

Not by Bare Assertions but by

**EVIDENCES**

and **REASON**

up and while in <sup>the</sup> attitude of calling upon the Lord, a pillar of  
fire light above the bright-<sup>ness</sup> of the sun at noon day  
came down from above and rested upon me and I was filled  
with the spirit of God and <sup>the</sup> Lord opened the heavens upon me  
and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying  
Joseph <sup>my son</sup> thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy way in my  
statutes and keep my commandments. Behold I am the  
Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all them  
who believe on my name may have eternal life <sup>in the world</sup>  
birth in sin ~~and~~ at this time and none doeth good no  
not one they have turned aside from the Gospel and  
keep not <sup>my</sup> commandments they draw near to me with their  
lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger  
is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit  
them according to their ungodliness and to bring to pass  
that which <sup>hath</sup> been spoken by the mouth of the prophets  
and of <sup>the</sup> apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it was  
written of me in the cloud <sup>clothed</sup> in the glory of my Father

**Brad Garn**



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Brad Garn

2012

## **Not by Bare Assertions but by Evidences and Reason**

The words of the title were extracted from a quote by Orson Pratt. The full quote can be found on page 43.

The image on the cover is an account of the First Vision recorded in 1832. This is the handwriting of Joseph Smith. An analysis and transcription of this account begins on page 36. The image on the cover was retouched for aesthetic reasons.

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Revised to correct typographical and grammatical errors, 2025.

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I appreciate the proofreading performed by an anonymous friend of mine who is a non-believing yet active member of the Church.

I am grateful to my friend Sandi Miller of StudioCentric Photography for the cover design and back cover portrait.

I am indebted to all those that have previously researched these topics and published their results both in books and online. Without their efforts my investigation would have been almost impossible. Many of their works are acknowledged in the footnotes and the bibliography.

In the last two years I have made many new friends online and in real life. Their kindness and understanding has been very important to me during this transition.

I would especially like to thank my wife for the support she gives me and for putting up with the amount of time I spent researching and writing this book.

## ***Introduction***

I was an active believing member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from the time I was born until I was 46 years old. In the spring of 2010, I left the Church. I formally resigned my membership in the Church in May 2012. In this book I will explain why I made these choices.

I put a lot of time and effort into writing this book. I thought carefully about what I wanted to say and I tried to choose my words to convey exactly the meaning I desired. However, writing is difficult for me. I am hopeful that what I have written is clear and understandable.

I tried to make this book as inoffensive as possible to believing members of the Church. But, in my attempts to clearly state my beliefs, there may be some statements which could be perceived as offensive. As a former member of the Church I understand how sensitive these topics are. I believe I have maintained a courteous tone and respectful boundaries.

I have many family members and friends who are members of the Church. I do not wish to break these bonds. I hope my family knows how much I love them. My family and friends have been very understanding during this difficult time. I hope they will continue to accept me for who I am.

## 2 | Evidences and Reason

My wife and I began the journey out of the Church together. We studied together, we decided to leave together, and we told our children together. However, after about six months my wife decided to begin attending again. After having an identical belief system for our entire marriage, this change has been difficult for both of us. I love my wife and I know she loves me. We are doing our best to support each other.

My children are old enough to make their own choices. Like any parent, I try to teach them what I believe, and more importantly why I believe it. Whether they agree with me or not, I will always do my best to love and support them for who they are.

This book is based on what I honestly and sincerely believe is the truth. My friends and family may find parts of it difficult to read. If they choose not to read all of it, I will understand. However, I ask and encourage everyone to at least read through the next two chapters.

## ***My Life in the Church***

Some of my earliest memories are from when my family lived in a church. There was an old mansion in Philadelphia that the Church had purchased to use as a meetinghouse. We lived there, and my Dad was in charge of shoveling coal into the furnace. To this day, the smell of coal reminds me of the basement in that building. I can remember drawing pictures on the chalkboards in the classrooms. I was so little that my pictures were all on the bottom foot of the chalkboards.

We moved to Mesa, Arizona when I was five, and at the age of eight, I was baptized by my grandfather and confirmed by my father. When I was young, I participated in all of the primary and youth activities. I earned my Eagle Scout award, and held various leadership positions in the scout troop and Aaronic Priesthood Quorums. When I was a Priest I had the opportunity to baptize my younger brother.

One day a friend of my younger brother rode his Big Wheel into the street and was run over by a Suburban. His legs were crushed, he was unconscious, and he was bleeding from his mouth. As he lay in the street I watched my father and a neighbor lay their hands on his head and give him a priesthood blessing. After the blessing, he regained consciousness and the bleeding from his mouth subsided. Witnessing this blessing was the foundational event for my testimony of the power of the priesthood.

I went to four years of seminary. I read and studied my scriptures. One year in seminary, I had perfect attendance. The other years were almost perfect.

The summer after my senior year, the youth of our stake traveled by bus to Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, to attend a youth conference. Brother Scott Anderson, a BYU religion teacher, spoke at one the youth conference sessions. I can no longer remember what he said, but I remember that I felt the spirit strongly when he spoke. Brother Anderson was a powerful speaker and his session of youth conference had a profound impact on me and my testimony of the gospel.

Shortly after the youth conference, I was preparing to attend BYU, and I was excited to register for a Book of Mormon class taught by Brother Anderson. I enjoyed going to class, and feeling the spirit as I learned more about the Book of Mormon. As we neared the end of the semester, and the end of the Book of Mormon, Brother Anderson challenged us to test Moroni's Promise. So in late Fall of 1981, I knelt at the foot of my bed in my dorm room in Deseret Towers, and asked God if these things were true. In answer to that prayer, I received a spiritual manifestation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

The next semester I registered for a 'Sharing the Gospel' class to help me prepare to serve a mission. I wanted to leave on my mission immediately upon turning 19. I submitted my mission papers too early, and they got sent back. I submitted them again at the appropriate time, and I received a call to serve in the Pennsylvania Pittsburgh mission.

Soon after I received my mission call, I went to a Young Adult activity at Camp Lo Mia near Pine, Arizona. At this activity, I met the wonderful young woman who would eventually become my wife. We dated for two months before my mission.

She sang at my missionary farewell. Before I left, I let her know that I hoped we would get married after my mission.

That summer I received my Temple Endowment, and shortly after my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, I entered the Missionary Training Center. This was at the time when missionaries served for 18 months. Pittsburgh was a difficult place to be a missionary. We spent a lot of time knocking on doors, and not much time teaching. Only two people, out of those I taught, chose to be baptized.

I came home from my mission, and four months later my wife and I were married in the Mesa, Arizona, Temple. My wife and I now have four wonderful children, and one adorable granddaughter.

When my wife was seven and a half months pregnant with our oldest son, her blood pressure was so high she had to be helicoptered from one hospital to another hospital that specialized in high risk pregnancies. The doctors said her high blood pressure was caused by pre-eclampsia. And, they said that she would need an emergency c-section to save her life and the life of our child. However, pre-eclampsia affects the ability of the blood to clot properly. If the blood would not clot properly, the c-section would be life threatening. They drew some blood and performed a test. The results came back marginal, so they needed to perform a second, more accurate test. Before the second test, I gave my wife a priesthood blessing. After the blessing, the second test showed that her blood clotting was within the safe range to perform the c-section. Our son was born weighing 3 pounds 7 ounces. This is one example of when I believed I used the power of the priesthood to help my family.

I have had many church callings. I have been a financial clerk, nursery leader, Primary teacher, stake missionary, gospel essentials Sunday School teacher, assistant stake clerk, ward mis-

sion leader, ward employment specialist, 11 year old Scoutmaster, assistant Scoutmaster, Varsity Scout Coach, youth Sunday School teacher, deacons quorum adviser, teachers quorum adviser, counselor in the Young Men presidency, Cub Scout den leader, Webelos den leader, and Cubmaster. I have also unofficially been an assistant visiting teaching coordinator, assistant compassionate service leader, and assistant ward chorister. I have always strived to magnify my callings.

When Gordon B. Hinckley was the prophet, I noticed he pronounced the word beloved with two syllables (be-loved) instead of three (be-love-ed). Because I wanted to follow the prophet, I began pronouncing it the same way he did. When President Hinckley passed away and Thomas S. Monson became the prophet, I listened to hear how he pronounced beloved. He used three syllables and I changed my pronunciation accordingly.

I was a full tithe paying, temple recommend holding, believing member of the Church. Up until the first Sunday in May of 2010, I never intentionally missed sacrament meeting. I even went to sacrament meeting in foreign countries where I did not know the language.

# ***Why?***

**I** have been asked many questions about leaving the Church. In this chapter I will answer the following three questions:

Why did you leave the Church?

Why did you resign your membership in the Church?

Why did you write a book?

## **Why I Left the Church**

I left the Church because I no longer believe the Church is true. In the Spring of 2010 I began a careful and extensive study of the Church and its core doctrines. My research and analysis led me to conclude that the Church is not true. I did not leave the Church because I was offended. I did not leave the Church because I was unable or unwilling to abide by the standards of the Church. The only reason I decided to leave the Church was because I became convinced that it is not true.

This is not a decision I made lightly. I spent many hours researching and pondering. I looked at a great deal of evidence. I carefully weighed the arguments, both for and against the truthfulness of the Church. I meticulously verified that the information was accurate and from reputable sources. This book contains a detailed explanation of how I came to this conclusion.



Leaving the Church is the most significant decision I have ever made.

I am confident that I understand the consequences of this decision for myself, my family, and my posterity. Some members of the Church have told me they believe God will understand why I have made this decision. They believe that when I die I will discover I was wrong, and then I will be able to repent and receive the same rewards as the faithful believer. This is simply wishful thinking. The prophets of the Church have taught that now is the time to prepare to meet God. Joseph Smith described those who will inherit the terrestrial kingdom:

These are they who are honorable men of the earth,  
who were blinded by the craftiness of men. (D&C 76:75)

If I am wrong, this verse will apply to me, and the consequences will be eternal. However, I am extremely confident that I am not wrong and that I have not been blinded by the craftiness of men. If I had any doubt at all, I would remain in the Church.

## **Why I Resigned my Membership in the Church**

When I first left the Church I did not see the need to resign my membership in the Church. However, I eventually decided that this was something that I wanted and needed to do. I desired to officially leave the Church. This is done through resignation. I would like to explain some of the reasons I made this decision.

Resigning my membership is a simple way to make a clear statement that I believe the Church is not true. Some people have suggested that I am going through a phase or having an identity crisis. Others have said I am lost, or confused. I feel belittled when people talk about me this way. I did not fall away. I have

not gone astray. I have consciously made my decisions and carefully reached my conclusions. The fact that I have resigned makes a strong statement about where I stand.

Resigning changes the labels that will be used to describe me. Members of the Church that don't attend are usually referred to as inactive or less-active. These members are often perceived as apathetic, unrighteous, or lazy. I am not inactive. Another label I avoided by resigning is excommunicated. Because I choose to speak openly about the Church, I believe there was a possibility of excommunication. I did not want the stigma associated with excommunication to be placed upon myself or my family. I don't want to define myself by my relationship with the Church. But, when needed, I prefer the label former-member.

The most important factor in my decision to officially resign was the realization that my ongoing membership in the Church implied support for teachings and policies I now oppose. These problems will be discussed in detail later in this book. I do not want my name affiliated with an organization that encourages its members to financially support and vote for discriminatory laws. Resigning is the best way for me to take a stand.

My resignation from the Church is a rejection of the Church. It is an official break from the institution of the Church. I am no longer a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## **Why I Wrote a Book**

I originally did not intend to write a book. I began to write a simple resignation letter. As I wrote the letter I attempted to write an explanation of why I no longer believed the Church was

true. Eventually that explanation became too long for a letter. So I took the explanation out of the letter and it became this book.

At first the only purpose of my book was to be included as an addendum to my resignation letter. But, as I worked on the book I began to consider making it publicly available. I knew that some people would be upset with me for publishing a book. But, I soon realized there were many reasons I needed to publish it. I will use the remainder of this chapter to explain some of those reasons.

In the Priesthood session of the October 2011 General Conference President Thomas S. Monson asked:

Do we have the moral courage to stand firm for our beliefs, even if by so doing we must stand alone?<sup>1</sup>

This book is my attempt to answer that question affirmatively. My integrity requires me to publicly stand for what I believe is true. I believe that my knowledge of the Church and my years of service to the Church make me a credible witness against the truthfulness of the Church. I can not and I will not quietly sneak away. I feel it is important for me, and others like me, to stand in the clear light of day and boldly assert that we believe the Church is not true.

Some may try to discredit me with the phrase, “You can leave the Church, but you can't leave it alone.” As a member of the Church, I was taught that it is important to profess my beliefs. As a Mormon missionary, I did not leave members of other churches alone. I tried to convince them that my church was true, and their church was not. I still have a desire to share what I believe is true.

1 [lds.org/general-conference/2011/10/dare-to-stand-alone](https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2011/10/dare-to-stand-alone)

When I was a believer, I did not understand why anyone would leave the Church, and I was judgmental of those who did. I hope that anyone who chooses to read this book will be better able to understand me and my decisions. Much of this book explains my feelings, my thoughts, and my beliefs. I am not asking anyone to agree with me. But, I hope people will try to empathize with me.

Since leaving the Church I have made friends with people who are afraid to tell their family members that they don't believe. They pretend to believe, and they continue to attend church just to avoid confrontation. Some of them lie to their bishops in temple recommend interviews so they can attend family weddings. I have also read stories of young men that are afraid to tell their parents they don't want to go on missions. I am ashamed to admit, when I was a believer I told my son I would kick him out of the house if he did not go on a mission when he turned 19. It is very difficult to tell your family you no longer believe. Some of my other new friends have had family members cut off all communication with them because they left the Church. Many people fear that when they reveal their disbelief it will destroy their marriage and they may lose their children. I do not judge those that choose to keep their disbelief a secret. But, I hope that if they someday choose to speak, this book will give them courage. And, when that time comes, I hope their families will accept them for who they are.

The Church will always be a part of my heritage and I expect that my children and grandchildren will have many affiliations with members of the Church. I foresee a possibility that someday one of my descendants may consider joining the Church. I hope that if that day comes they will read this book and carefully consider my analysis of the Church before making their decision.

The Church was a very large part of my life, and leaving it was not easy. I am not usually an emotional person, and even though I don't often show it, this has been an emotionally draining experience. Since leaving the Church, I have spent an excessive amount of time researching the Church. Writing has forced me to carefully analyze and organize my thoughts and feelings. I am hopeful that I can use the completion of this book as a form of closure, and that I will be able to quit focusing so much of my emotion, time, and energy on the Church.

This book carefully documents the doctrinal issues that convinced me the Church is not true. When I was a believer, my daughter occasionally came to me with difficult questions about the Church from evangelicals. Whenever this happened, I did my best to research the issues and explain the answers to my daughter. If a child, sibling, or friend of mine had written a book that carefully listed the reasons they no longer believed, I would have read it with the hope that I would have been able to show them why they were wrong.

If I am wrong, I want and need to know. And, although I am currently confident in my research and my conclusions, I am not dogmatic. My beliefs are based on the evidence and analysis contained in this book. Convince me that my analysis of the evidence is erroneous, and I will adjust my beliefs accordingly.

## ***Distressed by Proposition Eight***

**I**n 2008, when the Church asked us to support Proposition 8 in California and Proposition 102 in Arizona, I was very confused. I understand the Church believes homosexuality is a sin. But to me, using the power of government is force, so I felt like I was being asked to vote for Satan's plan. I know this is an oversimplification of the issue, and there are many arguments both for and against this vote. My purpose here is not to debate the issue; it is just to explain how I felt.

The Church usually takes a neutral stand on political issues. And, it encourages us to think and study the issues for ourselves. I believed there was a War in Heaven where we fought for free agency. This belief was the cornerstone of my political philosophy. When I analyze a political issue, my primary concern is how individual freedoms will be affected. I could not in good conscience support these propositions.

I believe the government should not decide who is allowed to marry, and who is not allowed to marry. I believe it was wrong for the government to prohibit the early members of the Church from marrying in the way they desired. I know it was wrong for the government to prohibit interracial marriage. At the time I was born, there were many states where it was illegal for interracial couples to marry. It was 1967 before the Supreme

Court finally overturned the last of these racist laws. The government must provide equal treatment for all people.

Our ward scheduled an evening for the youth to distribute flyers in support of Proposition 102. I was a youth leader at the time, but I did not want to participate. I called the bishop and explained why I felt the way I did. I also told him I had no intention of telling the youth or other ward members of my feelings. He said it would be fine if I did not participate. I made sure I had to work late on the evening that the flyers were distributed.

At the time, as a believing member of the Church, I believed this was simply a case where the leaders of the Church had made a decision based on what they thought was best, and that this was not a revelation from God. But because it seemed so wrong to me, I didn't understand why God would allow them to do that.

## ***Learning About Evolution***

In 2009, I found a blog by BYU biology professor, Steven Peck, that talked about how BYU was celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. I was surprised by this because I thought we did not believe in evolution.

Back when I was in eighth grade science, we saw a movie called *Hemo The Magnificent*. This movie taught the basic concept of evolution without ever mentioning the word *evolution*. I was fascinated by what it taught. That evening I came home, and told my dad about it. I don't remember exactly what my dad said, but I know he told me that what the movie taught was called *evolution*, and we did not believe it. My fascination quickly transformed to avoidance.

After that I had no interest in learning about Biology because I was afraid that I would be taught things that were not true. In high school, I chose not to take Biology. Instead, I chose to take Chemistry and Physics to get my required science credits. I took one required introductory Biology course at BYU, but we did not discuss evolution.



So, after discovering that evolution was being taught at BYU, I decided to begin my own personal study of Biology and evolution. On Steven Peck's blog he said:

... we ask our neighbors to learn about LDS Faith from us, rather than the evangelical literature. We really should apply that broadly and learn our evolution from evolutionary biologists. It's only fair you know.<sup>2</sup>

With this in mind, I read all the posts on Steven Peck's blog. I read *Relics of Eden*, a book by Dan Fairbanks, an LDS scientist. I spent a lot of time studying the 29+ *Evidences for Macroevolution* from the TalkOrigins website. I studied many Wikipedia pages, and many other scholarly web sites on the internet.

To make sure that my investigation of evolution was unbiased, I also looked at sources which presented arguments claiming evolution is not true. Some of these claims are strictly theological. Others claim the scientific evidence for evolution is either not valid or is misinterpreted.

As I carefully evaluated the evidence and arguments both for and against evolution, I became convinced that evolution is true. The evidence for evolution is overwhelming, and the arguments for it are logical and consistent. The arguments against evolution are ad hoc and disorganized. The evidence also clearly shows that our human bodies were created by this same evolutionary process. I do not expect anyone to accept this based on my short description here. I am just explaining that I found the evidence completely convincing. I was embarrassed by my previous lack of intellectual integrity as I had criticized evolution when I actually knew almost nothing about it.

2 [sciencebysteve.net/?p=773](http://sciencebysteve.net/?p=773)

After learning the facts of evolution, I began trying to figure out how to make this new knowledge fit with my belief in the Church. As I studied what had been said by church leaders and members, I found many different statements and opinions.

The current LDS Institute Old Testament Student Manual has the following quote from President Joseph Fielding Smith:

I say most emphatically, you cannot believe in this theory of the origin of man, and at the same time accept the plan of salvation as set forth by the Lord our God. You must choose the one and reject the other, for they are in direct conflict and there is a gulf separating them which is so great that it cannot be bridged, no matter how much one may try to do so ...<sup>3</sup>

After reading this I was really confused. The biology department, at BYU, is teaching evolution is true, and the religion department is teaching evolution is false.

In spite of the above quote, there are many believing members of the Church that also believe in evolution. Some members of the Church claim the Church currently has no official position on evolution. In support of this view, they quote the following 1931 statement from the First Presidency:

Upon the fundamental doctrines of the Church we are all agreed. Our mission is to bear the message of the restored gospel to the world. Leave geology, biology, archeology, and anthropology, no one of which has to do with the salvation of the souls of mankind, to scientific research, while we magnify our calling in the realm of the Church. ...<sup>4</sup>

3 [institute.lds.org/manuals/old-testament-institute-student-manual-1/ot-in1-02-gen-a-2.asp](http://institute.lds.org/manuals/old-testament-institute-student-manual-1/ot-in1-02-gen-a-2.asp)

Even though there are many statements by church leaders that teach against evolution, by late 2009, I had accepted the idea that I could believe in evolution, and still believe in the Church. I even had a family home evening where I presented my new knowledge of evolution to my children, and did my best to explain to them how this should not affect their testimonies. However, even though I did not tell anyone at the time I must admit the knowledge of evolution had weakened my testimony.

A major pillar of my testimony had been Alma's statement:

... all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth,  
and all things that are upon the face of it ... (Alma  
30:44)

I now realize it is much more complicated than this. I can no longer look at the world as I naively had before, and think obviously there is a God. He could have directed or controlled the evolutionary process, however His influence is not scientifically observable.

4 [en.fairmormon.org/Mormonism\\_and\\_science/  
Death\\_before\\_the\\_Fall#ref\\_1stpres1](http://en.fairmormon.org/Mormonism_and_science/Death_before_the_Fall#ref_1stpres1)

## ***Crisis of Faith—Joseph's Wives***

One day in March of 2010, my wife asked me a question about polygamy. She wanted to have a better understanding of this topic in case she ever had to answer questions about it.

I typed polygamy into Google, and we ended up reading some Wikipedia articles. One of the articles claimed some of the women Joseph Smith married, were simultaneously married to other men. When a woman has multiple husbands at the same time, it is called polyandry. I usually trust Wikipedia, but I was pretty sure this wasn't true. I thought I would be able to go to pro-church sources and find out this was not correct. I planned on coming back and fixing this error on Wikipedia.

### **Polyandry: Zina Diantha Huntington**

We went to FAIRLDS.org, the website of the pro-church Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research. We found the article, *Zina and Her Men: An Examination of the Changing Marital State of Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Smith Young*.<sup>5</sup> To our surprise, this article confirmed Zina was married to Joseph Smith and Henry Jacobs at the same time. We learned that Joseph married Zina when she was seven months pregnant with

5 [fairlds.org/FAIR\\_Conferences/2006\\_Zina\\_and\\_Her\\_Men.html](http://fairlds.org/FAIR_Conferences/2006_Zina_and_Her_Men.html) by Allen L. Wyatt

Henry's first child. After this marriage, Zina and Henry continued to live together. A couple of months later Zina gave birth to their first son, Zebulon, and Henry and Zina began to raise their child together.

Eventually Joseph was killed, and about a year and a half later, the Nauvoo Temple was operational. Zina was pregnant with Henry's second child. On February 2, 1846, at about 5:45 in the afternoon, Zina was sealed to Joseph. Brigham Young was the proxy for Joseph. John D. Lee, William Huntington, and her husband, Henry were the witnesses. I cannot imagine how Henry must have felt as his pregnant wife knelt at the altar while he stood witness to the ordinance he believed would take her and his children away from him for all eternity.

Also, immediately after Zina was sealed to Joseph for eternity, she was married to Brigham Young for time. About a week later, Henry and Zina left Nauvoo, and began their pioneer journey as husband and wife. On March 22, on the banks of the Chariton River, Zina gave birth to their second son. They named him Henry Chariton Jacobs.

By May, Henry and his family had arrived at Mt. Pisgah. On May 31, 1846, Brigham Young called Henry to go on a mission to England. Henry accepted his mission call, left his wife and children, and headed for England. Henry and Zina were never together again. On April 3, 1850 Zina gave birth to her third child, Zina Prescinda Young.

This whole thing made no sense to us. We had never even heard of polyandry. It did not fit with the doctrines of the Church as we understood them. And also, it completely invalidates the rationalization that polygamy was necessary because women outnumbered men.

## Other Wives

We began to do more research into polygamy and polyandry. We found the Church website, [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org), verifies the polyandrous marriages of Zina, as well as many of the polygamous marriages of Joseph.<sup>6</sup> As we researched the wives of Joseph Smith, we found there is credible evidence that during Joseph's life, he was married to at least 33 women, and that 11 of these women were simultaneously married to other men<sup>7</sup>.

Of course, we were already familiar with the principle of polygamy. However, the details of polygamy that we discovered were sickening to us. We found evidence that Joseph attempted to keep his polygamous relationships secret from his first wife, Emma. We discovered evidence that Joseph sometimes used what I would term "*spiritual coercion*" when he attempted to convince women and girls to marry him.

We also found at least 10 of his wives were teenagers when they married him. One of them was only 14 years old. Another was either 14 or 15. In the Church today these young women would be Mia Maids. Joseph and Emma's first baby was born in June of 1828. These two young women were born just two months later in August of 1828. Joseph and Emma were old enough to be their parents.

## Helen Mar Kimball

One of these girls was 14 year old, Helen Mar Kimball, the daughter of Heber C. and Vilate Kimball. This is another story that made no sense to us. Joseph had first asked Heber C. Kimball for his wife, Vilate. Heber did not want to give Vilate to

6 [familysearch.org/pal:MM9.2.1/M1Y3-H92](http://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.2.1/M1Y3-H92)

7 [www.wivesofjosephsmith.org](http://www.wivesofjosephsmith.org)

Joseph, but because he believed Joseph was a prophet of God, he agreed. As far as I can tell, it did not matter if Vilate wanted to be Joseph's wife. When Heber agreed, Joseph told him that it was only a test.

About a year later, Joseph who was now 37 years old, asked Heber for his daughter Helen. Helen wrote about this in her autobiography:

... [M]y father introduced to me this principle & asked me if I would be sealed to Joseph, who came next morning & with my parents I heard him teach & explain the principle of Celestial marriage - after which he said to me, 'If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation and exaltation & that of your father's household & all of your kindred.' This promise was so great that I willingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward.<sup>8</sup>

My wife and I could not accept that a marriage could guarantee exaltation for all of her kindred. It appeared to us that Joseph had used a young girl's love for her family to manipulate her into marrying him. Why would God want a 14 year old girl to marry a 37 year old man.

8 [rsc.byu.edu/archived/womans-view-helen-mar-whitneys-remembrances-early-church-history/11-appendix-one](http://rsc.byu.edu/archived/womans-view-helen-mar-whitneys-remembrances-early-church-history/11-appendix-one)

## ***Critical Thinking and Evidence***

**F**or most of my adult life, I have considered myself a critical thinker. Anyone that has ever forwarded an email to me with an outlandish claim knows I will attempt to verify the claim. I have a Bachelor of Science in Engineering, and I took additional math and science classes as electives. I truly enjoy researching and studying.

Evidence is the foundation of critical thinking. Like most educated people, I want to see evidence before I am willing to believe anything. For example, I do not believe in the following things because I have not seen any credible evidence for them: astrology, psychic readings, palm readings, divining rods, extrasensory perception, UFOs, bigfoot, Loch Ness Monster, reflexology, iridology, out of body experiences, telepathy, lost city of Atlantis, pyramid power, and Ouija boards. (I admit that a few times I have believed some crazy conspiracy theories, but upon further study of the evidence, I have found my way back to reality.) Careful analysis of evidence and critical thinking are what allows us to reject myths and superstition.

Evidence and critical thinking are the fuel of Science and Technology. Scientists and Engineers must carefully collect and analyze evidence. Through their efforts, many diseases have been reduced, and one disease has been completely eliminated. They have created medicines, and advanced medical devices and



techniques that have increased the length and quality of our lives. Science and Technology permeate our lives. Without them, it would be impossible to produce enough food to feed the population. I have a great respect for evidence and critical thinking.

Before learning about polyandry and the unsavory details of Joseph's polygamy, I had a testimony of the Church; I knew the Church was true. Like almost everyone, there were things which troubled me. But learning the details of Joseph's wives was too much. My testimony faltered. I allowed myself to doubt. I no longer knew the Church was true. However, I also did not know that it was not true. I simply did not know what to believe. I became an investigator. I asked myself "What if I'm wrong?" I had to find out if it was true or not true. And then I did something I had never done before: I turned the spotlight of critical thinking towards the Church.

I decided that I needed to objectively look at all of the evidence, and study all of the arguments, both for and against, the truthfulness of the Church. In a court case, the Judge and Jury must listen to both the prosecution and the defense. If they listened to just the prosecutor, and did not let the defense present a case, it is very likely that the verdict would be guilty. Likewise, if they only listened to the defense and ignored the prosecutor, the outcome would probably be not guilty. In order to have a fair trial and have the best chance of finding the truth, they must listen to both sides. Then, and only then, can they determine which side is most likely the truth.

Deciding to objectively look at the evidence is probably one of the most important decisions I have ever made. Looking back, I feel this was the only significant choice I made. Obviously, I made many other choices, but this is the one that really mattered. At the time, I did not know where this choice would lead.

But I had chosen a path, and the only way to avoid the destination would have been to turn back, and get off this path.

One way to get off this path was suggested by Elder Kevin W. Pearson at the last Stake Conference I ever attended. He said when there are things we don't understand, we should "put them in a box," and hope that we can understand them someday. In the past, I have done this; I had several items in my box. However, as I learned more, my box overflowed. For me, choosing to put everything back in the box would be choosing to turn off my brain.

Besides putting problems in a box or as others say, on a shelf, I have learned of a number of other ways that people deal with difficult issues. Most of these now seem like platitudes that are designed to help us ignore or misinterpret evidence. The following concepts don't work for me:

- Satan planted evidence to deceive us
- God planted evidence to test us
- God works in mysterious ways
- Anything that is against the Church is a lie
- It's all part of the plan
- You just have to have faith
- Pray more and read scriptures more
- Mistakes of man
- Scriptures are Not Literal
- Not Official Doctrine
- We Don't Know—We Can't know anything for sure
- We'll Find Out in the Next Life

Many members of the Church choose not to look at any evidence against the truthfulness of the Church. I have met some believing members of the Church that have looked at lots of this evidence. They claim they have studied it objectively. Now that I

have thoroughly studied the evidence, I doubt their objectivity. It appears to me that they predetermine what they want the evidence to show, and then they find ways to rationalize how their beliefs can be true, in spite of the evidence.

I remember sitting with my bishop in a classroom at the stake center before the Priesthood Session of General Conference in April of 2010. We talked about how belief is a choice. At the time, I doubted the idea that belief is a choice. I realize now that belief is a choice, but like all choices, it has consequences. For me, the consequence of choosing to believe is that I would sacrifice my ability to look objectively at the evidence. This is a sacrifice I cannot make. Objectively looking at evidence is my new iron rod.

## ***Deceived by Emotion***

**M**any people have suggested that critical thinking and analysis of evidence are not the correct way to find the truth about religion. They believe the way to find truth is through spiritual promptings. I used to believe this, but I now believe that trusting spiritual promptings is not a valid way to determine the truth. A few examples will explain why I believe this.

### **Pioneer Trek Reenactment**

In the summer of 2008, my wife, my eldest son, and I went on a handcart trek reenactment with our stake. On the second day, some men on horseback dressed in military uniforms came and took the men away to simulate the Mormon Battalion. We marched away, and our women were left to pull the handcarts alone. We were marched to a hill where we were asked to silently watch as the women struggled to pull the handcarts up the hill alone. The women from two or three handcarts had to work together to pull one cart up the hill. Then they had to go back for the other carts. Some of the women made five or six trips up that hill. As I watched this with tears in my eyes, I felt the spirit as strongly as I ever have.

Later, when I began to study church history, I learned that the handcart companies were nine years after the march of the

Mormon Battalion. What we had “reenacted” never happened. I realized that we had been emotionally manipulated. At first I was angry with the stake leaders that had planned the trek, but then I thought maybe it was an honest mistake. Maybe they just did not know the history accurately. Once I quit focusing my anger on the leaders, I realized there was a much bigger problem. Even though the stake leaders might not have known that the battalion was nine years before the handcarts, God knew it. So then I had to ask why the spirit would testify of something that did not happen. I did not feel the spirit that day. On the contrary, I had been put in an emotional situation, and I mistook my own emotions for the spirit.

## **Paul H. Dunn**

I remember as a teenager feeling the spirit while reading and hearing the stories of the General Authority, Paul H. Dunn. Many other people also testified they felt the spirit when he talked. However, investigative reporters discovered that many of his stories were lies. After being exposed, he eventually said “I confess that I have not always been accurate in my public talks and writings.”<sup>9</sup> He was disciplined by the Church but the nature of the discipline was never made public.

As I look back on this, I have two questions. First, why didn't any of the General Authorities have the spirit of discernment to detect these lies? Secondly, and more importantly, why did many of us feel the spirit testify of things that were not true?

9 [ldschurchnews.com/articles/20913/An-open-letter-to-the-members-of-the-Church.html](https://ldschurchnews.com/articles/20913/An-open-letter-to-the-members-of-the-Church.html)

## **Other Religions**

People in other churches have great faith, and they are convinced that their religions are true based on spiritual manifestations. This even applies to people in non-christian churches. There are many people that would not even consider listening to the Mormon missionaries simply because they are completely convinced they already have the truth. If the spirit can lead people to believe in all different churches, how can it be a reliable way to discern the truth? It is naive and even conceited to believe that members of the Church are the only ones that have the real spirit, and that everyone else is misled by their own emotions.

## **My Analysis of Spiritual Manifestations**

The above examples explain why I no longer believe the spirit is a reliable way to determine the truth.

Some people believe they can tell a difference between their internal emotions, and an external spiritual manifestation. From my own personal experience, I now realize I cannot tell a difference. Previously, I absolutely believed I had felt the spirit. I bore testimony many times that I knew the Church was true. I had no doubt. But now I have thought carefully about this, and I realize there is no objective way for anyone to know the source of a feeling. I realized it could all be in my head. Certainly the human brain is capable of creating very powerful emotions. Even if I have a feeling that is different or is more powerful than any other feeling I've ever had, I still cannot know this feeling came from God. Thinking that it did is just an assumption.

Because I do not have confidence in the spirit as a way to find truth, it seems to me that looking at verifiable evidence makes more sense. If the Church is true, the evidence will support it. It is not reasonable to think the Church is true, but that the evi-

dence will not support it. It is possible that the evidence will be neutral towards the Church, and in this case I might be convinced that spiritual promptings are sufficient for belief. But if there is credible evidence against the truthfulness of the Church, believing based on spiritual promptings is delusional.

The following table summarizes my definitions of these concepts:

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Knowledge     | Belief based on evidence                                  |
| Faith or Hope | Belief when there is insufficient evidence for or against |
| Delusion      | Belief contrary to the evidence                           |

For example, before Galileo, if someone believed the sun went around the earth, this was a faith-based position. Now, however, if someone believes the sun goes around the earth, they are delusional. If they were to suggest I pray to find out if the sun goes around the earth, I wouldn't, because I know the earth goes around the sun. How could I even ask God to tell me if something is true, when I have seen the evidence that proves it is not?

## ***Sources and Research***

When I was a Junior at Mountain View High School in Mesa Arizona a friend gave me a pamphlet containing the following quote from the Book of Mormon:

... I know that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be (Jacob 7:9)

I told him that his pamphlet was lying because this was not in the Book of Mormon. Since I was in seminary, I had my Book of Mormon with me. I opened it up to prove to him it was a lie. I was shocked to find this is in the Book of Mormon. It did not take me long to discover that my friend's pamphlet was quoting Sherem, one of the anti-Christ's, from the Book of Mormon. I am confident the author of the pamphlet knew he was being dishonest.

After this experience, I assumed that anything written against the Church was nothing but anti-Mormon lies. However, it is not possible to conduct an unbiased investigation of any subject without considering arguments from both sides. Because of my experience with my friend's anti-Mormon pamphlet I have been very careful to verify all the evidence that I have evaluated. Using the internet, and some effort, it is usually possible to find evidence from sources both pro and con.



I find the following mathematical concept relevant. Any number of cases supporting a conjecture<sup>10</sup>, no matter how large, is insufficient for establishing the truth of a conjecture. A single counterexample will disprove a conjecture. Religious concepts cannot be proved or disproved in the same way mathematical conjectures can. However, I believe religious concepts that appear to be true based on many supporting cases are falsified by a few counterexamples. And if I limit my study to sources that focus only on supporting cases, I will likely never learn of the counterexamples.

As I evaluated arguments, I was careful to consider the agenda of those making the arguments. Of course I found some statements that can be classified as anti-Mormon lies. But I also found statements that could be called pro-Mormon lies. And, I found many things in between. With an issue as important as religion, there are many people on both sides who are very passionate. Sometimes those speaking against the Church get carried away, but often they present carefully reasoned arguments.

After careful study, I have found many of the arguments for the Church seem weak and convoluted. Many times the arguments for the Church require interpretations of scriptures that twist the meaning of words. I have also found arguments for the Church where it seems like those making the arguments are just trying to muddy the waters. I think some of these fallacious arguments were created by trying to make the facts fit the conclusion.

The Church often encourages its members to only read from pro-church sources. For me, it is intellectually dishonest to reject something just because of the source. It is also intellectually dis-

10 In mathematics a conjecture is a mathematical concept that has not been proved or disproved

honest to accept something just because of the source. Evidence and arguments must be evaluated on their merits.

Even though sources should be evaluated only on their merits, whenever possible I have used church sources. Most of the block quotes in this book are either from scripture, an official church book, an official church website, or some other pro-church source. One of the best new sources available is the Joseph Smith Papers website. They have high resolution images of original church writings and printed documents.

I spent about two months researching the Church before I quit attending. After I quit attending, I continued to study and research. The following sections present a summary of about two years of research.

To keep this book to a reasonable length, I am not presenting both sides, and I am presenting only a summarized version of some of the things that convinced me. Even though I am not presenting arguments which support the Church, I want it to be clear that I have studied them thoroughly. Anyone who sincerely wants to fully understand the issues will have to do their own careful research. Reading this summary will be insufficient to fully understand the scope and magnitude of the problem.

The following sections contain what I believe is credible evidence that the Church is not true. The issues I am concerned about are not peripheral; they are the core doctrines of the Church. It seems to me that in almost every area I studied, I found significant problems. If there were only a few minor problems in unimportant areas, I would not have left the Church. If you want the Church to be true more than you want to know if the Church really is true, you should quit reading now.

## ***The First Vision and Nature of God***

The most important event in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the First Vision. As a missionary, I memorized part of Joseph's account of this vision as recorded in the Pearl of Great Price. The first vision allegedly happened in the spring of 1820. The official account, published in the Pearl of Great Price, was not written until 18 years later, in 1838. In this account, Joseph claims to have seen God and Christ. The Church teaches that from this account we learn that God and Christ are separate, and that God has a body of flesh and bones. The following subsections show chronologically how Joseph's teachings about the nature of God evolved from Trinitarian to the teachings we have today.

### **1830 Book of Mormon**

In 1830 the first edition of the Book of Mormon<sup>11</sup> was published. In this edition there were four verses that clearly taught that Jesus is the Father. In the 1837 edition, these verses were altered by adding the phrase “the Son of” so they now teach Jesus is the Son of the Father.

The following four verses are as they appeared in the first edition:

11 [josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/book-of-mormon-1830](http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/book-of-mormon-1830)

Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is **the mother of God**, after the manner of the flesh. (Book of Mormon 1830 Edition p. 25, corresponding to 1 Nephi 11:18 in the modern edition, emphasis added)

And the angel said unto me: Behold **the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father!** (Book of Mormon 1830 Edition p. 25, corresponding to 1 Nephi 11:21 in the modern edition, emphasis added)

And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying, look! And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; **yea, the Everlasting God, was judged of the world;** and I saw and bear record. (Book of Mormon 1830 Edition p. 26, corresponding to 1 Nephi 11:32 in the modern edition, emphasis added)

And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that **the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world;** and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved. (Book of Mormon 1830 Edition p. 32, corresponding to 1 Nephi 13:40 in the modern edition, emphasis added)

And, after the 1837 edition they now read as follows:

... the mother of **the Son of** God ... (1 Nephi 11:18 emphasis added)

... the Lamb of God, yea, even **the Son of** the Eternal Father! (1 Nephi 11:21 emphasis added)

... yea **the Son of** the Everlasting God, was judged of the world (1 Nephi 11:32 emphasis added)

... the Lamb of God is **the Son of** the Eternal Father and the Saviour of the world ... (1 Nephi 13:40 emphasis added)

My whole life I was taught that God and Christ are two separate beings. Now I see the Book of Mormon originally contained verses which taught that Christ is the Father. I find it especially ironic that the last of these verses is talking about how the Book of Mormon will restore the plain and precious things which were removed from the Bible.

If Joseph really had a vision where he saw that God and Christ were separate, why didn't he question these verses at the time he supposedly translated them? How come he did not correct these verses until 1837? Not only does this make me question Joseph's concept of the Nature of God it also makes me question the origin of the Book of Mormon.

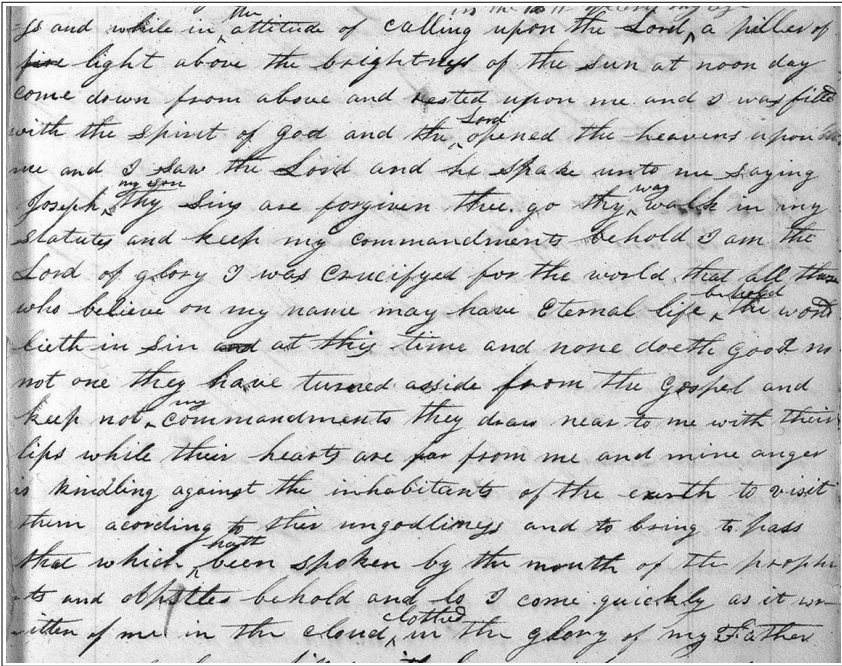
## **1832 Account of the First Vision**

In 1832 a short history of the Church was written. The portion of this history describing the first vision is reproduced in the image on the following page. It is written in Joseph's own handwriting. Obviously it is difficult to read the handwriting at the scale reproduced in this book. I did not include this image so that it could be read. I included it because seeing this account written in Joseph's handwriting with my own eyes had a powerful impact on me. The following is the transcription of the image:

... and while in attitude of calling upon the Lord a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the

heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world lieth in Sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned asside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them acording to th[e]ir ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Ap[o]stles behold and lo I come quickly as it [is] written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father ...<sup>12</sup>

12 [lds.org/ensign/1984/12/joseph-smith-jr-in-his-own-words-part-1](https://www.lds.org/ensign/1984/12/joseph-smith-jr-in-his-own-words-part-1)



It and while in <sup>the</sup> attitude of calling upon the Lord, a pillar of  
 fire light above the brightness of the sun at noon day  
 come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled  
 with the Spirit of God and ~~the~~ <sup>the Lord</sup> opened the heavens upon me  
 and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying  
 Joseph, <sup>my son</sup> thy sins are forgiven thee go thy <sup>way</sup> ~~ways~~ in my  
 statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the  
 Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all ~~them~~  
 who believe on my name may have eternal life <sup>in me</sup> ~~the word~~  
 both in sin ~~and~~ at this time and none doeth good no  
 not one they have turned aside from the Gospel and  
 keep not <sup>my</sup> commandments they draw near to me with their  
 lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger  
 is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit  
 them according to their ungodliness and to bring to pass  
 that which <sup>is</sup> ~~has~~ been spoken by the mouth of the prophets  
 and ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~behold~~ <sup>behold</sup> and ~~so~~ <sup>so</sup> I come quickly as it was  
 written of me in the cloud <sup>clothed</sup> in the glory of my Father

First Vision—1832—Joseph's Handwriting<sup>13</sup>

I was shocked when I read this. I find it nearly impossible to believe that Joseph saw God, and then when writing a history of the Church, he failed to even mention God. To me this is a major discrepancy. I have read the Church's explanations; they don't work for me. This one piece of evidence alone, causes me to seriously question the reality of the first vision.

<sup>13</sup> [lds.org/josephsmith/v/index.jsp?](https://lds.org/josephsmith/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=a7e115b8812e0010VgnVCM1000001f5e340aRCRD&vgnextfmt=tab3)

vgnextoid=a7e115b8812e0010VgnVCM1000001f5e340aRCRD&vgnextfmt=tab3 (Click on the fourth image to zoom in)

## 1835 Lectures on Faith

In 1835 the *Lectures on Faith* were published as part of the Doctrine and Covenants. They were removed from the Doctrine and Covenants in the 1921 printing. The following verses are from the Fifth Lecture<sup>14</sup>:

We shall in this lecture speak of the Godhead; we mean the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things - by whom all things were created and made that are created and made, whether visible or invisible; whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space.

They are the Father and the Son: **The Father being a personage of spirit**, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fullness.

**The Son**, who was in the bosom of the Father, **a personage of tabernacle**, made or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man - or rather, man was formed after his likeness and in his image.

(D&C Lecture 5:1c-2d 1835 edition emphasis added)

Q. What is the Father?

A. He is a personage of glory and of power  
(D&C Lecture 5: Question 5 1835 edition)

Q. What is the Son?

A. First, he is a personage of tabernacle  
(D&C Lecture 5: Question 7 1835 edition)

14 [josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835#60](http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835#60)



I own a replica copy of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. When I take that replica in my hand, I try to imagine what it would have been like to have been one of the saints in Kirtland when it was originally published. I am sure they knew the *Lectures on Faith* had originally been taught in the School of the Prophets, and now they were canonized scripture available for all to read. They must have been thrilled to have the opportunity to read the lectures. I, however, was not thrilled when I first read them. I felt confused, upset, and distressed. I was shocked when I discovered the scriptures formerly clearly taught that God is a Spirit.

## 1835 Account of the First Vision

Joseph's Journal in November of 1835 contains the following account of the first vision:

... a pillar of fire appeared above my head, it presently rested down upon my head, and filled me with joy unspeakable, a personage appeared in the midst, of this pillar of flame which was spread all around, and yet nothing consumed, another personage soon appeared like unto the first, he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee, he testified unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God; and I saw many angels in this vision ...<sup>15</sup>

Neither personage in this account is identified. According to this account, the second personage said, “Christ is the son of God”, referring to both God and Christ in third person. Therefore, the second personage is neither Christ nor God. At least this version teaches that Jesus is the son of God.

## My Analysis of the First Vision and Nature of God

The following table summarizes Joseph's teachings about the first vision and the nature of God:

| Year | Source                 | Summary  |
|------|------------------------|--|
| 1830 | Book of Mormon         | Some verses in Nephi clearly teach <i>Christ is the Father</i> . (changed in 1837)                             |
| 1832 | Letterbook 1           | First vision account with Christ alone.  |
| 1835 | Doctrine and Covenants | Lectures on faith teach God is a spirit.   |
| 1835 | Joseph Smith Journal   | First vision account with two unnamed personages. The second one refers to Christ and God in the third person. |
| 1837 | Book of Mormon         | Verses which formerly taught <i>Christ is the Father</i> now changed by adding the phrase <i>the son of</i> .  |
| 1838 | Pearl of Great Price   | Current first vision account with God and Christ.  |

These teachings are full of contradictions. Sometimes Christ is the Father, and other times Christ is the son of the Father. Sometimes God has a body, and sometimes he is a spirit. In the official version of the first vision, Joseph saw God and Christ; in another version he saw only Christ; and in another version he saw two unnamed personages.

I find these contradictions to be very significant. I cannot just ignore them, and to me, the explanations that try to justify them,

are just rationalizations. These contradictions are sufficient evidence to convince me that the first vision did not happen. And, these contradictions are not the only evidence against the first vision. I now believe it is a story that Joseph made up. He could not keep his story straight; and over time, he embellished it, until he created the version that is taught today.

If the first vision really happened, God would not have allowed the records of it to be so full of contradictions. Obviously, if the first vision did not happen, the Church cannot be true. It is the founding event, and without it, nothing else matters. Even if I wanted to believe Joseph had a vision, how would I decide which version to believe?

# ***The Book of Mormon***

I first read the Book of Mormon with my parents when I was a child. When I was a teenager, our family would get up early in the morning to read it. I studied it in seminary, and at BYU. I taught it on my mission. I read it to my children. I thought I really knew the Book of Mormon. I was very familiar with it, but mostly I had just read it over and over.

I realize now I was not educated enough, and I did not have enough information to really analyze the Book of Mormon. I have now studied from sources which critically analyze the Book of Mormon, and I am aware there are significant problems. In this chapter I will attempt to abide by the following counsel of Orson Pratt as I present evidence against the Book of Mormon:

This book must be either true or false. ... If, after a rigid examination, it be found an imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such; the evidences and arguments on which the imposture was detected, should be clearly and logically stated, that those who have been sincerely yet unfortunately deceived, may perceive the nature of deception, and to be reclaimed, and **that those who continue to publish the delusion may be exposed and silenced, not by physical force, neither by persecutions, bare assertions, nor ridicule, but by strong and powerful arguments - by evidences adduced from scripture and reason** ...<sup>16</sup> (emphasis added)

16 Orson Pratt, *Divine authenticity of the book of Mormon*, 1850, p. 1.  
[books.google.com/books?id=H9sHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1](https://books.google.com/books?id=H9sHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1)

## Translation Process

In the July 1993, Ensign Russel M. Nelson quotes the following description of the translation process given by David Whitmer, one of the three witness:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. **Brother Joseph would read off the English** to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and **when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear**, and another with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.<sup>17</sup> (emphasis added)

According to this, the words appeared, and then disappeared only if they were correct. Therefore, the words of the Book of Mormon should be accepted as the literal word of God. This leaves very little room, if any, for arguments that problems in the Book of Mormon are a result of the translation process.

I had never been taught that Joseph translated by looking at a stone in a hat. Certainly I never saw any church artwork that depicted Joseph with his face in a hat. Why is this description of the translation process rarely portrayed? It seems to me that the Church often portrays its history without any unflattering details.

17 Russell M. Nelson, A Treasured Testament, Ensign, July 1993, quoting David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ, 1887, p. 12. [lds.org/ensign/1993/07/a-treasured-testament](https://lds.org/ensign/1993/07/a-treasured-testament)

## Horses, Chariots, Plants and Animals

The following two verses are examples of horses and chariots in the Book of Mormon:

And it came to pass that the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also **many horses**. (Enos 1:21 emphasis added)

And they said unto him: Behold, he is feeding thy **horses**. Now the king had commanded his servants, previous to the time of the watering of their flocks, that they should prepare his **horses and chariots**, and conduct him forth to the land of Nephi; for there had been a great feast appointed at the land of Nephi, by the father of Lamoni, who was king over all the land. (Alma 18:9 emphasis added)

There is extensive fossil evidence of horses anciently in the Americas. However, sometime before 10,000 BC, these horses went extinct. The fossil record in the Americas after 10,000 BC continues with the fossils of many other animals, but there are no horse fossils. Horses had been extinct in the Americas for about 7,500 years before the earliest Book of Mormon times.

In the Old World in addition to horse fossils, archeologists have found artifacts like saddles, bridles, ancient statues and art-work depicting horses and chariots. So many of these items have been found that many of them are even available for purchase on the internet.<sup>18</sup> In the Americas there is a wealth of other archeological evidence, but not a single horse artifact or any depiction of horses or chariots has ever been found. When a society has horses the evidence left behind is obvious. If there were horses

18 [worldwidestore.com](http://worldwidestore.com)

during Book of Mormon times, it is impossible that evidence of them would not be found.

When old world explorers first came to America they did not find any horses. Conquistadors on horse back slaughtered natives even when heavily outnumbered. In one battle the Conquistadors with 106 infantry and 62 cavalry destroyed an army of 7000 Incas<sup>19</sup>. The horse is not just an animal, it is a powerful weapon. Beyond this, the horse elevates a society by enabling the transportation of people, goods, and ideas over long distances. The advances that the horse brings are not historically evident in any of the pre-Columbian cultures of the Americas.

Based on the fossil records, the archeological records and historical records, I am convinced that horses and chariots did not exist in the Americas during Book of Mormon times.<sup>20</sup>

The Book of Mormon also has references to the following animals: cattle, oxen, donkeys, goats, wild goats, sheep, swine and elephants. And, the Book of Mormon mentions wheat and barley. The fossil records and the archeological records show that these plants and animals did not exist in the Americas during Book of Mormon times.

## Steel

According to the Book of Mormon, both the Jaredites and the Nephites produced swords of steel. No pre-Columbian steel artifacts have ever been found in the Americas. The production of steel is a very difficult process, and it cannot be done without leaving evidence behind. When Europeans arrived in the Americas, they found the indigenous populations did not have steel. Societies with the ability to produce steel have a huge advantage

19 *The Last Day of the Incas*, p 84.

20 [mormonthink.com/backup/horses.htm](http://mormonthink.com/backup/horses.htm)

over societies that cannot produce steel. I do not believe there were people in America with the technology to produce steel. If any group of people had that knowledge, it would have spread across the continent and left evidence behind.

## **Ancestry**

I was taught that the native people of the Americans were descendants of the Lamanites. To avoid the negative association with the rebellious Lamanites members of the Church sometimes refer to the native peoples as children of father Lehi. For example in December of 2011 at a cultural event preceding the Quetzaltenango Guatemala Temple dedication President Dieter F. Uchtdorf stood before the youth and said “You are truly children of our wonderful Father Lehi.”<sup>21</sup>

When I was in junior high they taught us that the ancestors of the Native Americans came from Asia across the Bering land bridge. Because I believed in the Book of Mormon I knew this was not true. I once intentionally lost points on a test by claiming the ancestors of the Native Americans came here on a boat.

As I began to look at this subject more carefully I discovered that the archeological and fossil evidence shows the Americas have been inhabited by people for at least 10,000 years. DNA, linguistic, archeological, and fossil evidence shows that the native people in the Americas migrated from Asia. The evidence supporting this conclusion has been collected and analyzed by archeologists and scientists with expertise in many different fields. Detailing this evidence is beyond the scope of this book. Based on my studies I am now convinced that the things I was taught in junior high are correct. The ancestors of the Native Americans came from Asia across the Bering land bridge.

21 [ldschurchnews.com/articles/61842/Children-of-Lehi-share-their-cultural-heritage.html](https://ldschurchnews.com/articles/61842/Children-of-Lehi-share-their-cultural-heritage.html)



When I was a believer I studied the geography of the Book of Mormon. I had found that there are multiple theories for the locations of the Book of Mormon lands. One common theme is that the Book of Mormon lands were actually a small area. These theories also teach that the people in the Book of Mormon were a small group of people that merged into a much larger population that was already here.

This idea contradicts the teachings of the Church and the prophets and it also contradicts the text of the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon teaches that the Jaredites were the first people in the Americas. after the flood of Noah receded from the Americas.

... and that after the waters had receded from off the face of this land it became a choice land above all other lands, a chosen land of the Lord ... (Ether 13:2)

Certainly if there was a world wide flood the Jaredites would have come to an empty land. However, archeological and fossil evidences show the Americas have been continuously occupied by humans and other animals since long before the time of the supposed flood.

In one of Joseph's accounts of his claimed vision of Moroni, he said Moroni said, "... the indians, were the **literal** descendants of Abraham ..." <sup>22</sup> (emphasis added)

The Book of Mormon also teaches that Lehi and his family came from Israel, and it teaches that they would have this land unto themselves:

Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments,

they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be **kept from all other nations**, that they may **possess this land unto themselves** (2 Ne. 1:9 emphasis added).

For many years the introduction to the Book of Mormon claimed that the people of the Book of Mormon were the *principal* ancestors of the native peoples of the Americas. Now the Church has changed the introduction to say the people of the Book of Mormon were *among* the ancestors of the Native Americans. There is no claim that this change was based on revelation. It seems that it was changed because the scientific evidence has reached the point where it is an indefensible position.

I am now convinced that the native peoples of the America came from Asia. I believe this directly contradicts the teachings of the Church and the Book of Mormon.

## **The King James Bible in the Book of Mormon**

As anyone who has read the Book of Mormon knows, the Second Book of Nephi quotes extensively from the Biblical Isaiah. Supposedly, the words of Isaiah were available because they were on the Plates of Brass.

One quote from Isaiah concerns seraphim. A seraph is a mythological fiery six-winged creature. The correct plural of seraph is seraphim. The King James translators made an error and wrote the plural as seraphims. This would be like writing the plural of cactus as cactis.

Above it stood the **seraphims**: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." (Isaiah 6:2 emphasis added)

The King James translators made this error twice, first in verse 2 and again in verse 6. When the Book of Mormon was originally published in 1830 it had the same errors. These errors are only a single character in each verse. But, it is significant because the same errors occur in exactly the same verses as in the King James Version.

Eventually these errors were discovered and the correct plural is found in the modern Book of Mormon.

Above it stood the **seraphim**; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.  
(2 Nephi 16:2 emphasis added)

One day I went to Fairlds.org and found the following statement about these errors:

One possibility is that during the transcribing of the printer's manuscript, someone recognized that Jacob was quoting Isaiah, and referred to the King James Version. The mistake may have been made by the typesetter, whose job it was not only to set the type, but also to punctuate the text, since neither the original nor printer's manuscripts were punctuated. The typesetter's job was, of course, to go over the text carefully, and it stands to reason that he might have recognized the Isaiah references and pulled his Bible out to ease his task.<sup>23</sup>

At first I thought maybe this sounded reasonable. However, I realized it might be possible to check the printers manuscript. The next morning I began searching the internet to see if I could find images of the printers manuscript. It did not take long to

23 fairlds.org/Book\_of\_Mormon/Book\_of\_Mormon\_vs\_the\_Critics.html

find the images.<sup>24</sup> However, it did take quite a bit of time to find the correct place in the manuscript because the images are poor quality and they do not have verse numbers. I found that in both instances the printers manuscript has the word seraphims. So these errors were not introduced by the typesetter. This wasn't that hard to find. I think fairlds.org should know it and they should remove their statement blaming the typesetter. This is a good example of how with careful research of the available historical documents it is sometimes possible to conclusively prove or disprove a historical conjecture.

Additionally, regardless of where the pluralization error came from, I was taught that angels do not have wings. In all the times I read the Book of Mormon, I must never have thought about this verse. To me, this is just ancient myth. I don't believe seraphim exist.

Another problem with the quotes from Isaiah is that most Bible scholars, now believe some portions of the book of Isaiah were not actually the words of Isaiah. They believe these portions of Isaiah were written long after his death, and more importantly long after the time when the Book of Mormon claims Lehi left Jerusalem with the brass plates. However, Some of these portions of Isaiah are quoted in the book of Second Nephi.

On this topic Grant Hardy, a believing Latter-day Saint scholar, made the following comment on an internet forum:

... the presence of Second Isaiah is right there in the book, in the wrong historical context. And as I tried to show in *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, it can't simply be written off as a quirk of the translator (i.e., when Joseph Smith came upon Isaiah material in the

24 [scribd.com/doc/2097751/1828-Printers-Manuscript-of-the-Book-of-Mormon](https://www.scribd.com/doc/2097751/1828-Printers-Manuscript-of-the-Book-of-Mormon) p. 72

plates, he just used the King James Version), because the rendition of Isaiah 48-49 in 2 Ne. 20-21 is modified in ways that are integral to the narrative. It has to be Nephi actively interacting with the anachronistic Isaiah text (just as Heb. 11 is integral to Ether 12).<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the quotes from Isaiah there are many other Book of Mormon verses that appear to be derived from the King James version of the Bible. The following verses are a single example of this:

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Romans 8:6)

... Remember, to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal. (2 Nephi 9:39)

I understand that God could reveal the same principle to different people at different times. However, the issue here is not that the principle is the same it is that the words are the same. The Bible verse was written in Greek by Paul around 50 AD. Later, around 1611 AD it was translated into English by the King James translators. The Book of Mormon verse was supposedly written in reformed Egyptian by Nephi around 550 BC. Later, in the 1820's it was translated into English by Joseph Smith. It's very unlikely that verses originally recorded in two different languages translated independently hundreds of years apart would come out nearly identical.

The above issues make it appear that the King James Version of the Bible was the source for parts of the Book of Mormon. There are many other examples like these. If the source of the Book of Mormon was actual gold plates, it should not appear that the Book of Mormon author is using the King James Version of the Bible as source material.

25 [mormonstories.org/250-251-grant-heather-hardy-book-of-mormon-scholarship/](http://mormonstories.org/250-251-grant-heather-hardy-book-of-mormon-scholarship/)

## Doctrine

There are a number of cases where the Book of Mormon contradicts the doctrines of the Church as they are taught today. I will give examples of a few of these.

As I have already documented the 1830 Book of Mormon originally taught that Christ is the Eternal Father, and then this was later corrected by adding the phrase “the son of”. There are other places in the Book of Mormon where the nature of God is still described in a way that clearly does not match the teachings of the modern church. For example:

And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son— The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son— **And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.** And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people. (Mosiah 15:1-5 emphasis added)

When I was a believer these Trinitarian verses were confusing to me. I tried to reconcile them by using the platitude “they are one in purpose.” But, the actual words on the page do not convey this idea.

Another issue is the Church's teaching that the temple endowment and sealing are necessary for salvation. These ordinances are not even mentioned in the Book of Mormon. If the

Book of Mormon simply lacked the temple ordinances, that might be acceptable. However, when Christ supposedly visited the Americas He taught that it is evil to declare more or less than repentance and baptism:

And again I say unto you, ye must **repent, and be baptized** in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. **And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil,** and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. (3 Nephi 11:38-40 emphasis added)

The Book of Mormon also contradicts the temple ordinance of baptism for the dead. The following verses teach that the baptism of people that did not have the law is just as inappropriate as baptizing infants:

For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also **all they that are without the law**. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; **and unto such baptism availeth nothing— But it is mockery before God, denying the mercies of Christ,** and the power of his Holy Spirit, and putting trust in dead works. Behold, my son, this thing ought not to be; for repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law. (Moroni 8:22-24 emphasis added)

It is not simply the case that the Book of Mormon does not mention temple ordinances. These examples show that the Book of Mormon is in direct contradiction with the temple doctrines of the Church today.

## **Racism in the Book of Mormon.**

It is a central tenet of the Book of Mormon that God punishes the wicked by changing the color of their skin.

And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. And thus saith the Lord God: I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent of their iniquities. (2 Nephi 5:21-22)

To me, these are two of the worst verses in the Book of Mormon. I see the following problems with these verses:

- It seems very unlikely that people from Jerusalem would have been described as white and exceedingly fair. People from the Middle East generally have olive skin.
- God considers white and fair skin to be delightsome.
- If dark skin is a curse for wickedness, all babies should be born white. They should not be cursed because their parents were wicked.
- God claims that the changing of the skin color is so that they will not be enticing to those with white skin.



- God says they will be loathsome until they repent; implying that when they repent, their skin will become white again. This, of course, does not happen.

Skin color is not based on curses from God. Skin color is strongly correlated with the latitude of one's ancestors.<sup>26</sup> People whose ancestors lived closer to the equator, have darker skin, and people whose ancestors lived at higher latitudes, have lighter skin. I do not believe in a God that punishes the wicked by changing the color of their skin.

## **My Analysis of the Book of Mormon**

Even if there are many things in the Book of Mormon that are good, this does not make the book true. For a book of scripture to be true, it should be internally consistent, there should be no anachronisms, nothing should be contradicted by evidence, and it certainly should not teach that God is racist. Even if there is only a single thing that is incorrect, it would cause me to seriously doubt the truthfulness of the book. But there are many things that are incorrect. Even with all the archeological work that has been done by members of the Church no evidence has ever been found that conclusively supports the Book of Mormon. Because of all of the problems detailed above, and many others, I am convinced that the Book of Mormon is not true.

To be perfectly clear, I now believe that Nephi, Alma, Ammon, Mormon, Moroni, and all of the other people described in the book never existed. They are all fictional characters. I believe all of the stories in the Book of Mormon, including the story of Christ visiting America are fiction.

26 [maps.grida.no/go/graphic/skin-colour-map-indigenous-people](https://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/skin-colour-map-indigenous-people)

## ***Lies About Polygamy***

**I**t is important to understand that this chapter is not about polygamy itself. It is about lying. God cannot lie. This statement is obvious, but a few scriptures will serve to reinforce it:

And I, Enos, knew that **God could not lie**; wherefore, my guilt was swept away. (Enos 1:6 emphasis added)

And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for **thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie**. (Ether 3:12 emphasis added)

And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the **devil, who is the father of all lies**, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. (2 Nephi 2:18 emphasis added)

### **Joseph Openly Taught God's Law Is Monogamy**

Joseph Smith, as the prophet, openly taught that God's law of marriage was monogamy. The scriptures are the word of God. In the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, section 101 clearly taught that polygamy was wrong:

Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare

that we believe, that one man should have one wife;  
and one woman, but one husband ... (1835 D&C 101)

In 1842 Joseph was the editor of the Church newspaper *The Times and Seasons*. In the October 1<sup>st</sup> edition of *The Times and Seasons* he included the entire 101<sup>st</sup> section of the Doctrine and Covenants, along with signed statements from prominent members of the community that monogamy was the only system of marriage in God's church. Among the people that signed this statement were two of Joseph's wives, Eliza R. Snow and Sarah M. Cleveland. It was also signed by Presiding Bishop Newell K. Whitney and his wife Elizabeth Ann Whitney. A few months earlier Bishop Whitney had performed and Elizabeth Ann Whitney had witnessed the marriage of their 17 year old daughter, Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph.

### **Joseph Secretly Taught God's Law is Polygamy**

The following is from a sworn affidavit of Lorenzo Snow, fifth prophet of the Church. I have a copy of this affidavit in a book authored by Joseph Fielding Smith. There is no doubt that this is authentic. Lorenzo Snow is describing a conversation he had in April 1843 where Joseph Smith told him about polygamy:

He there and then explained to me the doctrine of plurality of wives; **he said that the Lord had revealed it unto him, and commanded him to have women sealed to him as wives**; that he foresaw the trouble that would follow, and sought to turn away from the commandment; that an **angel from heaven then appeared before him with a drawn sword, threatening him with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment**. He further said that my sister Eliza R. Snow had been sealed to him as his wife for time and eternity. He told me that the Lord would open the way, and I should have women sealed to me as wives. This conversation was

prolonged, I think one hour or more, in which he told me many important things. **I solemnly declare before God and holy angels, and as I hope to come forth in the morning of the resurrection, that the above statement is true.**<sup>27</sup>

Lorenzo Snow, swears an oath before God, that Joseph told him God commanded polygamy. I have many additional sources that prove Joseph secretly taught that polygamy was commanded by God. But why list anymore? This one is irrefutable.

## **My Analysis**

I believe Joseph was lying when he said God commanded polygamy. I can accept that some things the leaders of the Church say are just their opinions. I accept that men are not perfect, and that even men that claim to be prophets of God, can make mistakes. But the evidence shows, the scriptures of the Church taught the rule of marriage in God's church was one man to one woman, and simultaneously, the prophet of the Church was having secret revelations from God commanding women to marry him. These cannot both be true; one of them must be a lie.

I do not believe in a God that lies. Joseph claimed to speak for God, and he made God a liar. Because Joseph put his lies in God's mouth, I do not accept his claim to be a prophet of God.

27 Joseph F. Smith Jr., *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, p. 67-8 [I have a copy of this book that I believe was originally owned by my great-grandfather, Nathaniel Hodges]

## THIRTEEN

# ***The Aaronic Priesthood Restoration***

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery claimed that on May 15, 1829, John the Baptist returned to earth as a resurrected being, and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon them, and commanded them to baptize each other. There are contemporary records of Joseph and Oliver telling people about baptizing each other. But there are no records of them telling anyone about John the Baptist until five years later. The first known record of this was in 1834 at a meeting of the Kirtland High Council.

## **Doctrine and Covenants Thirteen**

Doctrine and Covenants 13 contains the canonized account of the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. The other early revelations were recorded in Revelation Book 1<sup>28</sup> as they happened. However, there is nothing about this event recorded in that book. It also was not published in the 1833 Book of Commandments or in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. If it really happened, I think it would have been published in these books. The first place the text of Doctrine and Covenants 13 can be found is in the History of the Church, written in 1838.

28 [josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-book-1](http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-book-1)

## David Whitmer

David Whitmer made the following statement:

I moved Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to my father[']s house in Fayette[,] Seneca County[,] New York, from Harmony, Penn. in the year [June] 1829, on our way I conversed freely with them upon this great work they were bringing about, and Oliver stated to me in Joseph presence that they had baptized each other seeking by that to fulfill the command ... I never heard that an Angel had ordained Joseph and Oliver to the Aaronic priesthood until the year 1834[, 183]5[, or [183]6—in Ohio. My information from Joseph and Oliver upon this matter being as I have stated, and that they were commanded so to do by revelation through Joseph. I do not believe that John the Baptist ever ordained Joseph and Oliver as stated and believed by some. I regard that as an error, a misconception.<sup>29</sup>

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses, did not believe that Joseph and Oliver ever had a visitation from John the Baptist. If a man that personally knew Joseph and Oliver did not believe them, how can I believe them? I believe that if Joseph and Oliver had really seen John the Baptist, they would have told David Whitmer.

## Doctrine and Covenants Twenty-Seven

Doctrine and Covenants, section 27, mentions the visitation of John the Baptist:

Which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto

29 David Whitmer, interview by Zenas H. Gurley Jr., 14 Jan. 1885, LDS archives. Early Mormon Documents p. 136-7

the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron; (D&C 27:8)

However, this verse was not part of section 27 when it was originally recorded. It was added later.

The following table documents the written accounts of section 27, and how it was changed over time:

| Publication                            | Date              | Word Count |
|--|-------------------|------------|
| Revelation Book 1 <sup>30</sup>        | circa August 1830 | 193        |
| Painesville Telegraph <sup>31</sup>    | April 19 1831     | 192        |
| Evening and Morning Star <sup>32</sup> | March 1833        | 193        |
| Book of Commandments <sup>33</sup>     | 1833              | 194        |
| Doctrine and Covenants <sup>34</sup>   | 1835              | 656        |
| Doctrine and Covenants                 | 2012              | 648        |

Notice that in 1835, it gets significantly longer. The added portion contains verse eight which I quoted above. So before 1835, this section did not mention John the Baptist.

The current heading to section 27 claims that part of it was written in August of 1830, and the remainder was written a year later in September of 1831. As far as I know there is no evidence to support the claim that the added portion was written in 1831.

30 [josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-circa-august-1830-dc-27#1](http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-circa-august-1830-dc-27#1)

31 [www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/OH/paintel2.htm#041931](http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/OH/paintel2.htm#041931)

32 [centerplace.org/history/ems/v1n10.htm](http://centerplace.org/history/ems/v1n10.htm)

33 [irr.org/mit/boc/1833boc-p60.html](http://irr.org/mit/boc/1833boc-p60.html)

34 [josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-circa-august-1835-dc-27#1](http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-circa-august-1835-dc-27#1)

The fact that the shorter version was printed twice in 1833 makes me suspect that the additions were not made until after 1833.

## **My Analysis**

Between 1829 and 1834 there are no records of John the Baptist restoring the Aaronic Priesthood. Historians have searched the journals of church members, the letters written by church members, the minutes of church meetings, and all church publications from this era. During these five years many men are ordained to the priesthood and over 3000<sup>35</sup> people are baptized. and yet there is not a single record of John the Baptist restoring the authority to baptize. At every baptism I attended a big deal was made about the priesthood restoration providing the authority to baptize. It seems very unlikely to me that there would not be any records of this visitation. But even worse than the lack of records, are the facts showing that they retroactively changed the *revelations*.

The above evidence convinces me that Joseph and Oliver never had a visitation from John the Baptist. It is a story that they made up later.

35 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Church\\_of\\_Jesus\\_Christ\\_of\\_Latter-day\\_Saints\\_membership\\_history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints_membership_history)



## FOURTEEN

### ***The Book of Abraham***

**I**n 1835, a man named Michael Chandler came to Kirtland, Ohio. He had four Egyptian mummies, and some Egyptian papyrus scrolls. These objects were purchased, and Joseph produced the Book of Abraham claiming it was a translation of the papyri:

A Translation of some ancient Records that have fallen into our hands from 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. (Heading to the Book of Abraham)

After Joseph died, his wife eventually sold the mummies and the papyri, and for many years, no one knew where they were. In 1966, a portion of the papyri were found in a museum in New York, and the Church now owns them. Also, there was one fragment of papyri which had been kept in the Church archives. The Church published pictures of all these papyri fragments in the February 1968 issue of *The Improvement Era*.

In addition to the papyri, there is a group of documents referred to as the Kirtland Egyptian Papers.<sup>36</sup> Some of these documents were created by Joseph, others were created by his scribes. These documents have some copies of pictures and char-

36 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirtland\\_Egyptian\\_papers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirtland_Egyptian_papers)

acters from the original papyri. And, of course, we also have the three facsimiles published in the Pearl of Great Price.

Unlike in Joseph's time, Egyptologists are now able to read Egyptian. They have carefully studied all of the above documents. They have found the papyri say nothing about Abraham.

Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists have translated the three facsimiles that appear in the Pearl of Great Price. This has shown that Joseph's translations of the facsimiles are not even close to correct.

The drawing of Facsimile 2 shown below is from the *Kirtland Egyptian Papers*. Notice there are portions missing from this image. In the version of this image that is published in the Pearl of Great Price, the missing portions have been filled in with images and characters copied from an unrelated portion of one of the other papyrus fragments. The characters that were copied into the missing portion of the outer circle are hieratic characters. However, the original characters in the rest of the circle are hieroglyphic. Also, the added characters are written in the opposite direction from the characters in the rest of the circle.



Facsimile 2

The Church History institute manual says the following about the papyri:

Studies of them have confirmed that they are mainly ancient Egyptian funerary texts of the sort commonly buried with royalty and nobility and designed to guide them through their eternal journeyings. This has renewed the question about the connection between the records and the book of Abraham.<sup>37</sup>

My studies have convinced me that the papyrus have nothing to do with Abraham. I believe the Book of Abraham was made up by Joseph Smith.

<sup>37</sup> *Church History In The Fulness Of Times Student Manual*  
[institute.lds.org/manuals/church-history-institute-student-manual/  
chft-16-20-20.asp](http://institute.lds.org/manuals/church-history-institute-student-manual/chft-16-20-20.asp)

## ***The Temple***

**T**he Church teaches that the ordinances of the temple are the crowning blessings of the gospel. So this is a very important topic. I understand that members of the Church believe the temple ceremony is very sacred. Even though I no longer believe, I have done my best to write the following in a way that I believe is respectful of church members' beliefs.

### **Origin of the Temple Ceremony**

The similarities between the temple ceremony and the Masonic rituals are far too numerous to be coincidence. To be respectful, I will not give any details of the similarities here. The parallels can easily be found on the internet.

The similarities provide sufficient evidence that either the Masonic rituals are derived from the temple ceremony, or parts of the temple ceremony are derived from the Masonic rituals.

Since the Masonic rituals predate the latter-day temples, the only way they could be derived from the temple ceremony is if they came from ancient biblical temples. As a believer this explanation had resolved this issue for me. There are three problems with this theory: First, there is quite a lot known about the ancient biblical temples, and there is no indication that there was anything similar to the modern temple ceremony. The ancient temple was used primarily to perform animal sacrifices. Second,

although no one knows exactly when masonry originated, the evidence implies that the Masonic rituals originated long after the ancient temples. Third, the similarities in language are too close. There are some phrases that are identical. Even if the ancient temple ceremony was similar to the modern temple ceremony, the ancient ceremony was not in English. How could the masons have passed it down for thousands of years, translated it into English, and have it end up so similar?

So the other possibility is that parts of the temple ceremony were derived from the Masonic rituals. Evidence supporting this theory is found in the *History of the Church* authored by Joseph Smith himself.

Tuesday, [March] 15. [1842] — I officiated as grand chaplain at the installation of the Nauvoo Lodge of Free Masons, at the Grove near the Temple. ... In the evening I received the first degree in Freemasonry in the Nauvoo Lodge, assembled in my general business office.

Wednesday, March 16. [1842] — I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree.<sup>38</sup>

The following is the record of the first time the endowment was given:

Wednesday, [May] 4. [1842] — I spent the day in the upper part of the store, ... in council with General James Adams, of Springfield, Patriarch Hyrum Smith, Bishops Newel K. Whitney and George Miller, and President Brigham Young and Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to

38 *History of the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 550-2

the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which anyone is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds. **In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days.**<sup>39</sup> (emphasis added)

The manual that we used in our elder's quorum meeting a few years ago verifies that the above refers to the endowment.

... May 4, 1842, even though the temple was not complete, Joseph Smith administered the endowment to a small group of faithful brethren.<sup>40</sup>

And thus we see that Joseph first gave the full endowment exactly seven weeks after he became a Mason. This evidence convinces me that Joseph based parts of the temple ceremony on the Masonic rituals. I believe that he made the rest of it up.

## **Special Clothing**

Many religions have special clothing. In some cases, these special clothes are only worn for religious ceremonies. In other cases, they are worn all the time. An extreme example is the burqa worn by Muslim women. More moderate examples are the Jewish yarmulke, and the robes worn by catholic priests.

39 History of the Church, Vol. 5, p. 1-2

40 Teachings of Presidents of the Church Joseph Smith, p. 413

The Church also has special clothing worn by members that have attended the temple. This is referenced in the following quote from the official church web site:

It is the special underclothing known as the temple garment, or garment of the holy priesthood, worn by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have received their temple endowment.<sup>41</sup>

I always believed the special clothing of other religions originated from the foolish traditions of men, and of course, I never believed God cared about any of it. I now no longer hold the view that the temple garments have any sacred significance. I don't believe a God would care what type of underclothing anyone wears.

## **My Analysis**

I cannot believe God would allow something as crucial as the temple endowment to appear to be so obviously derived from Masonic rituals. To be completely clear, I no longer believe that there is any validity to the temple ordinances performed by the Church.

41 [lds.org/ensign/1997/08/the-temple-garment-an-outward-expression-of-an-inward-commitment](https://www.lds.org/ensign/1997/08/the-temple-garment-an-outward-expression-of-an-inward-commitment)

## ***Blacks and the Priesthood***

**B**efore June 8, 1978, the Church did not allow black men to hold the priesthood.

### **Trying to Imagine What It Was Like**

In 1978 I was 14 years old and held the Aaronic priesthood. I was a member of the teachers quorum of the Mesa 30<sup>th</sup> ward. There were no black families in our ward. Since I was only 14 and because I did not have any black friends I never thought much about it. Now as I think more carefully, I can try to imagine what it would have been like for a black man without the priesthood.

Maybe this black man had a Japanese Home Teacher that he called in the middle of the night to come to his house, to give his sick wife a blessing. Maybe he asked his Mexican friend to give his newborn son a name and a blessing. How did he feel as he watched his white bishop baptize his daughter and confirm her as a member of the Church. I imagine him in sacrament meeting with his 12 year old son as they sat together behind the Deacons. What would he have said when his son whispered in his ear, "Dad, why can't I pass the sacrament with my friends?"

It would have been very difficult to deal with the fact that he could not perform the priesthood ordinances and blessings for his family. But, if he had good friends and responsible church



leaders, they would have made sure that he and his family had the blessings of the priesthood when needed.

I try to imagine what would have happened if he went to his bishop for a temple recommend interview. The bishop asks him questions about his belief in God, the Atonement, the restoration, and the current prophet, etc. He answers these belief questions appropriately. The bishop then asks him questions about chastity, the treatment of his family, honesty, tithing, the word of wisdom etc. He answers all of these behavioral questions correctly. The last question is "Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord's house and participate in temple ordinances?" Of course this interview is only imaginary because he would have had to answer "No, I am not worthy to enter the House of the Lord. I am a black man."

Before June 8 1978, the Church did not allow black men or black women to attend the temple. This means they could not receive their endowments, they could not have their marriages sealed for time and all eternity, and they could not be sealed to their children.

Additionally, before June 8 1978, temple endowments and temple sealings were not performed on behalf of deceased black people. The following is from a talk give by Elder Mark E. Peterson at BYU on August 27, 1954:

Brother Hope [a black member of the Church] asked me if it would be possible for him to have baptisms for the dead done in the temple on behalf of members of his family who had passed on. I went to President Smith, "Yes, you get their records and we will take them over to the temple and have the baptisms done for them." I did, and we performed vicarious baptisms for these

Negroes.<sup>42</sup> Only the baptisms and confirmations - nothing else, but we did that much.<sup>43</sup>

Before this policy was changed, black members of the Church were denied access to the ordinances they believed were necessary for their salvation. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* says the following about saving ordinances:

The ordinances of baptism, confirmation, Melchizedek Priesthood ordination (for men), the temple endowment, and temple sealing are **required for exaltation** for all accountable persons. These are called the saving ordinances.<sup>44</sup> (Section 20.1 emphasis added)

## Statements by the First Presidency

As a believer I had managed to shove this issue into my “box” by rationalizing that it was a “mistake of man.” However upon further study I have found evidence that clearly invalidates this excuse.

Statements by the First Presidency are the ultimate declaration of church doctrine. On August 17, 1949, the First Presidency, consisting of George Albert Smith, J. Reuben Clark Jr, and, David O. McKay, issued a statement addressing this issue.

The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of **direct commandment from the Lord**, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect

42 It is important not to judge this quote or other quotes in the chapter based on using the word "Negro." This was the accepted term at the time.

43 [scribd.com/doc/7769535/Mark-E-Petersons-Racist-BYU-Talk](https://www.scribd.com/doc/7769535/Mark-E-Petersons-Racist-BYU-Talk)

44 [lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/priesthood-ordinances-and-blessing](https://www.lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/priesthood-ordinances-and-blessing)

that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. ... The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that **the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality** and that while the details of this principle have not been made known, the mortality is a privilege that is given to those who maintain their first estate; and that the worth of the privilege is so great that spirits are willing to come to earth and take on bodies no matter what the handicap may be as to the kind of bodies they are to secure; and that among the handicaps, failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood is a handicap which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth. Under this principle there is no injustice whatsoever involved in this deprivation as to the holding of the priesthood by the Negroes.<sup>45</sup> (emphasis added)

This First Presidency statement makes it perfectly clear. The priesthood and temple ban was commanded by God, and it was a consequence of actions in the pre-mortal life.

A more recent statement was made on December 15, 1969. The First Presidency consisting of David O. McKay, Hugh B. Brown, and N. Eldon Tanner issued another statement:

... The seeming discrimination by the Church toward the Negro is not something which originated with man; but goes back into the beginning with God ... Were we

45 [fairmormon.org/Mormonism\\_and\\_racial\\_issues/Blacks\\_and\\_the\\_priesthood/Statements](http://fairmormon.org/Mormonism_and_racial_issues/Blacks_and_the_priesthood/Statements)

the leaders of an enterprise created by ourselves and operated only according to our own earthly wisdom, it would be a simple thing to act according to popular will. But we believe that this work is directed by God and that the conferring of the priesthood must await His revelation. To do otherwise would be to deny the very premise on which the Church is established. ...<sup>46</sup>

Again, this is a clear undeniable statement that the priesthood and temple ban was done at the command of God. It cannot be dismissed by calling it the mistake of man.

## **My Analysis**

I have a hard time understanding how any black people ever accepted this policy. Admittedly, there were some black people that joined the Church before 1978. However, there were many, many more that rejected the Church because of this policy. And, although this policy has now changed, people of all races continue to reject the Church based on this alone.

I have talked to some members of the Church who say that if the ban was still in place today, they would leave the Church. For me, it does not matter that it ended 30 years ago. I cannot just ignore this issue because it has been fixed. Racism was, is, and always will be wrong.

I think that denying the priesthood to black men, and the temple to black families, is a case where racist men made their God in their image. I do not believe God had anything to do with this policy. He did not create it nor did he terminate it. I do not believe in a racist God. And, I do not believe men who teach that He is racist are His prophets.

46 Ibid.

### ***The Church Is Not True***

The evidence I have presented in the preceding sections gives only an overview of the problems. I have studied many other topics, and found many other problems. Entire books have been written on important topics that I have barely mentioned. Additionally, there are many websites that are dedicated to analyzing the truthfulness of the Church. Like I said previously, anyone who sincerely wants to fully understand the issues will have to do their own careful research. There is an overwhelming amount of reliable, undeniable evidence.

Long before I began seriously investigating the Church, I had occasionally gone to FAIR when I had a question about a difficult topic. When I went to FAIR and looked up a single issue, the explanation seemed reasonable enough to satisfy me. However, when I started looking at all of the issues, I started to notice that the explanation for one issue sometimes conflicted with the explanation for some other issue. I also noticed the explanations would often focus on a slim possibility of truth, while ignoring a much greater probability of falsehood. This might be acceptable for one item, but when this type of argument is used for many items the probabilities of falsehood compound.

The evidence and arguments I have presented in the preceding sections are the things which are the most convincing to me. They are also the most doctrinally significant items. The First

Vision, the Book of Mormon, the Restoration of the Priesthood, the Temple—all of these need to be true in order for the Church to be true.

With respect to these founding items, it seems reasonable to expect that either all of them are true, or none of them are true. It would be perplexing if some appeared to be true, and some appeared to be false. If the evidence made only a few of them appear to be false, it might be reasonable to doubt the evidence or the analysis of the evidence. But, when the evidence refutes all of them, I cannot believe.

I wholeheartedly agree with what President Hinckley said in the Priesthood session of the April 2003 general conference:

Each of us has to face the matter—**either the Church is true, or it is a fraud. There is no middle ground. It is the Church and kingdom of God, or it is nothing.**<sup>47</sup>  
(emphasis added)

I really believe he is right when he says there is no middle ground. It cannot be partially true. Based on my careful and thorough analysis of evidence and arguments both for and against the Church, I am completely convinced the Church is not true. It is a fraud. It is nothing.

<sup>47</sup> [lds.org/general-conference/2003/04/loyalty](http://lds.org/general-conference/2003/04/loyalty)

### ***A Teaspoon of Sewage***

**W**hen I was teaching the young men as the deacon's quorum adviser I remember asking them to consider the following:

Question: What do you get when you put a teaspoon of sewage in a gallon of milk?

Answer: A gallon of sewage.

The point of this was that a movie or TV show that is mostly good, is not good, if it has even one bad part. The Church has some things that I now believe are bad parts. To me the items in this chapter are like a teaspoon of sewage.

When I believed in the truth of the Church, I either had not thought about these issues, or I chose to ignore them. These issues did not convince me that the Church is not true. And therefore, fixing these issues will have no effect on my beliefs regarding the Church.

However, these issues are important enough to me that I want to be on record as taking a stand against them. Once I realized that the Church was not true, the primary reason I decided to officially resign was because my continuing membership in the Church implied that I supported the Church's positions on these issues.

For each of these issues I try to offer suggestions for improvement. I believe that my transition from member to former-member gives me a perspective on these issues that may not be available to members or to non-members. Even though I am no longer a member of the Church, I hope that my suggestions can be taken as constructive criticism.

## Racism Today

In the 2011 Aaronic Priesthood manual Lesson 31 contains the following quote from Spencer W. Kimball:

We recommend that people **marry those who are of the same racial background** generally, and of somewhat the same economic and social and educational background (some of those are not an absolute necessity, but preferred), and above all, the same religious background, without question.<sup>48</sup> (emphasis added)

Just before this quote, the manual instructs the teacher to ask the young men to list some of the characteristics they would find important when selecting a wife. I can imagine some of the immature young men joking about how they want a hot wife. Maybe one of them will say he wants a blonde wife. Is the adviser now supposed to explain that hair color is not important, but that skin color is?

In 2011, the Church produced a new resource guide for this manual where they give additional resources for each lesson. When I discovered this resource guide, I looked in the section for Lesson 31, hoping to find a repudiation or clarification of this

48 [lds.org/manual/aaronic-priesthood-manual-3/lesson-31-choosing-an-eternal-companion](https://www.lds.org/manual/aaronic-priesthood-manual-3/lesson-31-choosing-an-eternal-companion) Quoting: "Marriage and Divorce," in 1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977], p. 144



racist teaching. I was disappointed. So it appears that this is what the Church intends to teach the young men today.

It might be reasonable to teach that marriages between people from different cultures are more difficult. But this quote specifically refers to race. Discouraging inter-racial marriage is, by definition, racist. Why does the Church continue to use a quote from a talk that was given before they allowed black people to enter the temple? This quote should be removed.

The following verse from the current Doctrine and Covenants supports slavery. I can find no better words than disgusting and repulsive to describe how I feel about this verse:

... we do not believe it right to interfere with bond-servants, neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them contrary to the will and wish of their masters, nor to meddle with or influence them in the least to cause them to be dissatisfied with their situations in this life, thereby jeopardizing the lives of men; such interference we believe to be unlawful and unjust, and dangerous to the peace of every government allowing human beings to be held in servitude. (D&C 134:12)

I call upon the leaders of the Church to remove this verse from their scriptures and to officially disavow these teachings and all other past or present racist teaching.

## **Intolerance of Homosexuality**

I no longer believe sexual orientation is a choice or a sin. However, I believe in freedom of religion. Churches have the right to teach that homosexuality is a sin. As I previously discussed, I disagree with attempts to pass laws that discriminate against people that are homosexual. I believe that everyone should be treated equally, especially by the government. I am

hopefully optimistic that someday we will look back on the laws prohibiting gay marriage with the same disgust that we have for the laws which formerly prohibited interracial marriage. I believe the Church is wrong on this issue. Furthermore, they should drop their support for laws prohibiting gay marriage.

According to a 2006 Deseret News article Utah leads the nation in suicide among men 15-24. An estimated one third of these suicides were people that were struggling with gender identity or homosexuality<sup>49</sup>. Certainly many of these suicides are related to church teachings.

I understand that the Church is unlikely to quit teaching that homosexual behavior is a sin. However, I think church leaders can at least be very careful about the way they frame their message, and be thoughtful with the language they use. I believe the Church should actively teach its members a stronger message of love and acceptance of homosexuals. Some leaders of the Church have shown improvement in this area.

One example of a great local leader is Bishop Kevin Kloosterman of the Sycamore Illinois ward. In November of 2011 he spoke at a conference for LGBTQ Mormons and their friends, families and allies. I cried as I listened to his talk. The following are some of his words:

Over the past year, I have felt promptings from the Spirit that I needed to learn all I could about these issues. To listen, finally, to many of your stories. Some of them I've read in books. Some of them I've read on the Internet. And as I took the time to listen and as I took the time to learn, I began to have a mighty change of heart.

49 [deseretnews.com/article/635201873/Deadly-taboo-Youth-suicide-an-epidemic-that-many-in-Utah-prefer-to-ignore.html](http://deseretnews.com/article/635201873/Deadly-taboo-Youth-suicide-an-epidemic-that-many-in-Utah-prefer-to-ignore.html)

But it was not without some pain. As you know very well, the stories that have been written, your own stories, are extremely painful. Some have called it a tragedy. I call it an atrocity, what has happened. And as I read these stories and as I learned more about these issues, I began to see the emotional wounds and the scars that many of you still have today. And I seem to ask the question, “Where did you get these wounds?” and unfortunately the answer was, “In the house of my friends.”<sup>50</sup>

## Church and Family

The Church is generally a pro-family organization. However, now that I am a nonbeliever, there are two things I think the Church should change.

The first change I think the Church should make is related to the following temple recommend question:

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

Because I am now a nonbeliever, and my teachings are contrary to the Church, I feel this question puts my friends and family in a difficult position. I think it is okay if the Church asks them if they agree with my beliefs. But making their temple recommends conditional on whether they affiliate<sup>51</sup> with me is wrong. I am sure most bishops and stake presidents will give a recommend to those who affiliate with nonbelievers, as long as

50 [mormonstories.org/lds-bishop-kevin-kloostermans-talk-on-homosexuals-in-the-lds-church/](http://mormonstories.org/lds-bishop-kevin-kloostermans-talk-on-homosexuals-in-the-lds-church/)

51 I found the following two definitions of affiliate: “To become closely connected or associated” and “to keep company with; hang out with.”

they don't agree with them. However, most members of the Church take these questions very seriously. I am confident some people have ended relationships with family or friends based on a desire to be sure they can answer this question exactly as it is written. One of my extended family members told me they were planning on asking their bishop for clarification on this question with respect to their relationship with me. I would simply like the Church to eliminate the word '*affiliate*' from this question.

The other change has to do with temple weddings. Couples planning a marriage should not have to exclude anyone. I think the Church should allow a civil marriage outside of the temple to be followed the same day by a temple sealing. I feel it is very harsh to expect a couple to exclude any family or friends from their wedding ceremony. At our wedding my wife and I had to exclude some of our friends, all of our brothers and sisters and my wife's biological father. Sadly, I did not even think to care.

**Humanitarian Aid**

As a member of the Church, I was under the impression the Church gave a significant amount of aid to humanitarian causes. The following data is from the Facts & Statistics page of the Church news media website.<sup>52</sup>

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Countries Receiving Humanitarian Aid (Since 1985) | 178           |
| Value of Humanitarian Assistance (Since 1985)     | \$1.3 Billion |

1.3 Billion dollars is a lot of money. However, this is the total value of all aid given in the last 26 years. In 1985, there were about 6 million members, and now there are about 14 million members. So I averaged 6 million and 14 million, and got 10 million as a rough estimate for the average number of members during the last 26 years. Then I took 1.3 billion dollars, and

52 [newsroom.lds.org/facts-and-stats](https://newsroom.lds.org/facts-and-stats)

divided it by 10 million members, and then divided, that by 26 years. The result of this computation tells me that on average the Church only spends about \$5 per member per year on humanitarian aid.

The Church recently opened the City Creek Center in Salt Lake City. This development includes a shopping center, office buildings, and residential units. The cost of this is estimated to be over 1.5 billion dollars. That is 2 million more than the Church has spent on humanitarian aid in the last 26 years. To me this seems like the Church has not properly prioritized the use of its funds.

According to the U.N., a child dies of hunger every five seconds.<sup>53</sup> The people of the world must try to fix this. All individuals, communities, churches, corporations, and governments need to do more. I had previously, wrongly assumed that some significant portion of my donations to the Church were going to humanitarian aid. As I gave a lot in donations to the Church, I should have been more diligent in verifying the use of those funds. I encourage all of us to commit to doing more than we have been doing to help solve the problem of world hunger.

## **Say What is Truth**

I was an active member of the Church for 46 years. Totaling up all the lessons from Sunday School, Seminary, and Priesthood meetings, I have had thousands of hours of gospel instruction. I have personally taught hundreds of lessons. But, when I started studying non-church approved material, I found there were many things I did not know. It appears to me the Church is intentionally hiding information from its members.

53 [edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/11/17/italy.food.summit](http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/11/17/italy.food.summit)

In the fall of 1981, Apostle Boyd K. Packer spoke at BYU to employees of the Church Education System. I think the following quote confirms the Church's desire to cover up its past:

There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of Church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not. **Some things that are true are not very useful.**<sup>54</sup> (emphasis added)

Now that I have studied the details of church history I understand why President Packer feels this way.

I will give one example of the Church not telling the whole truth in its lesson manuals. There are many more examples. The Elder's quorum manual from 2007 contains a historical summary of the life of Joseph Smith. It records his marriage to Emma, but it does not mention any of his other wives. And, in the introduction, it says the following:

The Prophet taught the doctrine of plural marriage, and a number of such marriages were performed during his lifetime.<sup>55</sup>

To me this is blatantly trying to hide the fact that Joseph himself was a polygamist. It easily could have said "... and was married to a number of women during his lifetime."

What they wrote about Joseph and plural marriage was accurate, but incomplete. I think this is exactly how President Packer believes church history should be taught. However, this is lying as defined by the Church's Gospel Principles lesson manual:

There are many other forms of lying. When we speak untruths, we are guilty of lying. We can also intentionally deceive others by a gesture or a look, by

54 [byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/21.3Packer.pdf](http://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/21.3Packer.pdf)

55 Teachings of Presidents of the Church Joseph Smith p. xii

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.<sup>56</sup>

The Church sets a high standard of honesty for its members. It appears that this same standard does not apply to church manuals. I encourage the Church to make sure their manuals are accurate and complete. I do not like being lied to. It is especially hard to take from the organization that taught me to be honest.

<sup>56</sup> [lds.org/manual/gospel-principles/chapter-31-honesty](https://www.lds.org/manual/gospel-principles/chapter-31-honesty)

### ***Other Religious Beliefs***

**A**fter I quit believing in the Church, I attended some other Christian churches with some of my friends. I also began a careful analysis of all my religious beliefs.

#### **The Bible**

One of the first things I looked at was the Bible. I quickly realized the Bible is full of atrocities and absurdities. Of course I had known about many of these issues but I had never carefully thought about them before. Because detailing the issues I now see in the Bible is beyond the scope of this book I will just list some of these problems.

The Bible condones and/or commands stoning, torture, human sacrifices, genocide, infanticide, murder, rape, slavery, genital mutilation, capital punishment for minor offenses, forced abortion by poison for suspected infidelity, sexism, racism, polygamy, obligatory levirate marriages, and animal sacrifices. According to the Bible these atrocities are performed in the name of God, at the command of God, and even by the very hand of God. The God described in the Bible is evil.

The Bible describes many things that I think are absurd. Before I list these, I want to state that I understand some of these could be mistranslations, some could be metaphorical, and I also understand that the existence of an all powerful God makes any-



thing possible. However, to me the following seem like myths created by ancient men: the world created in six days, the first man created from dust, the first woman created from a rib, a world wide flood, confounding of languages at the tower of Babel, dragons, four headed creatures, six winged angels, exodus from Egypt of more than a million people, a talking donkey, Jonah in a whale, Giants and Goliath, people living hundreds of years, Lots wife being turned into a pillar of salt, Daniel in the lions den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace, the walls of Jericho brought down by yelling, the sun moving backwards, Samson slaying 1000 men with a jaw bone, Samson losing his strength because his head was shaved, Elijah calling down fire from heaven, two bears killing 42 children for mocking a bald prophet, illnesses caused by demonic possession and cured by exorcism, etc, etc. Without evidence I see no reason to accept these as anything more than myths and fables. I no longer believe they literally happened.

## **The Resurrection**

The most important event in the Bible is the resurrection of Jesus. The Bible tells the story of Thomas. According to the Bible, he knew Jesus, he knew the miracles, and he personally knew the other apostles. They told him face to face that they had seen the risen Lord and yet he did not believe.

The other apostles had made a most extraordinary claim but they presented no evidence. Thomas was wise to doubt. Now I ask myself should I believe this extraordinary claim. There is no evidence. There is only a book written by men thousands of years ago. A book that is full of atrocities and absurdities. For me this is not enough. Like Thomas I cannot believe without evidence.

## Prayer

Some of my close friends and family may have noticed that I do not participate in public prayers. During prayers, I do not bow my head or close my eyes, and at the end of prayers, I do not say *Amen*. I intend no disrespect to those who choose to pray, and I hope they can respect my choice not to pray.

In my life, there were many times when I thought I had seen answers to prayers. I also believed I had seen miraculous healing through priesthood blessings. I now believe all of these can be explained by natural processes. Sick people sometimes get better on their own. Often sick people are healed through medical care. I am sure much of what is attributed to prayer and priesthood blessings is simply a placebo effect.

When I prayed for help in solving a problem, it was possible, and even likely, that I found the solution through my own efforts, or through the efforts of others. Sometimes I thought a prayer was answered, and there was no possible natural explanation. But, just because I wasn't able to think of a natural explanation, doesn't mean it was supernatural. Sometimes what I thought was an answer to my prayer, might just have been coincidence.

All of the stories supporting the efficacy of prayer and priesthood healings now appear to me as anecdotal evidence. I have seen earnest prayers go unanswered. I have participated in faithful priesthood blessings that went unfulfilled. In these cases, I used to believe the desired outcome conflicted with God's will. However, I now realize it is easy to focus only on the presumed divine interventions while ignoring all of the unanswered prayers and unfulfilled blessings. I now believe the world would be a very different place if God answered prayers.

I wrote the following short parable to try to illustrate my current feelings about prayer:

### **The Parable of the Unfair Father**

But what think ye. A certain man had two sons. And it came to pass, he cared for and provided food and raiment for the elder son. But the father did neglect and abuse the younger son. Yea, the elder son had plenty to eat, and was fat, while the younger son had great want and suffered, lo, even near unto starvation. And the elder son spoke daily unto his father thanking him for food, and he continually beseeched his father saying do not let me starve like unto my younger brother. And the younger brother begged his father for food, but his father heard him not.

Thousands of times in my life as I sat before a table full of food, I thanked God for the food, and offered the plea “bless it to nourish and strengthen our bodies.” I do not believe God responds to this prayer by miraculously changing the nutritional value of my food. If I want my food to be nutritious, I have to choose healthy food.

If there is a God, He either can not or will not answer the prayers of the mothers of starving children. In the approximately five seconds it takes to say the short prayer we often offer before meals, a child dies of starvation. When I think of this, I cannot help but feel like the elder brother of my parable. If I believed in a God of miracles, I could not pray for myself. The only prayer I could utter would be, “God, please feed my brothers.”

### **Life After Death**

To me there is no evidence that there is a life after death. On the other hand, I don't see any evidence that there is not a life after death. There is no way anybody can really know. I doubt

that there is a life after death, but I do not claim to be sure. I think it would be wonderful if there is a life after death where I get to live happily with my family. However, if I am going to be eternally punished, or even placed in some lower kingdom where I will be wailing and gnashing my teeth because I could not accept the incredulous claims of religion, then I have to hope this life is all there is.

## **Is there a God?**

I obviously do not believe in the lying, racist, polygamous God Joseph Smith created for the Church. I have carefully explained why I now believe all the so called books of scripture are just fiction created by men. And I have expressed why I no longer believe “all things denote there is a God.” I described how I have been deceived by spiritual feelings, and how these feelings lead people to many different Gods. Therefore, I am left with nothing I consider reliable evidence for the existence of any Gods.

Of course it is not possible to disprove the existence of a God. It is not possible to prove the God of Christianity does not exist. And, it is also not possible to prove, Allah, the God of Islam does not exist. I can't disprove the existence of Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma, Pangu, Apollo, Thor, Poseidon, Zeus and hundreds of other Gods that people believed in and continue to believe in. But, I feel that without proof of existence I am justified in not believing. Unless undeniable irrefutable evidence comes forth to show that a God or Gods exists I have no reason to believe.

## **I Don't Know**

There are many things I am sure of. But, there are also many things I do not know. When I was a believer I felt sorry for people who did not know *The Truth*. However, I have now realized I

would rather not know than erroneously think I know. Just because there is no answer does not mean an answer should be made up.

Using critical thinking and evidence to determine the truth is straightforward and logical. Trying to reconcile the evidence and my former beliefs was mentally difficult. It required twisting the evidence, misinterpreting the evidence, or simply ignoring the evidence. I had to constrain my thinking. It would be fair to say I was afraid of the evidence.

Realizing I do not know something is the first step on the road to learning more. I lost what I had believed was a sure knowledge. But, in exchange, I gained the freedom to think, to learn, and to grow. To me, the freedom to think is wonderful. It is OK not to know.

## ***Closing Remarks***

**A**s I come to the close of this book, I would like to make a clear and concise statement of where I stand. In other words I would like to bear my testimony.

### **My Testimony**

Until the spring of 2010 I had a testimony of the Church; I knew it was true. However, these beliefs were based on subjective personal experiences. I am now convinced these feelings are simply internal and therefore have no ability to tell me anything about what is really true. My new knowledge is based on evidences and reason. After careful study and analysis of the evidence I am convinced the first vision did not happen. I am also convinced the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Orice are fiction created by man. I know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not true. I am also convinced the Bible is a book of mythology created by ancient man. I see no evidence that convinces me to believe in any religion or any supernatural being. I do not believe in any gods.

### **Final Words**

When I first left the Church, I told most people who asked me about religion, that I did not want to talk about it. In one conversation, shortly after I left the Church, I got angry and felt out of control. I was hurt and confused then. Now, I have studied,

researched, and organized my thoughts. I no longer feel confused. If anyone wants to discuss religion with me, I will be happy to do so. Feel free to call, email, comment on my blog, or stop by my house. And for those who do not want to talk about religion, that's fine also. I will try not to bring it up.

Hopefully nothing I have written has offended anyone. Certainly that was not my intention, and I apologize if it has.

Again, I want to express my love for my family and friends. I am thankful they have stood by me through this transition.

I hope anyone who has read this, can now understand me and maybe even respect my analysis and conclusions. Leaving the Church is not a decision I made lightly. I have studied, researched, and pondered about this more than anything in my life. I am completely confident that I have made the correct decision.

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## ***Resignation Letter***

In May of 2012 I made appointments with my bishop and stake president and hand delivered the following letter and a copy of this book to them. I also sent a copy of the letter and this book to church headquarters.

Bradley Hall Garn

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602-

bradhg@gmail.com

May 6, 2012

Bishop C

Twelve Oaks 1st Ward

Chandler AZ 85226-4674

Dear Bishop C,

Over the last two years I have spent a lot of time diligently studying the Church. I have looked at a great deal of evidence and I have carefully weighed the arguments both for and against the truthfulness of the Church. Based on the evidence, I have come to the conclusion that the Church is not true.

Because I no longer believe the Church is true I hereby resign my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I request that you please fill out the proper form and submit it to President T [REDACTED]. My Membership information is listed below.

I completely understand the seriousness of this matter. I am aware that the Church handbook says that my resignation "cancels the effects of baptism and confirmation, withdraws the priesthood held by a male member and revokes temple blessings." However, as I am confident that the Church is not true I know that I am not losing anything.

As my son, D [REDACTED], is a minor, there are to be no interviews or conversations with him about church topics unless I am present.

Included with this letter is my book: *Not by Bare Assertions but by Evidences and Reason*. This book summarizes my investigation of the Church. Read it if you want to understand why I have reached the conclusions I have. Feel free to share this letter and my book with whomever you want.

As most of my family and friends are still in the Church I do not desire to cut off my affiliation with members of the Church. I would like to be treated as any other nonmember. I still would like to be invited to church activities and service projects. I will continue to welcome visits from members of the Church. I even welcome discussions about the Church as long as they are two way conversations.

Thanks for your continued friendship and the help that you have given to me and my family.

Sincerely

Brad Garn

|                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Full Name         | Bradley Hall Garn |
| Birth Date        | ■■ ■■ 1963        |
| Membership Number | 000-1012-■■■      |

Enclosures: 1

cc: Stake President ■■■ T ■■■  
Tempe Arizona South Stake  
■■■■■  
Tempe AZ 85284-3502

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## **Why I Left the Church**

I was a lifelong active believing member of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, in the spring of 2010, when I was 46 years old I left the Church.

In this book I explain why I decided to leave. I know it is difficult for some members of the Church to understand why anyone would leave. I also know there are many misconceptions about why people leave. I hope this book will help my family, my friends, and members of the Church understand me and others like me.

The beginning of this book does not contain any of the evidences against the Church. I'm asking everyone to read at least the first 12 pages. I understand the topics discussed in this book are sensitive to many people. I greatly appreciate and respect those who are willing to read this book in its entirety.

