pride connected with self, one loses one’s integrity as an individual and surrenders freedom; but one gains a new security and a new pride in the participation in the power in which one submerges. One gains also security against the torture of doubt.

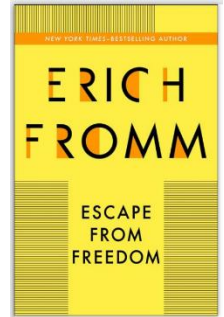
One is saved from making decisions, saved from the final responsibility for the fate of oneself, and saved from the doubt of what the meaning of his life is or who he is. These questions are answered by the relationship to the power to which he has attached himself. The meaning of his life and the identity of his self are determined by the greater whole into which the self has submerged.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 166

¹⁰⁰ C.G. Jung, The Undiscovered Self, 1957, 67,8,9

¹⁰¹ "[The Discovery of Freedom](#): Man’s Struggle Against Authority", 1943, By Rose Wilder Lane, who is joined by Søren Kierkegaard, and Erich Fromm—three very different thinkers who converge on a powerful shared insight: True morality and authentic freedom begin with the individual’s inner choice—not obedience to an external authority.

This authoritarian character is defined by his conformity and by his suppression of spontaneous feelings. Yet, at the same time he consciously conceives of himself as free and subject only to himself. However, he has consigned his freedom and his individual power to the leadership in submission to them. This submission is revealed by the absence of responsibility he feels for the actions of his leaders. One example of the Mormon authoritarian character's escape from freedom (and associated responsibility) is the total absence of financial accountability required by the contributing membership of their church leadership.



Likewise, I believe the submission of devout Mormons to “worthiness interviews” deprives individuals of their sense of moral or ethical autonomy. It puts entirely too much power in the hands of church officers; “it undermines the individual’s sense that they are primarily responsible for their own moral behavior; it encourages deceit and petty manipulation. No other church that I know of exercises this kind of control over its members. No other church that I know of makes such wanton use of disciplinary tools like ‘disfellowshipping’ and ‘excommunications.’¹⁰²”

Faithful Mormon authoritarian characters say that his (or her) individual freedom and autonomy are fundamental religious precepts¹⁰³, yet are silent about or supportive of the forceful repression of the freedom of public expression within the Mormon faith community. Even among the Mormon Intelligentsia this culture of public silence is justified as “the Mormon way.”¹⁰⁴ Because, to publicly question, or to publicly support the rights of others to public dissent and advocacy, is to refute his overarching devotion to the authority that he wants to control the church and to dominate his life. By his silence he sustains his escape from freedom through devotion to the authorities of the “only true church,” that are required to say what is “right” for all, and to whom he wants to reaffirm his symbiotic promise of *obedience*.

However, my experience is that by this loyalty to authority the development of character is stunted. Normally, love is based on freedom and an equality of power. But, in the authoritarian system, the meaning of love, and self-love are confounded by submission. An attitude of self-denial for the sake of communal unity, and the surrender of one’s own rights and power are perceived as examples of “great love,” duty, and devotion. However, just the opposite is true in that loyalty and *obedience* are placed ahead of self-trust. Because, love, self-love, and self-interest (rather than self-denial) are the essential affirmations of one’s own life, happiness, growth, freedom, and purpose.

Likewise, the teaching of *sacrifice* as an end in itself, is a perversion of true sacrifice if the individual self is in submission to the higher power of an authoritarian system. Rather, sacrifice has moral authority only when individuals act freely in the sense of spontaneity, acknowledging no higher authority or motive than from within themselves.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² John D. Wrathall, Sexual Terrorism, Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, Vol3 1997, June 1998, 181-2

¹⁰³ J. Fredric Voros Jr., Freedom of Speech in the House Household of Faith, *Sunstone*, Oct 1991, Volume 15:4, 16 - 22

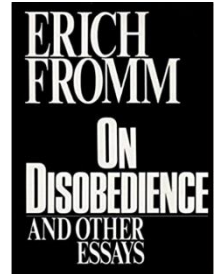
¹⁰⁴ Orson Scott Card, Walking the Tightrope, *Sunstone*, April 1989, Volume 13:2, 41

¹⁰⁵ Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, 1941, 19,21,177,178,182, 266, 295

Indeed, one of the most obvious losses of individual self within Mormonism is the submission of “Endowed” Temple goers to the church laws of *obedience*¹⁰⁶ and *sacrifice*¹⁰⁷.

Disobedience, Authenticity, and Courage

According to Hebrew myth, by an act of disobedience, Adam and Eve became free and independent. Likewise, every individual must have the capacity to be disobedient—disobedient to authorities who try to muzzle new thoughts and to the authority of long-established opinions which declare change to be nonsense.¹⁰⁸ “... I do not mean to say that all disobedience is a virtue and all obedience a vice.” ...However, “If a man can only obey and not disobey, he is a slave; if he can only disobey and not obey, he is a rebel (not a revolutionary); he acts out of anger, disappointment, yet not in the name of a conviction or a principle.



However, in order to prevent a confusion of terms an important qualification must be made. Obedience to a person, institution or power ... is submission; it implies the abdication of my autonomy and the acceptance of a foreign will or judgment in place of my own. Obedience to my own reason or conviction ... is not an act of submission but one of affirmation. My conviction and my judgment, if authentically mine, are part of me. If I follow them rather than the judgment of others, I am being myself; ...¹⁰⁹

“Why is man so prone to obey and why is it so difficult for him to disobey? As long as I am obedient to the power of the State, the Church, or public opinion, I feel safe and protected. In fact, it makes little difference what power it is that I am obedient to. It is always an institution, or men, who use force in one form or another and who fraudulently claim omniscience and omnipotence. My obedience makes me part of the power I worship, and hence I feel strong. I can make no error, since it decides for me; I cannot be alone, because it watches over me; I cannot commit a sin, because it does not let me do so, and even if I do sin, the punishment is only the way of returning to the almighty power.

In order to disobey, one must have the courage to be alone, to err and to sin. But courage is not enough. The capacity for courage depends on a person’s state of development. Only if a person has emerged from mother’s lap and father’s commands, only if he has emerged as a fully developed individual and thus has acquired the capacity to think and feel for himself, only then can he have the courage to say ‘no’ to power, to disobey.

¹⁰⁶ 1. “Obedience”, Family home evening Manual, Gospel Principles, Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, 213 – 219

2. “All That Thou Commandest Us We Will Do,” Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide 1980 – 81, Choose You This Day, Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, 1

3. “Obedience Is The First Law of Heaven”, Choose You This Day, 1979, 125 – 130

4. “First Law of Heaven”, In His Footsteps Today, For the Sunday Schools of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1969, 49, 156 - 162

5. “What Does It Mean to Sustain the Lord’s Servants?”, A Personal Study Guide for the Melchizedek Priesthood 1975 – 1976, A Royal Priesthood, Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975, 38 – 39

¹⁰⁷ 1. “Sacrifice”, Gospel Principles, 1978, 161 – 167

2. A Royal Priesthood, 1975, 77, 80

3. “The Law of Sacrifice”, Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide 1979 – 1980, He That Receiveth My Servants Receiveth Me, Published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, 86 - 91

¹⁰⁸ Fromm, Disobedience, 17

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 18, 19

A person can become free through acts of disobedience by learning to say no to power. But not only is the capacity for disobedience the condition for freedom; freedom is also the condition for disobedience. If I am afraid of freedom, I cannot dare to say 'no', I cannot have the courage to be disobedient. Indeed, freedom and capacity for disobedience are inseparable; hence any social, political, and religious system which proclaims freedom, yet stamps out disobedience, cannot speak the truth"¹¹⁰

In dictatorships, silence \triangle from those at the bottom is required. People's beliefs become hostage to instructions from their Authorities. Recommend to individuals that one become the author of one's own authentic life, and that religious claims to power shall not succeed at condemning faith in one's inner divinity. Contrary to LDS Priesthood claims first made by their philandering treasure digging founder, Joseph Smith, there is no one true path toward God for everyone.

The four (4) sections above explain how Mormon Authoritarianism harms the member. A young person does not suspect the source of temptation is coming from Church activity and Temple attendance. Furthermore, Church leaders have succumbed to the [Authoritarian Temptation](#) and promote it in the Temple as the "Law of Obedience."

Spiritual Abuse

I think the lesser Law of Obedience is wrongly elevated to high principle on purpose. It begs the question of: Obedience to what? To a church officer, or to one's own self-determined conscience. By its ongoing claim that God will never permit the prophet to lead the church astray¹¹¹, and the constant teaching to "Follow the Brethren," and the prohibition against public criticism of its leadership¹¹², the church is teaching submission to its power and authority above individual conscience.

Church authorities control members by claiming divine inspiration even though they are fooled by a murderous forger like Mark Hoffman. The forged document purchase intended to remove from public view what they thought was more evidence of Joseph Smith's superstitions. ([Photo & Article, Salt Lake Tribune](#))

All church members it is said, if worthy, would receive personal revelation confirming \triangle the actions and policies of church leaders¹¹³. By implication, a difference of conscience in the member is a measure of spiritual weakness¹¹⁴. And public expression of difference is grounds for expulsion.¹¹⁵ These claims and threats are acts of spiritual abuse¹¹⁶. To



the extent that I adopt the code of public silence, and to the extent that I sacrifice my moral agency to church demands to

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 21

¹¹¹ Prepared by the Church Educational System, Teachings of the Living Prophets, "Student Manual Religion 333", 1982, Chapter 3 & 4, Section 3-7, 15, Section 4-6,21

¹¹² George Q. Cannon, Published for the use of College Students in the Church Educational System (CES), Living Prophets for a Living Church, 81

¹¹³ a.) Teachings of the Living Prophets, "The Living Prophet and Scripture", Chapter 4, 17 – 22.

b.) Nicolas Shumway, "Ambiguity and the Language of Authority," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 16, No.2 Summer 1983, 55

¹¹⁴ Teachings of the Living Prophets, Section 4-6, 21

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 81

¹¹⁶ David Johnson & Jeff VanVonderen, Chapter 5 - Identifying the Abusive System, The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse, 1991, 63 - 71

“Follow the Brethren,” then to that extent is my integrity and personhood devalued¹¹⁷ and the church’s espoused purpose defeated. That purpose is development of individual authenticity, strengthening of the internal conscience, and expression of the power for good within each individual. Church influence, power, control, reputation, programs, and image are lesser priorities.

Further compounding the assault on individual character is the use of force, through the law of the church, to silence public expressions of individual conscience. The ongoing excommunications¹¹⁸ send a chilling message demanding conformity to the majority view. Perhaps, distracted by the particular issues, most church members are complicit in these acts by their public silence, seeming not to see the threatening implications to higher principles, freedom of choice and freedom of conscience.

Apostle Dallin H Oaks shows us what *spiritual abuse* looks like when a group has overwhelming control over the opinions and conscience of its members. Oaks confesses that before the Priesthood ban on Africans was lifted (1978), he studied the justifications but could confirm no truth to “any of them.” Never-the-less, “I determined to be loyal to our prophetic leaders.”¹¹⁹

Contrast Dallin Oaks suppression of his conscience in comparison to the actions of Stewart and Morris Udall at the University of Arizona where the cafeteria on campus was segregated and the Udall brothers – both of whom were “Jack Mormons” – did something to end that injustice without waiting for the civil rights act or national desegregation to do it for them. They took a young black student who was relegated to eating separately outside and did something about it. The young man, Morgan Maxwell Jr. recalled the event:

“Morris and Stewart Udall escorted me to a table, and we sat down. Both Morris and Stewart told the manager in a strong voice close to his face to serve me and that I was eating with them. The manager looked around and took our lunch orders of hamburgers and milkshakes. That was the best hamburger and milkshake I ever tasted (smiles).

When I returned to the Old Main fountain my Black friends were waiting, and the Udall brothers shook hands with everyone. We all thanked the Udall brothers and from that day on we were able to eat at the Coop.”¹²⁰

Loyalty to that same Authority which compelled the silence of Dallin Oaks is being used as a bludgeon against gay men and women and their families resulting in the Bloodshed of youth suicide.

If people in the church, like Oaks, have their own conscience shackled¹²¹ by the demand that they remain loyal and silent about their own personal Moral convictions then members become complicit.

¹¹⁷ "Elder Oaks and the [Bending of the Mormon Soul](#)," [△](#) by Jonathan Streeter. How controlling groups maintain a hold on the mind and hearts of members who internally disagree with leaders? Your own personal conscience cannot be trusted if it contradicts the Brethren.

¹¹⁸ Lavina Fielding Anderson and Janice Merrill Allred, *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance: Volume 2*, 1996, xiv, 118 - 120

¹¹⁹ [The Ban Came From God: What it really means to "Be One"](#) [△](#), by Jonathan Streeter: Thinker of Thoughts.

¹²⁰ [Stewart Udall Sequence I: The Conscience of a Jack Mormon by Thinker of Thoughts](#) | Jul 15, 2015 | Mormonism, Race [△](#)

¹²¹ Elder Oaks and the [Bending of the Mormon Soul](#) [△](#) by Jonathan Streeter. How exactly do controlling groups maintain a hold on the mind and hearts of members who internally disagree with leaders? Elder Oaks' recent address at the Be One celebration gives us a great case study.

Silence is no act of courage to simply support the Authorities. A real act of moral courage is to stand for your personal conviction in the face of religious authority telling you that what you know to be true in your heart is not of God.

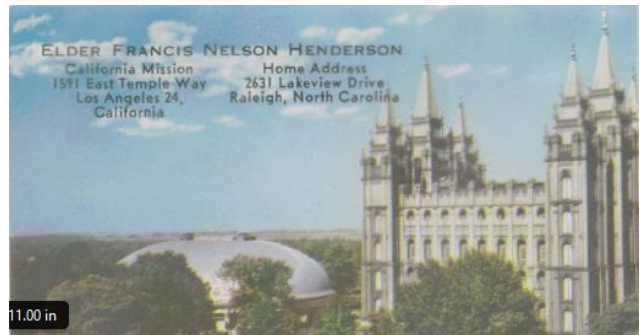
It costs nothing to cry out against people who you perceive to be critics or enemies of the church. But if you speak out and hold your ground on something that you know to be true in the face of men claiming to speak for God telling you to doubt your own heart that is real moral courage.

In his confession, Oaks wrongly glorifies a group culture of silence rather than learning to trust one's own voice above that of leaders. The Temple Covenants of Obedience and Secrecy compels one to the silence that Oaks is advocating. However, we're starting to see people take those stands of conscience more and more every day.

Consistently, Mormonism seeks, both within and without, to eliminate public opposition through sanctions, excommunications, worthiness interviews, force of law, and in the past, violence¹²². Thus, in America, the church works in contradiction to an otherwise free society that tolerates pluralism and individual freedom insofar as the exercise of personal liberties does not violate the freedom and rights of others. However, while giving lip service to "free agency", these constitutional liberties were trammled by the early church Presidents, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young in the name of communal unity. Early church members like John Correll, and others who sought to advance republican values of liberty above authoritarianism and who publicly advocated those principles, were labeled as apostates, sometimes financially ruined or threatened with physical harm, and ostracized from the faith community¹²³.

I believe the church mission experience is viewed as the behavioral prototype for the faithful church member. I was by objective measures a "successful" missionary. We were warned in the Salt Lake mission home that pressure would be part of our experience. It was. The most common motivational technique within the mission was to present mission programs as divinely inspired. I quietly dismissed many exaggerated claims to divine inspiration as the hype they obviously were. I say 'quietly dismissed' because the working missionary is unquestionably not at liberty to openly challenge or to critically examine, authentically, any part of the missionary program. One pays a price for silence. I have since understood missionary training tends to set a life's pattern that the church values highly. However, the problem with encouraging this behavior is that every act of silence diminishes to some degree personal strength of character in the returned missionary.

I felt tremendous pressure to meet the mission baptism goal of two (2) people per week, and to achieve the 70-hour workweek standard. From my eventual position as Assistant to the President in the mission headquarters, the highest performing Southern California missionary I knew, baptized 167 persons before his promotion into the mission presidency replacing me at my honorable release to go home at 24 months. Obedience and personal



¹²² a.) R.N. Baskin (Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Utah), Reminiscences of Early Utah, 1914

b.) Harold Schindler, Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God Son of Thunder, 1983

¹²³ Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher, "Introduction: Mormonism and the Dynamics of Dissent", Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History, 1994, 9 -10

worthiness were always held forth as the deciding factor to achieving the “inspired” baptism goals. I believe the motivational practice of connecting worthiness to achievement, destroyed the mental health of one missionary I knew. As an adult, I better understand the danger of planting such beliefs in the minds of my children connecting achievement to self-worth.

The strongest lesson from my mission experience is a deep conviction that religious “pressure” is a form of force to which I am opposed. Words reminding me of that experience are compulsion, force, fear, punishment, discipline, ostracism, domination, manipulation, and control. Three (3) days into the mission I decided to do it their way because the only option was to quit. I thought about the pressure a lot knowing that those forces sometimes corrupted the motive for my missionary work. I thought the source of these forces should not be the Church because if not successfully resisted it causes me to be inauthentic, a phony. However, to my dismay, I found the mission experience was only a more concentrated introduction to the continued use of these forces by the church in my adult life.

Second of three (3) reasons (Inauthenticity)

These forces illustrate again the for my exit from the Church. I could not successfully establish my own authentic¹²⁴ self within it. Not only was I working full time earning a living, but the Church also intended to prescribe any remaining free time and made it wrong to decline any church “calling”. I was forever in conflict with its demands when claiming my own time and claiming my right to be the author of my own life.

I admire the courage of those educators, historians, writers, intellectuals, and feminist whom the church seeks to silence through excommunication. I have been on the fringe of such discipline. I was released as Elders quorum teacher less than one hour after, and for the reason that, I presented both viewpoints (neutrally) on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), rather than the one-sided anti-ERA position of the church.



Elder Henderson, California 1963

One should not think I am so small this action hurt my feelings and therefore explains my exit. Rather, one sees what I already knew instinctively that even on civic issues we vote on, adult church member-citizens cannot have discussions held at church when open to viewpoints different from those advanced by church leadership. I self-censored. My immediate release as Elders quorum teacher is an event in my own church life, not an inference I drew when others were excommunicated, demonstrating to me that debate is silenced. The banishments of others that I watched from a distance, sent the intended message which is a clear and personal threat to me confirming the authoritarian nature of the church. This silencing I reject.

Third of three (3) reasons (Freedom of Speech)

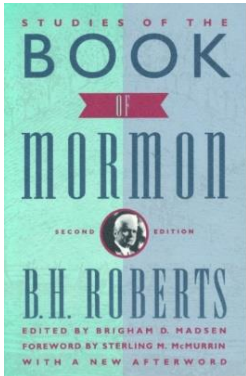
Such attempts to restrict illustrate *again* the that broke the Church’s controlling grip because I reject its intent to threaten my freedom of public expression while at Church. Such attempts at control even extend to discussion about our votes on civic issues like the Equal Rights Amendment.

This overreach is an abuse of power experienced by Janice Allred, Sonja Johnson, Lavina Fielding Anderson. It is my lived experience too, leading to my decision to exit, not because my feelings are hurt, but as Pope John

¹²⁴ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [Authenticity](#): Substantive revision Thu Feb 20, 2020

XXIII expresses so well, because Mormonism is so counter to my nature *which requires that I give external expression to my internal acts of religion: that I share with others my thoughts in religion; enjoying immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Injury therefore is done to the human person and to the very order we should wish to establish for human life, if the [free exercise](#) of religion or free speech is denied in religion.*

Trust is illustrated *again* here being First of three (3) reasons (Dishonesty) that broke the Church's controlling grip because of religious and parental training on being a good person "on the inside." "Nelson be honest with yourself," I hear my mother saying. If teaching honesty succeeds, it produces someone who deeply values the truth and who seeks deep-down integrity. Religion therefore creates the basis for its own downfall when it comes up short.



For example, one expects to learn of church historian B.H. Roberts "Studies of the Book of Mormon" in Sunday church classes, rather than else-where, about the many things whose cumulative force is "so serious a menace to Joseph Smith's story of the Book of Mormon's origin."¹²⁵ This first part of my decision to exit is based again on the lived experience of what I see the Church to be, in my lifetime – dishonest, lacking intellectual integrity, and untrustworthy.

B.H. Roberts "[Studies of the Book of Mormon](#)" was hidden for 50 years until after Modern Microfilm published a draft copy that I first read in the 1970's. Only after Modern Microfilm's reproduction of a draft copy did University of Utah Historian, Madsen, publish B.H. Roberts work. Only after exposure of hidden church history by credible sources on the internet did Church leaders try to repair their own tarnished reputation by spinning "Gospel Topics Essays." For example, that Joseph Smith gave four (4) First Vision accounts each more grand as time passed. Or Smith's methods for seducing teenage girls. Or Smith's polyandrous marriages to the wives of men he sent overseas on missions. Or that Smith "translated" the Book of Mormon with his face buried in a hat looking at a stone.



As a member of the Church, it is my absolute right to know all of our Church history. It is fundamentally immoral that Church leaders know about Smith's polygamy then to ignore it, instead funding apologist to weave and spin arguments that mislead and deceive people so that they won't understand Smith's life or that his historical claims for the Book of Mormon do not hold up. Once I looked more closely in the late 1970's, I discovered devastating evidence the Church knew about but was hiding and excommunicating truth telling members who spoke of it. A travesty. One cannot overstate too often that for the past 175 years; the Latter-day Saint Church repeated Joseph Smith teachings that Native Americans are descended from ancient seafaring Israelites. However, DNA research confirms what anthropologists said my whole life, that Native Americans are originally from [Southeast Asia](#). There are no [Lamanites](#).

The Church is still in full deception mode even today with the "[Gospel Topics Essays](#)" seeming to forget again they represent a church, not a public relations corporation. Those Essays are not good faith attempts to genuinely inform church members, but are attempts to mislead, and to whitewash, leaving out significant details, and to

¹²⁵ B.H. Roberts. [Studies of the Book of Mormon](#). Pg 240

prevent Mormons from learning their true history and from considering the credible problems with Church truth claims. Christians too, especially in the conservative evangelical world, are given a distorted history about origins of the Bible as their Pastors cherry pick from it to construct their sermons.

“The honest investigator must be prepared to follow wherever the search of truth may lead. Truth is often found in the most unexpected places. He must, with fearless and open mind insist that facts are far more important than any cherished, mistaken beliefs, no matter how unpleasant the facts or how delightful the beliefs.” *Hugh B. Brown – General Conference, October 1962*

Values I Elevate Above Others

The first value is that feelings arising from our lizard brain are an unreliable guide to objective truth. We have a higher ability to cognitively evaluate our feelings, hence, to avoid self-deception such as is the great weakness in Joseph Smith’s famous “Way of Knowing” to have a “burning in the bosom.”

A car salesman wants us to make our decision based on feelings. Joseph Smith equates feelings¹²⁶ to an answer to prayer.

I advocate using our cognitive powers, *reason*, to double check feelings which when unchallenged can be an unreliable source of religious belief leading to superstitions, to believing in magic, or to self-delusions about almost any made-up story. Equating one’s feeling to the Holy Ghost whispering evidence of Truth is a mistake illustrated by the case of disgraced Elder Paul H Dunn’s inspiring but made-up stories.

“If a man knows more than others, he becomes lonely.”

Carl Gustav Jung
Swiss psychiatrist, 1875 - 1961

Reason requires individuals, but especially Church leaders, to be exceptionally intellectually honest because otherwise, as the Scottish philosopher David Hume notoriously said, *reason* becomes only a “slave of the passions.” Like Hume, I believe that *reason* helps us govern our feelings even though reason alone cannot lead us.

However, Latter-day Saint feelings¹²⁷, testimonies, suffer from intellectual dishonesty. For example, in the case of David P Wright and Bishop Simon Southerton church leaders punish integrity by finding reasons to excommunicate them. Likewise, BYU professors’ position on the faculty is threatened if they attend the Sunstone Symposium. It seems documenting such bald-faced attacks on personal integrity makes no difference to believers. I document again how Church leaders encourage

¹²⁶ By Jonathan Streeter: [Epistemology](#) [△](#), How to approach Truth Claims.

By Uermormon: [Common ground](#) [△](#) is only found between those who have the same Epistemologies, three (3) reasons (behind the reasons) why I left the Mormon Church going beyond Truth Claims:

1. Rule #1: I decide what I can and can’t study. I am allowed to choose what I can and can’t think about.
2. Rule #2: I am in charge of what I can and can’t say.
3. Rule #3: I can question any people, and I can question any Information.

¹²⁷ One cannot pin their entire testimony on getting a warm feeling and then you know it is all true. Joseph made claims that the Book of Mormon and Book of Abraham are historical documents, yet it is clearly shown they are not. Presidents Nelson and Hinckley standing behind Smith’s claim gets the church in [trouble with itself](#) [△](#).

their followers to be ignorant of Church history (as they are), encouraging them to search only half-truths¹²⁸ told at “faithful” internet sites, to avoid questioning, thus intentionally weakening the mind’s check on one’s feelings, fears, or wishes.

Attorney Richard Packham explains, " ‘Testimony’ has a slightly different meaning in religion from what it means in a legal setting. In the law, a testimony is a statement of what the testifying witness has seen or heard personally. It cannot be what he learned from a third party, nor can it be mere opinion. The witness's feelings are generally irrelevant. That is, a testimony must be based on facts.



The testimony of an ‘expert witness’ has different rules. First, the expert witness must be qualified as an expert in the field of learning about which he is testifying. The qualifications may be academic degrees, publications, professional experience in the field, or anything that makes the witness unusually knowledgeable about the field. The expert may be asked to express an opinion about a hypothetical situation similar to the situation at issue in the trial, and he may also testify as to his opinion of the facts before the court as they relate to his field of expertise.

In religion, a testimony is often something quite different. Sometimes it is the believer's statement of justification for his belief, often a ‘spiritual’ experience such as a vision, an unusually strong feeling, a seeming miracle. In Mormonism, the term has come to be applied also to a mere statement of belief, stated strongly, without any justifying facts included: ‘I KNOW that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God!’ The watering-down of testimonies in Mormonism is perhaps best illustrated by the common practice of teaching little children to ‘bear testimony’ in public testimony meetings, often prompted by a parent whispering the words into the child's ear. The child dutifully repeats: ‘I know the church is twoo and Joseph Smiff was a pwoffet. Namajesuschristamen!’

Another indication of the distortion of Mormon testimonies is that every young Mormon missionary is expected to ‘have a testimony.’ Many young Mormons have simply grown up in the church and never thought about their testimony, or exactly why they believe what they believe, other than simply having been taught and trained to believe it, and when faced with a missionary call realize that they really don't have one. The advice they often receive from Mormon leaders is simply to say the words (like the little child) often enough, and pretty soon they will indeed have a testimony. Some have received the generous offer from an older Mormon: ‘You can borrow my testimony until you have one of your own.’

In other words, many Mormon ‘testimonies’ are not valid testimonies at all, since they do not represent at all what the testifier actually knows. They are based on feelings, ‘warm fuzzies,’ and supposed miracles or supernatural manifestations that are essentially no different from the feelings, miracles and manifestations that believers of all religions use to buttress their convictions that their religion and their god is true and correct. My testimony is based on facts - facts that everyone can check and verify to their own satisfaction.”¹²⁹

The second value is that the autonomous individual supersedes community or Church. As social creatures we have healthy or unhealthy ways of meeting our need to belong. Healthily, the person’s free exercise of religion is superior to the power of the

¹²⁸ I saw on my missionary work how advocating for the Church’s story tempts one to make arguments subordinating intellectual honesty in favor of Testimony. To this day I am deeply distrustful of any information coming from the Church. For example, their claim that extreme improbabilities disqualify [DNA](#) testing of Lamanite, i.e., American Indian [origins](#).

¹²⁹ Question to Attorney Richard Packham, “What do you think now about your Mormon testimony?” ([here](#))

Church. Unhealthily, darkness comes when the Church succeeds at placing itself above the power of the person, between the individual soul and the person's search for Good (for God).

However, the source of power and the use of power, either coercive or persuasive, identify the organizational type more than any other single attribute. Hence, the necessity of clarifying what is coercion, force, pressure in a religious context because the concept of religious coercion is misunderstood in Mormonism. Free choice is contrasted with religious coercion on page ten (10) of my Sunstone paper, [The Authoritarian Temptation](#).

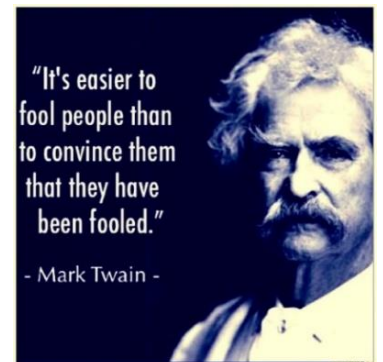


Mormonism is coercive because it uses covenants on all Temple goers "before God, angels, and these witnesses" to give "yourselves, your time, talents, and everything" to the Church. Entering the Celestial Kingdom (heaven) is conditioned on one paying tithing, attending Church, accepting and fulfilling church "callings."

Without fair warning on entering the Temple the first time, one discovers our good intentions are used against us. Unwittingly, one has entered an undisclosed secret ritual requiring that we sacrifice to the Church our own independent authentic choices for shaping our own life according to our distinctive character, conviction, and authentic interest. For some like myself, one discovers the Church thinks I have yielded the freedom, the time, the money, (the power) to be and to see what I can make of myself.

My life, my values, my beliefs, my purpose are to be defined by Church. The Temple ritual empowers Church leaders to make free with my life. The leverage gaining control is established in the Temple through the threat or fear of perceived harm or loss in the next life. One does not suspect going into the secret Temple ritual that it is not harmless.

It is an authoritarian claim based on the Covenants made there that intend to control one's life in service to the Church. Going in, one is uninformed what is going to happen, unprepared to defend one's boundaries, unsuspecting of the Churches intentions, unknowing that submission to Temple laws like Obedience are not virtues when it suppresses self-expression or self-actualization in a hierarchical high demand religious belief system like Mormonism.



Also derived from the Temple ritual, Brother Oaks says that "[It's wrong to criticize leaders](#) [□](#) of the Church, even if the criticism is true." However, at this time Apostle Oaks is Vice Chairman of the BYU Board of Trustees. He went to the University of Virginia Law School, to make the legal argument that even though National and State laws should protect the individual rights of our LGBTQ children, brothers and sisters, his Church and BYU should be free from those Civil Rights laws¹³⁰ protecting individuals. Instead, Oaks means the opposite, that religious freedom, is the Church's freedom, not the individual's freedom.

BYU will expel and withhold earned university credits from Gay BYU students who marry. That is the "religious freedom" to dominate that Oaks argued for in Virginia. Brothers Oaks, Nelson, Holland have guided creation of

¹³⁰ School of Law event with [Dallin Oaks](#) draws protest from Lambda Law Alliance to challenge Oak's history of homophobic beliefs.

the BYU Honor Code to justify and to enforce such discrimination. The brethren at the top, feeling unaccountable to tithe paying members, claim immunity from criticism that should be rejected.

Church founder, Joseph Smith, considered any criticism to be persecution. Is it any wonder his intolerance of criticism ended up in the Temple ritual? Or, that the Law of Consecration, Obedience, Sacrifice are put in the Temple ritual Covenanting one to giving up “your time, talents, and everything” to the Church? Is it any wonder that Latter-day Saints have a learned susceptibility to religious coercion and to holding deeply mistaken ideas about what is “Free Agency?”

[Freedom](#) and authenticity are essential to moral living. Motive is essential because we know that slaves are obedient but coerced. Obedience is not a qualifying moral trait. Temple covenants of Obedience or Sacrifice serve secondary institutional purposes but undermine the authenticity necessary to an individual’s morally worthy life.

The power of the Christian church to compel obedience using physical force was defeated during the European "Reformation." In its place are Democratic values transferring power downward from Popes, Kings, and Prophets to the individual person. Therefore, one expects the innate justice of constitutional rights be assimilated by resident religious organizations whether Mormon, Christian, Jewish, or Islamic.

About claims to Priesthood power and authority, Erich Fromm says it is a delusion when the Church tries to rope the individual into a social organization and reduce us to a condition of becoming obedient and self-sacrificial. For if the individual is not truly regenerated in spirit, society cannot be either, for society is the sum total of individuals in need of redemption. The salvation of the world consists in salvation of the individual soul. Otherwise, what becomes restricted is the free, spontaneous expression of the infants, the child’s, the adolescents, and eventually the adult’s will, their thirst for knowledge and truth, their wish for affection.

The **third value** is to be on guard that our motives are authentically ours because morality is determined by whether our choices are driven by promised rewards or punishment, or genuinely arise from within as a compassion or caring for oneself or others, thus are authentically ours. Otherwise, we are compelled by guilt (the internalized expectations of others) or like the enslaved are extorted or bribed. One does not suspect religion is yet another source corrupting one’s motives or morality.

Such corruption of motive was Lucifer’s plan in the Mormon Myth of a pre-existence war in heaven. The story is that Lucifer intended to compel obedience by drawing back the veil thus giving us perfect knowledge (memory of the preexistence) thereby forcing us to obey.

Jesus’ argument against is said to be that “knowing” or remembering our pre-existent life with God would compel us, causing two (2) difficulties: First, if compelled we are unaccountable. Second, if compelled we become inauthentic. Therefore, freedom, absent compelling influence, is a necessary condition to the development of a responsible, healthy, mature human person. These principles apply whether or not one believes in the story of a pre-existent life.

I believe Church leaders have succumbed to this very temptation about the type of power they choose by putting the “Law of Obedience” into the Temple ritual, by claiming to be “right,” by claiming they “know,” by claiming God reveals to them through “feelings,” by their judgements in worthiness interviews, by sanctioning members

“Every man is a creature of the age in which he lives, and few are able to raise themselves above the ideas of the time.”

Voltaire
French Enlightenment writer, historian, and
philosopher. 1694 - 1778

whose public opinions or advocacy is different than theirs, by exclusive Temple marriage sanctions, by making tithe paying Temple worthiness a condition of Church employment, by telling missionaries to say they “know” Joseph Smith was a prophet while withholding discrediting information about the man¹³¹, by never publicly admitting and repenting of their mistakes.

First of Three (3) Reasons I Exit – Dishonesty

One sees by their posting “[Gospel Topics Essays](#)” on the internet, Mormon Church leaders are aware of the same evidence as the RLDS, and as I am that foundational claims do not hold up

They know DNA evidence shows native Americans (Lamanites) are not Israelites to whom the Book of Mormon is dedicated. There are no Lamanites anywhere. It is fiction.

The “[Gospel Topics Essays](#)” show that Church leaders are aware that contrary to Smith’s claim, Abraham himself did not pen the writings on the Egyptian scrolls that became the Book of Abraham. The evidence cannot be overstated, there is no relationship what-so-ever between the origins or content of scrolls and the Book of Abraham.

They know the Temple signs and tokens of the priesthood are the same as those in Free Masonry where Smith was elevated to the rank of master mason in Nauvoo. The Temple copies from Free Masonry.

¹³¹ Can Smith’s fantastical claims possibly be true? It helps to know he began his career as a “*Seer*” (see’er) who for hire with his stone in a hat could see treasures beneath the surface of the ground. Digging for treasure again after his trial for fraud in Judge Neely’s Court, he would claim to miraculously finding Golden Plates. Using his stone in a hat again, he dictated the Book of Mormon (BoFM) to his scribes, Emma Smith and Oliver Cowdery who describe his use of the “seer” stone in a hat. It is a tell that Smith sent agents, including Oliver Cowdery and Hiram Page, to Kingston, Upper Canada to try to sell the BoFM copyright. Hiram Page later said the brothers hoped the sale would be \$8,000. It turned out that starting a Religion is more profitable than treasure digging or selling the BoFM. (See Scott C. Dunn, “Spirit Writing”, *Sunstone*, June 1985, 24 [Automatic Writing](#). Or, see [Origins: A Course in Miracles](#).)

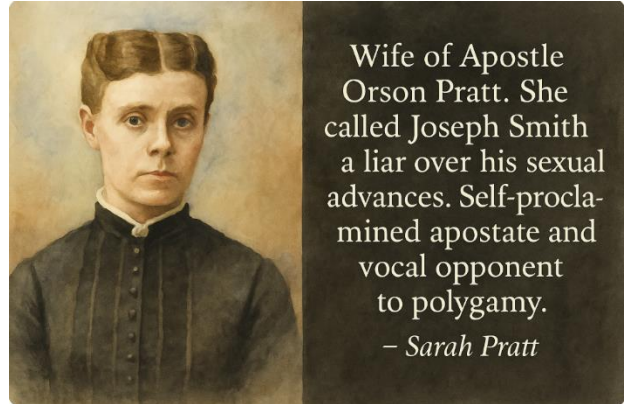
The account of Jesus is a history created 2000 years ago written between 40 years (Mark) and 90 years (John) after Jesus crucifixion as told in the four (4) Gospels, and by the Apostle Paul who never knew Jesus. However, the history of Joseph Smith is so recent that evidence of his life is abundant, and it is devastating both to his Truth Claims and to the inherent immorality of his Authoritarian Creation of the Church. These traits are still on display in the Temple endowment where modern Priesthood leadership continues to require the secret oaths of Obedience, Sacrifice, and Consecration be covenanted by all new Mormon Temple inductees.

Unlike health insurance discounts for non-smokers, there is no discount for Priesthood powers said to benefit Mormon families. Sadly, the lives of the wives of the most powerful Priesthood holders, such as President Nelson, Apostle Oaks, and Apostle Holland, could not be saved by Priesthood blessings.

I provide multiple links to Joseph Smith’s [Happiness Letter](#) [in](#) which he attempts to seduce 19-year-old Nancy Rigdon. His reasoning is circular just as it is in the famous Book of Mormon Moroni 10:4 challenge to pray for an answer “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith.” The Fallacy of presumption is both that there is a God who will answer, and that the answer will be, yes – that the BoFM is True. The almost universal failure to receive any objective answer to these prayers must therefore be a lack of sincerity or faith. These presumptions are seldom recognized as the circular reasoning that they are.

Church convert, Mike, does an “Examination of Mormon Truth Claims” linked to in [Appendix F - LDS Discussions](#). I find Smith’s failed Truth Claims irreconcilable. Foremost, is translation of the Egyptian papyri that were returned to the Church in my lifetime (1967). They do not translate to the Book of Abraham what-so-ever nor date to Abraham’s lifetime even though Smith said they were written by the Hand of Abraham himself.

They know Smith's character does not survive using his position as church leader when coercively seducing believing female followers. They know he successfully pressured near 40 female believers, including orphaned teenaged sisters entrusted to his care, and 12 women "simultaneously married to other men"¹³² as the "Gospel Topics Essays" phrase it. They know that according to the women, Smith's romantic advances were rejected by William Law's wife, Jane, and by Sidney Rigdon's daughter, [Nancy](#)¹³³. They know Smith publicly denied that he had married anyone other than his first wife, Emma.



They know of his first affair with the Smith family housekeeper, 16-year-old Fanny Alger, caught in the act by Emma and condemned by Oliver Cowdery. In 1838, Oliver Cowdery's exit from the Church was because he knew Joseph Smith had been engaging in a sexual relationship with a teenage servant in his home, Fanny Alger.

Emma Smith confirmed to William McLellin years later that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger the servant girl. She went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction! The first well authenticated case of polygamy took place in which Joseph Smith was "sealed" to the hired girl. The "sealing" took place in a barn on the "hay mow,"¹³⁴ and was witnessed by Mrs. Emma Smith through a crack in the door! Joseph Smith was caught and begged forgiveness calling in Dr. Williams, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon to reconcile Emma.¹³⁵



They know the Book of Mormon story line, that native Americans are a lost tribe of Israel is a mistaken contemporary Protestant hypothesis popular at the time of Joseph Smith. They know the Urim and Thummim and Spectacles are all described earlier by neighboring Pastor Ethan Smith's "View of the Hebrews" in the county adjacent to the Smith family.

Once unshackled from the truth claims, one may begin to freely recover from the Mental Health or [Psychological](#) effects of a lifetime of Intellectual [Dishonesty](#), [Inauthenticity](#), and [Conformity](#) that having a [Testimony](#) requires.

One sees that Obedience to authority rather than to one's own inner light is a Mormon sickness. One sees calling the secret Temple "Law of Obedience" sacred, wrongly attempts to legitimize it and to conceal it.

¹³² Joseph Smith and Other Men's Wives ([Pt 1](#))-Dan Vogel, ([Pt 2](#)), ([Pt 3](#))

Mormon Stories/LDS Discussions: Joseph Smith's Plural Marriage Proposals ([Pt 1](#)), ([Pt 2](#))

¹³³ Mormon Discussions: [The Happiness Letter](#) [△](#) (to Nancy Rigdon) - A Study in Religious Manipulation

¹³⁴ William McClellin, quoted in J. H. Beadle, "Jackson County," 4

¹³⁵ William McLellin, Letter to Joseph Smith III, July 1872, Community of Christ Archives

One sees throughout their Mormon upbringing; Church leaders suppressed the facts of Church history by threatening excommunication¹³⁶ or saying the history is “not faith promoting” or saying “the information is not useful.”

One sees the top-down organization of the LDS Church as a Corporation is consistent with its demands in the Temple for Tithing payments (the Law of Consecration). Each year, an estimated \$8 billion in tithing income is used to pay the church's bills and fund the church's programs estimated to cost \$7 billion. The surplus accumulates into a reserve fund at Ensign Peak and is invested. Church leaders refuse financial disclosure or accountability to its contributing membership.

Whistleblower David Nielsen¹³⁷ alleges that Ensign Peak is really a clandestine hedge fund masquerading as a charity where Tithing investments grow tax free. Independent estimates put total Church funds at Ensign Peak at more than \$150 billion. The Church could/should disclose its finances to tithe paying Stake Holders disclosing that [tithing](#) is not needed.

“To obscure the amount of the Church’s portfolio, and with the Church’s knowledge and approval, Ensign Peak created thirteen shell LLCs, ... The (SEC) order finds that Ensign Peak maintained investment discretion over all ... the shell companies, ... “We (the SEC) allege that the LDS Church’s investment manager, with the Church’s knowledge, went to great lengths to avoid disclosing the Church’s investments, depriving the Commission and the investing public of accurate market information,” ... Ensign Peak agreed to settle the SEC’s allegation that it violated” and pay a \$5 Million penalty¹³⁸ a mere slap on the wrist.

One sees in Mormon testimonies that the claim of “knowing” is a loyalty oath trusting the leadership and submitting to them, as in the moto, “follow the brethren.” Testimonies of “knowing” the Truth is the opposite of “faith” which is uncertainty where one lives “as if” the Truth is known but is not known.

One sees our leaders teaching prospective converts that a testimony is to be had by relying on their feelings, a “burning in the bosom,” despite an abundance of evidence in their possession contrary to their story. As Milton Mayer explained, a State leader’s allegiance is to the wellbeing of the institution above its member-citizens. Acting on the evidence that we and they are now all aware of, as demonstrated in the “[Gospel Topics Essays](#),” could produce a schism as it did in the much smaller Reorganized LDS Church.

One sees that our leader’s loyalty to the Church is thoroughly screened before promotion to their high rank. Testimony (meaning Loyalty not Truth) is a primary qualification for promotion. By frequently participating in the Temple ritual, such leaders could feel justified saying that criticizing them is wrong, [even if the criticism is true](#). [△](#)

“It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong.”

Voltaire
French Enlightenment writer, historian, and philosopher. 1694 - 1778

¹³⁶ [Fawn McKay Brodie](#): A Biographer's Life Hardcover – October 1, 1999 by Newell G. Bringhurst

¹³⁷ CBS News, 60 MINUTES OVERTIME, MAY 14, 2023 / 7:00 PM / CBS NEWS, [Whistleblower](#): Mormon church investment fund stockpiled money, masqueraded as a charity.

¹³⁸ [SEC Charges](#) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Its Investment Management Company for Disclosure Failures and Misstated Filings, Washington D.C., Feb. 21, 2023

These Church authorities use the authoritarian Temple ritual as a shield to escape accounting to their members. They seem to have momentarily forgotten that in their leadership position they are responsible for all that is said and done in the Temple and that they can and do change, correct, or improve what is done there.

The great Mormon “Fallacy of Presumption¹³⁹” is found in the **Moroni 10:4 Promise** in the **Book of Mormon** which states:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."

The verse creates a special rule for verifying truth—prayer and spiritual confirmation—which by their absence, dismisses other methods, such as historical, textual, or empirical analysis.

Several **fallacies of presumption**¹⁴⁰ exist in this passage (*circular reasoning*) that assumes the Book of Mormon (BofM) is true in order to find out that it is true. Following this reasoning, one either gets the desired confirmation or one is guilty of insufficient faith.

This shifts the burden of proof onto the individual rather than the claim itself. If someone does not receive confirmation, the fallback assumption is that they lacked sincerity, real intent, or faith—making the claim unfalsifiable.

When presented with the Moroni 10:4 promise, one must detect the hidden *presumption* that the BofM is true and the *false dilemma* that only prayers asked properly (sincerely, with faith, and real intent) can confirm it. If someone does not receive a confirmation, the explanation is that they did not ask in the right way, rather than considering the possibility that the Book of Mormon is not true.

The promise does not consider that one could ask sincerely and still not receive confirmation, nor does it allow for the possibility that the book’s truthfulness can be determined by other means such as historical, textual¹⁴¹, or empirical analysis.

For example, the book purports to be a history of a Jewish family (Lehi) departing Jerusalem 600BCE to populate an empty new world, the Americas. This claim can be empirically verified to show whether Lamanite DNA is Jewish, and archeology shows whether the Americas were empty. Such methods are available now, but not in Smith’s Day.

¹³⁹ Recognizing [Fallacies of Presumption](#). Identifying or rejecting the "premise of the question" exposes the fallacy.

Richard Packham - "Truth Will Prevail: All About [Proof, Evidence, Fallacies](#) and Lies", ([web site](#)).

¹⁴⁰ The use of logical fallacies in the BofM are manipulative which reflects poorly on it. One investigator defeated Joseph Smith’s [bad faith](#) [promise](#) found in BofM Moroni 10:4 by saying he got a confirmation, “It is not true.” The fallacy is known as “*begging the question*” (*circular reasoning*) when the promise contains the *presumption (premise)* that the BofM truly is a historical record of the Lamanites.

¹⁴¹ Chris Johnson's presentation, "[How the Book of Mormon Destroyed Mormonism](#),"(1:21:12) [\(24min:30sec\)](#) delivered at the 2013 Ex-Mormon Conference, critically examines the origins of the Book of Mormon by analyzing its textual similarities to early 19th-century publications. Johnson employed statistical models to compare the Book of Mormon's text with contemporary works, notably "The Late War Between the United States and Great Britain" (1816) by Gilbert J. Hunt. His analysis shows significant parallels, implying that the Book of Mormon was drawn from existing literature of that era. That it reflects the cultural and literary context of Joseph Smith's time.

The final two *presumptions* are that there is a God, and that God answers prayers. However, faith is believing when there is little evidence for or against a belief. Delusion is believing when there is an abundance of evidence against the belief.

What Did They Know and When Did They Know It?

Evidence is that Church Leaders Know What We Know. Their responsibilities are inescapable! **“What did they know, and when did they know it?”**

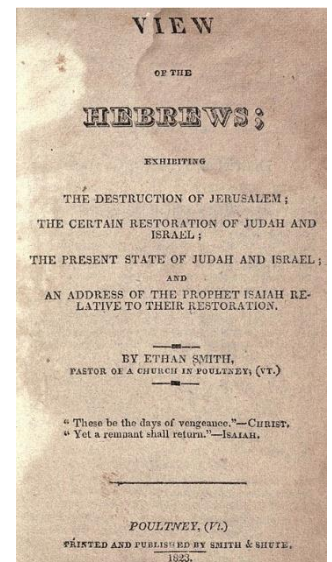
Arrival of the internet has caused the Church to lose control of its historical information and forced the Church, by destruction of its credibility and the threat of legal jeopardy, to post “[Gospel Topics Essays](#)” on the internet. Doing so was forced upon them by declining membership as their duplicity is discovered. Even though sanitized and [deceptive](#), Church members discover in these essays’, hidden away on the Church web site, information from their own Church they were never told about that was once deemed anti-Mormon.



The Brethren know former Church Councilor William Law opposed Smith taking women followers to wife in Nauvoo. According to Law, Smith had made several proposals to Law's wife Jane, under the premise that Jane Law would enter a polyandrous marriage with Smith. Law's wife rejected him, later describing Smith's proposals, saying that Smith had "asked her to give him half her love; she was at liberty to keep the other half for her husband." Smith succeeded in his proposals to eleven (11) other married female followers who, as “[Gospel Topics Essays](#)” phrase it, were “simultaneously married to other men.” On January 8, 1844, Smith removed Law from the First Presidency.

The Brethren know what Brother Law knew about Smith’s [polyandry](#). They ought to know about Lamanite [DNA genealogy](#) since at least year 2000 that Native American Lamanites are not descended from middle Eastern Israelites. From year 1967 leaders know of the modern translation and dating of the [Egyptian scrolls](#). The Scrolls have no relationship, what-so-ever, to the time of Abraham or to Smith’s Book of Abraham he claimed to be translating. The evidence is conclusive in my opinion; Smith was evolving from his days as a self-aware, convicted, [treasure digging](#) con-artist for hire into earning his living as a religious leader supposedly having miraculous powers of translation.

At minimum, this means to me that today’s Church leaders are self-deceived. Saying they “know” Smith was a prophet without disclosing the wealth of contrary evidence that for decades they have intentionally, knowingly hidden or ignored. For example, Church Historian B.H. Roberts in 1922 warned the Brethren in [Studies of the Book of Mormon](#) pointing out there are many major things in Pastor Ethan Smith’s [View of the Hebrews](#) “... not a few things merely, one or two, or a 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 Smith’s story of the Book of Mormon’s origin.”¹⁴² These leaders are scientist, doctors, or lawyers, like Brother Oaks, trained on how to arrive objectively at the truth, the testing of evidence against experience. Sitting on the Church Board of Directors are the Prophet and Apostles. These men fail their corporate



Title page from the 1823 printing

¹⁴² Stan Larson, [Quest for the Gold Plates](#), 1996, ISBN 0-9634732-1-2, 147
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responsibility to disclose vital inside knowledge they have that could make possible “informed consent” of tithe paying stakeholders¹⁴³.

Hiding the counter evidence is so egregious, it deserves repeating again that these highly educated Church leaders kept their inside knowledge hidden from me throughout my upbringing, kept it hidden from my parents, kept it hidden throughout my church service as a missionary, kept it hidden during my Temple marriage, kept it hidden during my years teaching Elders Quorum and Gospel Doctrine classes. To me it seems, these leaders have perfected a high level¹⁴⁴ of self-deceit being able to speak so earnestly in General Conference to an audience increasingly aware of the mass manipulation!

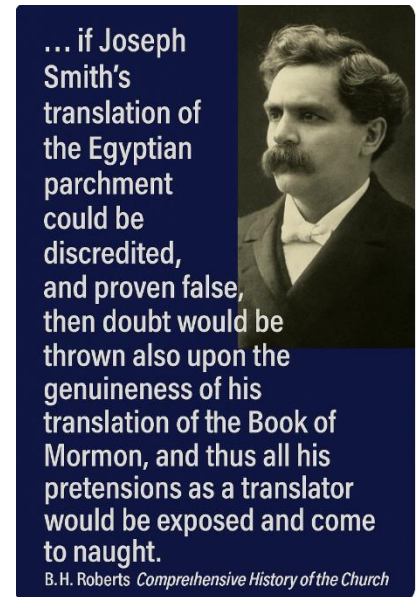
The Mormon story is fantastical. Can it possibly be true as claimed? So improbable are the claims that the war metaphor is employed to discredit doubters as disloyal. The metaphor may then be employed to justify hiding Church historical information from me and Church members as if we are the enemy. Using military language leaders talk of "battling" the devil, "conquering" sin, the “war in heaven”, and we sing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” It is counter to Jesus’ teachings.” It describes our relationship to God in military terms. To the mind of our Church leaders, their militarism might seem to justify secrecy, half-truths, and deceit.

Evidently, conservatives in the Quorum of Twelve Apostles won the internal debate while open history advocates like Church historian Leonard J Arrington are replaced and banished to Brigham Young University. Why is there ever any question about openness? This conservative victory puts the Church on a dangerous path because to restrict¹⁴⁵ information is to restrict agency.

Church “authorities” have a clear but hard choice, whether to act with integrity leading to revolutionary change like the Reorganized LDS Church has made, or whether to sustain the sentimental attachments of the pious to the testimonies with which those tithe payers were brought up. As a highly profitable tax-free corporation, the Church board of directors consistently chooses organizational interest above integrity by sustaining the simple religion of the conservative faithful while ignoring the interests or needs or wellbeing of its truth seekers. From my time as a missionary, I thought such a conflict of interest would be a telling test of their integrity if circumstances ever presented.

What kind of church is it that believes knowing the Truth about it will destroy faith? Jesus did not say the Truth destroys Faith. Jesus said the Truth will set you Free and so it has done for me.

This Statement renounces the practice of excommunicating [Truth tellers](#): Church Educational System (CES) employees like [Grant Palmer](#), historians like [D. Michael Quinn](#), attorney’s like [Paul Toscano](#), and women like



¹⁴³ “The Broken Shelves: Ex-Mormon Reddit [Narratives of Deconversion](#)”, by Lesley Rivera Wright, Master’s Thesis UNCC, 2021

¹⁴⁴ Indications that the General Authorities do, in fact, know very well that the church's claims are false, see Grant Palmer's reports of private conversations with a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, at "[Three Meetings With A General Authority](#)".

¹⁴⁵ Radio Free Mormon, [The Great Mormon History Coverup](#) - LDS Leadership's battle against intellectual honesty

[Maxine Hanks](#) whose public speaking or writing differs from the beliefs of Church leaders or are the voices of those they wish to silence.

¹⁴⁶All these excommunications are attacks on individual integrity. For example, the excommunication of BYU professor [Dr David Wright](#)¹⁴⁷ who used the methods of Biblical scholarship to conclude the Book of Mormon is modern, not ancient. These excommunications are unjust in their mean treatment of Church members, and these acts ignore other elements of Church theology celebrating freedom, intelligence, knowledge and love as the greater values. I had expected the Church to practice what it preaches.¹⁴⁸ However, the Church's consistent behavior over the last 28 years confirms to me, beyond any doubt, that these domineering practices, that I find so offensive, are truly representative of the Church's authoritarian values today. They are to me unchristlike and unbecoming of a church.

The attack on [Dr David Wright's](#) integrity and his excommunication illustrates what I meant when saying I did not understand what the authoritarian nature of the Church means:

- 1.) I mean that without my consent the authoritarian nature of the Church declares rules, policies, or beliefs that I am expected to *silently* agree with, to defend, and to follow. And, that I shall not publicly oppose or advocate against any of their guidance or prophecies, on threat of excommunication.
- 2.) I mean by perpetuating Fast and Testimony meetings such as it is, the Church uses its authority to wrongly teach that one's emotions or feelings are a reliable way to discover Truth. The testimony meetings are shamelessly resorting to a "herd mentality." These meetings are held while fasting intentionally weakening one's intellectual or emotional balance. LDS testimonies are the most delusional reasoning one will ever hear.
Delusions are fixed false beliefs that despite evidence to the contrary, are still believed. Delusions are a tightly held belief that can be part of psychotic experiences like mania, depression, substance intoxication, or delusional disorder. For example, believing that a famous person is in love with you. Or as in the cases of a dozen already married¹⁴⁹ female followers of Joseph Smith, persuaded by him to believe that they should marry and have sex with him.
- 3.) I mean that the authoritarian nature of the Church allows for the use of mechanisms hostile to one's sovereignty. For example, requiring Temple worthiness interviews, placing on one Temple Covenants like *Obedience*, and insisting that one attend Tithing Settlement because it is the law and order of the Church.

Second of Three (3) Reasons - Inauthenticity

Secondly, I could not break the deeply ingrained habit of being inauthentic without getting away. The habit of self-censoring because I know silence is the Mormon way. For example, self-censoring about President Joseph Fielding Smith's short lived 1970 rule that only men, not women, could offer Sacrament meeting prayers. Self-censoring about President Kimball's teaching against family planning when he said that marital sex must be had at the risk of pregnancy. The habit of being too nice because I know what is expected. Habitual little inauthenticity's like putting on a fake smile feigning friendliness in the foyer after some miserable intellectually dishonest testimony meeting filled with repetitious platitudes by those addicted to certainty¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁶ LDS Church historian B H Roberts talks about the Papayra and the Book of Abraham, April 11, 2021, [Link](#)

¹⁴⁷ David P. Wright, [Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance](#) Volume 3, 1997, 308

¹⁴⁸ Sterling M. McMurrin, "Recent Excommunications Damaged the LDS Church" [Salt Lake Tribune](#), 19 July 1995, A-8

¹⁴⁹ LDS Essay on Polygamy/[Polyandry](#) in Kirtland and Nauvoo (Annotated)

¹⁵⁰ Frank Schaeffer says the "[Certainty Addicted](#) brain of all fundamentalists is delusional." (At 6:00 Minutes) He is son of theologian and author Francis Schaeffer. He worked with his father and other members of the Religious Right in the 1970s making films, writing

Third of Three (3) Reasons – Freedom of Speech

Extraordinary claims require extraordinary and abundant evidence. This Statement shows how absent is the evidence, how counter to healthy human development are its teachings, how intent on [authoritarian](#) thought control is its purpose beginning with its rejection of free speech.

Citizens of the United States and many countries have loyalties to liberal Western democratic values arising out of the European "Reformation" in which the power of the Christian church to compel obedience was defeated. In its



Luther Post the 95 Theses

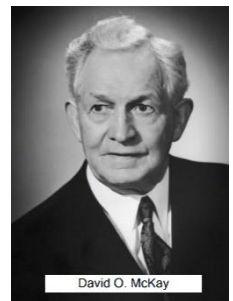
place are democratic values transferring power downward to the people. Democracy values individual liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, the separation of Church and State. Therefore, it is fair to require such constitutional rights (also named liberal rights) be assimilated by resident religious organizations whether Mormon, Christian, Jewish, or Islamic.

Like Islam and Christian Fundamentalist, Mormonism is a haven for authoritarians¹⁵¹ who desire power upwards towards their God as the head of Church and State. It is a power claim in conflict with Democratic values. This conflict was true of Mormon founder, Joseph Smith, who envisioned a theocracy, and is true of Islam. Both religions restrict freedom of speech within.

Take for example, Church members David P. Wright¹⁵², D. Michael Quinn, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Janice Allred and others, all excommunicated in my interpretation for refusing the attempt by the Church to restrict their freedom of speech. I believe these actions by Church leaders are premeditated and intends that a Bishop, a Quorum, or a Council shall use their powers to establish and maintain control over these Church members making an example of them to others. One's integrity is threatened. To a true believer, loss of eternal wellbeing in the next life is threatened.

Also threatened is severance from one's established religious social relationships. The Church now calls such church trials, courts of love. Except families do not excommunicate or banish their children. Only testimony bearing Latter-day Saints are capable of such hypocrisy.

As a missionary at the time of President McKay in 1962-64, I taught and believed that "free agency" was a central truth of the Church, guarded and protected by it. I was inspired by President McKay's intervention when Sterling McMurrin was threatened by a Church court. Following President McKay's day came a new emphasis on obedience. Combined with the idea of prophetic infallibility, that call to conformity seemed to condemn some of my convictions without public objection. For example, as a young married man, I found myself opposed to the position, articulated most



David O. McKay

books, and speaking at churches and other venues. In 2007, Schaeffer published his autobiography, *Crazy for God: How I Grew Up As One of the Elect, Helped Found the Religious Right and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of It Back*, in which he goes into detail about growing up in the Schaeffer family.

¹⁵¹ Jonathan Haidt: "The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion", Liberal vs Conservative values, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONUM4akzLGE&t=2761s>

¹⁵² David P. Wright, [Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance](#) Volume 3, 1997, 308

trenchantly by Apostle J. Reuben Clark, that marital sexual intercourse could occur only at the “hazard” of pregnancy.¹⁵³ Also, I believed the Equal Rights Amendment was a simple, positive, clarifying statement that would benefit my daughters. When teaching Elders Quorum or Gospel Doctrine classes, I often guided classroom discussions towards advocating free agency as superior to obedience.

For example, I taught that freedom, love, spontaneity, and genuine delight, without ulterior motive, are necessary to moral living. To obey can be morally empty. Slaves obey. Purity of motive is essential. Motive is corrupted by fear, hope of reward, or a burdensome sense of duty. The moral worth of LDS religious behavior can be corrupted, hence nullified, by promises of Celestial reward (a payment), or by fear of eternal losses (coercion). Authenticity is essential to morally, otherwise one’s shallow, artificial motives are apparent to oneself and to others. Temple covenants of Obedience or Sacrifice intentionally make Church control supreme, thus undermining the authenticity essential to a morally worthy life.

I came to believe, after McKay’s passing, the Church is willfully domineering from the top. My friends and family insisted that I misperceived the intentions of Church leaders. However, to establish the point I asked if, in their opinion, the policy of the Church is to excommunicate me were I to disagree vigorously, publicly, and influentially with the Church leadership? Take for example as a first point of disagreement that I am obligated and must be free from the threat of excommunication, to knowingly speak and write publicly my conscience, even when it disagrees with the beliefs of Church leaders. Otherwise, the threat of excommunication from the group is a coercive attack on one’s conscience, on one’s integrity, and on one’s “free agency”.

Establishing common factual grounds for agreement in a discussion can be difficult when contesting the nature of Mormonism. However, finally all my faithful Temple worthy adult brothers and sisters agreed with my perception—that indeed, I may be excommunicated were I to publicly and vigorously advocate the above freedom of speech when it conflicts with Church leadership. At last, my percept is acknowledged. No more denial.

Threatening my freedom of public expression is an abuse of power first felt as a missionary. The threat has teeth as demonstrated by the excommunication of twelve LDS historians, feminists, and intellectuals. For me, these un-repudiated actions are inherently illegitimate. However, I learned that church history contains many examples from the time of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and now to our time, that establish authoritarian values as the Mormon tradition. I believe President McKay’s tolerance was an aberration.

On the dome of the Jefferson Memorial are inscribed the words, “I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.” Yes, the Church does use its power claim to “being right” and does use excommunication, or the threat of it, to intimidate and control members. However, difference of ideas in the ‘mind of man’ cannot be the basis of separation among God’s children.



On the Northwest wall of the Jefferson Memorial is another of Thomas Jefferson's beliefs: "Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens...are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion...No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship or ministry or shall otherwise suffer on account of his

¹⁵³ Spencer W. Kimball quoting J. Ruben Clark, “The Marriage Decision”, *Ensign* Feb 1975, 4
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religious opinions or belief, but all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion. I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively."

I believe attempts to dismiss the [necessity](#) that church members must speak their conscience in Mormonism are acts of "unrighteous dominion". Public renunciation of these acts and restoration of membership to those who have suffered from them are needed to clearly remove the implied threat of excommunication from the minds of all church members.

Abraham – Obedience and Sacrifice

Imagine oneself in the story of Abraham, commanded by God to sacrifice one's child as a test of one's *Obedience*. Imagine preparing to proceed, looking at one's child, and then turning to look at God and saying, "You are the God of the Universe, if you want this child dead, slay her/him yourself. I **love** her/him more than I **fear** you. Slay us both if you will" because I accept foremost that the nature of the God I believe in, is as a God of love. The divine test is passed in that moment of proof that one has made love greater than fear or *Obedience*.

Mormonism has the stain of *Obedience* on its soul when in 1857, Temple endowed Mormons failed that test to put Love ahead of Obedience. Sent by the Cedar City Stake Presidency and High Council¹⁵⁴ to slay more than 120 men, women, and children of the Francher Wagon Train at [Mountain Meadows](#) Utah. All but one of fifty-five (55) male Latter-day Saints complied,¹⁵⁵ fulfilled the Law of *Obedience* and the Oath of Vengeance that existed in the Temple at that time.

¹⁵⁶The Abraham-Isaac story of obedience and sacrifice, human sacrifice, are Old Testament "Law of Moses" ideas that Latter-day Saints argue Jesus' teachings replaced. However, Mormon Church leaders have rehabilitated *Obedience* and *Sacrifice*, ancient Old Testament moral relics and made them tools of their **power** by placing the Law of *Obedience* and Law of *Sacrifice* in the Temple ritual.

The Abraham-Isaac story is surely written by a Jewish Cleric having an authoritarian personality type¹⁵⁷ characterized by a disposition to treat authority figures with unquestioning obedience. Bob Altemeyer¹⁵⁸ and John Dean use the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale to identify, measure, and quantify the personality traits of authoritarian people. Authoritarian persons arise when anxieties are produced in them by people who do not abide by the conventions and social norms of society.



Lucifer's Plan:

Like the mythical pre-existent war in heaven, these secret Temple Covenants are immoral because like Lucifer's plan, they attempt to compel *Obedience* and Church authorities use them for that purpose. For example, when

¹⁵⁴ First Presidency's Mountain Meadows Massacre anniversary [statement](#), Salt Lake Tribune, Sept 11, 2007

¹⁵⁵ Juanita Brooks, [The Mountain Meadows Massacre](#), New Edition 1962, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, ISBN: 0-8061-0549-6, 90

¹⁵⁶ Abraham and Isaac painting by Harold Copping, from his 1910 book, [The Copping Bible](#) illustrated by himself.

¹⁵⁷ Authoritarians have a general tendency to focus upon people who violate their values and to act oppressively against them (authoritarian aggression); a general opposition to intellectualism; a tendency to believe in mystic determination; and an exaggerated concern with sexual promiscuity (as found in Mormon worthiness interviews).

¹⁵⁸ [Authoritarian Nightmare](#): The Ongoing Threat of Trump's Followers, Paperback – June 22, 2021, by John Dean & Bob Altemeyer

one chooses freely to live what the Church prescribes, the Covenants are unnecessary. Covenants only do their job when controlling someone who otherwise would not freely make the prescribed choice.

Corruption of individual motive was the result of Lucifer's plan in the Mormon Myth of a pre-existence war in heaven. The story is that Lucifer intended to compel *obedience* by drawing back the veil thus giving us perfect knowledge (memory of the preexistence in the presence of God) thereby compelling one to obey in mortal life.

Jesus' argument against is said to be that "knowing" or remembering our pre-existent life with God would compel us, causing two (2) difficulties: First, if compelled we are unaccountable. Second, if compelled we are inauthentic. Because freedom, absent any controlling influence, is a necessary condition for the development of a responsible, healthy, mature human person. These principles apply whether or not one believes in the story of a pre-existent life.

I believe Church leaders are adopting Satan's argument when putting the "Law of *Obedience*" into the Temple ritual. They seek to compel by claiming to be "right," by claiming they "know," by claiming God reveals to them through "feelings," by their judgements in worthiness interviews, by excommunicating members whose public opinions or advocacy is different than theirs, by making tithe paying Temple worthiness a condition of Church employment, by telling missionaries to say they "know" Joseph Smith was a prophet while withholding discrediting information about the man, by never publicly admitting or repenting of their mistakes.

The new first time unsuspecting target of Temple manipulation is indirectly threatened in the temple that Celestial exaltation cannot be achieved unless they accept the Temple Covenants and comply with them.

Placing these laws in the Temple is deliberate. It attempts to compel through Covenants "before God, angels, and these witnesses" that you give "your time" and "everything" to the Church.

Since I wish to be the author of my own life, I claim that entitlement for themselves where it belongs, to choose without guilt how my time shall be used. By attending the Temple, submitting to Temple worthiness interviews, granting an interrogation at year-end tithing settlements, we mistakenly give away our power.

Why would one do so if not in the false hope that something outside of us will fulfill our need to accomplish great things or fulfill our need for self-worth or be judged worthy in the next life or fulfill our need to belong. When instead we are better to reclaim our power, to recognize that we are never separated from our inner divinity, and to take responsibility for ourselves.



Secret Covenants

On the one and only first-time attendance at the Temple in my own name (as opposed to vicarious attendance in the name of and on behalf of another person), the Covenants violate my self-ownership, i.e., my individual

sovereignty.¹⁵⁹ The Priesthood leader, by refusing to give a full disclosure before going into the Temple, invalidated my Covenants.

In those secret Covenants the Church attempted by surprise to gain for itself the promise that my time, labor, and life choices shall satisfy whatever it may require of me.

First, a new Temple candidate must be fully aware of the Temple ritual far in advance when deciding to be Temple married or to go on mission for which the Church requires the Covenants be taken. They cannot be secret.

Secondly, failure to disclose relevant known facts of Church history to those making new Temple Covenants is proof not just of official deceit, but evidence of officials' beliefs are held insincerely because of their hiding.

The Temple Covenants are secret because otherwise they cannot withstand the light of day when seen for the Manipulation and attempts to Control that they are. The Covenants lose their power the moment an inductee understands their covert purpose¹⁶⁰.

Similarly, no matter one's biological age, the Covenants are invalidated when one lacks the capacity for Individual Sovereignty. By individual sovereignty I mean the "power within" to say no. Meaning we claim our own power over our own lives and allow others the right to do the same. To be accountable requires we be in this place of true, authentic, and self-generated power.¹⁶¹ Individual sovereignty is incompatible with Temple Covenants which ultimately defeat sovereignty.

¹⁵⁹ Individual sovereignty means that it is evil for any other person or Church to interfere with one's honest and peaceful choices. This criterion means use of Temple Covenants are acts of domination and control which disregard that being a free and sovereign person having purity of motive, and being free of coercion, and having the capacity to give informed consent, are necessary pre-conditions to any judgement of one's morality.

¹⁶⁰ Temple covenants tempt abuse of our good faith and trust in the Church in lesser ways. For example, when "busy work" is created for the sake of producing mere Church activity. For example, the small Ward we attended in Santa Maria CA was split, thus doubling the number of church jobs specifically intended, according to the Stake President, to stress the membership making us more "active." The creation of such artificial activity is wrongly assumed to be innately good when it consumes much of one's free time in service to the Church. It preempts many other good uses of one's time that one would choose.

We raised our hand against confirming the Ward split. To do so required being subjected to an interview justifying our vote against the Stake Presidency's decision. The Stake 2nd Councilor gave his opinion in the interview, correctly I think now, that the Temple "Law of Obedience" preempts my soliciting opposing votes from among stake High Councilors in advance. There was to be no public discussion at Church, no benefit of opposing viewpoints when confirming their decision. Not to miss the point, Temple Laws turn my earnest public opposition about the Ward split into a prohibited, disobedient, insubordinate, challenge to their authority.

¹⁶¹ "What is Personal Sovereignty and How do I get me some of that? 4 Unique ways to access your Autonomy," Reya, Nov 20, 2016 "The experiences of feeling Complete... Worthy... Belonging... from within ourselves, ... we are Sovereign and free unto ourselves, yet remarkably interconnected and interdependent with all of life. This state of mind and heart comes with the recognition that we are never separate from our inner divinity, regardless of our human circumstances. It is in this recognition, this re-wiring of our beliefs and our purpose, that we remember our divine Sovereignty. For if we are never separate from the force of creation, then how can anyone control us? We are an island unto ourselves.

We are each the author of our own life; the creator of our own reality. As islands of Sovereignty unto ourselves, we recognize that each of us, alone, must take responsibility for ourselves. We accept the fact that by our beliefs, our thoughts, our intentions and our feelings, we create our own reality. And this deep visceral knowing allows us to disengage from the cycles of power, and the shame and blame games that would keep us there. We create our reality through the things we choose to keep our focus upon. This comes with great responsibility. The ability to respond to the life we are creating. No one else is responsible for how we feel, our state of being, what is happening to us. Ultimately, it is each of us that chooses what our reality is going to be.

We are responsible for our own beliefs, our words, our own emotions, our own actions. These create the world around us. So, we take back our power, extract ourselves from the cycle and place ourselves on the throne, at the hub of the wheel of our own life. There is no "They." No one is coming to save us. The government will not do it. The angels. The aliens. We are the ones we have been waiting for. And we need to be on our own thrones to do our own work that is ours to do. We are the authors of this life of ours."

Authoritarianism:

Authoritarianism refers to the hierarchical and centralized structure of the LDS Church. Authority is concentrated at the top, with the President of the Church holding ultimate authority and decision-making power.

This authority is said to be divinely ordained and is believed to be necessary for the proper functioning and guidance of the Church as well as guiding the personal lives of all church members.

The authoritarian nature of the LDS Church leads to the criticism that it undermines individual freedom of thought and expression, and that the highest form of worship, as found in the Temple, justifies policies that are oppressive.

An authoritarian religion harms individuals in a number of ways. It creates a power imbalance, and a *conflict of interest* between those at the top favoring the best interest of the institutional Church against those individuals at the bottom whose best interest is different, which leads to abuses of power and mistreatment or manipulation of individuals.

Individual freedom is necessary for judging morality because freedom allows individuals to make their own choices and decisions about how to live their lives. This is important because moral judgments are based on the idea that individuals should be free to act in accordance with their own values and beliefs, as long as they do not harm others.

If individuals are not free to make their own choices, it may be difficult or impossible to determine whether their actions are moral or not, since they are not acting of their own accord. Additionally, the concept of individual freedom is closely linked to the idea of autonomy, or the ability to self-govern, which is often considered a fundamental aspect of *free agency*.

The strict rules and regulations of authoritarian religions can place a great deal of pressure on individuals to conform, leading to feelings of guilt and shame if they are unable to meet or if they choose not to meet expectations.

Furthermore, the emphasis on obedience and conformity within an authoritarian religion can stifle individual freedom of thought and expression, leading to a lack of intellectual and spiritual growth. This can also make it difficult for individuals to question or challenge certain beliefs or practices, which can have negative consequences on their mental and emotional well-being. In some cases, the consequences of not conforming to the expectations of an authoritarian religion can be severe, such as excommunication or other forms of punishment or ostracization within devout religious families.¹⁶²

“What is restricted is the free, spontaneous expression of the infant’s, the child’s, the adolescents, and eventually the adult’s will, their thirst for knowledge and truth, their wish for affection. The growing person is forced to give up most of his or her autonomous, genuine desires and interests, and his or her own will, and to adopt a will



Parents Francis Marion & Jane Taylor Henderson. Still living: Janet (far left), John (hand on heart), Nelson (Me - stripes on shirt). Father - Raleigh NC Branch President, District President, Stake Presidency.

¹⁶² [Richard Packham](#), "The next year was an armed truce in my marriage. My wife left me suddenly, with no warning, taking the children. Her friends at church helped her escape, and she returned to Zion and divorced me. A last-ditch attempt at reconciliation failed when she said that her return would be conditioned upon my returning to the faith." Packham's calm, reasoned, statement is on video [here](#).

and desires and feelings that are not autonomous but superimposed by the social patterns of thought and feeling.”¹⁶³ Church, and family “has to solve a difficult problem: *How to break a person’s will without his being aware of it?* Yet by a complicated process of indoctrination, rewards, punishments, and fitting ideology, it solves this task by and large so well that most people believe they are following their own will and are unaware that their will itself is conditioned and manipulated.”¹⁶⁴

However, a believing Church member is likely to dispute that force is used. Except, what difference is obedience when coerced by a gunman threatening one’s life, than is obedience coerced by an authoritarian church threatening a believer’s perceived eternal wellbeing who say that publicly differing with them is the beginning of apostasy? Coerced *Obedience* defeats *moral agency*.

Testimony

There are "Objective Truths" that are true whether or not one believe in it. The methods and tools of science are uniquely conceived to seek out and establish objective truths. The quest for truth is not in conflict between science¹⁶⁵ and religion because Objective Truth does not care how it is discovered. One’s intellectual integrity requires that one’s truth is always open to challenge.

These principles of the Scientific Method apply not only to the natural world, but also apply to discovering what is healthy or beneficial to the psychological or spiritual well-being of the human person, marriage and family, corporate and community relationships. After resisting at first, many religions are incorporating such new sources of knowledge into their teachings.

There are several signs that can cast doubt on someone's claim to knowing the truth. It's important to approach these signs with a critical mindset and consider the context in which truth claims are made. Here are some common indicators that might discredit someone's claim to knowing the truth:

1. Lack of evidence or supporting facts or suppressing information: If someone cannot provide sufficient evidence or supporting facts to back up their claim, or is not open to opposing facts, it raises doubts about the validity of their knowledge. Unsupported assertions should be scrutinized carefully. For example, Joseph Smith’s claim that the Book of Abraham source was penned by the hand of Abraham himself.
2. Inconsistencies or contradictions: When someone's claim contradicts well-established facts or contradicts one's understanding of the nature of God (of good), or is not psychologically healthy, or is internally inconsistent, it weakens their position. Logical inconsistencies or conflicting information or conflicting virtues, suggest that the claim may not be based on truth. For example, using excommunication as a weapon to attack the intellectual integrity of scholars like BYU Dr David P. Wight.
3. Confirmation bias: If someone only seeks or presents information that confirms their preconceived beliefs, their Testimony, while ignoring or dismissing conflicting evidence, it indicates a bias and undermines the claim's credibility such as is encouraged in LDS testimony meetings. Objective analysis requires considering a range of perspectives and evidence.

¹⁶³ Erich Fromm, To Have or To Be, 1976, 165,6

¹⁶⁴ Erich Fromm, To Have or To Be, 1976, 166

¹⁶⁵ Mormon Think: ["It Started with Science,"](#) [u](#) By Dianne Chryst Ormond, Resignation letter.

4. Lack of expertise: Assessing the credibility of a claimant involves considering their qualifications and expertise in the relevant field, Church history for example. Claims made by individuals without expertise should be examined with skepticism. For example, DNA evidence on the origins of Native Americans.
5. Personal bias or vested interests: If someone has a personal bias or a vested interest in promoting a particular viewpoint, for example a person whose income depends on presenting a “faith promoting” viewpoint, for example those employed by the Church Educational System, then their claim may be influenced by subjective motivations rather than a genuine pursuit of truth. Conflicts of interest should raise concerns about the objectivity of the claim.
6. Emotional reasoning: Claims based solely on emotional reasoning¹⁶⁶ (a burning in the bosom), without a basis in evidence or logical argument, are often less reliable. Emotional appeals may manipulate or distort the truth, so it's crucial to separate emotions from objective analysis.
7. “Other than ‘feelings,’ what evidence is there the church is what it claims to be? Feelings are not a reliable test of truth, as anyone knows whose feelings have turned out to be wrong, such as feeling good about an investment which failed or a marriage that ended. If feelings equal truth, then Islam, Catholicism, Buddhism, and all other faiths are also the one true religion because their members also have a witness.”¹⁶⁷
8. Lack of transparency: If someone refuses to provide transparency in their methods, sources, or data, it raises suspicion. Openness and the ability to provide clear explanations and justifications contribute to the credibility of a claim. For example, advice against internet searching should make one suspicious as to why not? Or making LDS Temple covenants secret? What is being hidden and why?
9. Repetition of debunked information: When someone continues to assert claims that have been thoroughly debunked or discredited, it calls into question their commitment to the truth. Ignoring contrary evidence indicates a disregard for factual accuracy. For example, the ongoing false claim that Book of Mormon Lamanites even exist after skin shaming Native Americans for 170 years when DNA evidence shows they are not descended from Israelites.

Remember that evaluating the truthfulness of a claim requires critical thinking, examination of evidence, and consideration of multiple perspectives. It's essential to approach information with skepticism and maintain an open mind.

A logical fallacy (circular reasoning) is committed when trying to believe¹⁶⁸ a predetermined conclusion as instructed in the Book of Mormon (Moroni 10:4). One is wrongly taught to associate feelings with answers to prayer. As always, the prayers are deficient when the magical answer does not come.

The idea of certainty, of being sure, is wrongly assumed to always be a good thing when one takes the position of having a LDS Testimony. Testimony means that one's belief is indisputable, that one knows beyond a doubt, beyond question. Thereafter, one's mind is closed to objective truths that could alter one's belief. This is the whole unspoken goal of having a Mormon Testimony. Anything that could threaten belief is said to be evil.

¹⁶⁶ Mormon Spiritual Witnesses | Ep. 1788 | [LDS Discussions Ep. 43](#) [△](#) How do sincere seekers often end up with different answers when appealing to "the Spirit"?

¹⁶⁷ Mormon Think: "[It Started with Science](#)," [△](#) By Dianne Chryst Ormond

¹⁶⁸ Associating good feeling with answer to Prayer. [Trying to Believe](#) 7 min. video. Excerpt: Mormon Stories | [Ep. 1907](#) [△](#)

One should be suspicious of the idea above because it is intellectually dishonest. One does not really *know* but one is interchanging the meaning of faith vs knowledge as if they are the same thing. Claiming to “know” is discrediting.

Secondly, the “certainty” of *knowing* is a delusion that has the ability to close our minds. If we are certain about something, there is no reason to be curious, and no reason to entertain or consider other points of view or other possibilities. Exploration is shut down by certainty, and we end up comfortable in our rigid beliefs – comfortable but unteachable.

Latter-day Saints are addicted to "Certainty", to knowing we are "right," to being members of the only True Church, to having a "Testimony." It is no secret that the act of “being right,” of being “Certain” is what goes on at monthly testimony meetings. Engaging in these first Sunday events, both leaders and followers conspire to preserve the leaders [authority](#) professing the current church leader is a Prophet of God. And Church leaders believe they are touched by divine providence. It is no surprise they love the adulation heaped on them at these monthly church-wide meetings. The meetings capture the leader-follower dynamic when otherwise they are powerless. Once followers’ bond, they don’t care much about evidence, because they believe in their leaders whose aura of specialness exists mostly in the eye of the beholder. Cultural conservatives are soothed who fear the loss of male domination from their leaders. They feel safe when strong men are in control, when the Truth is certain.

Power is at play. Not everyone wants to be free, but many want to be led by surrendering to a leader, a Church, to God or Jesus; gaining a new security and a new pride by participation in the power in which one submerges. One gains certainty, security against the torture of doubt.

“The first recorded testimony concerning Joseph Smith’s supernatural abilities occurred during his 1826 pre-trial examination as a ‘glass looker.’ Josiah Stowell had heard of young Joseph’s ability to discover treasure and asked his help in finding a lost Spanish mine by peeping into a "seer" stone in a hat. At Joseph’s pre-trial examination, Stowell ‘declared he [Joseph] could see things fifty feet below the surface of the earth, as plain as the witness could see what was on the Justice’s table.’

“When we speak untruths, we are guilty of lying. We can also intentionally deceive others by a gesture or a look, by silence, or by telling only part of the truth. Whenever we lead people in any way to believe something that is not true, we are not being honest.”

LDS Definition of Honesty

The justice then ‘soberly looked at the witness and in a solemn, dignified voice, said, ‘Deacon Stowell, do I understand you as swearing before God, under solemn oath you have taken, that you believe that the prisoner can see by the aid of the stone fifty feet below the surface of the earth, as plainly as you can see what is on my table?’ ‘Do I believe it?’ says Deacon Stowell, ‘do I believe it? No, it is not a matter of belief. I positively know it to be true.’”¹⁶⁹

Mormon ‘testimonies’ are expected to contain a similar phrase, “I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Joseph Smith” and the current president are “Prophets of God.” In my lifetime three of these elderly Prophets became senile (McKay, Benson, Hunter). The essence of honesty is that you do not pretend to know something that you

¹⁶⁹ Robert B. Anderson, “The Dilemma of the Mormon Rationalist”, *Dialogue a Journal of Mormon Thought*, Volume 30 No 4, Winter 1997, 79

do not know.¹⁷⁰ Faith implies doubt. Rather than a statement of faith, the Mormon ‘testimony’ is a loyalty oath of group belonging that indicates a decision to submit one’s own thought to church authority. One is admonished to avoid reading certain books or to avoid internet searching out of the very real fear that the truthful history discovered there will deconstruct Mormon claims. Indeed, Latter-day Saints accept this prohibition with surprising acquiescence.

Church claims to “being right”, is a claim to power, not Truth. The internet is feared because truth tellers found there is a threat to Church Power, not to Truth. Protecting one’s testimony is allegiance to that Power, a loyalty oath to it, not to truth. Having a Testimony means that one should obey what is right, hence its power. Guarding that claim to “being right” leads to all kinds of [dishonesty](#), half-truths and deception, documented in this Statement.

Mormon truth tellers are on the internet¹⁷¹. The internet need not be feared so long as we can trust our Church leaders are telling the truth. However, our leaders fear of the internet arises because they know we will discover what they have hidden, and we will discover the ongoing misrepresentations they make.

For example, we will discover that our leaders knew all along of young Joseph Smith’s employment as a [treasure digger](#), his arrest and trial as an imposter. We will discover from [DNA](#) evidence that Native Americans are not Book of Mormon Lamanites descended from Lehi out of Jerusalem. We will discover what they have known since 1967 that the [Book of Abraham](#) scrolls in their possession do not contain the writings of Abraham “by his own hand upon the papyrus.”



Monthly testimony meetings are a form of brain washing. The most embarrassing example is seeing Mormon parents shuttle their children up to the pulpit to repeat these oaths of allegiance when the child hardly knows the meaning of the words. Then, under enormous social pressure, to watch the internal struggle with personal integrity, as the adolescent or young adult is expected by family and congregation to eventually pronounce that he or she now too “[knows](#)”.

That hesitation arises in those who, because of their intellectual honesty, have difficulty pretending to have such a testimony, understanding they cannot just choose to know the unknowable without self-deception.

I saw in missionary training the young missionary with the courage and honesty to say he does not really “know” is advised to bear testimony that he “knows,” anyway. In time, he is assured, the virtue in the act of testimony bearing will produce the “knowing” he seeks. At age 20, I recognized this advice was intellectually dishonest and self-deceiving akin to brainwashing. Once the posture of “knowing” is adopted as one’s own, then membership in the faith community depends partly upon the successful defense of that position.

Yet, from beginning to end, the oath of “knowing” lacks integrity. Therefore, the practice should cease. First, the existence of strong social expectations to say “I know” is compulsory in the most delicate areas of personal faith and choice. Second, the conditioning of children, missionaries, and members to adopt the group conscience as

¹⁷⁰ Alan W. Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, 1951, 18

¹⁷¹ [The Mormon Alliance](#) documents ecclesiastical/spiritual abuse in the LDS or Mormon Church. ([David](#) and [Dianne](#) Wright) Sandra [Tanner's Bookstore](#) provides critical research and documentation on the LDS Church Dr. John Dehlin, founder of [Mormon Stories](#), activist, public speaker, and religious transitions coach. [CES Letter](#), by Jeremy Runnells, is one Latter-day Saint's honest quest to get official answers from the LDS Church. [Radio Free Mormon](#) tackles difficult subjects in Mormonism like no one else.

their own is manipulative and akin to brainwashing. Third, church members are taught to rely on feelings while being actively discouraged from examining counter evidence. Hence, those compliant Testimonies are corrupted.

Employees of the Church Educational System (CES) can be fired, disfellowshipped, or excommunicated for disclosing discomforting Church history or for not paying their tithing. Excommunicated for being intellectually honest in ways the Church did not like are former CES employees Grant H. Palmer¹⁷² (Director of the LDS Institute of Religion) and David P. Wright¹⁷³ (BYU Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Near Eastern Languages). In the name of this so called “knowing,” truth and scholarship are sacrificed.

In my teens, I wondered in Testimony meetings, why the Church was not more widely accepted in the face of the evidence presented. However, in adulthood the monthly Testimony meetings became a torturous affront to my intellectual honesty. I do not deny the existence of transcendent experiences. I believe these are common human experiences shared by believers in all religions. And, as I’ve seen so often in Mormon testimonies, I’m sure the universal tendency is to use the religious belief system in which one is immersed to add meaning and interpretation to the experience as explained in “[The Mormon Way of Knowing](#)”¹⁷⁴. A belief in Testimony (belief in believing) encourages this practice. The most outrageous rationalizations and interpretations of life’s experiences are welcomed when they sustain belief, while honest contrary interpretations or counter evidence are rejected as heresies or doubts that could undermine Testimony.



Mormon “Testimony” meetings abandon even the pretense of objectivity. Its purpose is to arrive at a foregone conclusion. The placement of “Testimony” meetings on the monthly calendar serves the control needs of church leaders. It targets our social vulnerabilities, our need to belong, our seeking a common purpose.

As Judy Johnson explains in her book, What’s So Wrong with Being Absolutely Right, “... the closed or narrow mindedness of dogmatism damages people’s careers, erodes their friendships, and limits their potential for intimacy.” Much more could be said about the destructive effect of the quest for Mormon Testimony on families when personal needs for certainty and standards of intellectual honesty differ. Johnson goes on saying, “...questioning their established beliefs threatens their deep psychological needs for certainty and safety. ... Equally dangerous are dogmatic followers. Adrift in a sea of ideological dependency and oblivious to the motives of dogmatic leaders who colonized their minds, dogmatic followers naively support authoritarian leaders who rule the marketplace of ideas and deny free speech.”¹⁷⁵

Testimony is the certainty of knowing, of “being right”, therefore the believer opens his mind to truth only on condition that it fits in with his preconceived beliefs and wishes. Faith, on the other hand, is an unreserved

¹⁷² Grant Palmer, [An Insiders View of Mormon Origins](#),

¹⁷³ David P Wright, [Mormon Alliance, Vol III Chapter 23](#).

¹⁷⁴ Brent N. Henderson, <https://www.fnhenderson.us/WayofKnowing8.pdf>

¹⁷⁵ Judy J. Johnson, What’s So Wrong with Being Absolutely Right: The Dangerous Nature of Dogmatic Belief, 2008, 14

opening of the mind to the truth, whatever it may turn out to be. Faith has no preconceptions: it is a plunge into the unknown.¹⁷⁶ It is the opposite of Testimony in that uncertainty is the virtue.

Church members are told a weak Testimony is the reason prayers are not answered. Mormonism encourages its members to believe in invisible beings, inaudible voices, intangible entities, undetectable forces, and events and judgments that happen after we die.

Its Temple ceremonies and Testimony meetings give credibility to the idea that believing in things for which there is no evidence is valid, and actually virtuous. Temples give credibility to the idea that invisible worlds are real, more real and important than the visible one. Like Testimony meetings, the Temple gives credibility to the idea that secret Covenants we are led into, alone among all other ideas, should be beyond critique; that the very act of questioning is wrong.

Control is the ulterior motive of church leaders who promise a celestial afterlife or magical healings in exchange for the critical psychological act of accepting church truth claims, and the accompanying duty to obey. The claim of being “right” is about control.

Making Testimony all important is misguided. Church leaders sacrifice truth, understanding, honesty, and its moral force in order to emphasize Testimony. Monthly Testimony meetings should be stopped and attempted magical faith healings could be abandoned except placebos such as this are surprisingly effective. Were there the slightest evidence in the data that priesthood healing magic worked, insurance companies could offer discounts.

Telling Church History

Religion abuses a person’s freedom at its own peril. Likewise, dishonesty is a perilous temptation Mormon leaders face when seeking to maintain Church truth claims and image. Joseph Smith’s fantastical claims about the Book of Mormon or Book of Abraham are now verifiable. Truth is simple and coherent while complexity and rationalization are the immediate result when seeking to reconcile Mormon claims with counter evidence found in the archeological and genetic record. There are many types of dishonesty including factual, intellectual, omission, misinterpretation, misleading marketing or public relations. Self-deception is the most insidious.



Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum ...

In my day, Apostle Boyd K. Packer demands that Mormon historians demonstrate and affirm that “the hand of the Lord [has been] in every hour and every moment of the church from its beginning till now.”¹⁷⁷ It is an unrepudiated command from Church leadership instructing those who know Mormon history to tell it dishonestly.

Likewise, “Ezra Taft Benson reported with obvious irritation the fact that LDS Seminary and Institute teachers ask him, ‘When and where can we begin to tell them our real story?’ and Elder Benson observes, ‘Inferred in that

¹⁷⁶ Alan W. Watts, The Wisdom of Insecurity, 1951, 24-5

¹⁷⁷ Boyd K. Packer, “The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect,” presented on 22 August 1981 to Seminary, Institute, and Brigham Young University religion instructors, and published in Brigham Young University Studies, 21

question is the accusation that the Church has not been telling the truth.”¹⁷⁸ The reality is that “Church leaders, teachers, and writers have not told the truth they knew ... but have offered to the Saints instead a mixture of platitudes, half-truths, omissions, and plausible denials”.¹⁷⁹

Every liar has his justification¹⁸⁰ and there are cases when lying is justified, for example were the Nazi Gestapo to ask if you are helping Jewish people escape. Such a lie is justified because the lives of the escapees are of greater value than honesty.

I believe that people and Churches ought to tell the truth, because the Church is enticing people to join, and to trust and to obey its leaders. The enticement results in members investing their lives in it.

However, one should always be aware that Church leaders see their obligation to truth differently, as when Church historian, Joseph Fielding Smith withholding evidence of Joseph Smith’s very different first vision account.

Apostle Oaks does had his own unfortunate episode when denying gay electroshock therapy was conducted at BYU on his watch. A conflict of interest exists where Oaks or Joseph Fielding Smith may feel justified in concealing the truth¹⁸¹ when conflicts arise between the corporate Church image vs the individual member. Church leaders wear two hats. The evidence is they will protect the corporate Church first, before you.

We know what he and his brethren’s highest values are, then we see how the conflict of values is decided between honesty vs image. Their [dishonesty](#)¹⁸² is self-justified when choosing between relative values such as an inspiring Church image vs attempting an objective history.

Their choice to put image first results in manipulating information rather than protecting the rights of church members and prospective converts who do not suspect the information is untrustworthy when relying on it to make their own life choices.

The ongoing self-deception by Church leaders is a continuation of the delusion they practice their whole lives leading up to their high Church appointments when testifying “*I Know*” instead of saying “*I Believe*” or “*I have Faith*.” An honest testimony says, I am acting on faith “*as if*” I know. The word changes from “*I Believe*” to “*I Know*” is intellectually dishonest. It is one more step towards habitual dishonesty.

However, the *Act of Being Right* (of knowing) is useful for controlling others which is Joseph Smith’s corrupt original purpose that modern day leaders are still copying. Control over the individual is seen in the Temple where Smith put the Law of *Obedience*, an Old Testament moral relic.

Oaks' perspective on lying aligns with his Institutional values emphasizing institutional integrity and the prioritization of the collective over individual interests:

¹⁷⁸ Ezra Taft Benson, *The Gospel Teacher and His Message* (Salt Lake City: The Church Educational System, 1976), 11-12.

¹⁷⁹ D. Michael Quinn, “On Being a Mormon Historian”, 1982

¹⁸⁰ TOTAS: Deconstructing Dishonesty - An Apostolic Rationalization for Lies. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQaKG0wrM0Q> Radio Free Mormon joins Jonathan Streeter for a look at a 1993 talk given by Apostle Dallin H Oaks on his talk, “[Gospel Lessons about Lying](#)” and explores situations in which this ethic on truth-telling has been applied in the Latter-days. Sunstone article covering the [Benson-Oaks controversy](#).

¹⁸¹ Deconstructing Dishonesty with (RFM) [Part 1](#) 03-26-2021, [Part 2](#) 04-02-2021, Elder Dallin Oaks BYU paper on [Lying](#), [Sunstone](#) Dec 1993, News: Disciplinary Actions Generate More Heat..

¹⁸² TOTAS: Deconstructing Dishonesty - An Apostolic Rationalization for Lies – Examination of [Oaks Justification](#)
Elder Oaks - Gospel Teaching on Lying. A Virtual Reading. Apostle Dallin H [Oaks to students and alumni](#) at BYU Law School.

1. **Institutional Loyalty:** He underscores the importance of upholding the reputation and trustworthiness of institutions, suggesting that individuals may need to subordinate personal interests for the greater good.
2. **Hierarchical Obedience:** Oaks emphasizes adherence to established authority and doctrine, reflecting his belief in the necessity of order and discipline within both legal and religious institutions.
3. **Moral Absolutism with Nuance:** While advocating for absolute moral standards, he allows for exceptions when higher moral duties are at stake. His approach emphasizes the importance of institutional integrity, professional responsibility, and moral discernment, advocating for a balance between unwavering honesty and the nuanced demands of ethical dilemmas.

Lawyers like Brother Oaks know lying can be justified. We know from Brother Oak's entire life, and from what he says, and from the high office he is screened to fill, what are his highest values. It is to protect the Church even when it comes into conflict with respecting the member's individual right to Informed Consent.

Authoritarianism

In matters of religion, motive is not peripheral, it is central. Across the world's major faith traditions, authentic virtue is inseparable from the reason why a person chooses to act. A deed done out of love, compassion, or inner conviction is not the same as one done from fear, conformity, obedience, or compulsion.

Therefore, when religion becomes authoritarian—when it centers obedience to external authority over inward transformation, it risks corrupting the very moral fiber it aims to cultivate.

Religion dominated by authoritarian values like “worthiness interviews” required to attend the LDS Temple, conflicts with the nature of a loving, forgiving, non-putative God. The Temple Covenants like obedience, corrupt one's motives for action because virtuousness requires authentically, genuinely chosen voluntary acts of concern, love, and care.

Why Religion Should Reject Authoritarianism:

This assertion rests on a valid spiritual principle: **Motive is essential to virtue**. Since authoritarianism fosters obedience over love, fear over freedom, and hierarchy over personal moral growth, it:

- Corrupts motives,
- Degrades virtue,
- Distorts the divine,
- And produces false righteousness.

Therefore, **authoritarian values are fundamentally at odds with the inner moral freedom religion must cultivate**. True spiritual life demands **freely chosen virtue** rooted in love, not in authoritarian coercion.

The Religious Primacy of Motive

Most religious teachings uphold that the value of an action lies not only in what is done but why it is done. In Christianity, Jesus emphasized internal motive: “You have heard it said... but I say unto you,” expanding commandments to encompass thoughts and intentions. The Apostle Paul affirmed that even self-sacrificial deeds mean nothing if done without love (1 Corinthians 13:3). In Buddhism, moral worth is determined by right intention (*cetana*). Motive, in these views, is not just a psychological curiosity—it is the foundation of moral judgment.

How Authoritarianism Undermines Moral Integrity

Authoritarianism emphasizes obedience, hierarchy, and deference to external authority. These values conflict with the religious call to freely chosen virtue. The authoritarian personality structure undermines virtue in at least three key ways:

1. **Externalized Morality:** Obedience is elevated above understanding. The individual follows rules not because they are right, but because they are commanded. Moral reasoning is outsourced.
2. **Suppression of Conscience:** Authoritarian systems discourage doubt, personal reflection, or questioning. The conscience is replaced by compliance.
3. **Mimicry of Virtue:** Outward righteousness may conceal inward resentment or pride. Such obedience lacks authenticity. As Søren Kierkegaard observed, morality driven by fear is aesthetic, not ethical—a semblance of goodness without its substance.

Theological Incompatibility with a Loving God

If God is fundamentally loving, forgiving, and patient, then an authoritarian religious system misrepresents the divine. Jesus condemned religious leaders not for lawlessness, but for their legalism and lack of mercy. The Parable of the Prodigal Son teaches that return to God is based on relationship, not rule-keeping. The God of compassion calls people to love, not fear.

Why Religion Must Resist Authoritarianism

Religion ought to cultivate free, morally awake individuals. Authoritarianism fosters obedience over love, fear over inner conviction, and hierarchy over equality before the divine. This distorts the image of God and produces shallow imitations of virtue.

When motive is the core of moral life, religion must be concerned not just with what we do, but why we do it. And since authoritarian systems are built on improper motives—fear, duty, blind loyalty—they cannot serve as valid vessels of spiritual truth.

Conclusion: Authoritarianism is not just a poor fit for religion, it is a fundamental contradiction. True virtue arises from freedom, and true religion must call people to love, not merely to obey.

Rejecting the Authoritarian Self

When a Church becomes authoritarian—when it centers obedience to external authority over inward transformation—it risks corrupting the very moral fiber it aims to cultivate.

Authoritarian religion cannot survive without authoritarian people. While institutions may preach obedience, it is individuals who internalize and enforce that obedience upon themselves and others—sometimes unconsciously. Studies suggest that roughly 30% of the population across cultures are predisposed to seek strong authority figures, and many of these individuals bring this preference into their religious lives. But this tendency is not harmless. When church members trade away their moral responsibility for the comfort of certainty and hierarchy, they become co-creators of an authoritarian system. Their compliance gives power to leaders who reward loyalty over love and uniformity over [spiritual integrity](#).

The Danger of Unquestioned Internalization

What makes individual authoritarianism especially dangerous is that it often disguises itself as righteousness. Members may come to believe that judgmental attitudes, rigid rule-keeping, or distrust of difference are

“spiritual” traits. In reality, these are psychological defenses, ways to avoid uncertainty, vulnerability, and personal accountability. People convert to authoritarianism not through reflection but through fear, habit, and social pressure. Over time, they may lose the ability to distinguish between true spiritual conviction and mere conformity. Yet religious virtue, if it is to mean anything, must come from free and honest engagement with conscience, not reflexive submission to dogma or peer expectations.

A Moral Call to Individual Responsibility

No church doctrine, no leader, and no tradition can substitute for your responsibility to be morally awake. If your faith asks you to silence compassion, suppress questions, or judge others in the name of “obedience,” then something has gone wrong. Spiritual life begins with the courage to think, to feel, to love—and to resist becoming an [agent of coercion](#) (00:49)¹⁸³. Just as authoritarian churches must be challenged, so too must the authoritarian tendencies within ourselves. Let us not perpetuate harm by becoming instruments of unexamined authority. Let us instead be the kind of people who elevate others, protect freedom of conscience, and model a faith that draws its strength not from control, but from compassion.

For example, Church leadership faces a difficult public relations task trying to be both honest and to construct a glorious Church image out of the awful historical record of its founders, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

Utah Supreme Court Justice and Law School professor, attorney Dallin H Oaks, understands that some matters of law will turn on the Justice's own values when weighing conflicting virtues or conflicting evils. The decision must rest on what in his mind is the greater good or the lesser evil.

For example, the religious Community’s wellbeing can conflict with the individual’s wellbeing. If Oaks as Jurist or as an Apostle holds values that are weighed towards the community or corporate best interest vs the individual's, then the court's decision can be very different.

Why then does the Church exist? Does it exist for the wellbeing of its members? Or does it exist to benefit itself as does a Corporation? One might think the answer is obvious, that as a Church its highest value puts the individual above the institution. Such values protect the individuals’ human rights, right to informed consent, rights of conscience, right of dissent from intrusion by religious institutions. In this case the term *religious freedom* means the rights and freedoms of the individual.

However, when Dallin H. Oaks uses the term *religious freedom* he means the opposite. He is overwhelmingly referring to the rights of religious institutions, especially the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as opposed to the rights of the individual believer. His framing of *religious freedom* emphasizes institutional

¹⁸³ For any young Mormon thinking about serving a Mormon mission:

4. [You always have a choice](#) [△](#). Run away from any human saying you don't have a choice or saying they know what God wants for you. It is for you to figure out what is healthiest for you.
5. When you were baptized you were far too young to make such a decision. Your brain doesn’t fully develop till age 25. Your baptism was likely not a choice. Instead, it was something you did to please those you loved.
6. You are not given all the information you need. As a matter of informed consent, you should know that in 2022 many Mormon missionaries came home early due to depression, anxiety, and disbelief because they were not told the truth about the Church when they were growing up.

What would cause a faithful LDS young woman to question her belief after returning home early from her mission. [Leaving Early From My Mormon Mission](#) [△](#) - Brinley Jensen Pt. 2, [40% leaving Church](#) within six (6) months after mission. [△](#)

autonomy, freedom from government interference, and the ability of churches to enforce internal discipline and norms, even when that conflicts with individual freedoms.

Oaks is thought to represent the values of Church leadership. Evidence from Oaks' Writings and Speeches sees "*Religious Freedom*" as the right of religious institutions to:

- Define marriage according to doctrine
- Select leaders and employees who adhere to religious teachings
- Maintain doctrinal purity without legal repercussions
- Individual constitutional rights do NOT apply to individual rights within the LDS institution.

Oaks does not advocate for individuals' rights within the Church to dissent or to exercise personal autonomy that contradicts official teachings.

Oaks' legal background and Church leadership roles incline him to view order, hierarchy, and authority as necessary for protecting religion itself. In his view:

- Churches need **strong internal governance** to survive societal change.
- If **individual rights** within churches are elevated too far, religion will erode from within.
- **Church Employment Cases:** Oaks supports the idea that religious organizations should be exempt from anti-discrimination laws when hiring or firing based on belief or conduct.
- **Public Dissent:** Oaks has stated publicly that public criticism of Church leaders constitutes apostasy, even when sincere, and even if True.
- **Institutional Loyalty:** Oaks teaches that members should obey Church leaders even when they disagree, because unity and authority preserve religion.

Dallin H. Oaks has a distinguished career both as a Utah Supreme Court Justice (1980–1984) and later as an influential Apostle of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In both roles, his decisions and teachings reflect a consistent preference to prioritize institutional order, community well-being, and hierarchical authority over individual autonomy or conscience, when the two come into conflict.



Theologians of the Second Vatican Council *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) declare with greater wisdom than Oaks (the lawyer):

“No power shall either command obedience or prohibit criticism \triangle because injury is done to the human person and to the purpose established by God when denying the free exercise of religion. The dignity of the human person demands external expression of one’s internal acts of religion. Authenticity requires that one is the author of one’s own life.”

To authoritarians like Apostle Oaks who participate in the “Apostolic Oath”, Church interest supersedes the individual’s best interest or rights. Therefore, manipulating or hiding information, or forbidding public criticism is justified in his authoritarian eyes. Your right to individual informed consent is subordinate. Or the innate human rights of gay church members protected by Federal or State law is subordinate to Church Law. Beware, because when Oaks speaks of religious freedom, he does not mean your individual freedom, he means the Church’s freedom to control its members!¹⁸⁴ For example, the Temple Law of Obedience.

¹⁸⁴ There are many forms of dishonesty including silence or half-truths. Whether its purpose is to enhance obedience to their leadership, or to produce one kind of testimony, or to construct a “public relations” image supporting the flow of convert baptisms and tithing, the deceit produces a loss of trust. It is a lie that reveals an intent to manipulate the faith of the membership rather than to trust the individual’s right to an informed choice.

For example, when Oaks travels to the University of Virginia Law School to a conference on Religious Freedom, he is not advocating for your individual rights to religious freedom. He is advocating for the opposite. He is arguing that the Church must be freed from national laws protecting fair treatment of gay BYU students. He is subordinating the meaning of individual Religious Freedom.



To authoritarian leaders like Oaks represent, value conflicts quickly arise between the Church as a community or the rights of the individual. Despite that the Churches confused reason to exist is to serve and to benefit its members, Oaks and his brethren's allegiance is to the institutional Church, not you. His value system justifies reversing the meaning of religious rights to mean institutional rights not your rights. Having swallowed the con artist (Joseph Smith) Temple Covenants means to the Brethren that you [surrender your judgement](#) to them, you obey them, or at minimum be silent. You may not freely speak or advocate for your conscience anymore.

To the brethren, I think this reversal of rights putting community rights above individual rights is how they justify their dishonesty to themselves. The Brethren wrongly think their own self-deception or testimony is for the greater good. The end justifies the means. However, for me, discovering their dishonesty re-counted in this Statement is a deep insult, forever discrediting them once understanding the depth of their corporate delusion.

The Gospel Topics Essays show the Brethren are acting like a board of directors of a corporation preserving their assets while continuing to push the scam Joseph Smith launched.

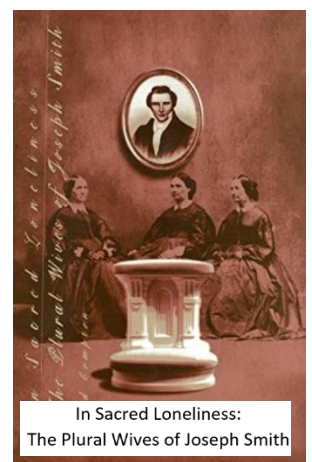
Ironically, the realization *is liberating because I had felt so compelled by Church truth claims*. Seeing the willful intentional deceptive act played by the Brethren, is the **first** of three reasons ([here](#)) that broke the Church's controlling grip and opened everything for re-examination, especially the fanatical importance put on having a Testimony.

Legacy of Unconscious Shame [LDS Essay on Polygamy/Polyandry in Kirtland and Nauvoo \(Annotated\)](#)



"Apart from purposeful misrepresentation, there is also the practice, both past and in my day of suppressing historical materials or, if not suppressing them, of discouraging their discovery. ... Every scholar with whom I am acquainted agrees that there is yet official Church reticence when it comes to using certain records, diaries, and other materials in the church's archives and in the First Presidency's possession relating to polygamy."¹⁸⁵

"This 'reticence' has manifested itself publicly by the commencement in January 1998 of a two-year curriculum drawn from Brigham Young's writings used jointly by Relief Societies and priesthood quorums in which only Brigham Young's first two (and therefore monogamous) marriages are mentioned, in which the lesson entitled 'Understanding the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage' nowhere mentions



¹⁸⁵ B. Carmon Hardy, "[Truth and Mistruth in Mormon History](#)", [Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance](#), Volume 3 1997, 279
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polygamy, and in which his own references to ‘wives’ have been edited to ‘[wife]’. And this, I am saying, is a kind of deception, a skewing of the Mormon past...”¹⁸⁶

“Fawn Brodie asked the pointed question, How was it that the ‘overwhelming majority of Mormons’ could ‘so soon forget the savage persecution of their fathers and grandfathers’ and ‘ignore the famous marriage law which was so long a fundamental tenant of their theology...’ She answers her own question by attributing the current Mormon position to ‘a legacy of unconscious shame.’ Mormons, moreover, like ‘other middle-class Americans ... longed for respectability.’ ... Brodie continued, ‘Mormon historians are now not only anxious to forget the past, but actively suppress the activities of would-be researchers in Mormon archives. Thus, the magnificent immoderation with which Joseph Smith embraced polygamy has been forgotten’ along with his other ‘human qualities.’ What remains is a Joseph Smith who is ‘a kind of deity, a holy figure.’”¹⁸⁷

Plural marriage did not stop easily after more than 45 years of practicing the ‘principle’ as essential to celestial exaltation. With a reward for his capture, polygamous church president, John Taylor, died in hiding on the Mormon underground. Under federal pressure the ‘manifesto’ of 1890 was issued. However, contrary to their promise and Official Declaration of the Church President¹⁸⁸, the highest church leaders continued to authorize hundreds of post manifesto polygamous marriages for another 14 years.¹⁸⁹ Apostle John W. Taylor, Apostle Brigham Young, Jr, Apostle Marriner W. Merrill, Apostle Abraham Owen Woodruff, Apostle Matthias F. Cowley, and others took plural wives after the manifesto. Yet, Brigham Young, Jr. wrote in *Harpers* “that the Woodruff Manifesto was binding on members of the church everywhere in the world, that the promises associated with it had been ‘scrupulously kept, ...’”¹⁹⁰

Plural Marriage

I was taught wrongly in Aaronic Priesthood by an educated man from North Carolina State College that Joseph Smith did not “practice” polygamy because of his wife’s objection. “I have identified thirty-three well-documented wives of Joseph Smith which some may regard as an overly conservative numbering ... Historians Fawn Brodie, D. Michael Quinn, and George D. Smith list forty-eight, forty-six, and forty-three, respectively. ... Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson’s 1887 list ... twenty-seven wives based on interviews and affidavits, ...”¹⁹¹



William Law, former member of the First Presidency and a publisher of the *Expositor*.

“Towards the end of Smith’s life, knowledge of his secret marriages began to leak out. William Law, Smith’s second counselor in the church’s First Presidency and an ardent polygamy foe, filed suit against the church leader for living ‘in an open state of adultery’ with 19-year-old Maria Lawrence. In a speech a month before his death, Smith responded by flatly denying polygamy, which was illegal under federal law. ‘What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can [only find one](#),’ he said.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 279 - 80

¹⁸⁷ Newell G. Bringhurst, contributor, *Differing Visions*, 1994, 290

¹⁸⁸ Wilford Woodruff, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 1959 Edition, 256-7

¹⁸⁹ B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 1992, Appendix II

¹⁹⁰ Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 208

¹⁹¹ Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, 1997, 1

¹⁹² Vern Anderson, “Salt Lake Tribune”, Dec 13, 1997, Religion C-2; Compton, *Sacred Loneliness*, 476

Smith's secrecy was also a deceit of his wife, Emma Hale Smith. As Nauvoo Relief Society president, "Emma Smith was a determined opponent of her husband's secret extra monogamous unions, and she used the Relief Society to squelch rumors of polygamy. Evidently, she had heard a report that Agnes [Coolbrith] had married Joseph [*she did*], so ... she announced that a Clarissa Marvel 'was accused of [telling] scandalous falsehoods on the character of Prest. Joseph Smith ... So Sarah Cleveland, second counselor to Emma, moved that Elizabeth Durfee and Elizabeth Allred investigate ... This action borders on the comic since both Cleveland and Durfee were probably already plural wives of Smith.'"¹⁹³

"...What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers."

(History of the Church, vol 6, p. 411)

Gretchen Day¹⁹⁴, Latter-day Saint mother of eight (8) children [said](#) [☐](#), " ... if a man professing to be a prophet came to my door and told me that an angel with a drawn sword told him he had to marry my 14 year old daughter and if she didn't, she and our family would not be saved, I'd say... 'Get the hell off my porch and call the police.' ... The fact that even in the [lds.org](#) essays ... considers polygamy in Josephs' time a commandment from God using this story was laughable."

According to accounts of his methods, he threatened with eternal damnation underage girls, married women, unmarried female orphans entrusted to his care, her total obedience to him becomes her only hope of true salvation, which consist of her becoming a priestess and a queen to him, her God. This female to male power arrangement, first used by Smith, survived in the Mormon Temple ceremony up to year 2018 where the new husband is no longer intermediary between women and God passing through the Temple veil into the Celestial room.

Undoubtably, Joseph Smith was sexually attractive to women. He was handsome, physically fit, charismatic, supremely self-confident, a high-ranking male. Smith used religion, his rank as Church president to criminally seduce women by placing himself between them and their God.

"The first person fooled by a con artist is himself. As Smith's successes mounted to near 40 conquests, he shared with male confidants in church leadership how easy sexual liaisons can be, redefined as "the New and Everlasting Covenant," by putting religious belief to work on his trusting, believing, compliant, female followers.

Deceit of Emma Smith, Emily and Eliza Partridge

Typically, Smith's proposals to women would say that the Lord had commanded him to marry them, that the Lord had already given them to him, it was sacrilegious to doubt, and that his proposal must be kept completely secret. It was the woman's duty to comply with the fact that she was already Joseph's possession.¹⁹⁵ In the example of Emily Partridge, "Joseph, thirty-seven, married this frightened, fatherless nineteen-year-old, whom he had not allowed to consult even her mother or her older sister. ... Four days later Eliza [Partridge] was married to Joseph. ...neither Emily or Eliza knew that the other had been married or that they now shared a common husband."¹⁹⁶ Two months later Joseph convinced Emma to allow him to take other wives, but she agreed only on condition

¹⁹³ Compton, [Sacred Loneliness](#), 155

¹⁹⁴ Gretchen Day, Feb 3, 2021, [Mormon Stories 1392](#): The Faith Journey of an Ultra-Orthodox, Utah County Mormon

¹⁹⁵ Compton, [Sacred Loneliness](#), 407

¹⁹⁶ Compton, [Sacred Loneliness](#), 408,9

that she could select them. He consented and to his surprise she picked Emily and Eliza. Accordingly, on May 11, 1843 the Partridge sisters were married to Joseph a second time, this time with Emma's knowledge and consent.

Stepping into the role of a moral critic and drawing from documented historical sources such as *In Sacred Loneliness* by Todd Compton, one must confront Joseph Smith's conduct in the Emily and Eliza Partridge episode as deeply troubling, marked by layers of **deceit, manipulation, and exploitation of power**. Following is a critique focusing on ethical concerns related to *coercion, secrecy, dishonesty, and abuse of trust*:



1. Manipulation Through Divine Authority

Joseph Smith's proposals followed a disturbing script: the woman was told that *God had already given her to him*, that *resistance would be sacrilegious*, and that the proposal must remain absolutely *secret*. This is a textbook example of **spiritual coercion**. To invoke divine command as a means of pressuring young women, particularly those in vulnerable positions such as being fatherless, like Emily Partridge, is not only unethical, it borders on **emotional and spiritual abuse**.

The power imbalance here is immense: Smith was the prophet, the founder of the religion, and seen as the mouthpiece of God. For a young woman raised in a culture of obedience and deference to prophetic authority, "consent" under such conditions is **not freely given**, it is extracted under duress. Ethical relationships require honesty and mutual agency, not divine ultimatums.

2. Deception Toward His Legal Wife, Emma Smith

Joseph Smith's behavior toward Emma Smith reflects not just dishonesty but calculated **betrayal of marital trust**. Prior to Emma's reluctant concession to plural marriage, Smith had already secretly married multiple women, including Emily and Eliza. By orchestrating a second "marriage" to the Partridge sisters under Emma's assumption that it would be the first, Smith **deliberately misled** his wife.

This deceit reveals a man willing to manipulate even his closest companion to maintain a web of secrets. Emma's conditional acceptance, "only if I can choose the wives" was violated in spirit and in fact. Rather than respecting her autonomy, Joseph exploited it to **retroactively cover up prior transgressions**.

3. Exploitation of the Partridge Sisters' Trust

Emily and Eliza Partridge were young, dependent, and trusted members of the Smith household. Their presence under Joseph's roof created a relationship of **custodial trust**, akin to a father-figure or guardian. To then enter into secret marriages with them, while ensuring that neither sister knew of the other's union, reflects a profound **breach of integrity**.

This compartmentalization of truth, where even siblings were kept in the dark, speaks to a deliberate pattern of **control and isolation**. Had they known, might they have objected? The secrecy served not the women's spiritual welfare, but Smith's ability to maintain the illusion of propriety and avoid resistance. It is especially chilling that

the sisters were **remarried under false pretenses**, unknowingly being asked to participate in a performance designed to manipulate Emma.

4. The Illusion of Consent

A modern ethical lens reveals that **none of the parties had full information**, not Emma, not Emily, not Eliza. Without informed consent, there can be no moral legitimacy to the marriages. The power Joseph Smith wielded, spiritual, social, and domestic rendered these unions morally compromised. To say these women “consented” is to ignore the environment of **doctrinal fear, dependency, and manipulation**.

Conclusion

Joseph Smith’s behavior in the case of the Partridge sisters cannot be morally justified by appeals to religious necessity or prophetic calling. Instead, it reveals a **pattern of exploitation cloaked in spiritual language**, where young women were deprived of family counsel, subjected to secrecy, and manipulated into decisions that would shape their lives under false pretenses. Meanwhile, his legal wife was betrayed, misled, and used to launder the appearance of legitimacy onto prior violations of trust. Such actions are not merely controversial, they are **profoundly unethical**, even by the standards of Smith’s own time, and especially so by ours.

Hiding from Emma: Rendezvous with Sarah Ann Whitney

In addition to 19-year-old Nancy Rigdon’s letter¹⁹⁷, another particularly interesting letter is preserved in Joseph’s own handwriting. On Aug 18, 1842, while in hiding to avoid extradition for the attempted murder of Missouri Governor Boggs, Smith penned a hand-written letter to Newel and Elizabeth Whitney asking them to visit with their 17-year-old daughter Sarah Ann Whitney, whom he had secretly married on July 27 without his wife Emma’s knowledge. He writes:

‘If you three would come and see me in this my lonely retreat, it would afford me great relief...do love me, now is the time to afford me succor, in the days of exile.’ Joseph instructed that ‘The only thing to be careful of...is to find out when Emma comes... (because) it cannot be safe.’ He suggested that the reason for their visit would be to ‘git the fullness of my blessings sealed upon our heads,’ and this cannot refer to the parents’ sealing, which had already been performed just days prior. Joseph further instructed them to ‘burn this letter as soon as you read it,’ and later to keep the marriage secret from their son, whom he feared could cause “serious trouble.”¹⁹⁸



Sarah did not burn the letter. In March 1843, Smith took additional steps to solidify the secret arrangement, providing Sarah a hand-written blessing assuring the salvation of her extended family, provided that she remains in the *Everlasting Covenant*, a term used to describe the Church’s practice of polygamy, as sanctioned by Joseph

¹⁹⁷ [The Happiness Letter](#) [△](#) to Nancy Rigdon

¹⁹⁸ Letter to Newel K., Elizabeth Ann Smith, and Sarah Ann Whitney, 18 August 1842, [Joseph Smith Papers](#)
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Smith. This episode was one of several instances connecting a young daughter's hand in marriage to prompt sealings, blessings and/or eternal salvation for the entire extended family.¹⁹⁹

By 1842, Smith had already taken numerous wives, in various suspicious arrangements, from young women living in his house as servants to young daughters of his acquaintances, the widow of his younger brother, even the wives of some of his closest associates, some of whom he had sent away on missions

Leveraging his position of power over those who believed him to be not only a friend, but a prophet of God does not paint Smith's standards or morals in a positive light. Smith's behavior is unjustified and is a measure of his depravity.²⁰⁰

Marrying Wealthy Orphans, the Inheritance of Maria and Sarah Lawrence

Edward Lawrence, a wealthy Latter-day Saint, died in 1839, leaving minor children: Maria, Sarah, and James Lawrence. Maria (b. 1823) and Sarah Lawrence (b. 1826) were underage at the time Smith became their legal guardian in 1841. Smith secretly married both girls in 1843, clearly a serious ethical conflict of interest in his dual role as both guardian and husband, giving Smith power over both their persons and [their inheritance](#) (2:07)²⁰¹. William Law objected strenuously to this.

In later affidavits and publications (notably in the Nauvoo Expositor, 1844), Law accused Smith of abusing his position as guardian to marry the Lawrence girls and control their property. He believed Smith had engaged in coercive, possibly criminal behavior, and used doctrinal pretexts (e.g., plural marriage as revelation) to justify it. William Law recounts:

"Soon after my arrival in Nauvoo the two Lawrence girls came to the holy city, two very young girls, 15 to 17 years of age. They had been converted in Canada, were orphans and worth about \$8000 in English gold. Joseph got to be appointed their guardian, probably with the help of Dr. Bennett. He naturally put the gold in his pocket and had the girls sealed to him. ... After Joseph's death, A. W. Babbitt became guardian of the two girls. He asked Emma for a settlement about the \$8000. Emma said she had nothing to do with her husband's debts. Now Babbitt asked for the books and she gave them to him. Babbitt found that Joseph had counted an expense of about \$3000 for board and clothing of the girls. Now Babbitt wanted the \$5000 that was to be paid Babbitt, who was a straight, good, honest, sincere man,



¹⁹⁹ Richard Bushman, [Rough Stone Rolling](#), P. 473, [The Whitney letter](#).

Mormons still believe in polygamy, even if they tell you they don't. Example: Mormon Prophet Russel Nelson. [Alyssa Grenfell](#) [△](#)

Maybe Mormons don't practice polygamy, but it is still in their scriptures. [Alyssa Grenfell](#) [△](#)

²⁰⁰ <https://www.mormonstories.org/truth-claims/joseph-smith/> [△](#)

²⁰¹ [Episode 71](#): Brigham's Reign of Power! (14:58) [△](#) (2:07) An Ex-Mormon Informant

*set about to find out property to pay the \$5000 with. **He could find none.***”

A repeated mode of conquest was to bring girls or women to live in his home giving him as a married man easy access to his targets, isolating them from their family, assert his priesthood authority, threaten their eternal wellbeing, put them under time pressure to decide. Here is a list of Girls/Women living in Smith's Household that he seduced.

Year	Woman/Girl	Age	Context
1833–1835	Fanny Alger	16-17	Live-in servant in Smith home (Kirtland). Affair discovered.
Early 1842	Eliza R. Snow	37	Boarding in Nauvoo Mansion House. Secretly sealed.
Mid 1842	Emily Partridge	19	Lived with Smiths. Secretly married to Joseph.
Mid 1842	Eliza Maria Partridge	22	Sister to Emily, also living with Smiths. Secret marriage.
Mid–Late 1842	Sarah Ann Whitney	17	Frequent guest at Smith home. Secret sealing arranged.
1842–1843	Lucy Walker	16	Orphaned. Joseph becomes guardian. Lived with Smiths. Married after pressure.
1842–1843	Maria Lawrence	17	Joseph becomes legal guardian. Lives with Smiths. Secret marriage.
1842–1843	Sarah Lawrence	15–16	Sister to Maria. Also, under guardianship and secretly married.
1843	Melissa Lott	19	Lived with Smith family. Later admitted full marital relationship.
1843–1844	Nancy Winchester	~ 14–15	Less clear; family very close to Smith.

Marriage to Orphaned Lucy Walker (16)

Consider the example of orphaned 16-year-old Lucy Walker, seventh (7th) of 10 children whose mother had died Jan 1842. Smith’s solution was to send Lucy’s father on a mission and take Lucy and three (3) others into his home.

In 1841, the Walker family moved to Nauvoo, Illinois from Vermont. Tragedy struck when Lucy’s mother, Lydia Walker, died in January 1842. Smith approached Lucy’s father, John Walker, and offered to take in several of his children, including Lucy, to raise them in his household. Smith portrayed it as an act of charity and community support. John Walker agreed, possibly feeling overwhelmed with a large family and the loss of his wife. Thus, Lucy, along with some of her siblings, moved into Joseph Smith’s home sometime in early 1842. Lucy was about 15–16 years old. She lived alongside Joseph and Emma Smith’s family and was treated as part of the household. Meanwhile, Smith was secretly practicing and expanding plural marriage, although publicly denying it.



In 1842 or 1843, when Lucy was about 16–17 years old, Smith secretly approached her and proposed marriage, as a plural wife. Lucy was horrified and resisted. In her later affidavit, she recalled that he said:

‘God Almighty has commanded me to take another wife, and you are the woman.’

My astonishment knew no bounds. This announcement was indeed a thunderbolt to me. He asked me if I believed him to be a Prophet of God. ‘Most assuredly I do,’ I replied. He fully explained to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage. He told me that this principle was again to be established in the earth; that the curse which had been pronounced upon the women must be removed; that the women must again

take their place as in Sarah's day, and that Christ would come and reign in the earth, and that it was for me to obey the law or receive a condemnation.

He said, 'I will give you until tomorrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message, the gate will be closed forever against you.'

Lucy had struggled deeply for months under pressure to consent. She finally relented after praying and supposedly felt God's approval.

Lucy's story is characteristic of trusting young women living under Joseph Smith's care or authority who married him. Her case is notable because she vividly described the emotional or spiritual pressure she experienced. It fits a pattern where Smith targeted vulnerable teenage girls, those whose parents were dead, absent, or under his influence.

Smith's coercive tactics using his well-practiced powers of domination, manipulation, and control to defeat the free will and choice of his sexual targets, affirm beyond any shadow of a doubt that he is a liar, a fraud, a lecher, and a wicked man who deceived many. His well-honed mechanisms of control and Obedience are ongoing in the Church he founded most notably in its Temples.

Joseph Smith's extra-marital sexual activity with teenage girls and other men's wives was not only immoral, but dangerous and ultimately deadly. A mob intended to castrate Smith in revenge for his sexual misbehavior (whatever it was) towards the 15–16-year-old younger sister of Eli Johnson (Nancy Marinda Johnson). Doctor Dennison was brought along to do the castration. Smith was badly beaten, tarred and feathered instead.²⁰²

Church history mischaracterizes the event by leaving out Smith's sexual provocation. It was not Satanically inspired persecution; it was a personal revenge action against Smith's sexual misconduct. The attackers were not all "anti-Mormons", many were insiders, or former insiders, deeply connected to the Johnson family and the local Mormon leadership. The intent was serious violence, they intended castration, not just humiliation.

In a second example of the risk Smith was taking, he proposed marriage to Jane Law behind her husband's back. Jane's rejection set in motion the chain of events leading to Smith's death. Jane Law was the wife of William Law, who was a counselor in the First Presidency, one of Joseph Smith's closest leadership associates in Nauvoo. When Jane Law rejected Smith, she was reportedly shocked, offended, and outraged. Afterward, she told her husband. He was devastated and furious.

After Jane's rejection, Joseph Smith tried to publicly shame Jane Law into silence by slandering her like he had done to others who rejected him. He accused Jane of adultery; a common smear Joseph used against women who resisted or exposed him. Jane and William Law stood firm, however, and refused to back down.

Jane Law stood up to Joseph Smith at great personal cost. Understanding Jane's story shatters the myth that Smith was only persecuted by "evil outsiders." Smith's closest associates, like William and Jane Law, turned against him because of Smith's personal immorality, not because they were "wicked."

Only one issue of the Nauvoo Expositor was published (June 7, 1844) before Joseph Smith unlawfully ordered the printing press to be destroyed. It accused Smith of polygamy and misuse of spiritual authority for sexual

²⁰² D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 635–636, note 98.

purposes. After Smith ordered the destruction of the press, he was arrested, and within three weeks, he was killed at Carthage Jail.

Surrounding the beginning and ending of polygamy was widespread dishonesty by church leaders and members alike that set a tradition of “lying for God” that I believe endures today.

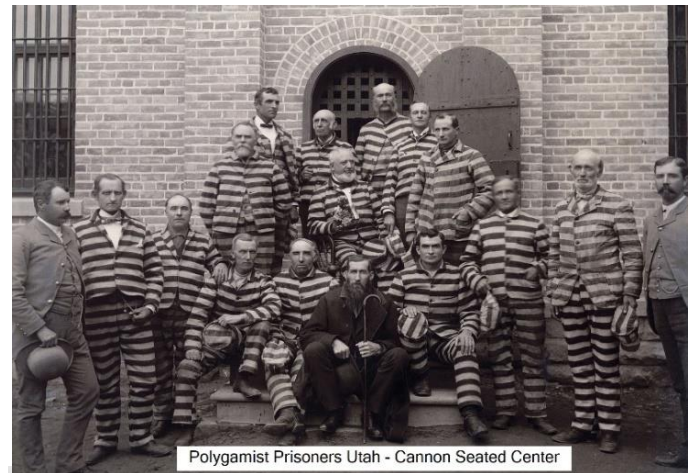
Yet however grand the principle in which the service of mistruth is placed, it becomes an example to others, including young people. “One of the sadder aspects of Mormon prevarication during the period of the anti-polygamy crusade and after was that children were told to lie to protect the Church and their parents.

This pattern so alarmed Charles W. Penrose, a future counselor in the First Presidency, that in 1887 he told President John Taylor that he feared for Mormonism’s future. ‘The endless subterfuges and prevarication’s which our present conditions impose,’ he said, ‘threaten to make our rising generation a race of deceivers’”.²⁰³

His prediction affirms the biblical proverb that the sins of the parents are visited upon the heads of the children for seven generations. These children are our Mormon great grandparents accustomed to placing the image of the church ahead of honesty²⁰⁴.

Commentary: LDS Church finally publishes a polygamy revelation it insisted for years didn’t exist

Then-President John Taylor wrote that the faith could never give up plural marriage, and then his immediate successor, Wilford Woodruff, did just that.



\$800 REWARD!

JOHN TAYLOR. **GEORGE Q. CANNON.**

To be Paid for the Arrest of John Taylor and George Q. Cannon.

The above Reward will be paid for the delivery to me, or for information that will lead to the arrest of

JOHN TAYLOR,
President of the Mormon Church, and

George Q. Cannon,
His Counselor; or

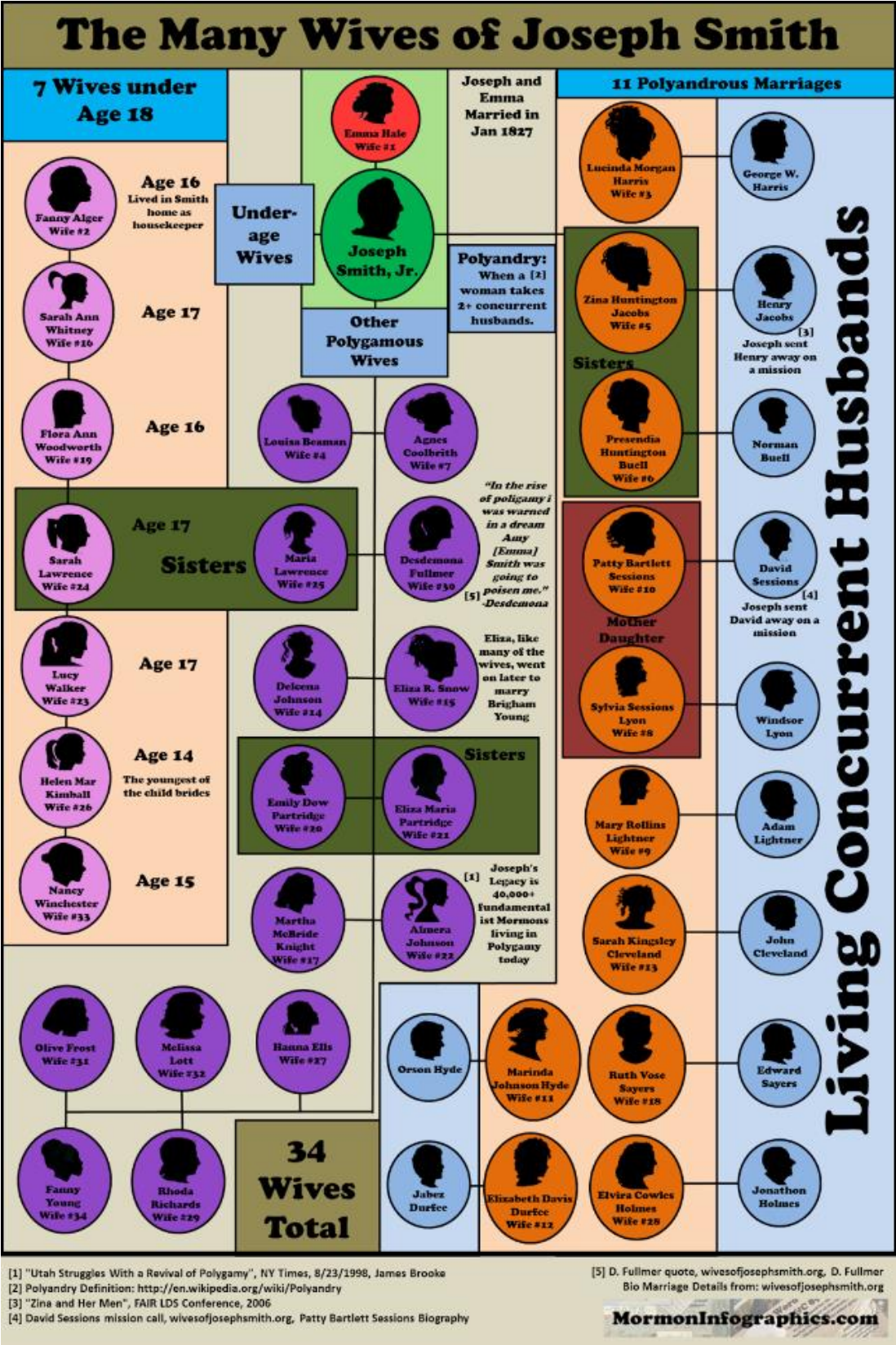
\$500 will be paid for Cannon alone, and \$300 for Taylor.

All Conferences or Letters kept strictly secret.

S. H. GILSON,
22 and 23 Wasatch Building, Salt Lake City.

²⁰³ Hardy, “Truth”, 280

²⁰⁴ [Salt Lake Tribune Commentary](#): [LDS Church finally publishes a polygamy revelation it insisted for years didn’t exist](#). June 17, 2025



Religious Culture of Violence and Obedience in Early Mormonism

From the Attempted Assassination of Governor Boggs to the Mountain Meadows Massacre

In the formative years of the Mormon Church, a distinctive religious culture developed, one characterized by intense loyalty, rigid obedience, institutional secrecy, and in certain circumstances, the sanctioning of extralegal violence. This culture found expression not only in the doctrine and practices of the faith, but in the personal behavior of its leaders and enforcers. Two violent episodes, separated by fifteen years, illustrate the depth and consequences of this phenomenon: the 1842 attempted assassination of former Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, and the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre in southern Utah.

The Attempt on Governor Boggs: Enforcers and Prophetic Threats

On May 6, 1842, Lilburn W. Boggs, former governor of Missouri, was shot and severely wounded in his home. Suspicion quickly turned to Joseph Smith, then living in Nauvoo, Illinois. Former LDS insider and excommunicated associate John C. Bennett accused Smith of having predicted Boggs's death by “violent hands” within a year and ordering the hit. Bennett named Orin Porter Rockwell, Smith’s loyal bodyguard, as the gunman. While no conclusive evidence linked Rockwell to the crime, he was arrested and jailed for nearly a year in Missouri before being released without conviction. His cryptic comment afterward—“I never shot at anybody. If I shoot, they get shot”—suggests both defiance and plausibility of guilt²⁰⁶.

Rockwell's reputation as a feared enforcer grew. He remained loyal to Joseph Smith and later to Brigham Young. Known for his fierce commitment to Church leaders, Rockwell was widely believed to have participated in other violent acts sanctioned—or at least tolerated—by Church authorities.

Wild Bill Hickman and the Confession to Justice Baskin

Another key figure in the tradition of LDS enforcers was William Adams "Wild Bill" Hickman, a notorious frontiersman who operated as a vigilante, lawman, and enforcer for Brigham Young during the 1850s. In his 1872 memoir, *Brigham's Destroying Angel*, Hickman confessed to participating in murders at the behest of Church leaders, stating bluntly: “Brigham Young is the murderer, not I. I did not do the killing from my own desire.”²⁰⁷

Later in life, Hickman privately confessed to Utah Supreme Court Justice R.N. Baskin that he was plagued by guilt over the killings and believed Brigham Young bore the moral responsibility for them. Baskin recorded this confession in his 1914 book *Reminiscences of Early Utah*, affirming that Hickman had killed more than a dozen men under religious pretense and feared divine judgment.²⁰⁸

Temple Oaths, Secrecy, and the Foundation of Obedient Violence

In 1842, Joseph Smith introduced the LDS temple endowment ceremony in Nauvoo. Early versions of the endowment included symbolic death penalties for revealing sacred knowledge, and created a culture of intense

²⁰⁶ John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), 275–280. See also: Rockwell’s reported statement after his release, in multiple secondary sources.

²⁰⁷ William A. Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel: Being the Life, Confession, and Startling Disclosures of the Notorious Bill Hickman* (New York: George A. Crofutt, 1872), 25–30.

²⁰⁸ R.N. Baskin, *Reminiscences of Early Utah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), 143–147.

secrecy and obedience. These oaths, though later removed from the ceremony, reinforced an institutional expectation of loyalty to Church leadership above all else.

Coupled with these were doctrines such as “blood atonement,” openly taught by Brigham Young in Utah, which held that certain sins were so grievous they could only be forgiven by the shedding of the sinner’s own blood. This doctrine was not merely theoretical; it became a spiritual rationale for extralegal executions, particularly against apostates or perceived enemies of the faith.

The Danites and Institutionalized Vigilantism

The origins of Mormon vigilantism can be traced to the formation of the Danites in Missouri in 1838—a secret society created to protect the Saints and enforce internal discipline. Though disbanded, the Danite legacy persisted in Utah through unofficial enforcers such as Rockwell and Hickman, and secret councils that authorized covert actions. These groups operated under oaths of silence and divine justification, echoing the structure of the earlier Danites.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre: Fulfillment of a Violent Culture

On September 11, 1857, a Mormon militia in southern Utah, aided by Paiute allies, slaughtered about 120 members of the Baker-Fancher emigrant party after falsely promising them safe passage. The massacre was the culmination of escalating rhetoric, secrecy, and a siege mentality fueled by the approach of U.S. federal troops (“Johnston’s Army”).

However, the massacre cannot be solely attributed to external threats. Local leaders such as Stake President William Dame, Isaac Haight and John D. Lee acted with confidence that their actions served Church interests. In Lee’s own words, the orders came from above, and the massacre was justified by perceived threats to Zion. Brigham Young’s role remains ambiguous; he may not have directly ordered the massacre but the Saints in Southern Utah believed it was in his character, he could have given the order. John D Lee said in his confession, “I have always believed, and still believe, that it was the will and command of Brigham Young that that company should be destroyed, with the exception of the small children.”²⁰⁹ By his teachings and lived example, Young created the violent culture in which such an atrocity could occur. He later shielded perpetrators from accountability.²¹⁰

Conclusion

A religious culture that sanctifies obedience, suppresses dissent, and ritualizes secrecy can easily evolve into one that tolerates or even endorses violence when perceived existential threats emerge. The attempted assassination of Governor Boggs and the Mountain Meadows Massacre both arose not as isolated acts, but from a system in which **religious loyalty superseded law**, and **violence could be seen as an instrument of divine justice**. Figures like Rockwell and Hickman were not merely hit men; they are products and instruments of a theological morality that prioritized survival, purity, judgement, retribution, and prophetic authority at any cost. Even when exposed

²⁰⁹ Mormonism Unveiled; or The Life and Confessions of John D. Lee (1877), p. 233

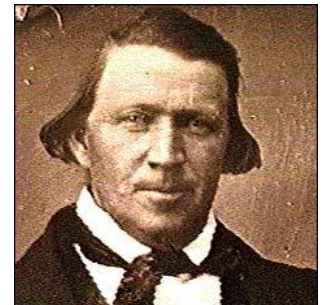
²¹⁰ Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950), 219–238. See also: John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Co., 1877).

by the horror of the massacre, LDS values of obedience to authority are still unrecognized by Temple goers for what the Covenants are. Pressure to obey and not to publicly question the will of the authorities, even when in conflict with our own conscience, is Satan's plan. This doctrine is Moral Abdication pressuring adherents to surrender personal moral responsibility and to obey Church leaders.

Mountain Meadows

Outside of the Oklahoma City bombing, the greatest terrorist act of American against American was planned and directed by the highest Mormon Church officers of Southern Utah in 1857 in which fifty-five loyal Mormons, and Indians organized by them, slaughtered 120 men, women, and children, the only ones spared being the youngest children. "Mountain Meadows could only be understood by realizing that it was the culmination of an attitude that had sponsored many lesser events of violence."²¹¹ The horror of the massacre effectively stopped further practice of 'blood atonement'."²¹²

While they admit his part in the affair, family members of John D. Lee resent that he bore alone the shame that should be shared by others, and that Mormon history named him as the only one responsible. The Stake Presidency and High Council at Cedar City were not prosecuted. John D. Lee was executed at the tragic site twenty years later in 1877. "Seven years after the execution of Lee ... Charles W. Penrose wrote the account which came to be the accepted story of the church, his whole purpose being to clear the name of Brigham Young from any implications of guilt."²¹³ However, Brigham Young and [Apostle] George A. Smith were the church authorities chiefly responsible for preaching the sermons and setting up the social conditions which made it possible. It is



Brigham Young

unknown whether Brigham Young ordered the massacre given the extent of Mormon prevarication. John D Lee thought Young had ordered it when he acted. However, it is well known Brigham Young was accessory after the fact, in that he knew what had happened, and how it happened. "Evidence of this is abundant and unmistakable, and from the most impeccable Mormon sources. ... Church leaders decided to sacrifice Lee only when they could see that it would be impossible to acquit him without assuming part of the responsibility themselves."²¹⁴

"Since that time a number of reputable Mormon scholars have begun research on the subject, only to be turned away from it ... Two of these men have said that they discontinued because they were 'counseled' with such vigor to leave it alone that they felt sure that to continue would cost them not only their positions in church schools, but their membership in the church itself. As late as 1929 ... another Utah writer introduced the subject of the massacre by paraphrasing the comment of B. H. Roberts that members of the church 'have been slow to admit all the facts of the case and unwilling to fix the responsibility for the crime upon those individuals of their own faith who shared in the participation of the tragedy,' ..."²¹⁵

²¹¹ Historian Barbara Brown Jones [interview](#) [△](#) by John Dehlin. She cowrote "[Vengeance is Mine](#)" with Richard Turley. Barbara puts down rumors about the Mountain Meadows Massacre and why it started and discusses who was to blame for it and who was not.

²¹² Samuel W. Taylor, [Rocky Mountain Empire](#), 1978, 27

²¹³ Juanita Brooks, [The Mountain Meadows Massacre](#), New Edition 1962, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, ISBN: 0-8061-0549-6, 216 -7

²¹⁴ Brooks, [Mountain](#), 216, 19

²¹⁵ Brooks, [Mountain](#), 216



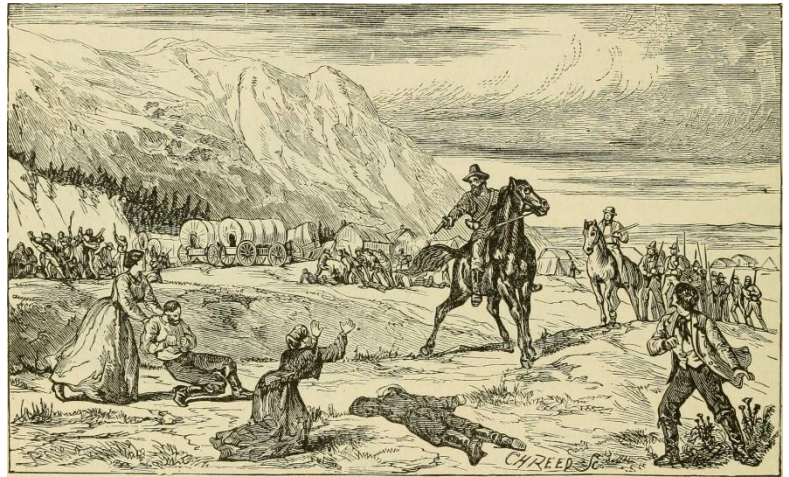
Joseph Fielding Smith

The story that I was taught in the 1950's and then myself taught as a missionary in the 1960's is presented in *Essentials in Church History*, by Joseph Fielding Smith. "In the 1945 edition, Smith devotes one chapter to the massacre, in which, without mentioning names, he can hardly find language strong enough or words vigorous enough to condemn the participants. ... it was the crime of an individual, the crime of a fanatic of the worst stamp. Yet in the collections of the historian's office of the Latter-day Saints church, records of which he is the custodian, there is ample evidence that this was definitely *not* the crime of a single individual, nor the responsibility of only one man. Even the most superficial research would show the utter ridiculousness of such a statement."²¹⁶

The Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 1992, continues the deception by omission, "pertinent information that could be embarrassing to the church is carefully omitted - as, for instance, ... local Southern Utah officials' involvement in planning the Mountain Meadows Massacre, ..." ²¹⁷

The deceit continued in ceremonies at Mountain Meadows on Sept 11, 1999 attended by descendants both of the slain emigrants and of local Mormons who did the killings. Church President Hinckley specified "No one can explain what happened in these meadows 142 years ago"

and "That which we have done here [dedicating the rebuilt monument] must never be construed as an acknowledgement ... of any complicity in the occurrences of that fateful and tragic day."²¹⁸ Whom should history hold responsible? "Well I would place blame on the local people," said Hinckley in a subsequent interview to the Salt Lake Tribune, Feb 23.



²¹⁹ In his speech the church leader did not explain the power of promised celestial rewards for obedience to the covenants and oaths of the Temple, particularly, the Law of Obedience and at that time, the covenant to *avenge the blood of the prophets* (Joseph Smith's). Given that the covenant of vengeance is no longer sacred by way of its removal from the Temple ceremony, the president needs no longer honor its accompanying oath of secrecy, thereby, removing his embarrassing necessity to feign prophetic ignorance about the power Temple covenants give church leaders.



Gordon B. Hinckley

²¹⁶ Brooks, *Mountain*, 217

²¹⁷ Sterling M. McMurrin, "Toward Intellectual Anarchy", *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 26 No 2, Summer 1993, 209 - 10

²¹⁸ John L. Hart, "'Let the Book of the Past Be Closed,'" *Church News*, 18 Sept. 1999, 3,8
as Quoted in "By Common Consent", *News Letter of the Mormon Alliance*, Vol. 5, No. 4, September 1999

²¹⁹ Writings of John D. Lee: Including His Autobiography, Eyewitness Accounts of That Important Event in Mormon History, the Mountain Meadows Mass Hardcover – Illustrated, 1 Jan. 2002, by Samuel Nyal Henrie (Editor)

Temple covenants empowered church leaders to command Obedience when guiding Priesthood holders into murdering 120 men, women, and children, unchecked by individual conscience.²²⁰

Hinckley's silence put responsibility on church members alone (and Indians who the Church falsely blamed) without the Church leadership accepting responsibility for its teachings, for the authoritarian rule of Brigham Young, for the mind-numbing emphasis on obedience. I think President Hinckley is loath to search for explanation because that search inevitably leads to a revolutionary criticism of Mormon authoritarian power, to which his predecessors, Church Educational System (CES) employees at BYU, and the Quorum of Twelve advising his presidency are committed to preserving.

John Doyle Lee lived a life of heroic proportions. He was a leader of uncommon energy and courage in a movement that helped shape the western United States. Brigham Young is reported to have said that Lee was the most competent frontiersman and settler that he had ever known. On a human scale, Lee was considered by most of those who knew him to be an intelligent, kind and even tender-hearted man who shared his food, shelter, knowledge and respect with everyone who needed it. He was a friend and teacher to the Indian tribes. He was a polygamist who married nineteen wives and fathered sixty-five children. But Lee's life ended in tragedy, as he took the blame for one of the most infamous atrocities of frontier history, the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857. Hounded into exile in the remote Grand Canyon and Navajo Country, he built and operated Lee's Ferry and Lee's Lonely Dell, now an historic monument. Eventually, he was arrested, imprisoned and brought to trial in federal courts twice, convicted, and executed by firing squad on the very site of the Massacre, on March 23, 1877.

Church historians know that between John D. Lee's conviction and his execution, Lee's defense attorney, W.W. Bishop, persuaded Lee to give an account in his own words. Mr. Bishop took the confession out of Utah to be published in a book and "Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1877, by Bryan, Brand & Co., in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington."²²¹ Lee's confession revealed that he was acting under the direction of the Stake President and High Council at Cedar City, Utah, near Mountain Meadows. Lee believed the Stake President and High Council acted at the direction of Brigham Young. No one above Lee was prosecuted. On the 150th anniversary Sept 11, 2007 at the Mountain Meadows site, Church Apostle Henry Eyring acknowledged for the first time that local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints *leaders*²²² directed the Massacre. He apologized to the Paiute Indian people whom the church has always blamed.

Most relevant today is to note that of fifty-five Mormons at the scene of the Massacre, only one reportedly had the strength of character to leave before the killing began²²³. John D. Lee's autobiographical account expresses his sense of conscience that preparations for the killing were dishonorable and wrong.²²⁴ Yet, Lee did not act on that conscience. Like in today's church, the excesses of Brigham Young and the power of the priesthood chain of command cannot be publicly challenged as a matter of conscience without threat of excommunication (or worse in those days²²⁵). Only obedience is tolerated.

²²⁰ Richard E Turley, sanitized the psychological and religious landscape in which the massacre occurred. In his two books about the Massacre. He [omitted the influence](#) of the Temple Oath of Vengeance, the Temple Law of Obedience, and the legacy of the Danites (who operated under oaths of secrecy and violent loyalty). Turley did so despite the fact that many massacre participants were endowed members, and John D. Lee himself was a known Danite

²²¹ [Mormonism Unveiled: Or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee](#), St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company. New York: W. H. Stelle & Co., 1877

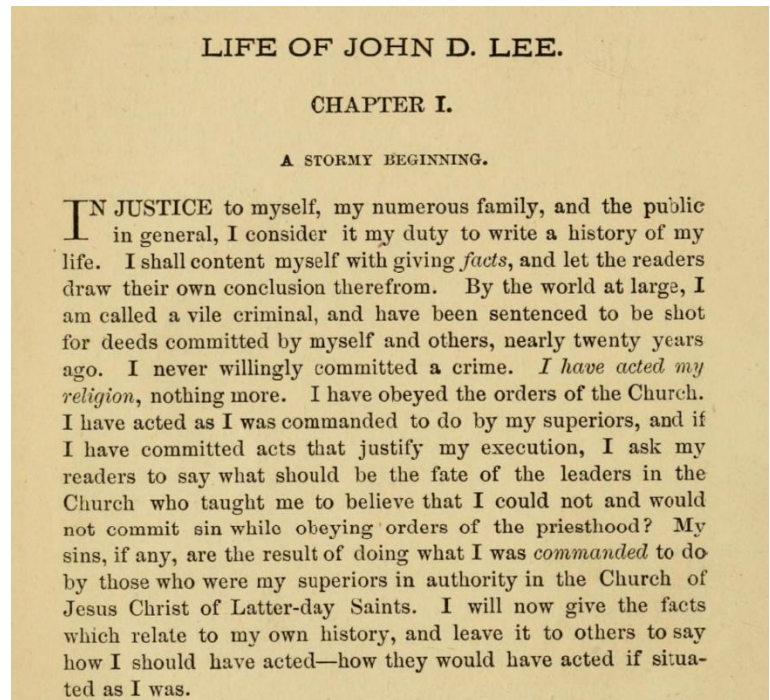
²²² First Presidency's Mountain Meadows Massacre anniversary [statement](#), Salt Lake Tribune, Sept 11, 2007

²²³ Brooks, [Mountain](#), 90

²²⁴ John D. Lee, [Mormonism Unveiled; or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop John D. Lee](#), 1877, 228-9, 233-5

²²⁵ J.H. Beadle, [Brigham's Destroying Angel: Life, Confession, and startling disclosures of the notorious Bill Hickman, the Danite Chief of Utah.](#), 1904

Church Temple Presidents and their superiors do not discuss publicly the former Temple covenant to avenge the blood of the prophets that existed at the time of the massacre. Neither do they discuss publicly the church Law of Obedience, both of which I think help to explain how the local Stake President, High Council, and Bishop (some holding concurrent militia and church offices) could organize fifty-five otherwise law-abiding church members to go against the Francher wagon train. Even the church history taught to me a hundred years afterward still reported the rumor of Missourians, murders, persecutors of the church²²⁶ as among the emigrants. However, the “crime of Obedience” at Mountain Meadows illustrates by extension to the extreme, the moral emptiness inherent in the church Law of Obedience that is still promised in the Temple by devout Mormons.



Why does this matter? If you're trying to understand why 55 otherwise ordinary Mormon men would commit one of the most horrifying massacres in American history — you'd want to understand the deep psychological and theological drivers behind their obedience and silence. However, all Mormon historians²²⁷ have covenanted to Secrecy, including Richard E Turley who in his two (2) recent books, sanitized why the massacre occurred by failing to disclose:

- Temple Covenants (Obedience, Sacrifice, Vengeance)
- Blood atonement. Parley P. Pratt's murder in Arkansas for stealing another man's wife.
- [Danite oaths](#)
- Secretive religious discipline

Notice in John D Lee's confession below, the absence of any reflection upon the immorality of the murder(s), which he replaces with the highest principles of the Temple, loyal Obedience and the Oath of Vengeance he was taught in the Temple and as a Danite:

“I have never willingly committed a crime. *I have acted my religion*, nothing more. I have obeyed the orders of the Church. I have acted as I was commanded to do by my superiors ... who taught me that I could not and would not commit sin while obeying the orders of the priesthood?”²²⁸

²²⁶ Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History, Deseret Book Co for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 19th Edition, 1964, 513

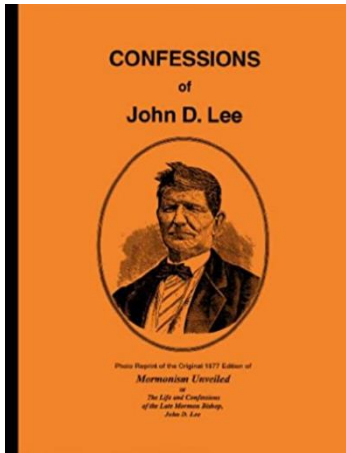
²²⁷ 2025-04-06-Meetup - [The Full Invitation with extended comments](#) , The ad hominem fallacy

²²⁸ [Mormonism Unveiled: Or the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee.](#) St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company. New York: W. H. Stelle & Co., 1877, Chapter 1, p 36

What are the implications about a religion that recommends distrusting one's own self or one's own conscience, but instead to trust and to rely solely on one's church and its leaders? This question has profound implications for any religious belief system.

If a religion teaches that you cannot trust your own conscience but must completely trust the Church or its Priesthood leadership, it sets up a circular logic:

- Your inner doubts are viewed as untrustworthy or even sinful.
- Your inner convictions are only valid if they align with church teachings.
- Therefore, the church becomes the only arbiter of truth, even over your own moral compass.



Slaves obey. It was Obedient church members, whose lives were conditioned by church teachings to follow their leaders, that disciplined fifty-five Mormon men to carry out the murder of men, women, and children at Mountain Meadows. “The real protection of members lies in their own sense of empowerment, in an individual sense of duty to God rather than to the institution, and in the primacy of individual conscience.”²²⁹

However, to the present ecclesiastical establishment, the above spiritual truth is a threatening transfer of power downward from church leadership to membership. Instead, the Church continues to pour energy into the current and quite successful efforts of indoctrinating the young with threatening messages to “Follow the Brethren”.

These calls to obedience and claims that “God will never permit him [the prophet] to lead us astray”²³⁰ are similar to those in Brigham Young’s time. Mountain Meadows is a horrific example of mistaken obedience to priesthood leaders. I believe instead that respect and deference to the individual conscience, above obedience to church authorities, is the lesson still omitted from the official church history of Mountain Meadows.

The Book of Abraham [LDS Essay on the Book of Abraham \(Annotated\)](#) [△](#)

I met a 50-year-old High Priest and Attorney on the tennis court who, after a discussion about Religion, said he wanted to become my Home Teacher. He did not even know the original “Book of Abraham” papyrus is found and returned to the church. One can only ask how it is he did not know? If as an active member such important information is not even brought into his awareness at church, is it any wonder “faithful history” advocates don’t want members exploring Mormon origins on the internet? What does the Attorney’s ignorance say about the integrity of Church Leaders who do know!

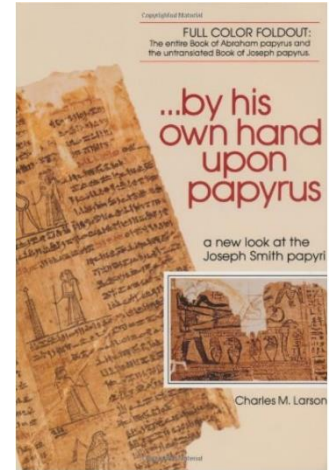
Joseph Smith says of the Book of Abraham, “THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM TRANSLATED FROM THE PAPYRUS, BY JOSEPH SMITH. A translation of some ancient Records, that have fallen into our hands from

²²⁹ Lavina Fielding Anderson, “The September Six”, Religion, Feminism, and Freedom of Conscience, 1994, 8

²³⁰ Harold B. Lee, “The place of the Living Prophet,” P 16; Living prophets for a living Church, Published for the use of college students in the church educational system, P 33

the catacombs of Egypt. -- The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.”²³¹

Remarkably, Joseph Smith’s Papyrus were presented to the Church by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, and announced on November 27, 1967. “The announcement mentioned ... an 1856 certificate of sale signed by Emma Smith Bidamon, Joseph Smith’s widow.”²³² The papyrus is carefully studied and translated. There is no argument that the papyrus does not contain ‘The Book of Abraham.’ “Instead, Joseph Smith used the Book of Breathings and considered it the writings of Abraham. The fact is that the papyrus which he used as the source of the Book of Abraham manuscript characters has nothing to do with Abraham. It is an Egyptian record which gives directions for wrapping up the Book of Breathings with the mummy. The papyrus roll that Joseph Smith used for his Book of Abraham was written for a man named Hor, a priest of Amon-Ra,²³³ who died about 100 B.C, 2000 years after Abraham.”²³⁴



Recovery of the papyrus sparked new studies of fac-simile No 1, No 2, and No 3 from the Book of Abraham. However, all the new activity over the fac-simile was old news. The fac-simile cuts from *The Pearl of Great Price* were presented to scholars in 1912 who wrote the same conclusion 60 years earlier:

“To sum up, then, these three fac-similes of Egyptian documents in the ‘Pearl of Great Price’ depict the most common objects in the mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith’s interpretation of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrates that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization. Not to repeat it too often, the point I wish to make is that Joseph Smith represents as portions of a unique revelation through Abraham things which were commonplaces and to be found by many thousands in the every-day life of the Egyptians. We orientlists could publish scores of these ‘fac-similes from the book of Abraham’ taken from other sources.

“For example, any visitor in a modern museum with an Egyptian collection can find for himself plenty of examples of the four jars with animal heads—the jars depicted under the couch in fac-simile number one. It should be noted further that the hieroglyphics in the two fac-similes from the ‘Book of Abraham’ (Nos. 2 and 3), though they belong to a very degenerate and debased age in Egyptian civilization, and have been much corrupted in copying, contain the usual explanatory inscriptions regularly found in such funerary documents.”²³⁵

JAMES H. BREASTED, Ph. D.,

²³¹ “The Book of Abraham,” *The Pearl of Great Price*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 1959 Edition, 29

²³² Stan Larson, *Quest for the Gold Plates*, 1996, ISBN 0-9634732-1-2, 85-6,

²³³ H. Michael Marquardt, “The Book of Abraham Papyrus Found”, 1975, 20

²³⁴ LDS Discussions, “Official LDS Essay on Translation and Historicity of the [Book of Abraham, Annotated](#)” Mormon Stories #1339: [Dr. Robert Ritner](#) - An Expert Egyptologist Translates the Book of Abraham Pt 1

²³⁵ Rt. Rev. F.S. Spalding, DD, *Joseph Smith Jr., As a Translator*, 1912, 26-7

Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago

“I return herewith, under separate cover, the ‘Pearl of Great Price.’ The ‘Book of Abraham,’ it is hardly necessary to say, is a pure fabrication. Cuts 1 and 3 are inaccurate copies of well-known scenes on funeral papyri, and cut 2 is a copy of one of the magical discs which in the late Egyptian period were placed under the heads of mummies. There were about forty of these latter known in museums and they are all very similar in character. Joseph Smith’s interpretation of these cuts is a farrago of nonsense from beginning to end. Egyptian characters can now be read almost as easily as Greek, and five minutes’ study in an Egyptian gallery of any museum should be enough to convince any educated man of the clumsiness of the imposture.”²³⁶

Dr Arthur C. Mace

Assistant Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Department of Egyptian Art.

LDS Church sanctioned “Gospel Topics” essay²³⁷, July 2014, concedes the following [undisputed facts](#):

1. Smith himself claimed that the papyri contain the writings of Abraham “by his own hand, upon papyrus.”
2. The papyri scrolls date to approximately 2,000 years after the time when Abraham lived.
3. The papyri scrolls have nothing to do with Abraham or the Book of Abraham (the scroll from which the Book of Abraham was “translated” is a standard Egyptian funerary document).
4. Smith’s translations of the Book of Abraham Facsimiles 1-3 are completely wrong.
5. Smith’s additions of drawings to the facsimiles are nonsense.

The recovery of the Joseph Smith papyrus is momentous because for the first time there is a tangible link to the source documents of Mormon scripture. Evidence of Smith’s incompetence and dishonesty has the same implication, that he is a con artist, whether he claims to be “translating” Abraham from papyrus or Nephi from gold plates.

The Book of Mormon [LDS Essay on the Book of Mormon: DNA Studies \(Annotated\)](#) [u](#)

One does not understand the context in which Smith claimed he dug the Golden Plates out of the ground without understanding that Joseph Smith conducted at least 18 treasure digs between 1822-1827. In 1826 Smith was put on trial as a “disorderly person and an imposter” for his treasure digs funded by Josiah Stowell. This case was brought by Stowell’s nephew, Peter [Bridgeman](#), after watching Joseph Smith’s methods in being the “seer” of the money digging party²³⁸. The more persuasive power he held; the clearer his ability to see buried treasure below ground. Treasure digging was a disreputable, well-known scam described by Benjamin Franklin²³⁹ long before Joseph Smith practiced it.

²³⁶ Ibid, 27

²³⁷ [LDS Discussions](#), "Official LDS Essay on Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham, **Annotated**"

²³⁸ “Book of Mormon: Joseph Smith and [Treasure Digging](#)”

²³⁹ Benjamin Franklin, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin 1: 134–39

Treasure digging for hire was such a scam, so common in Smith's Day that legislatures, governors passed laws prohibiting the superstitious fraud. Smith was arraigned March 20, 1826, before [Judge Neely](#) in Bainbridge, New York. Smith testified on his own behalf, insisting in his defense that he used a "seer" stone to help others look for "hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth," despite never once having found any.

Treasure digging for hire, often referred to as "money digging," was not explicitly illegal in New York when Joseph Smith was doing it. However, it was considered a fraudulent and deceptive means to deceive individuals, taking their money under false pretenses which was subject to legal action under broader laws related to fraud. Modern Church Leaders are copying Smith's claim to have such magic powers when they too say they are "Seers."

Contemporary accounts about Captain Kidd²⁴⁰ of buried treasure fame, say Kid visited the port city named "Moroni" on the island of "[Cumorah](#)" (the Comoros Islands near Madagascar). Joseph named the spirit guarding the buried gold plates, "Moroni," and the buried treasure location, "Cumorah."

Why are there so many anachronisms in the BofM? "Why does *The Book of Mormon* quote Isaiah before Isaiah was written? Why does it mention the *Bible* a millennia before the *Bible* even existed? Why has *The Book of Mormon* preserved the errors in the King James translation such as 'virgin' for 'young woman'? Why is 'Christ' used when it is a Greek word, not the Israelite word Messiah?"²⁴¹

Even though no golden plates are available for analysis of the Book of Mormon translation, such as are the papyrus for the Book of Abraham, a tremendous archeological record is present. Contrary to what I was misled to believe, the archeological record does not support the Book of Mormon account:²⁴²

No. 1 – The Plant-Life Test of the Book of Mormon. Wheat, barley, figs, and grapes are all mentioned in the Book of Mormon, but no evidence supports the existence of these plants in Mesoamerica. "The negative score on the plant-life test should not be treated too lightly. An abundance of evidence supporting the existence of these plants has been found in other parts of the world of antiquity."²⁴³

No. 2 – The Animal-Life Test of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon mentions the ass, bull, calf, cattle, cow, goat, horse²⁴⁴, ox, sheep, sow (swine), and elephant. "Evidence of the foregoing animals has not appeared in any form—ceramic representations, bones or skeletal remains, mural art, sculptured art, or any other form. ... The zero score presents a problem that will not go away with ignoring of it. ... That evidence of the ancient existence of these animals is not elusive is found in the fact that proof of their existence in the ancient old-world is abundant."²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Mormon Stories: LDS Nuclear Submarine Commander, Full Part 3 Episode 1468, Captain Kidd, buried treasure at [Cumorah](#) (Madagascar), Capital City Maroni - 10 min clip at 50:30 Minutes.

²⁴¹ Mormon Think: "[It Started with Science](#)," [△](#) By Dianne Chryst Ormond, Resignation letter.

²⁴² Evidence The Book of Mormon Is False - [Alyssa Grenfell](#) [△](#) (A young returned Sister Missionary tells of her discoveries.)

²⁴³ Larson, [Gold Plates](#), 179

²⁴⁴ Note: Extinct horse bones are found in Mexico, however the bones themselves are not radiocarbon dated because collagen was not available from the bones. Only the surrounding soil was radiocarbon dated. Since the bones and the soil are shallow, it means the carbon14 dating of the soil is unreliable because fresh young carbon14 dissolved in rainwater washes down into the soil making the date measurements appear younger. This phenomenon is understood but ignored by some LDS who are trying to prove their belief that horses existed in Book of Mormon times. Horses in the Americas are known to have gone extinct long before.

²⁴⁵ Larson, [Gold Plates](#), 182

No. 3 – The Script Test of the Book of Mormon. “This is a crucial test since a developed writing system is a hallmark of civilization. ... New World inscriptions ought to be found in cuneiform (for the Jaredites) and Hebrew and Egyptian (for the Nephites). ... Scholars today see no linguistic relationship between any native American language or script and ‘ancient Egyptian, Sumerian/Akkadian, or Hebrew languages or writing systems’”²⁴⁶



The moral authority of the Book of Mormon can be examined to see if it is profound. Also, the book can be examined to see that errant beliefs from early American Christianity are not justified as virtues within it. The following three mistakes from early American Christian fundamentalism are perpetuated in the Book of Mormon.

First, attributing to God, behavior that makes Him vengeful or murderous. “... the Spirit said unto me again: Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands; Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. ... Therefore, I did obey the voice of the Spirit, and took Laban by the hair of the head, and I smote off his head with his own sword. (1 Nephi 4:11-18)”

Second, defining people as inherently evil and unworthy. “For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them, yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, ... (Mosiah 16:3).”

The BofM is full of early American Christian superstitious beliefs about the devil. The Devil's Influence was thought to tempt people into sinning and leading them away from God. Over time, as society progressed and scientific explanations of the unknown became more prevalent, many of these superstitions diminished in influence, though remnants of these beliefs are kept alive by the BofM in contemporary LDS culture.

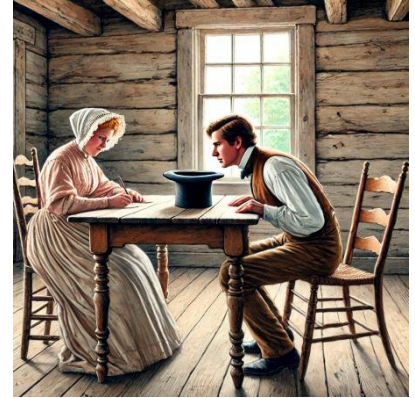
Third, enthroning tribal intolerance while justifying racism. The ancestors of native Americans are described in the Book of Mormon as “white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome” but so “that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them” so that they would become “loathsome” to the Nephites. “And cursed shall be the seed of him that mixeth with their seed; for they shall be cursed even with the same cursing...(2 Nephi 5: 21-23)”

Skin shaming Native Americans, Joseph Smith constructed in the Book of Mormon a mistaken and now disavowed (and edited out) explanation for Native American skin color. All of the above confirm an investigator’s suspicion that Book of Mormon origins are from the 19th century. Furthermore, “Unless an individual has experienced an unusual and an extensive historical education, he little realizes that a speculative relationship of the American Indian to a Hebraic origin is a most time worn thesis which must have sprung from the imaginations of some of the theologically inclined soon after 1492.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 204, 210

²⁴⁷ Mervin B. Hogan, “A Parallel: A Matter of Chance versus Coincidence”, Included with a Photomechanical Reprint of View of the Hebrews, 1825 Edition, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Salt Lake City, 17

Not only is this racist skin shaming explanation of the American Indian origins, Joseph Smith's thesis in the Book of Mormon, but also Pastor Ethan Smith's thesis (no relation). He first published *View of the Hebrews* four years before start of the Book of Mormon "translation", in 1823 in Poultney, Vermont adjoining county (on the West) of Windsor County where the Smith family lived.²⁴⁸ LDS General Authority, B. H. Roberts writes, "... did Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* furnish structural material for Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon? It has been pointed out in these pages that there are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not a few things merely, one or two, or a 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 Smith's story of the Book of Mormon's origin."²⁴⁹



For example, from *View of the Hebrews* (p.150), is a description of Indian pontifical dress, "In resemblance of the *Urim and Thummim*, the American Archimagus wears a *breast plate* made of a white conch-shell, with two holes bored in the middle of it... in imitation of the precious stones of the Urim²⁵⁰" ... "Can there be any doubt, but that the things said in Ethan Smith's book, on the matter of the 'Urim and Thummim,' 'breast plates,' and curious stones' and attachments to breast plates' – all published from eight to five years before the Book of Mormon was, are sufficient to suggest the Urim and Thummim as described by Joseph Smith?²⁵¹" [See History of the Church, 5:537]

Interestingly, Scott C. Dunn draws a parallel between the use of the Urim and Thummin stones above, and "automatic writing" as the very method through which Joseph Smith produced the Book of Mormon. "... significant... statements by Martin Harris, David Whitmer, Emma Smith, Joseph Knight, Sr., Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdrey, Isaac Hale [u](#), and others... report that Joseph dictated the Book of Mormon with his face buried in a hat looking at a "seer" stone or, possibly, the spectacle-like pair of transparent stones known as the 'interpreters' or Urim and Thummim. Emma Smith and Elizabeth Whitmer Cowdery report that the Prophet would perform this operation for hours on end. Most of these accounts, some of them by eyewitnesses, indicate that Joseph was reading words or sentences which he saw in the sacred instruments. This certainly implies a relatively effortless or automatic process.²⁵² Moreover, this use of a crystal or stone to dictate information is a

²⁴⁸ B.H. Roberts, *Roberts' Manuscript Revealed*, "A Parallel", Modern Microfilm, 1980, Salt Lake City, 407

²⁴⁹ Larsen, *Gold Plates*, 147

²⁵⁰ B.H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, University of Illinois Press, 1985, ISBN 0-252-01043-4, 207 - 208

²⁵¹ *Ibid*, 208

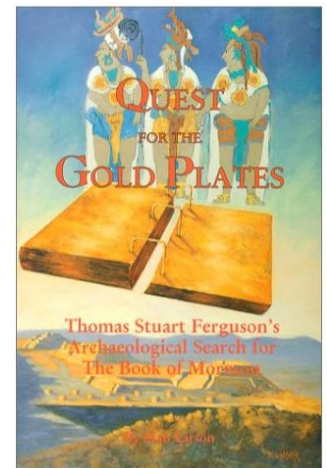
²⁵² Scott Dunn says, "In addition to clarifying the translation process, an automatic writing model of the Book of Mormon helps illuminate certain aspects of this volume which have never adequately been explained. Such, for example, is the case with the extensive use of the Bible in the Book of Mormon. In addition to the lengthy passages from Isaiah, the Book of Mormon is replete with allusions, expressions, and quotations from the King James translation of the Old and New Testaments. Since many of these quotations occur in settings hundreds of years before the biblical manuscripts were composed, it seems highly unlikely that these verbatim extractions were engraved on the Nephite plates.... Automatic writing, on the other hand, provides a very simple explanation of these circumstances. Just as individuals under hypnosis have been able to quote lengthy passages in foreign languages which they heard at the age of three, so have automatic writers produced detailed information from books which they have read but, in some cases, cannot remember reading. Thus, if Joseph Smith's scriptural productions borrow material from the Bible he was known to study, this is certainly consistent with

well-known method of producing automatic writing ...”²⁵³

LDS General Authority, B.H. Roberts, poses similar questions. “Was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the Book of Mormon from such common knowledge as was in the communities where he lived in his boyhood and young manhood, from the Bible, and more especially from the *View of the Hebrews*, by Ethan Smith? That such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question.

The fact of it is first established by the testimony of the mother who bore him, Lucy Smith. ... ‘I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived upon the face of the earth – all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons and daughters, and giving the most profound attention to a boy, eighteen years of age, who had never read the Bible through in his life; he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study ... During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most *amusing* recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them.’ (History of the Prophet, 1901 edition, Salt Lake City, Utah. Published under the sanction and direction of the late President Joseph F. Smith.)

It must be remembered that the above took place before the young prophet had received the plates of the Book of Mormon. ... And yet it must be from that book that he would get his knowledge of the ancient inhabitants of America, unless he has caught suggestions from such common knowledge, or that which was taken for ‘knowledge,’ as existed in the community concerning ancient American civilization and built by the imagination from this and possible contact with Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* his description of the ancient inhabitants of the land, their life, religion and customs. A year later he will be helped by the Josiah Priest’s book, *The Wonders of Nature and Providence*, published only twenty miles away, and it will have much to say about the Hebrew origin of the American Indian, and his advanced culture and civilization. Whence comes the young prophet’s ability to give these descriptions “with as much ease as if he had spent his whole life” with these ancient inhabitants of America? Not from the Book of Mormon, which is, as yet a sealed book to him; ... These evening recitals could come from no other source than the vivid, constructive imagination of Joseph Smith, a remarkable power which attended him



other cases of automatic writing. This phenomenon of memory, known as cryptomnesia, may also explain the presence of writing styles and literary patterns which are found both in the Book of Mormon and the Bible.

Because such feats of recall often occur in automatic writing, this phenomenon also helps us understand the inclusion in the Book of Mormon of so many concepts which seem to belong to nineteenth-century New England. A number of Mormon writers, for example, have pointed out that the Book of Mormon incorporates theological concepts and addresses religious debates common in Joseph Smith’s environment. In addition, the book capitalizes and expands on theories of the origin of the American Indian which were circulating in that part of the country in the 1820’s but which have been rejected by anthropologists and ethnologists today.”

²⁵³ Scott C. Dunn, “Spirit Writing”, *Sunstone*, June 1985, 24 [Automatic Writing](#)
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through all his life. It was as strong and varied as Shakespeare's and no more to be accounted for than the English Bard's.

Parley P. Pratt, one of Joseph Smith's most gifted followers, himself a poet, and wonderful preacher ... said: 'He possessed a noble boldness, and independence of character; his manner was easy and familiar ... his intelligence universal, and his language abounding in original eloquence peculiar to himself – not polished – not studied – not smothered and softened by education and refined by art; but flowing forth in its own native simplicity, and profusely abounding in variety of subject and manner. He was interested and edified while, at the same time, he amused and entertained his audience; and none listened to him that were ever weary with his discourse. I have known him to retain a congregation of willing and anxious listeners for many hours together, in the midst of cold or sunshine, rain or wind, while they were laughing at one moment and weeping the next. Even his most bitter enemies were generally overcome if he could once get at their ears' (Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, p. 47)."

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"In light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be argued, which, given the suggestions that are to be found in the 'common knowledge' of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is." ²⁵⁵

Church Historian B.H. Roberts continues, "If ... the view be taken that the Book of Mormon is merely of human origin; that a person of Joseph Smith's limitations in experience and in education, who was ... of the period that produced the book – if it be assumed that he is the author of it, then it could be said there is much [internal evidence](#) in the book itself to sustain such a view.

In the first place there is a certain lack of perspective in the things the book relates as history that points quite clearly to an undeveloped mind as their [origin](#). The narrative proceeds in characteristic disregard of conditions necessary to its reasonableness, as if it were a tale told by a child, with utter disregard for consistency."²⁵⁶ For example, there is the excessively rapid rural population growth in the new world²⁵⁷, the impracticalities of distance, travel, and time in the story of "Lehi's departure from Jerusalem"²⁵⁸, "'Liahona', the wonder compass ... which worked by faith"²⁵⁹, the transportation of the Jeradites, their flocks, fowls, honey bees, fish, seeds of every kind (Ether 2:1-3), water, "and also food for their flocks and herds"²⁶⁰ aboard their six small vessels with glowing stones for light. Adding to the difficulties of the Jeradite voyage is the duration. This company of human souls and these animals, flocks, seeds, provisions, and water were at sea for "three hundred and forty and four days" (Ether 6:11)! Only twenty-one days short of a whole year!

²⁵⁴ Roberts, "A Book of Mormon Study", 243 – 245

Mormon Stories [#1346](#): Shannon Caldwell Montez - The Secret Mormon Meetings of 1922

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 250

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 251

²⁵⁷ John C. Kunich, Multiply Exceedingly: Book of Mormon Population Sizes, *Sunstone*, Vol. 14-3, 27-44

²⁵⁸ Roberts, "A Book of Mormon Study", 251

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 255

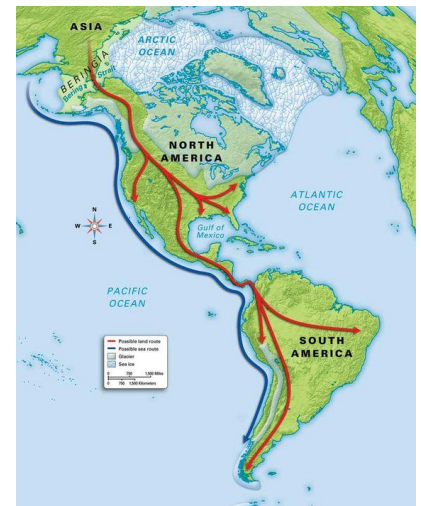
²⁶⁰ Ibid, 257

“Is it much to be wondered at if intelligent people to whom the Book of Mormon is presented for consideration, should ask: Do we have here a great historical document²⁶¹, or only a wonder tale, told by an undeveloped mind, living in a period and in an environment where the miraculous in ‘history’ is accepted without limitations and is supposed to account for all inconsistencies and lapses that challenge human credulity in the thought and in the easy philosophy that *all things are possible with God*?”²⁶²

The above extracts from B.H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, were unpublished for half a century. In our time, former B.Y.U. teacher of Hebrew, the Hebrew Bible, and Near Eastern Studies, Dr. David P. Wright, applied his training in the method of “Historical Criticism”, to study the historical aspects of the Book of Mormon – its date and authorship, the historical veracity of events described in it, and the existence of ideas and practices in the periods in which they are claimed to have existed. His published results say, “...The book also offers descriptions – negative descriptions – about the personality and character of supposed Native American ancestors²⁶³. A critical study of the Book of Mormon, as I have indicated, shows that *Joseph Smith was its author* [italic added], which carries with it the implication that these perspectives about Native Americans were his own speculations. We have the ethical responsibility of examining the validity of this critical perspective seriously and carefully lest we hold unfounded notions that create attitudes that [have been and] are injurious to Native Americans.²⁶⁴”

The fact of Smith’s false claim to have translated the Book of Abraham from documents written by Abraham’s “own hand” discredits his similar claim to have translated the Book of Mormon from plates written by Mormon. Furthermore, internal evidence within the book itself points to a contemporary origin, rather than to a historic origin.

For example, Book of Mormon Lamanites do not exist. Biologist and former Bishop, Simon Southerton, was first to make me aware that genetic evidence uncovered by DNA testing reveals Native Americans (Lamanites) have Asian DNA, not the Middle Eastern Israelite DNA where Lehi came from. The account of Southerton’s discovery is seen Appendix B – [Lamanite Genetic Genealogy](#).



Because DNA evidence²⁶⁵ shatters Smiths claim that Native Americans are the “principal” ancestors of the Lamanites. In 2006 the Church was forced by undeniable evidence to change the Book of Mormon’s own description of itself to say BofM peoples were “among the ancestors of the American Indians.” However, everything about Joseph Smith is a problem, not a few things merely, everything! It is all made up in Smith’s fertile imagination. Keep looking if you wish, however we know the Native American origin story is from neighboring Pastor Ethan Smith, [View of the Hebrews](#). Native Americans are Asian, not Israelites. There are no Lamanites, anywhere.

²⁶¹ Mormon Scholar Terryl Givens' Shocking [Admission](#), “Although the Book of Mormon claims to be equally inspired, and to dictate a sacred history every bit as ancient as Kings or Chronicles, virtually nothing associated with the Book of Mormon’s origins or subject matter can be independently traced to a time earlier than 1827”

²⁶² Roberts, “A Book of Mormon Study”, 258

²⁶³ [Book of Mormon](#), 2 Nephi 5:24; Enos 1:20; Alma 3:5; 22:28; 43:20; 44:18

²⁶⁴ David P. Wright, “Historical Criticism: A necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth,” *Sunstone*, September 1992, 35

²⁶⁵ Official LDS Essay on Book of Mormon and DNA Studies, [Annotated](#)

“The Americas were the last continents colonized by humans and the nature and timing of this colonization has been the subject of intense scientific research for over a century. The Mormon Church claims special knowledge within this field of scientific research. Most Mormons believe that native people in the Americas and Polynesia are largely (or at least partly) descended from Israelites. These views are largely based on the sacred writings Mormons possess, in particular the Book of Mormon, and numerous statements by church leaders, including all of its prophets, over many decades. As recently as March 2013 native Central American Mormons from [Honduras](#) were reassured by an apostle that they are the descendants of father Lehi, an Israelite who the Book of Mormon claims sailed to the Americas about 600BC.”²⁶⁶

One expects the Truth to be coherent, not to be so easily threatened on every front. However, the Excommunication of Book of Mormon truth tellers like Simon Southerton²⁶⁷ and David P Wright²⁶⁸ shows a level of intellectual dishonesty throughout Church leadership where “*corruption*” best describes it. The coverup is more damaging than the falsehoods they seek to hide.

In an Authoritarian belief system like Mormonism, *corruption* is not an overt instruction. But Testimony bearing subordinates understand and can spontaneously carry out and replicate the will of their leaders without being told. Mormon authoritarianism, Testimony, demands above all else that the power claim to “being right” be preserved.

By its policy of putting its image ahead of telling the Truth, the Church seeks to preserve the possibility Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon claim that it is a historical record because if not, the Church is founded on a lie. However, the believability of Smith’s claim has come to an end. Mormon history discloses Smith’s treasure seeking, his face in a hat to “translate,” plus [View of the Hebrews](#) composed in an adjacent county by his neighbor Ethan Smith, and “Lamanite (Native American) DNA is Southeast Asian, not Middle Eastern Israelite.



Joseph Smith’s claims must be challenged openly by Church members, Church university employees (BYU and CES), and Church leaders. Foremost, the evidence calls upon corporate Church leaders who are lawyers and scientist, despite the risk of creating a schism, to summon courage, face the evidence, fulfill their fiduciary responsibility to the Corporate Church by reforming itself, by making the necessary changes to the foundations of their faith as contemporary leaders at the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have already done.

Reformation is unavoidable because there is clear evidence showing Smith’s claims about the origins of both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham are false. Over a century of comprehensive archaeological, anthropological, and genetic research has found no trace of Middle Eastern migrations to the Americas prior to Columbus. The Book of Mormon Lamanites do not exist.

Likewise, Smith’s “translation” of the Book of Abraham papyrus is completely wrong because Egyptologist can now read Egyptian. The two are totally different. Furthermore, the recovered papyrus does not date to the time of

²⁶⁶ [Link to Quote](#), Simon Southerton, [The Sacred Curse](#) (self-published 2020) how genetics has exposed the 19th century origins of Mormon Scripture. How [Kennewick Man](#) has Impaled Rodney Meldrum’s Heartlanders, [The face of a Nephite](#), David Read.

²⁶⁷ Simon Southerton, [My Court of Love](#), Exit Statement, P 57

²⁶⁸ David P. Wright, [Mormon Alliance Case Reports Vol III Chapter 23](#), A Documentary Case Study

Abraham. Therefore, Church truth claims are undermined by the fact that two of its defining scriptures are not what Smith claimed.

Intellectual Dishonesty

Church leaders have these facts in front of them just like I do. Long ago the Church Presidency chose to ignore B.H. Roberts warnings about Smith's claims in [Studies of the Book of Mormon](#). Now, 100 years later, is it any surprise they are fearful of the internet. These men govern the Corporate Church but fail their fiduciary duties to tithe payers. They hold a position of trust requiring not only financial disclosure but that they investigate and demonstrate with integrity their inside knowledge about foundational historical problems affecting the Church. Given Church leaders' conflict of interest between serving both the Corporate Church and their tithe paying Church members, is it any wonder they are opposed to both criticism and internet searching? Those two interests are not the same!

It is not wickedness to research the claims of the church, and it is not apostasy to wonder why what we see with our own eyes does not align with the story the church continues to tell.

Many of the Church's best and brightest are resigning membership because Church leaders show themselves to be intellectually dishonest. At worst, their beliefs cannot be sincerely held because they are conscious of their own willful acts to omit, to suppress, and to withhold contrary evidence.

Asking again, can the Pastor's belief in a resurrection be sincere, if he has the un-resurrected body hidden in his basement? Likewise, can Church leader's belief be sincere when they are hiding evidence all these years because it is not "faith promoting." Can Church members trust the motives or integrity of Gospel Topics Essays where preservation of Testimony is at stake?

Leaders warn that members are leaving the church because of weakness or giving into temptation. Such a lie is deliberate. It tries to hide that those resignations are acts of personal courage and conscience. That resignations often happen when betrayal is discovered from those same leaders who have told half-truths or outright falsehoods after inviting our trust²⁶⁹ by saying they will never lead us astray.

Church leaders like Russel M Nelson know that DNA evidence shows the Lamanites are not of Middle Eastern descent according to Smith's story of Lehi departing Jerusalem in the Book of Mormon. Instead, Native American DNA shows they are of Southeast Asian descent.



This evidence requires Russel Nelson to fulfill his duty at Church to see that you know this. Instead, minor changes are made to the Book of Mormon introduction attempting to conceal major new evidence that Joseph Smith took mistaken ideas prevalent in his community and in his day about native American origins, wrongly putting them into the Book of Mormon.²⁷⁰ Nearby author Ethan Smith's "View of the Hebrews" is only one example.

Changes to the Book of Mormon introduction reveal Church leaders are aware, but instead of fulfilling their duty to us to openly disclose, and to make revolutionary

²⁶⁹ Mormon Stories #1385: [The Legal Case for Fraud - Gaddy vs. the LDS Church](#), Jan 15, 2021 (0:56 - 1:17, 2:42)

²⁷⁰ [Book of Mormon and Mound Builder Myth](#)  - Dan Vogel

changes like the Community of Christ (former RLDS) has done, our highest leaders knowingly, intentionally commit the sin of omission. This new information brings with it to their high office the responsibility to act with intellectual integrity requiring revolutionary change and repentance from them. However, so far, they forsake these duties.

Likewise, Russel M Nelson knows the Book of Abraham (BofA) papyrus has been found and returned to the Church in 1967. He knows it is translated and dated. He knows it has no relationship whatsoever to the contents of the BofA. Yet again, Russel Nelson does not fulfill his duty by seeing to it at Church that you know these things.

Instead, Russell Nelson engages in conspiratorial pathological religious delusions, for example that his feelings are God whispering to him. Or, that the end of the world is near. Or, that the Lamanites are a chosen people. Or, that Satan and his angles are “raging” against Nelson, However, these manipulative tactics do not work anymore because we are aware of the misinformation he is spreading.

So, do we have any hope of deprogramming the millions of Latter-day Saints who are devoted to such lunacy? Do not hold your breath. First, psychological and political research makes clear that once people have gone far enough down the rabbit hole of conspiratorial thinking, it can be nearly impossible to get them back out.

Second, those who seek to debunk conspiracy theories are precisely the people or sources true believers are told to distrust. If someone accepts that all contrary opposing information is controlled by Satan, then fact checking will never convince them they are wrong. Furthermore, the risk of a backfire effect is documented, in which correcting misperceptions ends up entrenching them. In the world of conspiratorial thinking, the stronger the counter argument, the greater the proof that evil is afoot.

We can no longer pretend that religious conspiracy theorists are beneath our attention. They have tremendous capacity, for example at the Nation’s Capital and as Trump voters seeking to overthrow a legitimate presidential election their candidate lost. Likewise, bringing the deluded people who go to LDS testimony meeting back to reality will be difficult.

To find the right antidote, we need to diagnose accurately who has taken the poison. And that means acknowledging these are not far-off lunatics. They are our neighbors, friends, and family.

Racism

Mormonism adopted errant beliefs from Biblical American Christianity into its scriptures and practices. Prejudice towards African Americans²⁷¹ is one such influence that I believe resulted in the [exclusion of African Americans](#) [△](#) from the Mormon priesthood. Consequently, African Americans²⁷² could not participate in the government of the church and were denied access to the highest Temple ceremonies, like Temple marriage.



²⁷¹ Apostle Mark E Peterson’s prejudiced view, Aug 27, 1954, Lamanites & Negro [segregated by Lord](#) with dark skin curse. [Brigham Young and Utah Slavery](#), Kurt Ralph Armann

²⁷² [The Mormon Church’s Racist Past Is WAY Worse Than You Think](#) [△](#) (1:21:21)

Similarly, I believe Christian and LDS glorification of the House of Israel and its “gathering” are simply the ongoing racial prejudices held by the Hebrew people seeing themselves favored by God (ethnocentric). Jesus himself being a Jewish Rabi from which Christianity derives, except we have not yet corrected this Jewish mistake of perceiving themselves as God’s chosen people.

The LDS self-identification as belonging to the House of Ephraim and Manassas, sons of Joseph a brother of Judah, derives from this common human tendency to see oneself as racially or nationally exceptional. The Old Testament is full of verses where the authors show that Israelites wrongly thought God loves them most. For example, the Jewish Passover celebrates God killing the innocent first borne child of every Egyptian household. In the language of Latter-day Saints, non-Mormons are referred to racially and culturally as Gentiles.

Mormons are ethnocentric believing we are better than other people when we are not.²⁷³

In my day LDS identification with the House of Ephraim is still preserved in the Mormon Temple. However, the priesthood and Temple restriction on African American Mormons (males) was completely removed in 1978. The policy was reversed without acknowledging that it had made a mistake. Before 1978, the explanation for excluding worthy African American males from the priesthood was the idea that God cursed them with a black skin.²⁷⁴ The reversal itself, however, is a de facto acknowledgement that the first policy was a mistake.

Apostle (later President) Joseph Fielding Smith taught that God consigns souls who were spiritually inadequate in the preexistence to be born into the black race. And, after the 1978 revelation, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie continued to write in the revised edition of the widely influential book, *Mormon Doctrine*: “the race and nation in which men are born in this world is a direct result of their pre-existent life.”²⁷⁵ Thus, even though the 1978 revelation changed church practice, none of the former underlying theories are disavowed or repudiated.

For example, President Kimball, did not offer an apology for the error of racism which was taught from his office and over the pulpits of our churches the world over. He did not say, “We stand humbly before our God and the world this day to prostrate our souls and beg forgiveness. We taught false and hurtful ideas about curses, skin color, and spiritual worthiness, and we were wrong. We taught false notions of white supremacy when refusing African Americans admission to our Temples, heinous ideas of pure white blood, and erroneously condemned interracial marriage, and we were wrong.”

Likewise, as a missionary in Northern Arizona I did not tell the few Native American’s we encountered the facts about the Book of Mormon skin shaming them by description of their ancestors as: “white, and exceeding fair and



Sitting Bull and family 1881 at Ft 

²⁷³ Mormon Professor Confronts Church on [Racism - The Lowry Nelson Story](#) w/ Matt Harris | Ep. 1913, Mormon Stories Podcast. [Matt Harris' book "Second Class Saints"](#) In 1947, Lowry Nelson, a respected Mormon academic, challenged the LDS Church's racist policies in a series of letters to top leadership. Occurring on the cusp of the Civil Rights Movement, the First Presidency reacted by doubling down on encoding white supremacy into Mormon doctrine. Nelson wasn't ready to give up though and continued to flirt with excommunication by publishing his correspondence with the brethren in a national magazine.

²⁷⁴ Book of Moses 7:8; Book of Abraham 1:21,27; The [Pearl of Great Price](#), 1959 Edition, 20, 31

²⁷⁵ Richard N. and Joan K. Ostling, [Mormon America](#), Harper San Francisco, 1999, ISBN 0-06-066371-5, 103

delightful” but so “that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a [skin of blackness](#) to come upon them” so that they would become “loathsome” to the Nephites. “And cursed shall be the seed of him that mixeth with their seed; for they shall be cursed even with the same cursing....”²⁷⁶

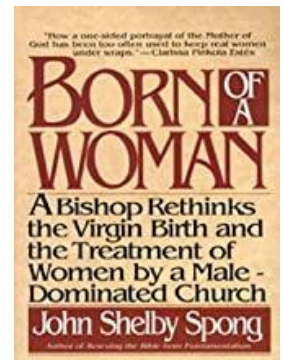
Sadly, brown and black skin LDS children grow up self-loathing, skin shamed into believing their skin color is a curse. However, there are no “[Lamanites](#).” The Book of Mormon creates a wholly fictitious account of Native American origins that is, like the curse of Cain account of African American origins, simply Mormon white racism.²⁷⁷

Why did these beliefs ever exist, and why is it so difficult to change them? The first explanation is that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young²⁷⁸ wrongly entangled these awful ideas into the church’s scriptures and teachings.

Second, church leaders are ever careful at holding on to the parental power rooted in their assertion that God will not allow the “prophet to lead the church astray.” Church members accept this claim with remarkable acquiescence.

Sexism²⁷⁹

Mormon leaders must have noticed the rising independence of some LDS women, because in 1970 the church presidency acted to tighten its grip over women by ending the quasi-independence of the women’s Relief Society. All Relief Society funds were turned over to the male priesthood. LDS women no longer decided whether to join the Relief Society but were automatically enrolled. The Relief Society was told to stop publishing its own magazine, and the church Correlation Committee took charge of women’s educational materials. Mormon men control appointment of presidents to the women’s organization at all levels and have the right to approve her choice of counselors²⁸⁰. Finally, in temple marriages [wives covenanted](#) to “Observe and keep the Law of your Husbands.”



Like racism, I believe sexism is another form of prejudice inherited by Mormonism from early American Christianity. Unlike African American males, Mormon women remain excluded from the priesthood and consequently from an authoritative voice in governing their church. Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong points to the source of Mormon prejudice by rejecting the traditional Bible-based view of women. He asserts: "For most of the two thousand years of history since the birth of our Lord, the Christian church has participated and supported the oppression of women. This oppression has been both overt and covert, conscious and unconscious. It has come primarily through the church's ability in the name of God to define a woman and to make that definition stick"²⁸¹. He focuses particularly on the creation of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the "ecclesiastical stereotype of the ideal woman against which all women came to be judged" and against which, inevitably, they came up short.²⁸² Bishop Spong summarizes: "Mary is a male-created female figure who embodies the kind of woman dominant males think is ideal – docile, obedient, powerless."²⁸³

²⁷⁶ Joseph Smith, 2 Nephi 5:21-23, [Book of Mormon](#), 1959 Edition, 61

²⁷⁷ Artificial Intelligence puts a 3-minute apology he did NOT say into the voice of President Nelson for the [Priesthood Ban](#)

²⁷⁸ Brigham Young's 1st [Address to Utah Legislature on Slavery](#) - 23 Jan, 1852, Thoughts on Things and Stuff

²⁷⁹ [My Relief Society Presidency Nightmare - Lori Young](#) [a](#) | Ep. 1892 (2hr:17min:20sec)

²⁸⁰ Ostling, [Mormon America](#), 365 - 6

²⁸¹ John Shelby Spong, [Born of a Woman](#), HarperSanFrancisco, 1992, ISBN 0-06-067513-6, p 1

²⁸² Ibid, 1

²⁸³ Ibid, 221

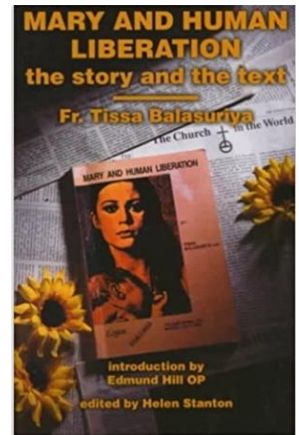
This ... Mary was imposed on believers through an "all-male hierarchy" that insisted, "These male definitions of women were divine, unchanging, and imposed by God. ... Any attempts to challenge these assumptions or to suggest some other possibilities were immediately condemned as a sin against God, the Bible, or the divine nature of creation. Any attempt to open the ecclesiastical hierarchy to women was met by screams that God's will, expressed through an unbroken, all-male sacred tradition, was being violated. The emotional response betrayed the irrationality of the fears as well as the weakness of the argument. ... Those sexist attitudes can be challenged only by challenging the doctrine of God, the meaning of Christ, the definition of sin, the role of the Savior, and the structure of the church on which they are based."²⁸⁴ He predicts "...the feminine side of God in some new incarnation will inevitably arise."²⁸⁵

Similarly, Catholic Theologian and Priest, Father Tissa Balasuriya, further makes the case for women. He writes that women need more often to affirm than to efface themselves, especially among the "poor".²⁸⁶ A woman's "sense of self-worth and a legitimate pride in oneself are good and necessary. Women's willingness to serve is often exploited by others, especially by men".²⁸⁷ Thus, the traditional devotion of Catholic women, not unlike Mormon women, "has a domesticating impact" by not helping them "to acquire a greater sense of their dignity, responsibilities and rights in the Church and in society."²⁸⁸

Fr Balasuriya challenges the creation story from the perspective of male prejudice rather than from Evolution, and the implication that Eve caused the Fall: "The interpretation of the Genesis story given by the Fathers of the Church, especially after Augustine, was that woman was the cause of the fall. She was the temptress, the accomplice of Satan and destroyer of the human race. The identification of Eve with evil became so common in Christian thought that the serpent acquired female features, as in Michelangelo's painting of the fall in the Sistine Chapel. ... Male theologians and clergy have been responsible for perpetuating this denigration of women throughout the centuries ...

This simplistic and damaging interpretation of the Genesis story calls into question the Genesis text, ... and of male superiority and prejudice. The doctrine of original sin was developed in a manner that was anti-sexual, for human sexual relations brought into being a person who was a sinner, an enemy of God. ... Since the female was considered more related to the body, and the male to the spirit and mind, this denigration of sexuality was closely linked with an anti-female attitude. This was particularly so among male clergy who dominated the Church's thinking, its ministry and administration. ...

Usually, the challenge to such dogmas will come from those who are adversely affected by them, and not normally from those who stand to benefit, or do not lose from such teachings. ... It is so profound in its impact, even today throughout the Christian world, that it must be revealed for what it is ..."²⁸⁹



²⁸⁴ Ibid, 222-3

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 224

²⁸⁶ Tissa Balasuriya, OMI (Oblates of Mary Immaculate), *Mary and Human Liberation*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997, ISBN 1-56338-225-3, 51

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 19

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 32

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 142, 145

Although writing about Catholics, I think Fr. Balasuriya explains the Mormon situation by suggesting that church “authorities think they must preserve the simple religion of the faithful. The faithful, in turn, have a sentimental attachment to conventional modes of thinking and to the pious practices with which they were brought up, even when these observances domesticate them to accept many forms of alienation and oppression.”²⁹⁰ They internalize their “own subjection to the powerful, and this internalization acquires its own legitimation and sacredness.”²⁹¹



“Women need to develop their own strategies for achieving an appropriate place and power in the church”, says Balasuriya, but “such changes do not occur merely because of prayer or theology. Women must develop and use their women-power.” He hypothesizes that “if for two weeks, women did not contribute to Church funds unless women's rights were accepted, there would be an immediate impact on the power-holders. Or if women contributed instead to funds which supported women's emancipation--Mary's pence instead of Peter's pence--they could have more effective power as women-Church. These are nonviolent methods that need to be developed. Woman-power, thus built up, needs to be linked across the world.”²⁹²



Such a movement sprouted when Sonya Johnson became president of “Mormons for ERA” (Equal Rights Amendment) in 1978. And today (1999), Janice Allred is President of the feminist organization, “The Mormon Women’s Forum.” However, the Mormon church has excommunicated both these insurgent leaders. Rightly or wrongly, I favored the ERA and I viewed the national public debate as a responsibility of citizenship properly outside control of the church. However, the church leadership had organized to defeat the amendment and had let its expectations be known to church member-citizens. As Elders Quorum instructor I determined that intervention by the church into this matter of State, justified open discussion of ERA pro’s and con’s in the Elders Quorum meeting

I taught. I felt that the church’s act of political advocacy crossed the line separating church and state. Hence, the absence of public debate from opposing member-citizens seemed to usurp our rights of citizenship. However, I was released as Elder’s Quorum teacher immediately after the ERA class discussion. Do not think I am so small this hurt my feelings, causing my exit. Likewise, Sonya Johnson was summoned before a church court and expelled even though her work was in the political arena, independent of any church office appointment.

I believe church members working to give Mormon women equal power are naive to underestimate the forces opposing them. The organizing leaders of any opposition will be dealt with forcefully as above. And, as is standard practice, those with the courage to raise their hand publicly to “vote” in opposition to the

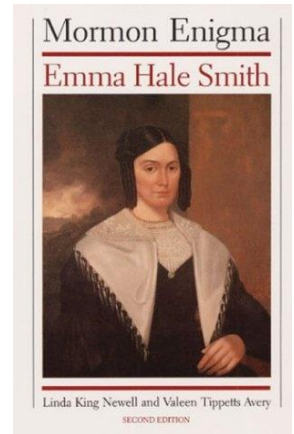
²⁹⁰ Ibid, 49

²⁹¹ Ibid, 49

²⁹² Ibid, 103

recommendations of the leadership are interviewed to determine the merits of their opposing vote. Hardly a secret ballot.

As with Emma Smith, when the prophet speaks, the consent of the governed no longer applies. The lingering theocratic influence first established by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo and Brigham Young in Utah is a heritage combining the power of Church and State. This heritage has values quite different from the pluralistic American democracy that tolerates peaceful dissent and freedom of speech. Indeed, because he was a religious leader, Joseph Smith commonly characterized any criticism of him, for any reason, by Mormons or non-Mormons as persecution²⁹³. When church members at Kirtland or Nauvoo, like Oliver Cowdery, objected to Smith's promiscuity with 16-year-old housekeeper, Fanny Alger, they were condemned and branded apostates. Brigham Young was no less ruthless. Hence even today, public criticism of church leaders or church policy is forbidden on threat of excommunication.



How is this allowed? True religious power is the opposite of top-down authoritarian rule in that power is held at the bottom by the people and within the individual, more than half are women. Once consent is withdrawn by the masses below, power is lost at the top. The nature of true religious power and human freedom is well described below:

Declaration on Religious Freedom: Dignitatis Humanae, Pope Paul VI, 1965

“In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience in order that he may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor ... is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience ... The reason is that the exercise of religion, of its very nature, consist before all else in those internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind. The social nature of man, however, itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion: that he should share with others in matters religious; that he should profess his religion in community. Injury therefore is done to the human person and to the very order established by God for human life, if the free exercise of religion is denied in society ... A since of the dignity of the human person demand[s] ... that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty ... However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless he enjoys immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom.”²⁹⁴

Thus, I believe the above limitations upon the power of the church to coerce, are even more limited than the power of the State to maintain civil order. However, in stark contrast to the above principles of religious freedom, church leaders have let stand, on appeal, the excommunication of Janice Allred, the President of the independent Mormon Women's Forum. Since women's power is an important issue to the church, the treatment of women opponents like Sonya Johnson and Janice Allred are key indicators of the church's ongoing inability to restrain

²⁹³ John E. Hallwas and Roger D. Launius, *Cultures in Conflict*, Utah State University Press, 1995, 5

²⁹⁴ *Declaration on Religious Freedom: Dignitatis Humanae*, Proclaimed By His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, p 1-2, Internet version at <http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/church/vaticanii/dignitatis-humanae.html>; Made available to the net by Paul Halsall (HALSALL@MURRAY.FORDHAM.EDU)

its use of coercive power or are an indication the church believes it need not restrain itself whenever it thinks it is right.

Church disregard for basic American liberties is a Mormon tradition illustrated long ago (in a former fight over women's rights) when Joseph Smith and the Nauvoo city council ordered destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor newspaper. William Law, the editor and first councilor in the church presidency, spoke the truth (not slander) when he dared to publicly oppose Joseph Smith's secret and unlawful introduction of polygamy into the Mormon community. The violent destruction of the printing press remains un-renounced.

State and National laws have the potential to act forcefully upon the lives of citizen-members and non-members alike through the police power of the State. However, as explained in the section on [religious freedom](#), police power is incompatible with the persuasive requirements of religion.

Church members hold an independent power as citizens belonging solely to each of us. By violating the "wall of separation" between Church and State, the Church exposes itself to the political contest where citizen-members may rightfully criticize, oppose, or use tactics that weaken it or bring pressure upon it.

The fact that moral issues exist in the law is no justification for the violation of the separation because moral issues exist in all law making. More damning, the church abuses its ecclesiastical trust when it uses excommunication to retaliate against churchwomen who contradict the Church's national agenda for American women. For example, when churchwomen like Maxine Hanks are excommunicated for publishing about women's issues in her book [Women and Authority](#) that Church leaders seem to fear could lead to reform within the church itself.

Excommunication, the verdict of a Church court, is not an act of love as claimed. It is domination and control. Families do not expel their offspring out of love.

Most of the Mormon faithful have little voice in the decisions that govern their church. Our leaders have no accountability to the people and secrecy reins at most levels of church governance. Experience shows democratic reformers in the church cannot expect the only powers exercised towards them to be "gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned." Therefore, in the reverse direction, neither can "meekness" be characteristic of the reformer's demand for change.

Sexuality

It's illegal to have sex with a porcupine in Florida, to have unnatural sex in Arizona, to make love with someone you're not married to in Utah and to live together (cohabit) in South Carolina. The maximum prison sentences for these heinous crimes (sic) vary from six months to 14 years. However, in most states, law reform has dropped regulation of consensual sex between adults, whether in response to the "sexual revolution" or to the realization that it's a mistake to have laws regulating the private areas of people's lives²⁹⁵.

²⁹⁵ Authors unknown, *The Living Together Kit*, ISBN 0-87337-360-X

However, the Stake presidency came into my Elders quorum meeting in 1975 asking priesthood members to vote for a California State proposition repealing legislative law reform that had decriminalized private consensual acts between adults. Never mind the principle of *free agency*, the Church was trying to use the force of California Law to impose its morality on the citizenship. If it could, is the Church willing to use the force of law to compel obedience? The question is answered conclusively. Yes, it tried to, but the proposition failed.



“From whence comes the assumption that sex inside marriage is always holy? Marriage does not make sex holy, the quality of the relationship does. ... Suppose the manifestations of a committed but unmarried relationship are love, joy, and peace, while bitterness, pain, and hurt are the products of a legal marriage. In what qualities does holiness reside?²⁹⁶”

I know of a young LDS couple about to become temple married who expressed their affection for each other by being physically intimate a couple weeks too early. All the craziness, judgement, and condemnation resulting from this harmless act destroyed the relationship and the impending marriage.

I know a LDS husband who looked at porn trying to figure out why his LDS wife is unresponsive. However, porn is an awful place to learn from because it is so distorted.²⁹⁷

I am fully aware of LDS erotophobic sexual prohibitions about masturbation, porn, premarital affection or sex, and the effect these extreme prohibitions have on new marriages, especially the LDS female partner who has learned from her religion to feel shameful about her sexuality, and who is likely naive about it when suddenly it is okay to be sexual in marriage after a lifetime of severe prohibitions. Many married couples never in their lives unleash the female's orgasmic sexual pleasure.

70 - 80% of marriages are terminated by the female who either leaves or drives the husband out. Many married women, having secured the marriage commitment, quit their marital roles to be physically intimate with their husbands²⁹⁸. Such a woman will be so sexually insecure in her marriage that she is threatened by porn. Naïve sexually unresponsive LDS wives do not realize that porn does not compare to good sex. Hence, feeling threatened by porn, comes the self-righteous condemnation the LDS wife is encouraged to make by her religious beliefs. This absurdity can result in divorce.

Young male sexuality is at first testosterone driven. The young single male even has spontaneous ejaculations in his sleep. If this happens when he is awake, then he has sinned and insanely he must confess to his Bishop this natural phenomenon.

I think it's wrong that middle aged Mormon Bishops are insisting upon private annual worthiness interviews with all male and female followers to include questioning them about their private sexual experiences. Parents should assist their children of all ages to refuse these intrusive violations of privacy or at minimum to attend the interview with their child to limit the scope of the interrogation.

²⁹⁶ John Shelby Spong, [Living In Sin](#), 1988, 65-6

²⁹⁷ Perform BETTER Than 95% Of Men In The Bed. A [Woman's Perspective](#) [△](#)

²⁹⁸ [Do you ONLY WANT SEX?: △](#) This is a dishonest question that women often use against men.

Like Islam, Mormonism is absolutely obsessed with sexuality in very unhealthy ways. A wholesome view sees human sexuality as a natural and healthy part of human growth, not sinful. However, the Church wrongly creates guilt in its young people as a mechanism to control them, without giving the slightest indication that the positive and good forces fueling the changing moral values have been grasped or understood. Mormonism is blind to the history of its strict sexual codes that rise out of and justify the famous system of polygamous marriage.

I argue that Mormonism yields to no religion in its ability to couple sexuality with guilt. Sexual sin is compared by the church to murder rather than to love or passion. Even for married couples²⁹⁹, sex, the church taught during my upbringing and at BYU, is not designed for joy, for love, or for recreation. "... the prime purpose of sex desire is to beget children. Sex gratification must be had at that hazard."³⁰⁰

The ghost of Eternal Polygamy³⁰¹, Mormon Church President Russel M. Nelson and his First Councilor Dallin H. Oaks are widowers whose virgin second wives are sealed to them for "eternity" in Temple marriage. To believing Mormon women the second sealing makes the deceased first wife into a polygamous wife in the afterlife. Dr John Dehlin reports that some devout LDS women are so troubled by the prospect of sharing their husband's intimacies with other women for all eternity that they are inhibited, hence withhold being fully intimate with their living husbands.

Young male return missionaries do not think your Temple marriages are safe from the effects of a lifetime of Mormon teachings, particularly erotophobic shaming of your sexually naïve wife. Research shows women are more affected than men by their up-bringing when shame is associated with sexual feelings. Called non-concordance³⁰², study of female libido shows many such women are turned off by feelings of physical sexual arousal.

Virginity, sexual incompetence, inexperience, immaturity, ignorance, insecurity, misfortune, can result in the marital sexual relationship starting out badly, sometimes irreversibly. A couple years of marriage and your dear wife has measured your imperfections with which her female instincts are to test you – do you measure up. Don't be naïve thinking religion or her marriage commitments are her guide, rather it is her instinct to test and to diminish you that will rule.

To your horror she may claim her right to turn your intimacies into a life of prudery, considering perfectly normal sexual wishes to carry no [weight](#) [△](#) because there are aged deeply conservative male church leaders in your marriage bed having religious relationships with her, whispering obedience to them into her ear. In her hypergamy she has selected whom she thinks are superior males, not you, Prophets and Apostles, ancient and modern. You thought Mormon Polyandry (one wife many husbands) is over, but it's not. It is a deal breaker for me.

Since childhood it is likely your devout, Temple worthy, testimony bearing, tithe paying wife's sexuality is shamed³⁰³. Is it any wonder the sin of prudery is present among the Sisters?

²⁹⁹ Editorial Page, On Limiting Families, *Church News*, May 24, 1975, 16

³⁰⁰ President Spencer W. Kimbal, "The Marriage Decision", *Ensign*, Feb 1975, 4

³⁰¹ Mormon Stories #861: Carol Lynn Pearson - The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy Pt. 2

³⁰² Web site: Female Sex Drive – [Non-concordance](#), segment at 11:15 min

³⁰³ Do you ONLY WANT SEX? This is a [dishonest question](#) that women often use against men to shame them.

Men bringing their interest in sex into their relationships is entirely appropriate.

My mention that there could possibility be such a thing as a female sexual orgasm became a forbidden subject my wife and I could not talk about. Alone, I discovered and read Master's and Johnson's two classic texts on the subject, Human Sexual Response and Human Sexual Inadequacy, published in 1966 and 1970. Sexually naïve, I learned enough in those books to successfully create the conditions six (6) years into the marriage (1972) that she could find her moment of pleasure for the first time. As always, nothing was ever said about the event, but it was a big deal. In the years to follow through 1983, I believe her climax always succeeded.

Church leaders created an impossible bind between my wife and I about sex that continued through five (5) years of counseling at the end. Her prudery, justified on religious grounds, became stricter and the liberties she took to refuse physical affection seemed frequent to me. One does not expect Mormon sexual "purity culture" to exist in the marriage. A woman's refusal must always be respected. Not only was I constantly wounded by the rejections, but we were growing apart because by 1980 I had discovered the willful, knowing, intentional deceptions about Book of Abraham and Book of Mormon origins that she could not or would not hear.


I became so tired of being told "no" and so tired of self-censoring my needs for affection that I finally gave up and didn't want her anymore. It was a shame because we had a great family, and she was a very good mother and a capable and responsible homemaker. She didn't do anything wrong and had not changed. I wished she had grown out of her prohibitions so we could have stayed together. I miss her good qualities that our children inherit.

However, I am the one who changed because I was on an intense ten (10) year self-improvement campaign initiated ironically to improve the marriage, but which also necessitated examination of all my beliefs including beliefs about the Church. I found the Church did not measure up to my standards, or even its own standards of honesty, that it was Authoritarian and purposefully violated my *free agency*. As my wife then pointed out, we were going in opposite directions³⁰⁴. All alone, by 1982 I had extracted myself from Mormonism knowing full-well it was not what it claimed to be.

I instinctively knew that as a devout LDS woman she cannot be deeply in love or even respect a husband who no longer believes (she cannot be attracted to him either). Nor would I tolerate disrespect. I was already living out those truths of how any LDS woman could change her feelings: she withheld. For example, she enforced boundaries on physical and emotional intimacy. She could have sex to include her moment of pleasure, but at the same time, kissing, being affectionate or emotionally close was unwanted, refused, and withheld. Choosing to continue living that way felt like choosing to die.

The divorce was final in 1984 (17 years). I signed a release so that she could re-marry a very conservative temple worthy LDS man for "All time and Eternity" in the Temple. He has a good woman!

In relationships since, and in my second marriage (22 years), no woman has refused affection, but rather have been generous, genuinely interested, enthusiastic participants. We have been able to talk too. I am a widower now twelve (12) years since my second wife's passing from ALS (2012). I'll be surprised if I remarry.

³⁰⁴ [How I Told My Husband](#)  (1:09:17) I Wanted to Leave the Mormon Church by Alyssa Grenfell
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Homosexuality

Underlying the discussion of Sexism, Racism, Sexuality, and Homosexuality is the search for true prophetic leadership. Such leadership is revolutionary in character. It transcends the easy social norms of the day. Such leadership is “ahead of its time” in the struggle for social justice.

The teachings of a [divine prejudice](#) against homosexuality³⁰⁵ illustrates again that the Church is last, not first, to recognize and to correct past forms of injustice. “Being Gay and Mormon”³⁰⁶ illustrates through [personal accounts](#), the pain and suffering caused by Mormon Church [policies against](#)³⁰⁷ Gay people.

The term or concept of “homosexuality” does not exist in LDS scripture. It first entered LDS teachings explicitly in the 1950s–60s, especially through Spencer W. Kimball’s writings like, The Miracle of Forgiveness. According to Biblical Scholar, Dan McClellan:

“If you are leveraging or deploying the Bible to condemn homosexuals or homosexuality or LGBT Q Plus identities you need to fix your hearts because you're not engaging the Bible in a consistent or a thoughtful or an insightful or a very principled or constructive way. You're just leveraging the Bible to serve the interests of your own identity politics and if your identity politics incentivize you to minoritized, marginalize, and oppress already vulnerable groups then you need to grow the hell up and do much better.”³⁰⁸



And then there is the Mormon Church’s mistaken³⁰⁹ attempt to reverse gay marriage in California jointly sponsoring Proposition 8 with the Catholics. The first result is LDS gay men or women try to repent by marrying heterosexuals, a disaster for the heterosexual partner.³¹⁰ The second result is a deeply hurtful [rejection](#) [△](#) of who they are, supposedly by God, leading to depression or [suicide](#) [△](#).

“The evidence points to the conclusion that homosexual persons do not choose their sexual orientation, cannot change it, and constitute a quite normal but minority expression of human sexuality. It is clear that heterosexual prejudice against homosexuals must take its place alongside witchcraft, slavery, and other ignorant beliefs and oppressive institutions that we have abandoned.”³¹¹

“There is and will always be hypocrisy in religion (as in most institutions), but it is a greater problem for religion to neglect it. ... The nonsense associated with the “shunning” of divorced individuals, the ridicule and condemnation of the adolescent’s sexual drives as he or she emerges into pubescence, and the isolation of the homosexuals”³¹²

³⁰⁵ [What Does The Bible Say](#) [△](#) (2:17:10) About Homosexuality?: Bible Scholar Dan McClellan

³⁰⁶ 1. Editors Anderson and Allred, Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, Volume 3, 1997, Part 2

2. Gary M. Watts, Mugged by Reality, *Sunstone*, November 1997, Vol. 20:4 Issue 108, 43 - 51

³⁰⁷ [On The Record](#) [△](#) | An LDS Chronology of LGBTQ+ Messaging, a historical accounting.

³⁰⁸ [My positions on homosexuality & the Bible](#) [△](#) (9:50) Dan McClellan

[On the Weaponization of the Bible against LGBTQ+ Folks](#) [△](#) (4:44) Dan McClellan

³⁰⁹ On Dec 10, 2010, LeAnn Rimes joined [The Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles](#) (6:21) [△](#) noting that a lot of young gay men and women have been taking their own lives because “they can't be themselves.”. Rimes performance is a statement of solidarity, unity, and love in the face of adversity.

³¹⁰ [Emily Pearson](#) [△](#) (2:19), Dancing with Crazy, 2012, Amazon Kindle cloud version.

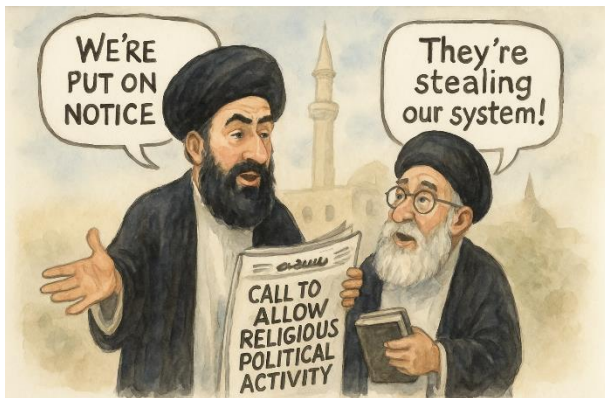
³¹¹ John Shelby Spong, Living in Sin, 1988, 79

³¹² Ibid, Forward, page 3

In my lifetime, the Church has a history of hypocrisy towards homosexuals that hides behind scriptural passage and myth even though Jesus and the BofM are 100% silent³¹³. On the 5th of November 2015 a new **Policy of Exclusion** was leaked. It was not published but was inserted into the secret handbook of instructions for leaders. The policy said nothing about Revelation, none-the-less there were mass resignations.

Every one of the Apostles at that time knows that Thomas Monson has dementia. They've already taken executive power away from him. They're not letting him make decisions. He does not make public appearances without the aid of a teleprompter.

November 13th, 2015, the first presidency issues a letter signed by Thomas Monson and councilors. It is similar to the policy put into the Handbook of Instructions and says nothing about Revelation.



January of 2016 the uproar has not died down. Senior Apostle Russell M Nelson goes to BYU, Hawaii, and does a [devotional](#) along with his wife Wendy. And in the devotional for the very first time this policy is claimed to be Revelation from God by Apostle Nelson³¹⁴. He is president of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time. This claim of Revelation is not being made by the Prophet but is being made by somebody in the quorum of the Twelve on behalf of the President of the Church.

In Nelson's description he has put all the Apostles at the scene of the crime; in the Temple fasting and deliberating prayerfully.

However, in their public statements all the Apostles speak as if completely unaware. Furthermore, in the April 2016 General Conference they say not one word about such a Revelation. Nobody else is talking about revelation except for Apostle Nelson

I think none of the Apostles corroborated Nelson's story because they knew his story was not true. However, the "Apostolic Charge" is so strong, none said a word. Their silence [means lives are lost](#).

Three and a half years after the exclusion policy was put in the manual and then leaked, the backlash from it is so great that God needed to give another revelation to President Nelson. This time he's the President of the Church to reverse the policy in April 2019.

Mormon leaders falsely claim divine guidance while continuing the long history of their devastating judgment of gay people individually and by force of law collectively³¹⁵. Excerpts of Edwin B Firmage's speech on the steps of the Utah state capital explain: "There will always be people ignorant enough, sick enough, or sufficiently mean-spirited ... to call others subhuman, bestial. But, ... when this process of dehumanization becomes the policy of an institution – church or state – massive, dark evil results.

³¹³ [What Does The Bible Say](#) About Homosexuality?: Bible Scholar Dan McClellan

³¹⁴ Segment of Apostle Nelson's speech Jan 2016 at BYU Hawaii saying gay exclusion [gay exclusion is revelation](#).

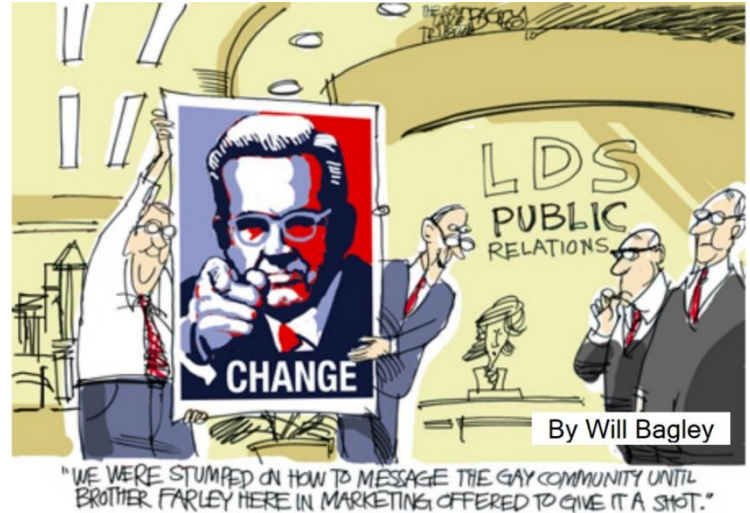
Mormon Stories #1153: Donna Showalter: Former Relief Society President Pt. 4, [Lost lives](#) at 42min:55sec (6.7 min)

Mormon Stories #1625 Part2 Going Deeper After Mormonism, Gay [Uncle of Ellee Duke](#) suicide at 58 min (10 min)

³¹⁵ Mormons Send Cold Cash to Alaska for Anti-Gay Marriage Referendum [\$500,000], *Church & State*, Vol.51, No 10, Nov 1998,

Social justice has been denied by the Utah legislature in naked attacks on our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters, and all our school children and young adults. Hate speech has been indulged in by the state legislators who thereby invite hate crimes.

And leaders who claim a monopoly of prophetic guidance have abandoned true prophetic leadership – sensitivity to the poor and the vulnerable. ... Shame on our legislature for this outrage. Shame on our Governor ... Shame on our senators who have applauded this act in direct violation of federal law ... And perhaps most serious of all in this situation – shame on the Mormon leadership for fomenting this spirit of intolerance and hate. I say ‘worst of all’ because I believe this is the source, the cause of such irrational, illegal, and immoral action. In debasing the prophetic role from its honored position of speaking fearlessly for social justice, dominant religious leadership has at once violated the First Amendment and the first and second commandments: that we love God and one another.”³¹⁶



Scholarship

Dr. David P. Wright states in a letter of self-defense to ecclesiastical charges, “...scholarship is not some sort of sin, a ‘failing of the flesh,’ which an individual recognizes to be an error and which that individual considers to be a blemish to his or her personal integrity. Scholarship, rather, is a constructive activity and is one of the purest expressions of a person’s character. Scholarship involves a failing of the flesh, paradoxically, only when one is not forthright with his or her conclusions, when one holds back evidence, when one dissembles about his or her views in the face of social – or ecclesiastical – pressure. To express one’s views, especially when they fly in the face of tradition, in other words, is hardly a sin but rather a virtue. Because Church disciplinary proceedings treat scholarship as if it were sinful, and even employ along the way the polemical myth that sin is what is responsible for the scholar’s unorthodox views, the proceedings are an attack on the individual’s integrity.”³¹⁷

College President, L. Jackson Newell, writes to Dr. Wright’s Stake President: “For Mormon scholars today, the more free and brave one is, the more likely he or she is to feel the iron blows of ecclesiastical discipline....I hope you will not punish David Wright for the very scholarly care and courage for which we ought to honor him. The test is not whether he is right but whether he is true to the evidence he uncovers and responsible in the words he writes.

I wouldn’t trade David Wright for all those religion teachers at BYU who look only for evidence that will fit their own particular assumptions about history or match their superiors’ theology....

³¹⁶ Edwin B. Firmage, “Seeing the Stranger as Enemy: Coming Out”, *Dialogue a Journal of Mormon Thought*, Volume 30 No 4, Winter 1997, 28,9

³¹⁷ David P. Wright, [Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance](#) Volume 3, 1997, 308
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While touting its commitment to families, the Church is brutally tearing many very good ones apart. David Wright, his wife and children have already paid a very heavy price for the Church's intolerance of scholarship. We hear general conference sermons about 'the importance of the one,' then watch our leaders sacrifice individuals' membership, and families, in the name of the many. I urge you to make a decision about David Wright that is worthy of the ideals spoken... by LDS leaders..."³¹⁸

University of Utah professor Edwin Firmage, Jr. writes, "...The image that Church trials such as David's present to the world and, indeed to many Church members, is of an institution determined at all costs to silence dissent, even when offered in a spirit of good will and fellowship. It is an image of a faceless corporation that uses its enormous administrative and social power to bully individuals into submission. It is an image of corporate officers abusing their authority to pursue private vendettas against their opponents and refusing to take responsibility for their actions. It is an image of misplaced obedience on the part of subordinate officers in following unjust and mean-spirited orders. Such trials discredit the institution they profess to defend and bring shame on its members."³¹⁹

Episcopal Bishop Spong also squarely faces issues of historical and intellectual honesty that will sound familiar to Mormons: "Long ago I decided that I could no longer sacrifice scholarship and truth to protect the weak and religiously insecure. I see another audience that the church seems to ignore. That audience is made up of brilliantly educated men and women who find in the church a God too small to be the God of life for them, a knowledge too restricted to be compelling or a superstition too obvious to be entertained with seriousness. My now-grown daughters are part of that audience. I want them to find in the Christian church a gospel that takes seriously the world of their experience, that does not seek to bind their minds into premodern or ancient forms, that is not afraid to examine emerging truth from any source, whether from the world of science or the world of biblical scholarship. I want the church to proclaim a gospel that has contemporary power and to worship a God who does not need to be protected by hiding that God in some anti-intellectual pose, for fear that new truth will obliterate faith and devotion due such a God."³²⁰



Infallibility

Of course, the Church professes not to have the Doctrine of Infallibility. However, we do have our own Mormon version of this doctrine in often repeated statements that the Lord will not permit the prophet to lead the Church astray.

Control is the "hidden agenda"³²¹ of church leaders who seek to declare one orthodox set of beliefs, and who declare one set of commandments by which all people are to live and be judged. Public discourse, church talks, class discussions, manuals and materials are to be of approved content and dominated by the orthodox notion of

³¹⁸ L. Jackson Newell, *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance* Volume 3, 1997, 352 - 3

³¹⁹ Edwin Firmage, Jr., *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance* Volume 3, 1997, 355

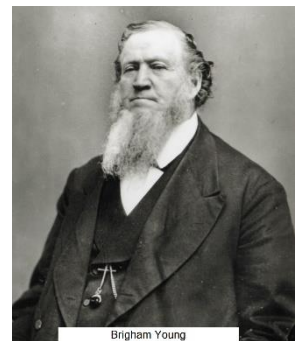
³²⁰ Spong, *Born*, xv

³²¹ Janice Allred, Do You Preach the Orthodox Religion?, *Sunstone*, June 1991, Volume 15:2, 31

truth. Critical thinking is acceptable only when it supports the orthodox view, and we should share our experiences in searching for truth only if we have arrived at the orthodox conclusion.

“If orthodoxy is defined by authority, then compulsion of beliefs will arise. In every case where a church tries a member for heresy, the fundamental issue is always obedience to authority, not the truth of any particular doctrine. Although the authorities may attempt to persuade the heretic to believe the orthodox view, they never open themselves to his view. So, the point of all trials for heresy is that members must submit to authority, if they want to remain in the church, because the authorities get to decide what is doctrine and what isn’t. Heretics must then decide whether to be excommunicated or to lie to authority or to themselves. Because belief cannot be compelled, people cannot just decide to believe what they really do not believe. So, if they choose to submit to authority, they are compelled to lie about their beliefs. This analysis of what it means to define a church by a set of beliefs should make it clear that orthodoxy is an inherently divisive and oppressive principle.”³²²

Today Galileo is universally recognized as a father of modern science, and his trial the cause *celebre* of the conflict of obedience versus freedom of thought.³²³ In his time Galileo realized at last that the authorities were not interested in truth, but only in their authority. Church leaders today and in the past take a similar stance. For example, “beginning in 1853 and continuing some twenty-four years” when “Brigham Young taught publicly that God ... had come to earth as Adam to physically father his spiritual offspring. Apostle Orson Pratt did not share Young’s views, instead teaching the omniscience of God and worshipping the attributes of God, not his personhood.” Said Pratt, “I hope that you will grant me as an individual the privilege of believing my present views ... I am willing to take President Young as a guide in most things but not in all. ... I am not going to crawl to Brigham and act the Hypocrite.” Young’s response, supported by Pratt’s colleagues [Apostles], was predictable: Pratt was teaching a ‘lie’ that was as ‘fals as Hell.’



The problem surfaced repeatedly over two decades, with Pratt speaking his mind, then eventually confessing, repenting, and capitulating. ‘If the Prophet of the living God, who is my standard, lays down a ... principle of philosophy ... or science ... We must bow. ... We must yield.’ Years later he restated to Young in a letter, ‘I have greatly sinned against you ... and ... God, in foolishly trying to justify myself in advocating ideas, opposed to these which have been introduced by the highest authorities of the Church. ... I humbly ask you ... to forgive me.’

Where their conflict began as a difference of opinion, Pratt had the authority of the scriptures behind him, so Young shifted the debate to submission to authority and demanded that Pratt recognize his right as prophet of the church to declare doctrine. Time has been kind to Pratt ... teaching Adam-God today could result in excommunication. ... This struggle ... touched on the question of honoring the office or its holder, the person or the virtues taught. ... In our lifetime church leaders have continued to vacillate on this point, while being absolute in their opposing positions.”³²⁴ ... “While Orson Pratt surrendered his individual integrity to Brigham Young,

³²² Ibid, 31

³²³ Robert B. Anderson, “The Dilemma of the Mormon Rationalist”, Dialogue a Journal of Mormon Thought, Volume 30 No 4, Winter 1997, 72

³²⁴ Ibid; 80,1

we understand that excommunication might have left him no life.”³²⁵ Never-the-less, to his detriment as a surrogate for all of us, Orson Pratt’s trust in his inner conscience is weakened, development of his personal integrity is fouled, and his freedom of expression in his search for truth are wrongly usurped in the name of Young’s prophetic authority.

Yet, even in the face of numerous counter examples like the Adam-God teaching above or the exclusion from church of children from gay families, church authorities continue their claim that “The Lord will never Permit the Living Prophet to Lead the Church Astray”³²⁶ and at the same time threatening excommunication for public disagreement. Bishop Spong articulates the situation most clearly, “Ecclesiastical claims to possess infallibility in any formulated version of scripture and creed or in the articulations of any council, synod, or hierarchical figure are to me manifestations of idolatry. Such claims do not serve the truth. They serve only the power and control needs of the ecclesiastical institutions.”³²⁷

Conclusion

The only question before the church in regard to its dishonesty and its abuse of power “should be how abject the apology to its former members will be, and to all those whose pursuit of truth was hindered by their fear of ecclesiastical reprisal, and how honest the confession of the church will be regarding its own incompetence and ignorance of the above and similar issues”³²⁸. Such actions are not to be expected, however from a body in which truth is regularly prohibited in order to preserve its unholy power claims of being right.

Historian D. Michael Quinn was excommunicated for refusing to meet with his stake president, which the stake president and high council defined as “conduct contrary to the laws and order of the Church.”³²⁹ Church leaders should understand that their actions are rightfully damaging to the reputation and moral authority of the church. That disciplined members and all those who feel threatened by those actions have become an important and energetic minority. These purposeful individuals are active in publications such as *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, and [*Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance*](#).

Our views and beliefs vary, but we are united in opposition to the intolerant fundamentalism manifest in the church today. “We hope to leave the world a better place because of what we have done—to give more than we have taken. Our ‘priesthood lineage’ includes Galileo and other men and women who have championed independent thought. Many of the attributes and virtues of Jesus contribute to our ideals. There are those of us who wish to leave undefined the degree of our belief in the supernatural. We ... enjoy pluralistic views and opinions, but we wish to diminish literal beliefs and to oppose narrow acts of discipline that threaten us and cause our friend’s pain.”³³⁰

³²⁵ Ibid;87

³²⁶ 1. Prepared by the Church Educational System, Teachings of the Living Prophets, “Student Manual Religion 333”, 1982, Chapter 3, Section 3-7, 15

2. “Will the President of the Church Ever Lead You Astray?”, 1974 – 1975 Study Guide for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Published by same 1974, 111

³²⁷ John Shelby Spong, Rescuing the Bible From Fundamentalism, 1991,232

³²⁸ Spong, Born, 178

³²⁹ Anderson, “The Dilemma of the Mormon Rationalist”, Dialogue, Volume 30 No 4, Winter 1997, 90

³³⁰ Ibid; 92

It seems to me, the programs, welfare, and image of the church are considered “more important than the interests or needs of the people or of consequences to them.”³³¹ I acknowledge there are quite normally conflicts of interest between any organization and the best interest of its individual members. Therefore, warn church members to be on guard, never to give away personal autonomy or to consign individual free agency to the church, Priesthood officers, or husbands. Emphasize the necessity of these precautions because the tendency of all institutions (government, corporation, or church) is to represent its own self-interest, first. High loyalty to the institution is naturally among the traits of men selected for church leadership. Further advise individual members that no man or institution should ever stand between oneself and God. Such advice will weaken church control and empower the members. Belief in a personal and authoritative direct connection to the God within, can be seen ultimately to bypass church claims to power by way of baptism, priesthood, Temple, and patriarchy.

My experience and belief are that the authoritarian nature of the church works inherently to defeat the inner development of the fully empowered individual. Reflection upon this assertion gives me pause, since I know good people in the church whose interpretation is different, I am sure. However, that the great majority of church members are publicly silent or give passive support to the recent church excommunications, is also telling. Freedom can be frightening; Authoritarianism can be tempting; I believe an *Escape from Freedom*³³² accounts for submission to the church policy of silent dissent (public silence)³³³.



I remember the moment in 1978 when I first admitted to myself that my understanding about the constraints personal liberty (*free agency*) imposes on the Church, are irreconcilable with the church history, policies and practices described herein. On leaving the bishops office that morning I knew the conflict came from my refusal to accept that times had changed, that I was actually the one who was naïvely clinging to a misunderstanding from my youth. The times of tolerance, respect for diversity, open-mindedness, self-governance, and personal autonomy taught by men like President David O. McKay, Hugh B. Brown³³⁴, and Marion D. Hanks were gone. The Presidencies of Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Spencer W. Kimball reestablished the authoritarian Mormon tradition³³⁵. I'd spent years teaching Gospel Doctrine and Elders Quorum classes earnestly redirecting the tone of the newly correlated³³⁶ lesson materials to emphasize instead the principle of *free agency* above obedience. However, those stressful years were, in hindsight, hopeless opposition to a top-down retrenchment back to conservative Mormon fundamentalism that I had never known.

One can predict that even though Smith's claims about the [Book of Mormon](#) and [Book of Abraham](#) historicity are discredited, there will be those busily redefining what Joseph Smith “actually” did was reveal, not translate. Of course, that is taking the liberty to oneself to contradict what he taught and said, hence, to eliminate the binary

³³¹ Harold T. Christensen, “Memoirs of a Marginal Man: Reflections of a Mormon Sociologist,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 20, No.3 Fall 1987, 120

³³² Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, 1941

³³³ What Does It Mean to Sustain and Follow the Brethren?; Living prophets for a living Church, P 78-81

³³⁴ President Hugh B. Brown, “An Eternal Quest: Freedom of the Mind,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 17, No.1 Spring 1984, 79

³³⁵ Richard J. Cummings, “Quintessential Mormonism: Literal-Mindedness as a Way of Life,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. XV, No.4 Winter 1982, 98

³³⁶ Peter Wiley, The Lee Revolution and the Rise of Correlation, Sunstone, 1995, Volume 10:1, 19 - 22

truth claims Joseph Smith made. Such rhetorical slights-of-hand, shifting from “translation” to “revelation” shield Mormon scriptures making them unfalsifiable, thus avoiding the necessary confession by Church leaders that would benefit the rest of us by weakening their power to dominate.

However, protecting their unholy claim to power is the very purpose of redefinition. It rises out of fear that otherwise the Church will lose its power to control its members. “The more bold the claim, the stronger the devotion that the members give.” For example, certain kinds of RLDS Church power was diminished³³⁷ when they chose honesty.

However, power rooted in dishonesty is corrupt when used as it is to influence or inspire the majority, and to silence the minority. Predictably, John Dehlin’s tolerance and goodwill at Mormon Stories would be turned against him to excommunicate and “pulverize” him (his words).

I met John Dehlin of “Mormon Stories” at Sunstone in 2004-5 unsuccessfully trying to persuade him he was being too kind, that Church leaders are power players who require pressure to make changes, not love or enlightenment. Ten years later after his Excommunication, John has taken off the gloves, so to speak.

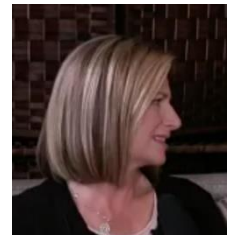
Given John’s PhD training as a counselor, he is still very respectful of people’s religious choices. Before his banishment, John often encouraged people to [stay inside](#)³³⁸ and reform it. John is seen at [Mormon Stories](#) posing leading questions to [Donna Showalter](#), or to attorney [Paul Toscano](#)³³⁹ or in 2012 to [Tom Phillips](#), former British Stake President.

His suggestion being made in the form of a question is that, for practical reasons, one could consider remaining inside, tolerating, submitting to, or empowering the Church because it serves a useful purpose. That could be true for some former believers.



Paul Toscano

Dehlin loves to condemn “binary” thinking. When I spoke to John estimate 2005 at Salt Lake City Sunstone, he did not want to disempower Church truth claims about the Book of Mormon even though he knew it is a contemporary document, not historical.



Donna Showalter

However, Donna Showalter³⁴⁰ corrects John’s argument about “binary” thinking when he is posing his agenda to her as a leading question. She points to the life vs death consequences for gays like her son who wrongly could believe the “binary” truth claims Church leaders make that they speak for God.

None-the-less, at Mormon Stories, John Dehlin and his wife, Margi Weber Dehlin do amazing work, creating the most important, constructive, positive, helpful support for those needing to examine Mormon truth claims honestly, whether choosing to exit or to remain in the Church. Recommend [contributing](#) to Dr Dehlin’s work like I do.

³³⁷ John Dehlin, [Mormon Stories, My Story #029 Part 3](#)—What I Do and Don’t Believe, and Why I Remain a Mormon, 41:45 – 44:40 Min

³³⁸ Mormon Stories #685: John Dehlin about [staying in](#) Part 2: Constructive or Destructive Critic?

³³⁹ Paul Toscano video interview, Part5 5 – 20 minutes; Part6 19 – 24 minutes. [Mormon Stories Paul Toscano](#)

³⁴⁰ Mormon Stories #1153: Donna Showalter: Former Relief Society President Pt. 4, [Lost lives](#) snippet at 42:55 (6.7 Min)

One of the self-serving falsehoods Mormonism teaches its followers is the idea that religion is the sole source of moral values. However, the LDS Church is a follower, not a leader advancing major social values in the world about racism, women's rights, homosexuality, gay marriage, etc. It is 30 years behind.

Mormon church believers can no longer live barricaded in a fortress. Retention rates among Mormon millennials are falling off a cliff according to Dr Patrick Mason. Only 41% of Mormon millennials believe that priesthood authority is reserved solely for men, not women. It could help if the Church were right more often than wrong, and the young did not so often discover the lies told to them about Church history. The flood of formerly hidden information has forced the church to produce "[*Gospel Topic Essays*](#)."

It is truth seekers having left the Church who have defined what the essays must be about. For example, Smith's polygamy, kept secret from his wife Emma, qualifies as criminal sexual predation on the wives of men he sent on missions, on teenage orphaned girls for whom he was guardian, by one in a position of power that he abused to achieve his sexual goals. Among the dozen or so essays written, the Church has yet to address the historicity of the Book of Mormon if it dares do so.

To paraphrase John Dehlin, "there's very little anti-Mormon literature in existence"³⁴¹. What there is in abundance is truth seekers, who have discovered that they've been misled and lied to. And they're using just the Book of Mormon itself, the Book of Abraham itself, church history itself, to demonstrate to the world that the Mormon Church has hid truthful information from its members and lied to them." Whether that is John Dehlin ([Mormon Stories](#)), Jeremy Runnells ([CES Letter](#)), [Mormon Think](#), Bill Reel ([Mormon Discussions](#)), RFM ([Radio Free Mormon](#)), Lindsey Hanson Park, The September 6 ([Mormon Alliance](#)), Brett Metcalf, Michael Quinn, Grant Palmer, take your pick. None of that is anti-Mormon. It is offensive to use that term. It is an apologist technique to poison the well against the truth tellers.

A tactic apologist use is saying, I'm smart and I have a PhD. I can still believe therefore you can. However, for many Latter-day Saints, the facts do compel disbelief. Furthermore, we discover many apologists are buffet Mormons who have redefined many words like translation into revelation, who have a testimony stronger than ever, but do not believe the Book of Mormon is historical or do not believe D&C 132 about plural marriage.

In a classic violation of informed consent, they do not tell you that their very livelihood, their reputations, their income, are tied to the church either indirectly or directly dependent on still believing. So, regardless of whether or not they are sincere believers, their motivation to believe has a confirmation bias. Their motivation is to cherry pick the evidence and to arrive at faithful conclusions because they are heavily tied to social pressures, to financial pressures that they don't acknowledge.

The "[*Gospel Topic Essays*](#)" are an inoculation. However, to call the Essays honest is wrong because there is a lot of hiding, a lot of omissions, a lot of contextualization in deceptive ways. The intention is that Essay readers can go back to sleep concluding there is no problem. Oh look, they are talking about a "seer" stone in a hat. Oh look, they gave an answer to the Book of Abraham. Oh look, they are talking about Joseph marrying wives of men he sent overseas on a mission. The essays do not connect the dots to show members why these are real problems.

The Corporate Board of Directors of the Church, who are the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Apostles, can point to the Essays to escape the legitimate accusation from contributing church members, that the Directors

³⁴¹ Mormon Stories 1407 - Faith Crisis [Stake Fireside](#): Patrick Mason in Logan/Cache Valley, Utah (2021), 0:30, 0:38 minutes.

are delinquent, failing in their duty to disclose all vital information to tithe paying members and converts. Furthermore, there is no escaping accountability to all the truth tellers they excommunicated who spoke publicly about the hidden truths the Essays are now admitting to.

What you have is a church that has misled and deceived systematically, consciously, intentionally, its members for over 150 years. Only after hemorrhaging memberships so badly, do they realize their only option is transparency. It is a calculation, not a decision based on truth, integrity, or honesty. The calculation is they will lose less by deceptively inoculating people than they would lose by just flat-out deceiving people and punishing the truth tellers.

"There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what is not true; the other is to refuse to accept what is true."

What the Church teaches us about repentance is to admit the mistake, make restitution, forsake the sin, confess to those we injured, and then do better. However, the church does none of that. In fact, Apostle Dallin Oaks is on record saying, we neither seek nor give apology³⁴². He is saying we do not repent; we make you repent; we shame you and punish you if you do not. But we are not going to repent.

If you doubt the disconnect between religion and moral values, look at the treatment of immigrant children at the US Southern border by the Trump administration chosen by Christian Fundamentalist and the majority of Utah Mormon voters both in 2016 and 2020. Or look at the top 20 most secular countries in the world; They all have universal health care because they care for the poor and needy. You do not need religion to be good.

I believe an [Authoritarian](#) personality explains Mormon fundamentalism best. It is a personality preference present in 1/3rd of all national populations according to Bob Altemeyer³⁴³. Therefore, Mormonism always finds a clientele. Authoritarian values serve a useful purpose in banking, the police, the military, or the Law. Authoritarian personalities are attracted to the rule of strong men, like kings, corporate or political leaders, prophets, Gods. Erich Fromm is explaining this same psychological draw by Hitler on the German people when Fromm writes, [Escape from Freedom](#). Authoritarian personalities are found scattered about in many professions but can crush the creative personality because they fear the uncontrolled liberty of others. Authoritarianism is [unhealthy](#) when encountered in counseling or education or religion or parenting or inter-personal relationships.

One is mistaken to think Mormonism is a family religion. Not when one marriage partner has uncovered and is willing to face the extent of Mormon Church deceit, domination, manipulation, and control, but the other is not. My wife at that time pointed out I was pulling away while she was drawing closer to it. Mormonism establishes the conditions making the differences extra-ordinarily difficult unless both follow the same path. Otherwise, she could only see me as the unworthy partner, an intolerable judgement in my view. I made the journey out of the Church alone. Isolated, I did not know of my inner loneliness till decades later meeting a person who understood.

Fixing Mormonism requires revolutionary change based on a [healthy](#) foundation. It will produce a schism because conservative authoritarian members will not come along which could leave half the membership behind. These are the people the Church has changed in my immediate and extended families into flaming [authoritarian](#) zealots

³⁴² "[No apology](#)? Really? Mormons question leader Dallin H. Oaks' stance", The Salt Lake Tribune, January 30, 2015

³⁴³ Bob Altemeyer, "[The Authoritarians](#)", University of Manitoba Winnipeg Canada

who on Fast & Testimony Sundays say they “know” the Truth with absolute certainty. It is an addiction to certainty. It has been a winning strategy, but it is aberrant [unhealthy](#) behavior the Church must bring to an end.

Likewise, the whole secret plagiarized Temple system must be eliminated that Smith adapted from the Masons at Nauvoo Illinois, its Laws of Obedience and Sacrifice, its promises of rewards and punishments. Church leadership must live up to their own teachings by disempowering itself, confessing publicly their dishonesty about Church history and do all the resultant deconstruction and denunciations. The church must restructure to become more Democratic and to include women in its top leadership. Church finances must be fully disclosed to tithe payers.

I made a big investment in Mormonism through to age 42 (1984) when I left. However, from 1984 – 1998 I delayed my official Exit, changing my life, wondering if I could find a way to use my insights, cultural understanding, and energy to participate in a reformation. I did not.

The decision to join any Church or to withdraw from membership is a personal choice. Acceptance of the individual’s right to resign rather than be excommunicated was won by Norman Hancock in an out-of-court settlement against the Church³⁴⁴. The thought of exposing in secret my conscience at trial in a Church court produced a primal visceral determination I would never submit to a Church court composed of 15 testimony bearing male judges who I consider intentionally uninformed, intellectually dishonest, addicted to certainty, their minds already made up. They now call it a court of love. Only testimony bearing Latter-day Saints are capable of such hypocrisy. I have resigned.

One surprise afterward is the sense of freedom I feel having changed my self-identity; for example, I’m not stressed anymore by mistakes the Church makes, like its confused awful doctrine(s) towards gays and lesbians.

LDS church meetings are as painful to me as the dentist’s chair, especially the craziness at Testimony meetings. I do not miss going to Church; it turns out Sundays and life are better completely absent Church. The freedom I experience is exhilarating.

Yes, out of my Mormon life came some good. On the other hand, life is better being liberated from it, to define and live my own life, a life that belongs to me not in sacrifice to the church. Unraveling the years of indoctrination and rebuilding my own belief system is interesting.

I have accomplished many cool things in my life, and I consider understanding Mormon Church manipulation and my escape from it is one of my greatest achievements. I have broken the chain of deceit and control that could follow for generations. For myself and my descendants we are freed to define and to create our own lives. It is a great relief living without guilt, owning my own free time, being authentic, forsaking prayer to a God who does not answer.

I feel no need belonging to yet another church³⁴⁵. The idea is repulsive, except the transcendentalists are tolerable. I have read all the books of Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong. For example, Spong’s book [Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism](#) shows the Bible has difficulties too, given the history of New

³⁴⁴ Lavina Fielding Anderson, [The Norman Hancock Case](#), Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, Vol 3, Part 1, Chapter 5

³⁴⁵ [Neil deGrasse Tyson's](#) Sharpest Arguments Against Religion
It's Time To Wake Up - [Alan Watts](#) on Religion
[Sam Harris's](#) Best Argument of all time, Part One

Testament composition, the ignorance and superstitions of its authors, the fabrications and unholy beliefs of bronze age peoples.

I witness in Mormon Testimonies the power of self-delusion that is common to of all fundamentalists, whether Mormon, Christian, Jewish, or Islamic, who think they must believe, or who believe because they want to believe the promises, or who believe to receive miraculous healings, or who believe fearing they may not live forever.

Regardless, I am permanently imprinted by the first half of my life inside the Mormon Church. For example, I still prefer to abstain from alcohol and tobacco. Leaving Mormonism is an act of repentance, a course correction, a move toward a more wholesome, healthy, and authentic life. Leaving is a wonderful improvement.

-- The End --

Biography

Francis ‘Nelson’ Henderson was born into the church in Raleigh, North Carolina (1942). The eldest of nine (9) children to Francis ‘Marion’ Henderson and Nellie ‘Jane’ Taylor. Marion was a founding church leader in Raleigh 1940’s – 1960’s coming from Wilmington NC. He served as Raleigh NC branch president, district president, and councilor in the first North Carolina stake formed at Raleigh. He led the fund raising and construction of the first ever chapel in Raleigh. My recollection of him at church is that he was always seated on the podium. His “go to” subject in church talks was about “Attitude.” A branch member once said to me, “Nelson, don’t you know your father is one of the most conservative members in this area.” No, I didn’t know that. I knew him as a gentile, kind, thoughtful, reasoned person that I deeply admired.

Jane’s heritage is Utah pioneer. One great grandfather was Provo church leader & BYU board member T.N. Taylor. He was Provo Stake President who led building what is now the downtown Provo Temple. One great grandfather was Church President John Taylor. I knew mother was conservative, yet she had a side of her open to exploration. This willingness to explore must be the factor making her women’s Relief Society lessons interesting to the Raleigh Church Sisters. As a young adult I made an extended effort to understand her one-on-one, adult-to-adult. She seemed to need and to appreciate those communications.

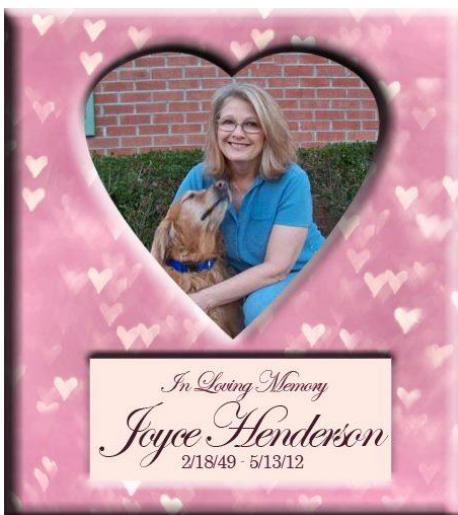
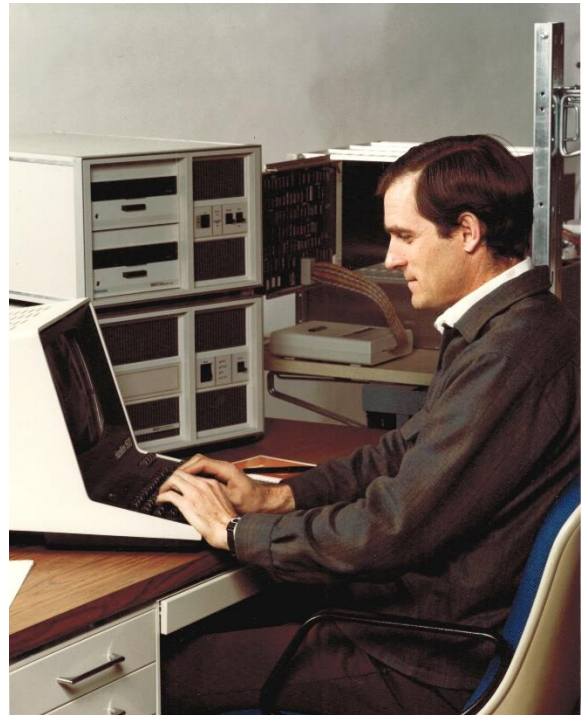


I served a successful two (2) year mission to So. California 1962 – 1964. Graduated BA Physics, BYU 1968. Married in the Temple (1966), I am a founding member of Comtel, 1978 - 2002, a California satellite communications company where I led development of embedded real-time computer firmware. Employed by Scientific Research Corp 2010 – 2014, and by GPS Source Inc, 2016 – 2017, Lockheed-Martin 2018 & 2019, Northrop-Grumman 2020, Spectra Sys 2021, BAE 2022 to present.

Remarried, I moved from Santa Maria CA, to Poway CA, to Lilburn GA, to Daniel Island SC, to Austin TX, to Colorado Springs, to Littleton CO, to Palmdale CA, to Satellite Beach FL, to Mount Pleasant, SC, to Providence RI, to Park City, UT, USA, to South Ogden UT.

In 1978 I first recognized irreconcilable differences between myself and the LDS Church. I'd been Temple married 12 years. In 1984 I left the LDS Church never to return and divorced. I remarried civilly in 1989. In 1998 I officially withdrew my LDS Church membership.

I am still surprised that officially resigning made any difference, but it did. It changed my self-identity so that its unhealthy beliefs or its history were not part of me anymore. My sense of responsibility for the Church dissipated. My cognitive dissonance relaxed, and I could release the Church to take its own divergent path while I became an interested but outside observer.



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www.mormon-alliance.org

<http://www.mormonstories.org/>

www.inertial-solutions.us

www.linkedin.com

<https://www.fnhenderson.us/NelsonHendersonBio.pdf>

<https://www.fnhenderson.us/FullExitStatement.pdf>

<https://www.fnhenderson.us/ExitStatement.pdf>

<https://www.fnhenderson.us/TempleTemptations.pdf>

<https://www.fnhenderson.us/ldswomen.pdf>

<https://www.fnhenderson.us/AuthoritarianTemptation.pdf>

[All links from Invitations, plus all links from Meeting videos.](#)

My Cell phone

My email

My main web site

My site

I sponsor

I Contribute to

My project

My Profile

My 2022 Resume

My Full Exit Statement

My Exit Statement (Short Version)

My Proposed Billboard Campaign

My 2004 Sunstone Speech

My 2005 Sunstone Speech

Host - Davis County Ex-Mormon Meetup

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Appendix A1 - The Psychological Effects of the Mormon Church on its Members³⁴⁶

One has only to look upon all the testimonials of “[knowing the truth](#)” at monthly testimony meetings to recognize psychologically aberrant behavior is an organized event happening all over the Church each first Sunday of the month.

Calling the Church, a “cult” is too pejorative. Instead, the [author](#) of this clarifying section refers to it as a “manipulative group” referring to characteristics many cults have in common: exerting undue influence over the emotions, thoughts and behavior of their members. Why, then, “manipulative” rather than a more neutral term such as “undue influence”? The reason is the asymmetrical relationship between the interests of the group and the individual. Influencing is a normal form of interaction between humans. Parents influence their children, managers their employees, companies their customers, etc.

The person who exerts the influence, however, is in turn influenced by the individual needs of the persons being influenced and usually is open to feedback. ... In a manipulative group, the process of exerting influence is not reciprocal. The interests of the group supersede the interests of the individual. The individual has little to no influence over the leadership of the group while the leaders, on the other hand, dictate the personal lives of the members down to the most minute details (food, clothing, entertainment, etc.). It is this asymmetry between the leadership of the group and the members that makes a group manipulative rather than merely influencing.

This asymmetric influencing is implemented through the use of manipulative techniques such as:

- *Inducing anxiety, guilt and fear (e.g. over one's eternal well-being);*
- *Cultivating a strong us-versus-them mentality;*
- *Promoting group think, discouraging independent thought;*
- *Enforcing strict lifestyle rules;*
- *Using rewards and punishments;*
- *Exerting social control and group pressure;*
- *Causing stress and overloading;*
- *Disparaging external information;*
- *Engaging in black-and-white thinking, polarizing.*

None of these techniques are the exclusive domain of manipulative groups. Sports fans often display a strong us-versus-them mentality; parents use rewards and punishments; political parties polarize; top athletes live by very strict lifestyle rules. Moreover, these techniques are not always consciously employed or recognized.

³⁴⁶ Italicized portions of “Psychological Effects of the Mormon Church on its Members” are copied from the site, [Mormonism 101](#). The author is unidentified but says he has well over 30 years active church membership. Disclosing one’s identity could result in excommunication, a threat to one’s marriage.

Appendix A2 - The Mormon Church as a Manipulative Group

Some of those in the Church with authoritarian personalities or those whose minds are bent towards it by church activity, correctly point out they live productive and good lives inside the group. Those adopting an authoritarian group mind set will automatically know how to employ manipulative techniques on others and their children without even being instructed.

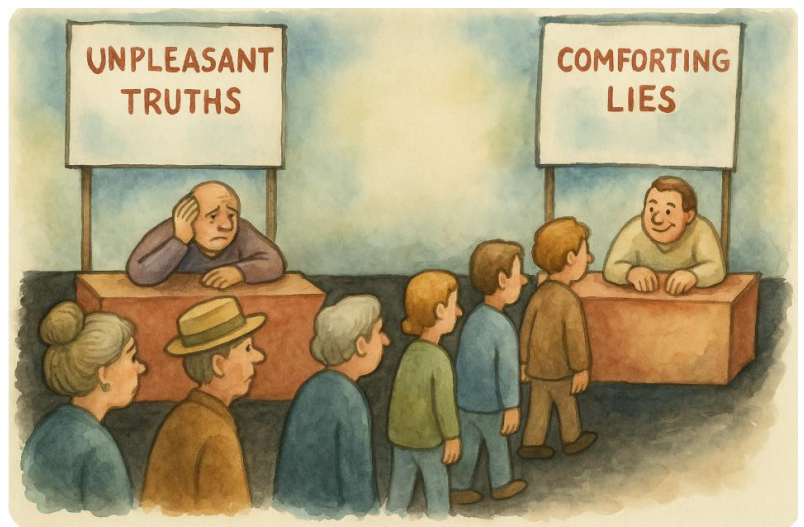
To determine the impact of a manipulative group on a random individual, the [author](#) says, several journalists, psychologists, professional associations and government agencies have constructed models and questionnaires.

Below are links to six such questionnaires, applied to the Mormon church. The answers to the first questionnaire have been extensively documented. That article is very long but hopefully also very recognizable for readers who are familiar with the Mormon church.

The questions on the other lists have only been answered with yes or no. These lists partly overlap because they concern the same subject but on the other hand, they also enhance each other because they have been constructed from different perspectives.

- Swiss journalist Hugo Stamm (*the Mormon church meets 40 of the 45 criteria on this list, or 89%*);
- Steven Hassan's BITE-model (*59 out of 74 criteria, 85%*); (CTRL key + Point Click to follow links)
- The Cult Education Institute (*19 out of 20 criteria, 95%*);
- The International Cultic Studies Association (*14 out of 15, 93%*)
- The Professional Association of German Psychologists (*25 out of 28, 89%*);
- The Belgian government's Information and Advisory Centre for Harmful Cultic Organizations (*15 out of 20, 75%*);

When evaluating these results, the reader should be aware that these kinds of questionnaires measure the possible impact on a random individual. No research has been done for this article into the actual psychological impact of the Mormon church on a defined group of members. Also, current sociological research indicates that people who join cults are not hapless victims of manipulation but take on an active and reflective stance in the affiliation process.



In conclusion, the Mormon church exhibits a relatively high percentage of characteristics of manipulative groups because of its authoritarian, hierarchical structure and its far-reaching, one-sided influence on, and control over the behavior, emotions and thoughts of its members.

Appendix B - Lamanite Genetic Genealogy

Former Bishop and biologist Simon Southerton records that while searching on the internet, “Without doubt the article that had the most impact on me was a statement published by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. concerning the Book of Mormon. In very strong language this statement spoke of a complete lack of evidence for any connection between the Old World and the New World. The strength of this statement jolted me. Scientists rarely make such dogmatic statements unless they have plenty of evidence (or none in this case) to back them up. I had been told in seminary that the Smithsonian had been known to use the Book of Mormon in their research. The statement utterly refuted this claim. In fact the Smithsonian have grown tired of responding to Mormons who regularly contact them to see how the Book of Mormon is helping them out. I believed the Book of Mormon was true and that Hebrew civilization had occurred on the American continent. I firmly believed that there was a connection between the Old and the New World, however, I had never taken the time to seriously examine this. I was confident that somewhere in the scientific literature there must be some reliable research that supported this. There is an abundance of Mormon literature that claims strong links between the two worlds. With this in mind I decided to look for myself for research that supported Old World migrations to the Americas.

I began searching for research papers having some connection with American Indians or Polynesians. Because I was familiar with plant genetics, I became interested in recent research on the DNA of American Indians. The principles of DNA analysis are applicable to all living things, so it was relatively easy to jump from the plant to the animal kingdom. I rapidly accumulated many scientific papers comparing the mitochondrial DNA of American Indians from numerous tribes with the mitochondrial DNA of other populations around the world. Mitochondrial DNA is passed from mother to child each generation. It is essentially a female genealogical lineage, or a maiden name if you like, stored in the mitochondrial DNA sequence. This part of the total DNA genome is used for population studies in many animal species. It is very simple to study because the mitochondrial genes don't get rearranged each generation like most genes, which are inherited as a mixed bag from previous generations. I was equally interested in more recent Y-chromosome DNA studies. Male lineages, much like DNA surnames, are passed from father to son and clearly reveal male genealogical lineages.

In the last decade scientists from several research groups had tested the mitochondrial DNA of over 2000 American Indians from about a hundred tribes scattered over the length of the Americas. It soon became apparent to me that about 99% of their female lineages were brought into the Americas in excess of 12,000 years ago. Almost all of these lineages are most closely related to those of people in Asia, particularly in southern Siberia near Mongolia. Several tribes in Mesoamerica (which included Aztecs and Mayans) had been tested and all but a couple of individuals out of about 500 had mitochondrial DNA of Asian origin. The small fraction of Native American lineages that were not from Asia appeared to originate in Europe, most likely Spain. DNA studies also showed that the female ancestors of the Polynesians came from South East Asia and not the Americas. Y-chromosome studies, which trace male migrations, strongly support the mitochondrial work, except that the European influence is higher (about 10% in the Americas).

For two weeks I wrestled with the research. I collected more and more research papers but failed to find anything that supported migration of Jewish people before Columbus. Enough is known about the DNA lineages of Jews to be very confident that they are clearly distinguishable from Asian lineages. They would also be easily identifiable if they were present in the Americas in significant numbers. I struggled with the complete discrepancy between the research and my understanding of the Book of Mormon and the doctrine of the Lamanites. The Book

of Mormon describes the occurrence of Hebrew civilizations in the Americas numbering in the millions. It is clear that the victorious Lamanites would have numbered in the millions in about 400 AD. I could not understand how such large numbers of people could have escaped detection.

Until this point in my life my intellectual study of the Book of Mormon was minimal. I had read it several times from cover to cover and knew the first few chapters of I Nephi very well. I had only taken a passing interest in New World prehistory. Perhaps this was because I am an Australian. I suspect that few Americans have an interest in Australian prehistory. Perhaps it was because I was so busy in the Church that I just didn't have the time. For whatever reason I had happily assumed that BYU scholars were uncovering evidence supporting the Book of Mormon. I began to closely examine the text of the Book of Mormon. The Introduction to the book states that the principal ancestors of the American Indians are the Lamanites. The original founders of both major Book of Mormon civilizations fled to a Promised Land kept from the knowledge of other nations. Historical accounts of these civilizations only mention the presence of people in the New World whose Hebrew origin is accounted for in the text. People who migrated away from these civilizations appeared to be entering further unoccupied territories. There is not a single mention of non-Israelite people in the entire history. According to the Book of Mormon there was clear reason to consider it Mormon doctrine that the American Indians are predominantly the offspring of Hebrew ancestors. The Lamanites with their dark skin curse and loincloths appeared as stereotypical American Indians. This strong scriptural foundation is apparently the reason that most Latter-day prophets and senior leaders consider this to be the case today. Arguably the most frequently repeated message in the Book of Mormon is that the seed of the Lamanites would receive the Gospel in the Latter days from the gentiles. This is further supported in the Doctrine and Covenants where God himself refers to any Indians at the frontiers as Lamanites. How could God allow the book to give the overwhelming impression that the descendants of Lehi were numerous, when they are now virtually undetectable?

I desperately tried to find holes in the research but soon realized just how fruitless this was. I was not upset by it and strangely my belief remained intact. I was on a detached journey of discovery in a field of science that was new to me. The gravity of the situation completely escaped me at first, however, gradually I became aware of the contradiction that I was faced with. When I woke up on the 3rd of August 1998, I felt I had solved a puzzle I had been battling with for as long as I could remember. During the night my subconscious must have found the space to sort things out. All the problems I had been struggling with evaporated when I reached one simple conclusion. As much as I wanted the Book of Mormon to be true, I suddenly knew that it wasn't. It might be full of some remarkable stories and scriptural writings, but it wasn't history about real people.”³⁴⁷

---End of Simon Southerland Excerpt---

³⁴⁷ [*DNA Genealogies of American Indians and the Book of Mormon*](#), Simon Southerland, March 17 2000
[*Brigham Young's Extermination of Utah Indians*](#), Kurt Ralph Armann



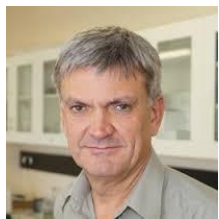
Appendix C - Three geneticists respond to the LDS essay on DNA and the Book of Mormon
[From Mormon Stories #571:](#)



Jamie Hanis Handy has a B.S. in Zoology and an M.S. in Biological Science Education and Genetics from Brigham Young University.



Eric Fairfield has a Ph.D. in molecular biology from State University of New York at Stony Brook. He is currently founder and owner of Cognitive Architectures for Learning, a company that understands cell by cell and synapse by synapse what learning and memory are and how to build devices from this knowledge. Eric has also run a church courses and seminar series bringing together science and religion. He is also a geneticist and biochemist with expertise in genes and their enzymes across many organisms.



Simon Southerton completed a PhD in plant science at the University of Sydney in 1989. For 15 years he worked at CSIRO, Australia's national research organization, where he led its forest genomics team. Simon first encountered DNA research on Native Americans and Polynesians in 1998 while serving as a bishop in Brisbane, Australia. In response to Mormon apologetics in 2004 he published [Losing a Lost Tribe](#), which explores the origins of Amerindian and Polynesian DNA and its implications for LDS beliefs arising from the Book of Mormon.

The LDS church came out with a Gospel Topics Essay entitled “Book of Mormon and DNA Studies” which wrongly presents conclusions to the DMA evidence challenging the Book of Mormon. Handy, Fairfield, and Southerton **repudiate the apologist's claims saying they are intellectually dishonest when suggesting that extreme improbabilities are worthy of consideration or that the science is tentative when it is not.** Their analysis and rebuttal are heard at this Mormon Stories [link](#).

In summary:

- 1.) The LDS church Essay is a powerful piece of apologetics.
- 2.) The science that it references is legitimate. They are not making stuff up. It is written by knowledgeable people.
- 3.) From the beginning the answer must be how do we explain this in a way so that the Book of Mormon can still be 100 percent historical, one hundred percent factual?
- 4.) The language to the members who read the Essay is, have absolutely no doubt, this is it, this is all you need to know, you don't need to understand it, to look any further, or to worry about it.

5.) The apologist cast doubt on DNA science in a way that is intellectually dishonest, for example suggestions that extreme improbabilities are worthy of consideration or that the science is tentative when it is not. For example, one chance in 10 billion is not tentative.

6.) DNA apologists are ignoring other stable fields of science which have concluded for 100 years that native Americans are Asian, now confirmed by DNA evidence.

7.) And my understanding (Jamie Handy) is that there have been some limited efforts at testing and when results did not go their way, they abandoned them.

8.) Redefining the Book of Mormon purpose as spiritual rather than its original claim to be historical, making it unfalsifiable.

9.) The physical and genetic absence of evidence from millions who fought and died at the Hill Cumorah, and from two civilizations (Jeradite & Nephite).

10.) DNA apologist always referring to “some” people or “some” scientist think or have done this or that without saying who or how many.

11.) Changing the groundwork from when we definitely one hundred percent culturally spoke about every single native indigenous population on all of North America and South America as the remnant of the Lamanites unequivocally. They are very much reframing what the Book of Mormon has been for most of the Mormon history.

12.) “You need a more careful approach.” And that's just code for saying you need to come up with the right answer and find any possible way that this works. And we're going to give you that possibility.

13. Apologist say, some people have wondered whether the migration's it described are compatible with scientific studies of ancient America. That statement makes it sound like there's just a handful of Mormons who are out there questioning this. It is minimizing. It's not just some people, it is every single person reading the Book of Mormon who wonders if there is scientific, historical or archeological evidence for this book that they're being asked to base their life on.

14.) Apologist in the DNA Essay point out Lehi didn't donate blood for us, and that is true. But we know a lot based on the story. He came from Jerusalem. We know what year he lived there. Populations did not move a lot in their lifetime. And so we actually do know a fair bit of what we should expect and what we should look for. If we assume even a little bit about where Lehi may have come from, we know twenty-four thousand of his twenty-five thousand genes, maybe almost all of the twenty-five thousand. So, the statement that we know nothing is just crazy.

And Middle Eastern population is a well and truly studied DNA lineage of Middle East populations, Jews, Palestinians, Arabs. Middle East is where they came from. So, there is a reference set of sequences to compare to.

15.) And the last sentence at the introduction of the Essay ensured DNA studies cannot be used decisively to either affirm or reject the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon. They played their endgame card that no matter what it says, we will never state that this information from DNA can influence the Book of Mormon and

the authenticity of it. And this is where I feel like it's an insult to all of our intelligence because we have seen the effectiveness of DNA studies happen in our own lifetime as Mormons.

It's well-documented that when DNA tests confirmed that indigenous populations in North and South America have East Asian ancestry and East Asian origins, the Introduction to the 2006 Book of Mormon edition modified the Native American paradigm by changing the wording from “**principal** ancestors of the American Indians” to “**among** the ancestors of the American Indians”. And so, they immediately revised what was this large, huge group of people that for 150 years they had claimed were descended from Lamanite people that we were preaching the gospel to.

[Annotated Book of Mormon and DNA Studies](#) LDS Discussions web site.

Subject: My court of love

Date: Jul 17, 2005 08:17

Author: Simon Southerton³⁴⁸

Hi Folks,

Some of you may hear reports about my upcoming disciplinary council. I just thought I would clarify a few things that were a little incorrect in the story I saw.

My wife and I left the church 7 years ago in 1998. We separated in 2003 for a period of almost 2 years. Several months after we separated, I met a woman and we were close friends for about a year. She was in the process of leaving the church, lives interstate, and was separated from her husband (now divorced). The relationship ended and about 6 months later my wife and I got back together. We have been together for about 9 months and things are going well.

I am proud to be an apostate and deliberately never requested that my name be removed from the records. There are only two ways that my name can be removed. I could request it myself or they must hold a church court. They can't take my name off the records without my knowledge. I wrote Losing a Lost Tribe because I want to pressure the church to change its teachings and doctrines that are racist and wrong. Native Americans and Polynesians are not descended from Israelites, and they are not the descendants of the imaginary cursed Lamanite race. I was looking forward to a court because it would give me an opportunity to admit to the charge of apostasy and defend my integrity.

Like many church leaders in Australia, my Stake President is aware that I have publicly challenged the teachings of the church for several years. Rather than hold a court on the charge of apostasy, he chose to take the sleazy route. He arranged for church leaders in another state to meet with my friend and to get a signed confession that she had had a relationship with me. She admitted she had before she knew what they were up to, and then refused

³⁴⁸ An Australian who wrote a book saying DNA evidence contradicts ancestral claims of Mormon belief faces [disciplinary action](#) that could get him excommunicated from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

to sign anything. Several weeks ago the Stake President and bishop met with me and my wife. I wasn't interested in talking about the adultery charge and we spent most of the time discussing my difficulties with the Book of Mormon. It was a very pleasant discussion, and both seemed very sincere. Two weeks later I received a letter from the Stake President inviting me to a disciplinary council to answer adultery charges. He made no mention of my apostasy in the letter.

I deserve to be excommunicated. I fully expect to be excommunicated. But I am disappointed that the Stake President has engaged in official backbiting and snooping in order to avoid discussion of the more difficult issues related to Polynesian and Native American ancestry. I suspect he would probably prefer his high council didn't hear about this.

As a bishop I never snooped into the lives of inactive members to look for opportunities to discipline and the bishops I have known didn't do this either. If they did they would be holding courts all the time. We have not attended church in 7 years and have not had a single home teaching visit during that time. Now I am back with my wife they choose to haul me into a church court to punish me for alleged sexual sins. My wife is looking forward to attending the court and letting them know how she feels about the course of action they have taken. Should be interesting!

Regards
Simon

Appendix D - [Recovering Agency](#)

From Luna Lindsey's [website](#): "In real life, a manipulated subject has to be completely unaware that it is happening. She must be in full cooperation with the process, which goes something like this:

An influencer gains your trust through friendship and promises, perhaps comforting you during a difficult time, and perhaps appealing to your existing ideals. Once you trust him, you're ready to believe him. You are convinced that everything he says is true and for your own good and for the good of others. Then he has the power to influence all aspects of your life.

That's when he teaches you a series of beliefs that will keep you from ever wanting to doubt those teachings or leave his group – even if later those promises are broken or the people turn unfriendly or you end up going against your original ideals.

Mind control is a type of persuasion that bypasses mental defenses against new beliefs, followed by:

- establishment of beliefs to deflect all skepticism and criticism of the doctrine and leaders
- suppression of critical thinking skills (while maintaining the illusion of logic)
- isolation of members from doubt-inducing information
- the creation of dependency on the group for social and psychological fulfillment
- the instillment of emotions like fear and guilt to keep members from leaving.

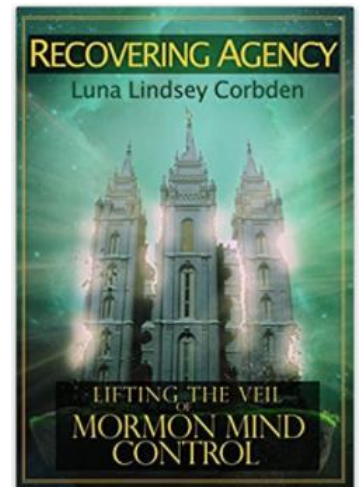
It is key that all the while, members maintain perfect trust in the person or group doing the manipulating.

No one knows when they're being controlled in this way – that's entirely the point.

Like "mind control," the word "cult" is loaded with lots of false notions. Many researchers, myself included, prefer the term, "high-demand group," because it is more descriptive, even if it is more of a mouthful.

A high-demand group, or cult, instills complete trust in its members and demands an inordinate amount of time, energy, and money, using a totalist and inflexible ideology that permeates most or all aspects of the members' lives. Such groups are known for isolating members either physically or culturally, suppressing serious questions and flexibility in thought, leaving little room for doubts or dissent, and never allowing criticism of leadership. The goal is for ideological purity and unanimity among all members.

The LDS Church fits this definition. These claims are backed up with research and examples within the pages of *Recovering Agency*."





Mind Control Techniques: 31 Flavors of Coercion

- Love Bombing
- Destabilization
- Deception
- Sacred Science
- Mystical Manipulation
- Milieu Control
- Demand for Purity
- Dispensing of Existence
- Doctrine Over Self
- Loading the Language
- Totalist Reframing
- Thought-Terminating Clichés
- Social Pressure
- Belief Follows Behavior
- Public Commitment
- Creating Dependency
- Black & White Thinking
- Elitism
- Us-vs-Them Thinking
- Indirect Directives
- Identification & Example
- Emotion Over Intellect
- Induced Phobias
- Trance Induction & Dissociative States
- Time Control
- Double-Bind
- Blame Reversal
- Guilt & Shame
- Confession
- Euphoria Induction
- Proselytizing

Appendix E – [Leave It Alone](#)

As Church leaders attempt to avoid accountability, they preemptively inoculate believers against former members like me by saying: "...you can leave the church, but you can't leave it alone," or " ... that information is unnecessary." These sayings function to [silence](#) people with sincere, legitimate concerns. It does not acknowledge the deception and harm the Mormon church has wrought.

As difficult as the reality is for believing/faithful Mormons, it is undeniable that the Mormon church has deceived/misled many of its members for well over a century. As faithful Mormon historian Richard Bushman recently acknowledged at a private gathering of questioning Mormons, "I think that for the Church to remain strong it has to reconstruct its narrative. The dominant narrative is not true; it can't be sustained." Following are church-confirmed facts:

- Joseph Smith's re-telling of his "First Vision" story changed significantly over time, calling into question the credibility of his claims.
- Joseph Smith and his family/close friends spent years engaging in the superstitious, deceptive, fraudulent, and illegal activity of "digging for buried treasure" for money by use of a magic peep stone, calling into question his/their basic credibility.
- Joseph Smith did not produce the Book of Mormon through the process of translating the golden plates using the Urim and Thumim, as Mormons were taught for over a century. Instead, Joseph Smith produced the text of the Book of Mormon through the use of the same magic peep stone that he used to deceive others in his treasure digging expeditions (see above).
- The Book of Mormon is not a historical record of the Native Americans (as archeological, anthropological, linguistic, and genetic science now demonstrates conclusively) – as Mormons were taught for over a century.
- Native Americans are not descendants of Jared and Lehi from the Book of Mormon (as DNA evidence now demonstrates), as Mormons and Native Americans were taught for over a century.
- The Book of Abraham is not a translation of an Egyptian papyrus, as Joseph Smith claimed.
- Joseph Smith was not a monogamist, as faithful Mormons were led to believe for close to a century. Instead, Joseph Smith married and likely had sex with over 30 women in his lifetime, many of them teenagers, some as young as 14, and several of them married to other men at the time he married them (see polyandry).
- As if Joseph's participation in polygamy and polyandry aren't disturbing enough, we have learned over the past few decades that Joseph repeatedly lied to those around him, including to his own wife, Emma, to hide these polygamous practices. We have also learned that Joseph used incredibly abusive techniques to both coerce young girls and their parents into acceding to his polygamous advances, and to silence/punish those who dared speak openly about these secret practices. Joseph also sent faithful Mormon men on foreign missions, only to then proposition their wives while they were away.
- The LDS Temple ceremony was directly plagiarized from the Masonic Temple ceremony.

It is difficult enough for a lifelong believing Mormon to discover that these facts are the origins of their faith. It is infinitely more disturbing and outrageous to learn that top church leaders have:

- Known about these troubling issues for decades (if not a century),
- Systematically hid this information from its membership, and
- Silenced and/or punished anyone who dared speak openly about these concerns (e.g., Juanita Brooks, Fawn Brodie, the September Six, Brent Metcalfe, Jeremy Runnells, John Dehlin, etc.).
- As lifelong, committed Mormons become increasingly aware that we have been systematically deceived by the church that we fully trusted – it is the duty of those who are in a position to safely speak up to hold the Mormon church accountable for its deception of generations of faithful members, and to protect ourselves and our loved ones from further deception.

While the Mormon church has done much good for many individuals and families, it is irrefutable that it has also caused a significant amount of damage. A small sampling of damaging LDS doctrines and policies includes:

- Withholding meaningful authority and leadership opportunities from women and girls in the Church, and providing girls/women with a stunted vision as to their potential (e.g., “a woman’s place is in the home”).
- Teaching children, youth, and adults extremely damaging messages regarding sexuality, masturbation, and personal worthiness.
- Teaching gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Mormons that their core identity is evil, and encouraging incredibly damaging “remedies” such as reparative therapy, mixed-orientation marriage, and celibacy. These teachings and policies have led to an epidemic of depression, broken marriages, and suicidality for our LGBTQ youth and adults.
- Striving to impose its religious beliefs and practices on the non-Mormon public through legal initiatives such as:
 - Defeating the Equal Rights Amendment.
 - Supporting Proposition 8 in California, which attempted to deny California LGBTQ citizens the right to marry.
 - Attempting to defeat Proposition 2 in Utah — an initiative that seeks to provide Utahns with serious illnesses a viable, natural treatment for debilitating pain and nausea, and help to decrease the opioid epidemic.
- Protecting sexual predators at the expense of sexual abuse victims.
- Teaching members for over a century that dark skin is a curse from God, and that people of color were “less valiant” in the pre-existence.
- Providing Native American church members with a wholly fictitious identity (i.e. Lamanite).
- Sponsoring programs like the “Indian Placement Program,” which basically amounted to cultural genocide.
- Systematically shaming and ostracizing members who leave the church. This practice stresses marriages, too often leading to the fracturing of otherwise healthy/happy families.

We risk being complicit in the above harm if remaining silent in response to the harm that we witness within Orthodox Mormonism. Consequently, it is absolutely essential if we feel safe and “called” to do so, to publicly hold the Mormon church accountable for the damage it is causing its members, and the general public.

We come by the desire to “Proclaim the Truth” honestly because as orthodox Mormons, we were taught:

- That truth matters.
- That we have an obligation to share/spread the truth, as we know it.
- To alleviate the suffering of others. To be courageous, and to “Do what is right, let the consequence follow.”
- That the health/safety of family members is more important than anything else.
- These values do not simply disappear when we remain silent.

The Mormon church sends out tens of thousands of missionaries each year to bear testimony of the truth as they see it, even though Mormon beliefs are considered offensive by many other religious and non-religious people. Mormons share their truth/testimonies with the world (even as those truths/testimonies condemn other religious traditions as either false, or inadequate), but then say it is not okay for those who leave the Mormon church to share their testimonies/truth as well.

Appendix F - [LDS Discussions](#): An Examination of Mormon Truth Claims.
Mormon Stories [Podcast Series](#)

1 - 2:41:09 Joseph Smith and Treasure Digging	Ep. 1575
2 - 2:07:21 Golden Plates and the Book of Mormon	Ep. 1583
3 - 2:59:57 Book of Mormon Translation	Ep. 1585
4 - 2:26:48 The Lost 116 Pages	Ep. 1590
5 - 2:00:18 DNA and the Book of Mormon	Ep. 1594
6 - 1:40:58 Tight vs Loose Translation Book of Mormon	Ep. 1599
7 - 1:59:39 Joseph Smith's Surrounding Influences	Ep. 1604
8 - 2:16:14 Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon	Ep. 1609
9 - 1:25:09 The King James Bible Problem in Book of Mormon	Ep. 1610
10 - 2:17:11 How the Book of Mormon was Composed	Ep. 1615
11 - 1:25:52 Adam & Eve and Mormon Truth Claims	Ep. 1620
12 - 1:31:01 The Global Flood and Mormon Scripture	Ep. 1623
13 - 1:00:22 Tower of Babel and Mormon Scripture	Ep. 1626
14 - 1:14:03 The Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Mormon	Ep. 1629
15 - 1:52:10 The Long Ending of Mark in the Book of Mormon	Ep. 1632
16 - 1:36:32 Deutero-Isaiah and the Book of Mormon	Ep. 1642
17 - 2:18:18 Joseph Smith's First Vision	Ep. 1648
18 - 2:59:21 Priesthood Restoration	Ep. 1651
19 - 2:22:46 Changes to the Doctrine & Covenants	Ep. 1655
20 - 1:42:46 Word of Wisdom	Ep. 1659
21 - 2:14:59 Race and Mormon Scripture Pt. 1	Ep. 1663
22 - 2:28:44 Race and Mormon Scripture Pt. 2	Ep. 1665
23 - 1:55:21 LDS Temple Endowment and Masonry	Ep. 1669
24 - 1:55:27 An Introduction to Mormon Polygamy	Ep. 1673
25 - 3:05:40 D&C 132 - Joseph Smith's Polygamy "Revelation"	Ep. 1676
26 - 2:01:56 Joseph Smith's Plural Marriage Proposals Pt. 1	Ep. 1679
27 - 1:57:42 Joseph Smith's Plural Marriage Proposals Pt. 2	Ep. 1682
28 - 2:56:54 The Happiness Letter Joseph's Proposition to Nancy Rigdon △	Ep. 1688
29 - 3:08:56 Polygamy Apologetics: Calling it "Spiritual Wifery" & more	Ep. 1691
30 - 1:51:24 The Book of Abraham - Is Joseph Smith's Translation Accurate?	Ep. 1701
31 - 2:35:16 The Book of Abraham - Analyzing LDS Apologetics Evidence	Ep. 1707
32 - 2:47:04 Examining The Book of Abraham Text	Ep. 1710
33 - 2:15:40 The Kinderhook Plates - A Complete History	Ep. 1716
34 - 2:07:06 Joseph Smith's Translations - Review and Analysis	Ep. 1719
35 - 3:24:21 Joseph Smith's Backdated Prophecies w/ Radio Free Mormon	Ep. 1730
36 - 2:20:17 Problematic Patterns in Joseph Smith's Revelations	Ep. 1734
37 - 2:13:59 Joseph Smith's Failed Prophecies	Ep. 1739
38 - 2:42:20 Revelations after Joseph Smith	Ep. 1749
39 - 1:32:32 The Problems with Mormon Personal Revelation	Ep. 1758

- 40 - 1:30:16 Mormon Patriarchal Blessings - A Discussion [Ep. 1763](#) |
- 41 - 1:31:38 Where Did Joseph Smith Get His Ideas? [Ep. 1770](#)
- 42 - 1:42:34 Did Brigham Young Transform Into Joseph Smith? [Ep. 1783](#) |
- 43 - 3:34:33 Mormon Spiritual Witnesses [Ep. 1788](#) |
- 44 - 2:09:58 How the Mormon Church Handles Doubt [Ep. 1800](#) |

[Joseph Smith and Other Men's Wives \(Pt 1\)](#) - Dan Vogel [△](#)

[Joseph Smith and Other Men's Wives \(Pt 2\)](#) - Dan Vogel [△](#)

[Joseph Smith and Other Men's Wives \(Pt 3\)](#) - Dan Vogel [△](#)

[Book of Mormon Witnesses - Pt 1](#) - The Three - Dan Vogel [△](#)

[Book of Mormon Witnesses - Pt 2](#) - The Eight - Dan Vogel [△](#)

[Joseph Smith's 1826 Trial \(Pt 1\)](#) - The Verdict - Dan Vogel [△](#)

[Joseph Smith's 1826 Trial \(Pt 2\)](#) - The Testimony - Dan Vogel [△](#)

Appendix G - Gospel Topics Essays (Annotated)

The Gospel Topics essays began to quietly appear November 2013 on the website of the Church aiming to answer hard questions about its history. However, just as important as what they admit, is what they don't say (which is often a lot).

The essays were not mentioned at church or General Conference; there was no article in the Ensign; there was no Public Affairs statement explaining their purpose or even acknowledging their existence. Most members don't even know about them or about controversial topics like polygamy or different versions of Joseph Smith's First Vision.

For the longest time the church didn't even make it clear that the essays had been approved by the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency. (That has since been corrected, after some members and even local bishops believed that the essays were anti-Mormon propaganda.)

From [LDS Discussions Website](#):

- [LDS Essay on the Book of Mormon: DNA Studies \(Annotated\)](#) [△](#)
- [LDS Essay on Polygamy/Polyandry in Kirtland and Nauvoo \(Annotated\)](#) [△](#)
- [LDS Essay on Polygamy/Polyandry in Utah \(Annotated\)](#) [△](#)
- [LDS Essay on the Book of Abraham \(Annotated\)](#) [△](#)
- [LDS Essay on Joseph Smith's Multiple First Vision Accounts \(Annotated\)](#) [△](#)
- [LDS Essay on Race and the Priesthood \(Annotated\)](#) [△](#)

