



Fear in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a Pathway to Reconciliation

Meandering Philosophy and Musings Mingled with Scripture

Revision B

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To fear God is to have absolute reverence and awe for an Almighty God, the Creator of all things. But the fear discussed in this paper is worry and dread over potential loss or calamity. This fear can include angst regarding a pending change, even though that change may be a needed growth opportunity, or otherwise bring blessings. The fear may be deeply rooted in a person's subconscious due to genetic predispositions or past traumatic experiences. Furthermore, fear can exist on an individual or an institutional basis.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has accomplished an immeasurable amount of good for innumerable souls by providing a faith community for like-minded people, offering disaster relief to those in distress and in so many other ways. In addition, the LDS Church provides excellent education opportunities through its BYU campuses and the BYU Pathway program.

But the Church has traumatized others via certain fear-based policies and unrighteous dominion. Some trauma victims leave the Church and may never return. Others are the “walking wounded” who still participate in Church for social or altruistic reasons even though their bubbles have burst, or their “shelves” have broken.

This paper is neither a vindication of the Church nor an expose. Rather it is a paper that wrestles with some real and messy issues with the hopes that some mutual understanding and peaceful reconciliation can be achieved. This paper also has some autobiographical sections for my own catharsis and self-help. Perhaps relating my personal experiences will help someone else to heal from his or her own soul wounds.

The wandering style of this paper was inspired by Robert M. Pirsig's “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values,” published in 1974, although my paper is nominally nonfictional. Or maybe my experiences and musings have all been a dream.¹

The attention given to individual topics in this paper varies widely from one subject to the next. There is plenty of room for someone to build upon this work. Or maybe I will offer future revisions.

Acknowledgements

I humbly thank my Savior, Jesus Christ, who took upon himself the sins of all mankind including my own in the Garden of Gethsemane and upon the Cross at Calvary.

I express gratitude to my talented wife Jan for patiently dealing with my vast idiosyncrasies, and I honor her as the loving mother of our three sons.

I deeply appreciate Danna Hartline and her seminal research on church trauma. Danna and I cofounded a Facebook group “LDS Church Trauma and Healing” which currently has over 1100 members.

*Danna recently completed her master’s thesis, *Understanding and Managing Church Trauma—Finding Help and Healing for Mormons*, at California Southern University. My own paper draws liberally from her thesis in tone and substance.*

My gratitude also goes to my Facebook friends Blaire Ostler, Brian Bresee and Scott Stover who contributed insightful quotes to this paper.

Michelle Hunter and Sherrilynn Dalton enabled me to experience healing through their prayers, for which I am eternally grateful, as I sought to reconcile my own fears.

I thank former Madison, Alabama Stake President Keith R. Draughon and former Seventy Elder Bruce A. Carlson for the important lessons they taught me about fear in the Church. I look forward to the

¹ And also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream... Jacob 7:26

day, perhaps on the other side of the veil, when we can reach a peaceful reconciliation, see eye to eye, and recognize that some dilemmas have more than one “right answer.”

1 Introduction



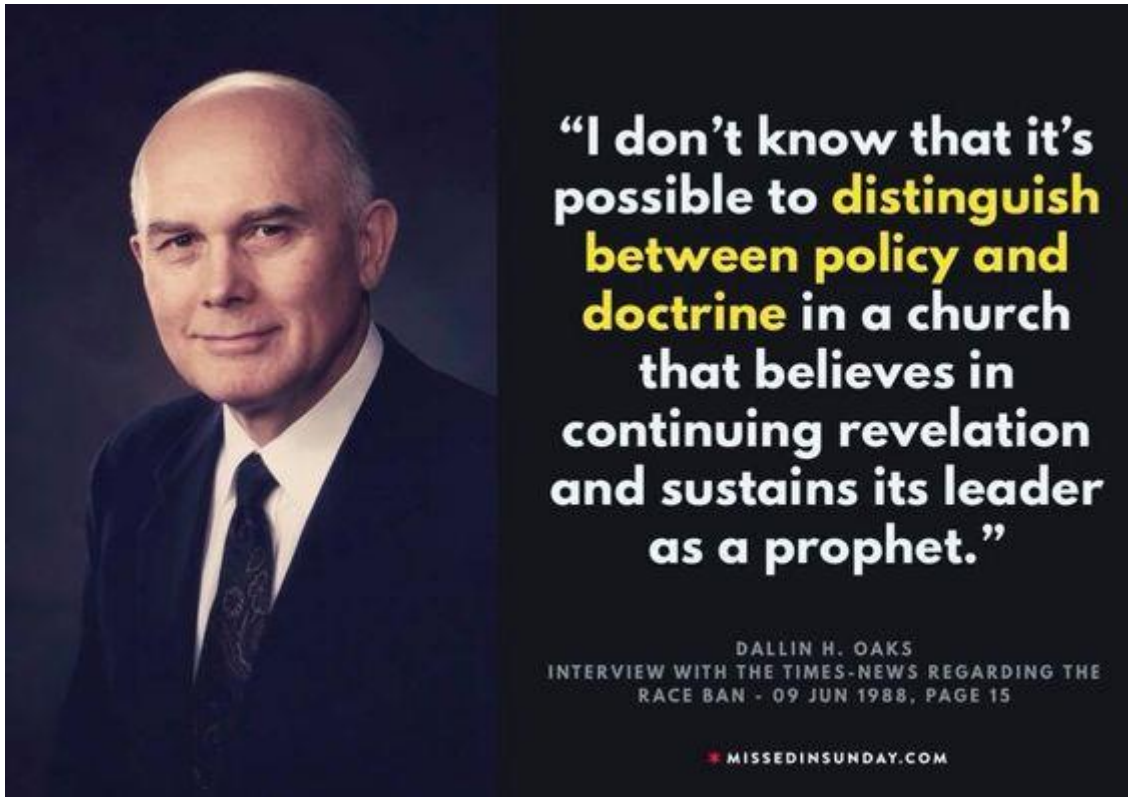
Vigilance is a necessary survival mechanism for man and animals. Both must anticipate hazards and prepare accordingly. But unmoderated vigilance can lead to debilitating fear, anxiety and mental illness. Hypervigilance can ruin a person’s finances, health, happiness and relationships. Or it can derail a person from his or her divinely appointed mission. The same is true for an institution.

Scriptural, hymnal and other quotes on overcoming fear are presented in this paper for perspective. This include teachings from LDS General Authorities and from other religious and secular figures, psychologists and philosophers.

The middle portion of this paper discusses how fear has shaped certain policies within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Whether the fear is or was warranted in each case is a question where reasonable people may disagree. My bias is that the fear is or was largely a stumbling block.

The policies in this paper have been thoroughly discussed in books, articles, official Church publications and blogs. Partial exceptions are the Hebrew Book Mormon and the relationship of the Church with the Jews. This paper gathers a cornucopia of mostly low-hanging fruit, but that is not its contribution. Rather the purpose is to tie these fruits together in terms of their fear-based common denominator.

Perhaps coming to terms with these visceral fears can open a pathway for making apologies and amends, mitigating current fear-based policies, and avoiding future mistakes, both on personal and institutional levels.



The Spanish philosopher George Santayana (1863 – 1952) famously wrote², "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." (1)

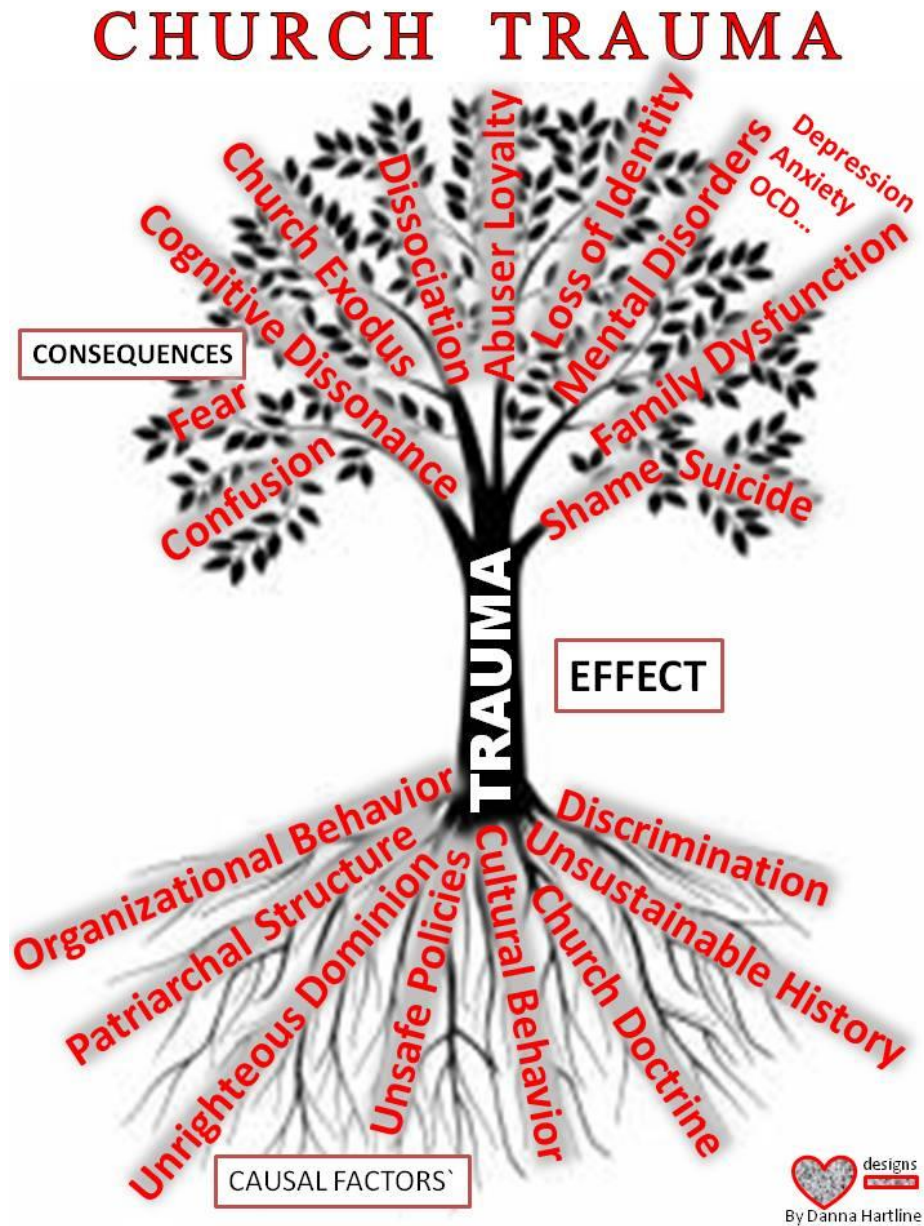
But expectations for merciful changes must be tempered with patience. President Dallin H: Oaks explained, "I know that the history of the church is not to seek apologies or to give them. We sometimes look back on issues and say, 'Maybe that was counterproductive for what we wish to achieve,' but we look forward and not backward." The church doesn't "seek apologies," he said, "and we don't give them." (2)

Members should not expect validation from the Church or its leaders, although affirmation could be a healing balm. Members should realize that Church leaders are "men of their times" when they enact detrimental policies out of fear and ignorance. This realization can enable members to make allowances for leaders' questionable behavior, but such tolerance can still be bounded.

A secondary purpose of this paper is to show that there can be "more than one right answer" when misunderstandings or disagreements occur. Hopefully, this realization can lead to reconciliation as discussed in the postscript section of this paper.

² Note that there are several common paraphrased variants of Santayana's quote.

2 Church Trauma Tree



My friend Danna Hartline created this image for her master's thesis and graciously granted permission for its use in this paper. She has posted chapters from her thesis at her blog: The Mormon Trauma Mama, Healing Help for When Church Hurts. <http://mormontraumamama.com/>

Danna correctly identified fear as a trauma branch. The purpose of the present paper is to show that fear is also a nutrient of the roots. Fear is thus both a "cause and effect" of the trauma tree trunk.

Furthermore, fear can be weaponized into a scare tactic, which is a form of the unrighteous dominion root shown in Danna's tree.³

Members expect church to be a safe refuge and sanctuary from life's storms.

And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth. - Doctrine & Covenants 115:6

In contrast, Danna noted:

Being wounded in a place that should be safe is one of the most traumatic experiences a person can go through. Deep compassion and continuing efforts to share knowledge about this important issue with leaders, sufferers, and congregations is an absolute necessity.

3 Vigilance Examples

3.1 Useful Vigilance



Vigilance as used in this paper refers to prudent assessments of plausible hazards, whether immediate or long-term, as well as the resulting actions to prevent or mitigate the threats.

³ My experience is that authoritarian-minded, dogmatic members sometimes weaponize statements made by "The Brethren." General Conference can be an emotionally triggering experience.

Squirrels exercise a heightened awareness during autumn by collecting and storing nuts so they will have food to last through winter. Some animal species forage in herds so that they can warn one another if a predator approaches the group. A clan of meerkats will even have one of its members serve as a sentry. (3) The meerkat standing guard makes peeping sounds when all is well.

Adults in developed countries purchase insurance policies and save money for retirement. Homeowners who are extra cautious install burglar alarms and security cameras.

Vigilance is a Biblical principle.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8

Jesus effectively charged his disciples to be vigilant.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Matthew 10:16

The call to watch or be watchful is a similar principle.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 1 Thessalonians 5:6



The term “watchmen” appears four times in the Book of Mormon as derived from Isaiah 52:8.

An example is:

Then shall their watchmen lift up their voice, and with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye.

4 Nephi 20:31

3.2 Dysfunctional Fear

3.2.1 Hypervigilance



Hypervigilance and fear as used in this paper refer to excessive anxiety over potential danger, perhaps implausible or only marginally possible, whether immediate or long-term, as well as the resulting actions or inactions to prevent or mitigate the imagined threat.

Fear may be innate or learned. Fear can be learned by experiencing or watching a frightening traumatic accident. Sociological research also shows that individuals' fear is shaped by their social relations and culture, which guide their understanding of when and how much fear to feel.

Doomsday Preppers' lives are governed by hypervigilance over some hypothetical pending apocalypse. Hypochondriacs live with the phobia that they have a serious, but undiagnosed, medical condition. Some people with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) wash their hands repeatedly due to fear of germs until their skin is sore and raw.

I implore you all. Temper fear with reason, panic with patience and uncertainty with education.

- Abdu Sharkawy, Infectious Diseases Specialist at University Health Network

6 Most Common Causes of PTSD:



Physical Abuse



Sexual Abuse



Witnessing /
Experiencing A
Serious Accident



Witnessing /
Experiencing
A Mass Disaster



War



Emotional
Abuse



@RealDepressionProject

People who are too often in "fight or flight" mode may experience headaches, fatigue, insomnia, nightmares, digestive problems and other ailments. Furthermore, hypervigilance can be a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). (4) Social isolation and self-medication with drugs or alcohol are symptoms which may accompany PTSD.

Unmoderated fear can escalate into panic or hysteria in extreme cases. The Salem witch trials in colonial Massachusetts are a prime example. More than two hundred people were accused during the trials between February 1692 and May 1693. Thirty were found guilty, nineteen of whom were executed by hanging, fourteen women and five men.

3.2.2 Persecution Complex



The LDS Church as an institution has a “persecution complex” that goes back to the time when the early Saints were driven out of their homes, from one town to the next. The Saints were violently persecuted and pushed from Ohio to Missouri, from Missouri to Illinois and from Illinois, they were pushed west to the Utah Territory.

The Saints faced persecution because:

1. They did not keep slaves, which was seen as a threat to the surrounding slave-owning culture at a time when the abolition of slavery was a big issue.
2. Their doctrine of plural marriage was seen as a serious attack on the social and ethical rules of the period.
3. The rapidly growing and tightly-knit Mormon communities had the potential to exercise considerable political power.
4. They were considered outsiders who led a completely different sort of life.

Some of the persecution was caused directly or indirectly by disgruntled former members who left the Church for various reasons including:

1. The failure of the Kirtland Safety Society, a banking institution championed by Joseph Smith.
2. Objection to Joseph Smith’s alleged polygamy.
3. Opposition to the Missouri Saints’ militarism, Danites, Sidney Rigdon’s Salt Sermon, etc.

The friction between early Church leaders and dissenters has led to a hypervigilance against real or perceived dissension of any kind that continues to this day. But such hypervigilance can be counterproductive, especially since Mormons are no longer beaten up or driven from their homes over their beliefs and practices.

Newspaper columnist Robert Kirby (5) has warned, "A persecution complex is dangerous. It's almost always the precursor to becoming the persecutor."

3.2.3 Dissension



Groupthink occurs when a group of well-intentioned people make irrational or non-optimal decisions spurred by the urge to conform or the discouragement of dissent. This problematic or premature consensus may be fueled by a particular agenda or simply because group members value harmony and coherence above rational thinking. (6)

Unity, conformity and loyalty to church leaders are highly valued traits in the LDS Church. But to what extent should members suppress their own consciences in order to go along with church policies?

An honest
disagreement or
question is different
than a mean spirited
attack and should not
be discouraged.
Sometimes such
questioning will cause
a change of direction
for the better.

JJ Dewey - freeread.com

An Ensign article by Ron Woods (7) warns against groupthink:

How often we're tempted just to "go along"! A neighbor comes to our door and asks us to sign a petition. We may know little about the proposal, and may even disagree, but we want to be cooperative, and so we sign, sometimes against our better judgment.

George Washington University professor Jerry B. Harvey labels such behavior "the Abilene Paradox" because of an experience in his family. The Harvey family once took a 53-mile drive in an automobile with no air conditioning on a 104-degree Texas day to eat in a particular cafe. The excursion did not turn out well, and in the ensuing argument, it became clear that not one family member had really wanted to go, but that each person thought everyone else did! They all just went along.

A similar phenomenon is identifiable in group behavior when people tacitly agree not to bring up unsettling facts. The process is called "group-think," and it discourages challenging commonly held group assumptions. Like the Abilene Paradox, groupthink encourages going along. Both of these

phenomena are characterized by situations in which any member could take the responsibility to turn the group around, but no one finds the courage to do so.

(end quote)

There are numerous strategies for groups to make decisions that mitigate groupthink. Some of these are collective intelligence, consensus-decision making, wisdom of the crowds and the Quaker Business method.

LDS author Jana Riess (8) has observed

Even a single dissenter can make a difference when he or she breaks up the power of consensus thinking.

What's more, dissent is valuable *even if the dissenters are eventually proven wrong*. The process of assimilating and trying to disprove dissent forces us to ask tough questions, so if we come to majority agreement we do so in a more informed and logical way.

The healthiest organizations are not the ones that shut down dissent or pretend that everyone is always in agreement. They're the ones that allow multiple points of view to inform their decision-making process.

Danna Hartline further addresses LDS Church groupthink in her thesis and blog. (9)

Blaire Ostler wrote the following in a Facebook Post with permission to share. Some of her wording is harsh, but her message deserves some thoughtful consideration.

There seems to be a general assumption that if you're a "believing" Mormon you wouldn't make criticisms against the Church, speak out against oppression, or oppose harmful teachings or policies. When "believing" becomes synonymous with "complacency," we really aren't doing our part as "believing" members.

Advocating for the best of Mormonism within the Church is something we should be doing and sometimes that includes criticisms. Faith without works is dead. (James 2:17) If we believe it, we should engage in it. More specifically, we should be anxiously engaged in good causes and through our free will we can bring to pass righteousness. This is our charge as "believing" members—not idly waiting to be told what to do. (Doctrine and Covenants 58:26-27) We are meant to search, ponder, pray, have opinions, take a stand, and then reevaluate that stance as we gain further light and knowledge. (Alma 32:35-36) Our knowledge is not perfect, but by wrestling with our limitations we might grow line upon line, precept on precept. (2 Nephi 28:30)

Now, could someone argue criticisms aren't always helpful in bringing out the best in Mormonism? You bet. Could someone argue inflammatory criticisms do more harm than good? Yup. Could someone argue that criticizing bad theology is less helpful than creating good theology? Absolutely.

However, I whole-heartedly reject the notion that to be a “believing” member means keeping my mouth shut to evil within the Church... I wrestle with Mormonism precisely because I still believe in its redemption and flourishing—not because the Church deserves an exemption from critical examination.

3.2.4 Strengthening the Church Members Committee



The LDS Church has a Strengthening the Church Members Committee (SCMC) formed out of hypervigilance over dissent. The committee was formed during the administration of President Ezra Taft Benson (1899-1994) (10). The original purpose was supposedly to track the activities of polygamous groups, but the scope increased to monitoring newspaper articles and social media postings for any signs of Church members who make critical remarks about the Church, its leaders or policies. The members’ postings can then be forward to the members’ local leaders for potential disciplinary actions. Here is an excerpt from 2012 BBC interview featuring Michael Purdy and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. The interview was criticized for its “gotcha” style. However, the excerpt is of historical significance given that the SCMC is never mentioned in Ensign articles or General Conference.

http://www.vibrationdata.com/scmc1_3.mp4

A random, anecdotal sampling of mostly anonymous posts on various blogs shows divided opinion on the SCMC. Some claim the SCMC is necessary and prudent for “boundary maintenance.” Others express indignation that the SCMC is as “Big Brother is Watching You,” from George Orwell’s dystopian novel 1984.

3.2.5 Scrupulosity



Scrupulosity is form of OCD-based fear characterized by pathological guilt about moral or religious issues. It is personally distressing, objectively dysfunctional, and often accompanied by significant impairment in social functioning.

Debra Theobald McClendon, PhD (11) wrote:

For members of the Church with scrupulosity, obsessive-compulsive anxiety bullies its way into their religious life by relentlessly plaguing them with pathological, toxic guilt and inducing them to believe that this guilt comes from the Spirit. As a result, elements of personal worship get hijacked by the anxiety. Prayer, scripture study, and church and temple attendance often no longer bring feelings of peace or a connection with the Spirit because they are generally done out of fear of punishment and create feelings of condemnation. Religious focus tends to become narrow and trivial; religious practice gets extreme; and behaviors such as praying and confessing become repetitive, persistent, and unwanted compulsions that cause a lot of distress.

One example where scrupulosity may be triggered is the “worthiness interviews” that bishops and stake presidents have with members. (12)

3.2.6 Perfectionism



Dallas Jensen (13), a practicing psychologist in Provo, Utah, said that perfectionism — “the damaging belief that one’s worth is inherently attached to always doing or being their absolute best,” — is often a factor that negatively affects his patients’ mental health.

“I see people stuck in erroneous beliefs that negative feelings must mean they are less righteous, or being punished by God, or deeply flawed,” Jensen said. “I hear people say they are doing everything the church tells them to do but they are still unhappy, and then assume it’s because they are just ‘bad’ people.”

September De Soto (13), is a young adult member of the Church in Utah who has had panic disorder and depression. De Soto said she remembers young women’s lessons where she was taught, “You can choose to be happy. You can choose to be not depressed.”

De Soto remembers thinking, “Are you kidding me? I did not choose this,” in response to the lessons. People in LDS culture pretend to be the happiest people because they believe they have the true gospel, she said. “I think we try to put on this face, especially in the LDS Church, that our lives our perfect, when that is completely false,” De Soto said. “The gospel is for the sick. It’s for the people that need help.”

Perfectionism is highly correlated with fear of failure, with its accompanying shame, embarrassment and future uncertainty. The dreaded potential of upsetting family, friends, leaders and other important people by falling short is often a fear factor.

"The reach for perfection can be painful because it is often driven by both a desire to do well and a fear of the consequences of not doing well," said psychologist Monica Ramirez Basco. (14) "This is the double-edged sword of perfectionism."

3.2.7 Treatment & Complicating Factors

Treatment options for hypervigilance, OCD and anxiety include cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and medication. Ashleigh Garrison reported in a CNBC article that more than 40 million adults in the United States suffer from anxiety, and that it is the most common mental illness in the United States. (15) Helpful medications are available but can also lead to addiction and overdose deaths.

Furthermore, Utah consistently ranks high in mental illness rate and anti-depressant medication usage. (16), (17), (18) Researchers at the University of Utah have found that Utah's high elevation and lower oxygen levels could be reducing the effectiveness of the medications doctors use to treat depression and anxiety disorders. (19)

3.2.8 Exposure Therapy



Face Your Fears

Another form of treatment useful for some fears and phobias is exposure therapy. For example, someone with a fear of snakes might be instructed to handle a snake, or someone with social anxiety might be instructed to give a speech in front of an audience.

Do the thing you fear most, and the death of fear is certain.

- Mark Twain (1835-1910)

3.2.9 Coronavirus



This photo is from a Kroger Grocery Store, Madison, Alabama, March 14, 2020. Customers bought out all the bread and toilet paper. Many other shelves were left nearly bare of food items and other supplies.

The coronavirus has come to the forefront of the news since I began this paper. Public reaction to this disease presents a powerful case study in prudent vigilance and irrational fear.

The First Presidency of the LDS Church sent out a letter on March 12 announcing “Beginning immediately, all public gatherings of Church members are being temporarily suspended worldwide until further notice.” This includes Sunday sacrament meetings.

Throughout the USA and in other countries, schools are closing, spectator sports events have been cancelled, air travel and cruises have been scaled back. These all seem to be reasonable precautions. One rationale is that these measures may not stop the spread of the virus but will slow its propagation in order to prevent hospitals and health care systems from being overwhelmed.

But what of the epic, global precautions against coronavirus? Between 291,000 and 646,000 people worldwide die from seasonal influenza-related respiratory illnesses each year, according to the USA Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (20). Will the stringent precautions taken against the coronavirus become the norm for each yearly flu season?

Dr. Abdu Sharkawy, Infectious Diseases Specialist at University Health Network, Toronto, Canada, wrote on his Facebook page on March 2, 2020 (21):

I'm a doctor and an Infectious Diseases Specialist. I've been at this for more than 20 years seeing sick patients on a daily basis. I have worked in inner city hospitals and in the poorest slums of Africa. HIV-AIDS, Hepatitis, TB, SARS, Measles, Shingles, Whooping cough, Diphtheria...there is little I haven't been exposed to in my profession. And with notable exception of SARS, very little has left me feeling vulnerable, overwhelmed or downright scared.

I am not scared of Covid-19. I am concerned about the implications of a novel infectious agent that has spread the world over and continues to find new footholds in different soil. I am rightly concerned for the welfare of those who are elderly, in frail health or disenfranchised who stand to suffer mostly, and disproportionately, at the hands of this new scourge. But I am not scared of Covid-19.

What I am scared about is the loss of reason and wave of fear that has induced the masses of society into a spellbinding spiral of panic, stockpiling obscene quantities of anything that could fill a bomb shelter adequately in a post-apocalyptic world. I am scared of the N95 masks that are stolen from hospitals and urgent care clinics where they are actually needed for front line healthcare providers and instead are being donned in airports, malls, and coffee lounges, perpetuating even more fear and suspicion of others. I am scared that our hospitals will be overwhelmed with anyone who thinks they " probably don't have it but may as well get checked out no matter what because you just never know..." and those with heart failure, emphysema, pneumonia and strokes will pay the price for overfilled ER waiting rooms with only so many doctors and nurses to assess.

I am scared that travel restrictions will become so far reaching that weddings will be canceled, graduations missed and family reunions will not materialize. And well, even that big party called the Olympic Games...that could be kyboshed too. Can you even imagine?

I'm scared those same epidemic fears will limit trade, harm partnerships in multiple sectors, business and otherwise and ultimately culminate in a global recession.

But mostly, I'm scared about what message we are telling our kids when faced with a threat. Instead of reason, rationality, open-mindedness and altruism, we are telling them to panic, be fearful, suspicious, reactionary and self-interested.

Covid-19 is nowhere near over. It will be coming to a city, a hospital, a friend, even a family member near you at some point. Expect it. Stop waiting to be surprised further. The fact is the virus itself

will not likely do much harm when it arrives. But our own behaviors and "fight for yourself above all else" attitude could prove disastrous.

I implore you all. Temper fear with reason, panic with patience and uncertainty with education. We have an opportunity to learn a great deal about health hygiene and limiting the spread of innumerable transmissible diseases in our society. Let's meet this challenge together in the best spirit of compassion for others, patience, and above all, an unfailing effort to seek truth, facts and knowledge as opposed to conjecture, speculation and catastrophizing.

Facts not fear. Clean hands. Open hearts. Our children will thank us for it.

Dr. Eugene K. Choi wrote the following regarding the fear people were experiencing due to the virus (22):

You see, when you are in fear, a reactive part of your brain called the amygdala takes control of your actions. And when you are in this reactive state, your body starts producing a steroid called cortisol to help you handle the stress. When we're stuck in fight-flight because of worries or anxiety, our bodies are wasting a ton of energy because it actually thinks it might die at that current moment.

And all that energy that's gone now makes our bodies weaker and more vulnerable. Being afraid is literally making you even more susceptible to getting sick.

And guess what cortisol does to your immune system? It WEAKENS it!

When we are in the selfish fight-flight state, we turn off this amazing part of our brain known as the prefrontal cortex. And when your prefrontal cortex is off, you prevent your immune system from operating at its best. It's also what makes you feel stuck and unable to figure out the best solutions for yourself especially if you've been taking a hit financially.

And worst of all, you do not have the capability of having empathy.

3.2.10 Multiplying Fear

Here is an editing version of a Facebook post I came across:

Do not try to teach people that the coronavirus lockdown was a mistake. Instead, only realize the truth that the lockdown has turned fear into a virtue. Those who are afraid believe that they are better people than those who are not, and will subconsciously look for ways to multiply fear, because it is their virtue.

Do Church leaders and members ever turn their fears into virtues?

4 Some Introspection

4.1 Who Am I?



And yet who am I to draw the dividing line between prudent vigilance and irrational fear?

Is the motorist's vigilance in locking his car before leaving it in the parking lot more "valid" than the traveler's aerophobia that limits him solely to ground transportation on long-distance trips?

Is the shopper's prudence in wearing a protective mask to the grocery store during the coronavirus outbreak more "justifiable" than the customer's caution in filling his or her cart with dozens of toilet paper rolls?

Our actions spring from our thoughts and beliefs. We then direct our actions, consciously or subconsciously, to fulfill and validate our preconceived notions, for better or worse. A self-fulfilling prophecy is a prime example of this cause-and-effect relationship. Another is the placebo effect in medicine.

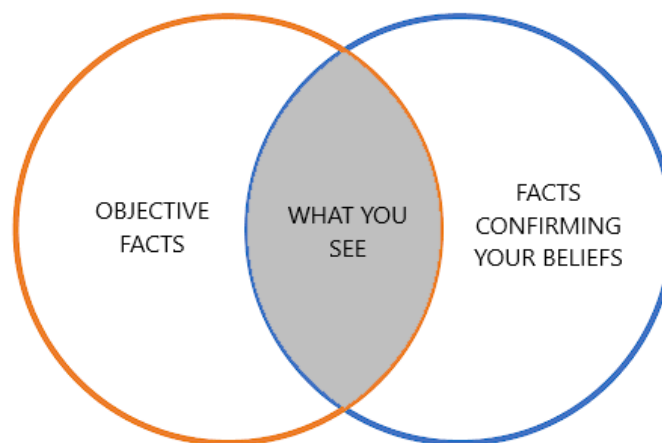
On a related note, American sociologist William Isaac Thomas wrote "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."

4.2 Immanuel Kant

There is a popular saying that "we create our own realities." A more accurate statement is that we create our own personal realities as we filter the external world through our senses, mind, body and spirit. These filters include our genetic predispositions and our past experiences. Our minds seek to form unity between the present moment and the past, including all our current beliefs and emotions whether

conscious or subconscious.⁴ This is known as confirmation bias, which has been described as internal “yes man.”

The above explanation was formulated by the Prussian German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who hypothesized the existence of two realities: An objective reality and a subjective reality. (23) Kant made humans part of the creative process of reality as they see it. This has implication for both religion and science. To religion Kant insisted that we cannot perceive of God directly because our perception of God will also be partly of our own construction. To science likewise he takes away the ruse of objectivity because everything we observe will always be influenced by us. This last statement appears to have an eerie similarity to Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle in quantum mechanics.



Simon and Garfunkel expressed this idea with the lyrical phrase “Still a man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest” in their ballad “The Boxer.”

4.3 Søren Kierkegaard

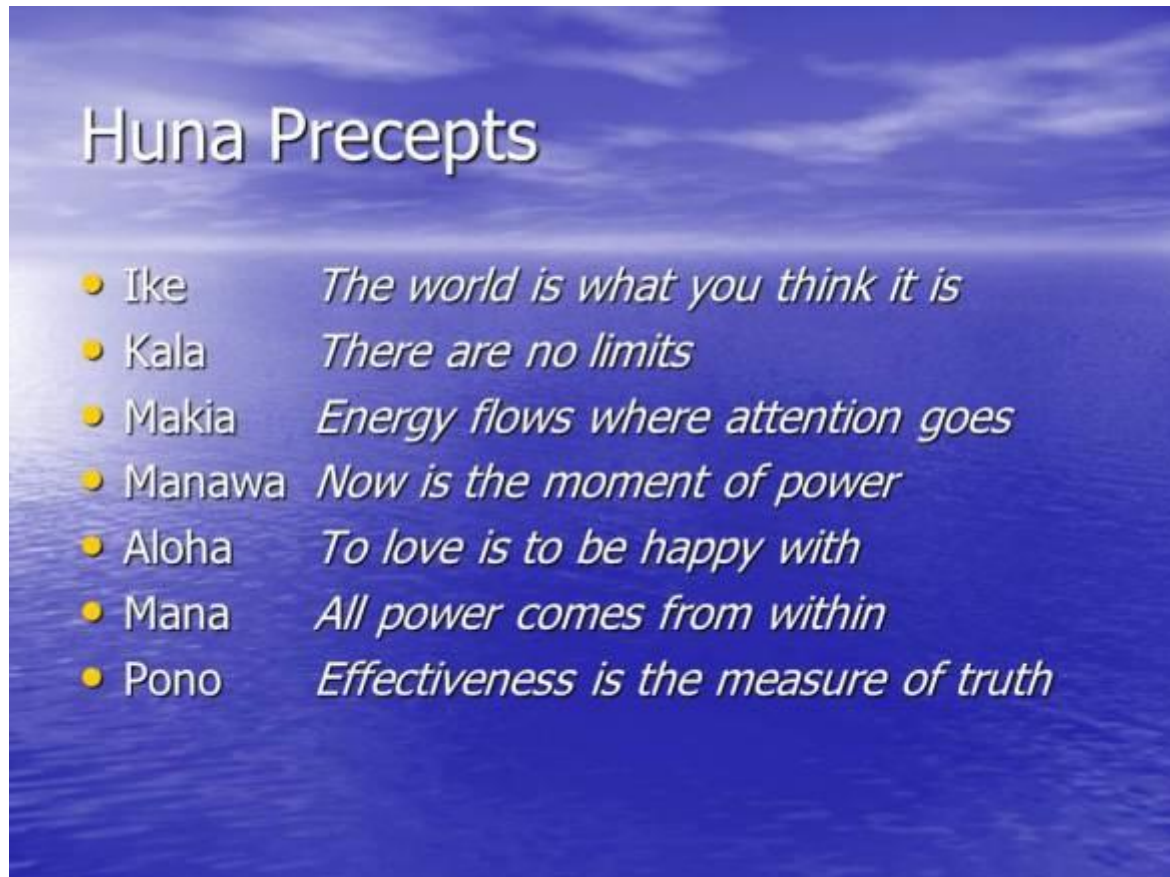
Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was influenced by Kant. One of Kierkegaard's recurrent themes is the importance of subjectivity, which has to do with the way people relate themselves to objective truths. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, he argues that "subjectivity is truth" and "truth is subjectivity."

Kierkegaard conveys that essentially truth is not just a matter of discovering objective facts. While objective facts are important, there is a second and more crucial element of truth, which involves how one relates oneself to those matters of fact. Since how one acts is, from the ethical perspective, more

⁴ The academic community prefer the term “unconscious” in place of the popular “subconscious.”

important than any matter of fact, truth is to be found in subjectivity rather than objectivity. We do not find truth through a detached "objectivity" but through a deep engagement with the world.

4.4 Huna



Huna is a lifestyle practice founded by Max Freedom Long (1890–1971), who lived in Hawaii for several years and was inspired by Hawaiian beliefs. Huna is not an authentic Hawaiian religion, however. Author Serge Kahili King wrote:

The most fundamental idea in Huna philosophy, IKE, is that we each create our own personal experience of reality, by our beliefs, interpretations, actions and reactions, thoughts and feelings.

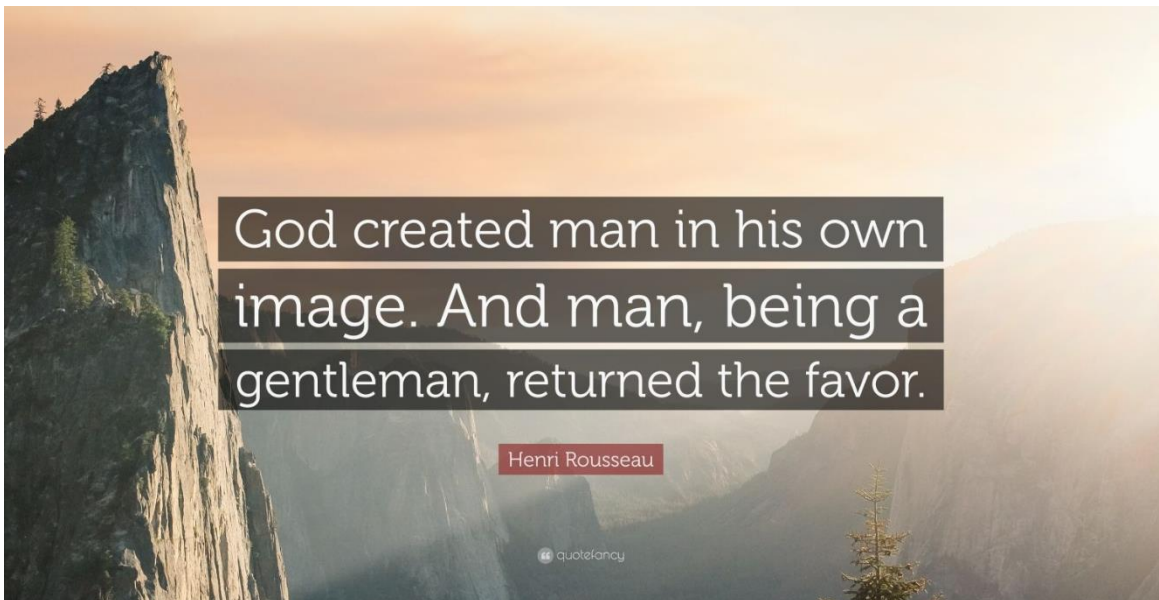
4.5 Men of Their Times

The authors at Fair Mormon (24), a group that defends the LDS Church and its leaders, correctly noted:

Prophets in all dispensations have been "men of their times," who were raised with certain beliefs and interacted all their lives with others who shared those beliefs.

This is essentially an admission that leaders' teachings and policies have some degree of subjectivity whether their teachings and policies were ultimately divinely inspired or not.⁵

4.6 What is Truth?



An LDS Hymn asks "Oh Say, What is Truth?" Perhaps this question is more complicated than anyone would care to admit. God's eternal truth absolutely exists in the objective sense. But each individual has his or her own subjective perception of what that truth really is, as does the LDS Church as an institution. Can we honestly acknowledge this as we argue doctrinal points or policy issues? Do we ever use fear as a tool in attempt to "prove" our subjective version of truth is the same as God's absolute truth?

⁵ The scriptures caution against "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9)

The same hymn seeks to answer its own question by describing truth as “The fairest gem that the riches of worlds can produce.” But, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” according to a maxim that traces back to ancient Greece.

Furthermore, the Lord said, “Mine house is a house of order.” (Doctrine & Covenants 132:8) But again, each person has his or her own perspective of what that order really is. Who among us is not a man of his times?

“All models are wrong, but some are useful” according to a quote attributed to the British statistician George E. P. Box. Perhaps we could keep this principle in mind when agonizing and arguing over “truth” and “order.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund (25) taught in a general conference talk:

Blessings from heaven are neither earned by frenetically accruing “good deed coupons” nor by helplessly waiting to see if we win the blessing lottery. No, the truth is much more nuanced but more appropriate for the relationship between a loving Heavenly Father and His potential heirs—us.

I submit that Elder Renlund’s “the truth is much more nuanced” has broader application beyond receiving blessings.

All religions are equally false and equally true, depending on how you use them. You can use them in the service of the ego, or you can use them in the service of the Truth. If you believe only your religion is the Truth, you are using it in the service of the ego. Used in such a way, religion becomes ideology and creates an illusory sense of superiority as well as division and conflict between people.

- Eckhart Tolle

5 Religious & Philosophical Messages on Fear

5.1 Hindu

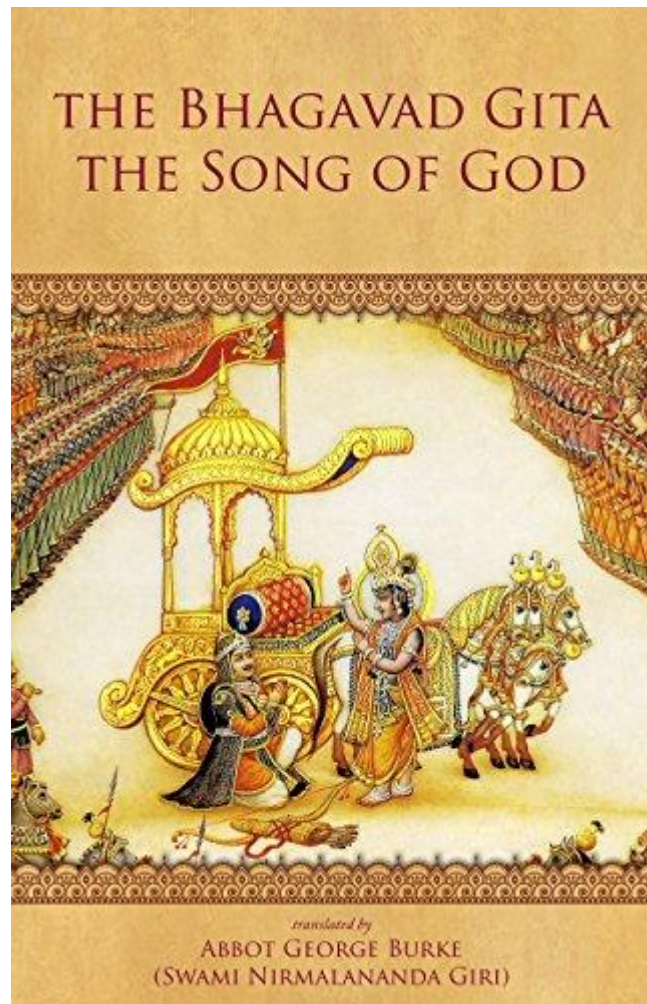


Lord Krishna is the Hindu god of compassion, tenderness, and love, and he is the incarnation of the god Vishnu. Krishna is the central character in the scriptural text Bhagavad Gita, the *Lord's Song*. Krishna serves as the charioteer for the Pandava prince Arjuna, who is filled with moral dilemma and despair about the violence and death the war will cause. Arjuna wonders if he should renounce the war and seeks Krishna's counsel. The dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna covers a broad range of spiritual topics, touching upon ethical dilemmas and philosophical issues that go far beyond the war Arjuna faces. (26)

Krishna then explains karma-yoga, reaction-free devotional work, and clears up Arjuna's mistaken idea that all work is fruitive and leads to bondage. Krishna also instructs Arjuna to fight to set the proper example of duty, but with knowledge and detachment, without falling victim to his own attractions and aversions.

Krishna gave the first virtue of human behavior in the Bhagavad Gita as abhayam, the absence of fear. This is the first of the 26 Divine Treasures. Clinging to life and body or love of earthly life are the causes of fear. A person who is always scared and cowardly will never have the courage to practice all other

values which include purity of heart, steadfastness, and charity. A person must have courage to stand up for his own beliefs and ideals when the situation requires.



The Bhagavad Gita acknowledges fear but does not erase it. Rather reduces fear to a mere sensation not worthy of attention. A fearless person does not run away from his problems. He faces them boldly and overcomes them. A coward can never be a leader because he meekly accepts social injustices. But a brave person raises his voice and tries to fix social evils and injustices that he sees around him.

The Soul Qualities That Make Man Godlike



1	Fearlessness —ॐ— abhaṃgam	Peace —ॐ— shanti	14
2	Purity of Heart —ॐ— sattva-saṃśuddhi	Absence of Fault-Finding —ॐ— apāśinam	15
3	Steadfastness —ॐ— jñāna-yoga-vyavasthiti	Compassion to All Beings —ॐ— daya	16
4	Almsgiving —ॐ— dana	Absence of Greed —ॐ— aloluptvam	17
5	Self Restraint —ॐ— dama	Gentleness —ॐ— mardavam	18
6	Religious Rites —ॐ— yajnas	Modesty —ॐ— hri	19
7	Right Study of Scriptures —ॐ— svādhyaya	Absence of Restlessness —ॐ— achapalam	20
8	Self Discipline —ॐ— tapas	Radiance of Character —ॐ— tejas	21
9	Straightforwardness —ॐ— arjavam	Forgiveness —ॐ— kshama	22
10	Noninjury —ॐ— ahimsa	Patience, Fortitude —ॐ— shruti	23
11	Truth —ॐ— satya	Purity of Body and Mind —ॐ— shaucha	24
12	Absence of Wrath —ॐ— akrodha	Nonhatred —ॐ— adroha	25
13	Renunciation —ॐ— tyaga	Lack of Conceit —ॐ— na-atimānita	26

5.2 Buddhism

5.2.1 Story

A fierce and terrifying band of samurai was riding through the countryside, bringing fear and harm wherever they went. As they were approaching one particular town, all the monks in the town's monastery fled, except for the abbot. When the band of warriors entered the monastery, they found the abbot sitting at the front of the shrine room in perfect posture. The fierce leader took out his sword and said, "Don't you know who I am? Don't you know that I'm the sort of person who could run you through with my sword without batting an eye?" The Zen master responded, "And I, sir, am the sort of man who could be run through by a sword without batting an eye." (27)

5.2.2 Quotes



Here are two quotes from the Tibetan Buddhist leader Dalai Lama (28):

If you have fear of some pain or suffering, you should examine whether there is anything you can do about it. If you can, there is no need to worry about it; if you cannot do anything, then there is also no need to worry.

If you have a sincere and open heart, you naturally feel self-worth and confidence, and there is no need to be fearful of others.

5.3 Tao



Taoism is an oriental philosophy. It is not an organized religion. One of the teachings of Tao is that it cannot be defined. Any definitions would detract from a true understanding of Tao. Perhaps the best explanation is that Tao is the way of nature, or the way of the heavens. Taoism is concerned with the sublime patterns of nature. A person can achieve peace and enlightenment by harmonizing his or herself with the course of nature. A person does not need to become a hermit, but he or she must become free from worldly desires. The "Tao Te Ching" is the fundamental book of Taoism. Its reported author was Lao Tzu (also spelled Lao Tse) who lived in China sometime around 600 B.C.

Lao Tzu's wrote in the Tao Te Ching:

Must one dread what others dread? . . . There is no greater illusion than fear.

The Chinese text Huai-Nan Tzu has the following story (29):

Yu travelled south inspecting the Empire, and when crossing the river a yellow dragon shouldered the boat. The boatmen changed color, but Yu, smiling genially said, "I'm doing my utmost in the interest of the people, discharging my duties in obedience to Heaven. Living, I'm but a guest, dying I return home. Why should we be disturbed in our peace? The sight of a dragon is no more than a lizard." Since he didn't turn color, the dragon pressed his ears and dropping his tail departed. Yu thought it a little matter to see monstrous animals.

5.4 Confucianism

The Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BC) taught:

If you look into your own heart, and you find nothing wrong there, what is there to worry about? What is there to fear?

The way of the superior person is threefold; virtuous, they are free from anxieties; wise they are free from perplexities; and bold they are free from fear.

5.5 Judaism

5.5.1 Bible Stories



Moses prepared his people for the battle awaiting them on the other side of the Jordan River, saying: "When you [an Israelite warrior] take the field against your enemies, and see horses and chariots, forces larger than yours, (*lo tira*) have no fear of them, for the Eternal your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt, is with you. Before you join battle, the priest shall come forward and address the troops. He shall say to them: *Sh'ma, Yisrael!* Hear, O Israel! You are about to join battle with your enemy. Let not your courage falter. (*Al tir'u!*) Do not be in fear, or in panic, or in dread of them' " (Deuteronomy 20:1-3). (30)

The king of Aram or Syria was making war against Israel and sought to capture Elisha. The following is taken from 2 Kings 6.

[14] Therefore sent he (Syrian King) thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city (Dotham) about.

[15] And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

[16] And he (Elisha) answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. (Elisha was referring to God's heavenly army).

[17] And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

[18] And when they (Syrian Army) came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people (Syrian army), I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

The story continues. Just as Elisha opened the eyes of his servant to see spiritual things, he closed the eyes of the Arameans and led them blind into the city of Samaria (6:18-20). There he refused to allow the king of Israel to harm them and instead made sure that they were fed and released unharmed. The result was more effective than killing the men, for it seems that they realized that further raid would be just as ineffective (6:22-23). (31)

5.5.2 Jewish Quotes

Fear can be a cruel thing. When it overflows its boundaries, it drains our life force. It changes our perception. Under its influence, every little setback seems huge. Until the world itself seems fundamentally terrible. Eventually, we look for the evil intent behind anything good. We become cynical. Finally, it seems pointless to work towards change.

- Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865-1935)

We cannot always eliminate problems, but we can learn to eliminate our anxiety over them.

You add to the technical difficulties of your problems by telling yourself how awful your situation is. When you accept a situation, even though it is not what you would have liked, the severity of the problem will be decreased.

Learn to clarify what is the worst that could happen and accept it. This will free you from worry.

- Alter of Kelm (1824-1898)

People often avoid making decisions out of fear of making a mistake. Actually, the failure to make decisions is one of life's biggest mistakes. – Rabbi Noah Weinberg (1930-2009)

Jewish spirituality lives in the midst of life itself, the life of society and its institutions. To create it we have to battle with two kinds of fear: fear of failure, and fear of success. Fear of failure is common; fear of success is rarer but no less debilitating. Both come from the reluctance to take risks. Faith is the courage to take risks. It is not certainty; it is the ability to live with uncertainty. It is the ability to hear God saying to us as He said to Abraham, “Walk on ahead of Me” ([Genesis 17:1](#)).

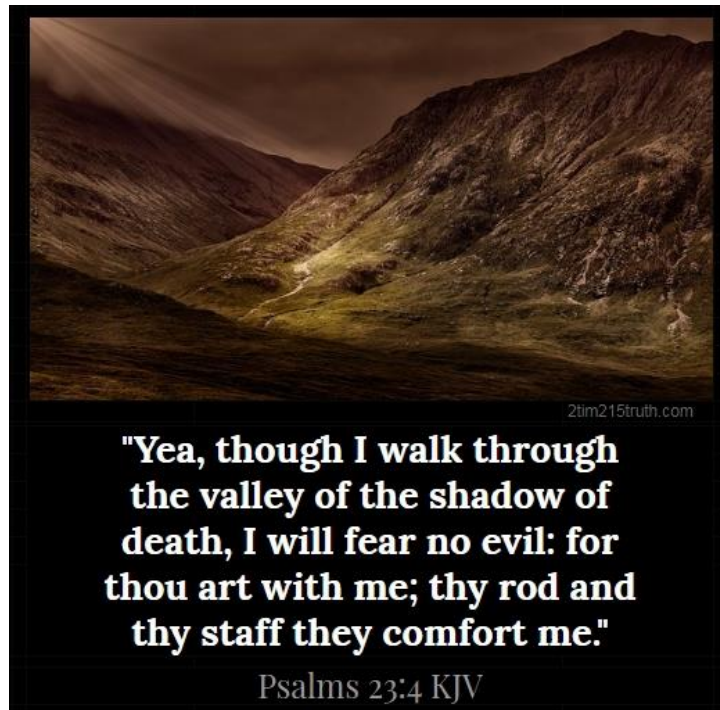
– Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

All the world is a very narrow bridge, and the essential thing is not to be afraid of anything.

– Rebbe Nachman of Bratzlav (1722-1810)

5.6 LDS Scriptures

5.6.1 Faith & Fear



Religious faith has the potential to bring courage to those who fear through scriptures and hymns. The following scriptures are taken from the LDS canon.

5.6.2 Old Testament

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he is also become my salvation. Isaiah 12:2

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Psalm 23:4

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? Psalm 118:6

5.6.3 New Testament

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. John 14:27

Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Philippians 4:6

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
2 Timothy 1:7*

But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. 1 Peter 3:14

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18

Furthermore, Jesus rebuked his panic-stricken disciples when they awoke him on a ship being tossed by stormy waves on the Sea of Galilee.

Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Matthew 8:26

5.6.4 Book of Mormon

The righteous need not fear. 1 Nephi 22:17 & 22:22

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation. 2 Nephi 22:2

Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear. Moroni 8:16

5.6.5 Doctrine & Covenants

Look unto me (Jesus Christ) in every thought; doubt not, fear not. Doctrine & Covenants 6:36

If ye are prepared ye shall not fear. Doctrine & Covenants 38:30

Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come. Doctrine & Covenants 68:6

5.6.6 Hymns on Fear



The following examples are taken from the LDS Hymnal.

The Hymn "How Firm a Foundation" (32) contains this verse:

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, upheld by my righteous,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*

The Hymn "Let Us all Press On" (33) contains the following phrase in its chorus:

*Fear not, though the enemy deride;
Courage, for the Lord is on our side.*

"The Lord Is My Light" (34) begins with:

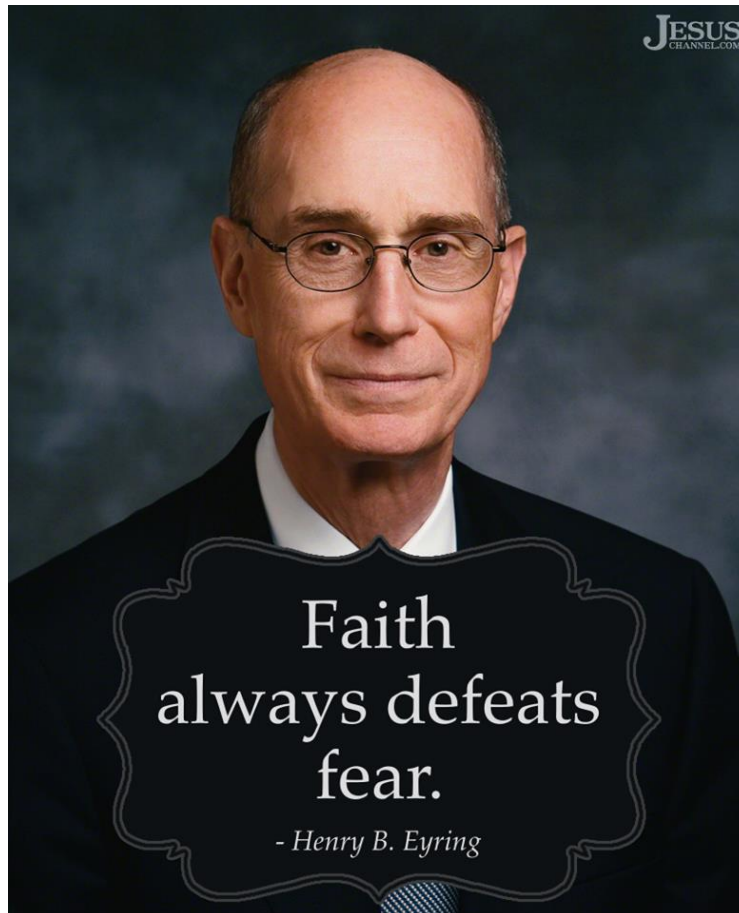
The Lord is my light; then why should I fear? By day and by night his presence is near.

"Do What is Right" (35) has its third verse:

*Do what is right; be faithful and fearless.
Onward, press onward, the goal is in sight.
Eyes that are wet now, ere long will be tearless.
Blessings await you in doing what's right!*

“Doing what is right” is a principle that Church leaders and members should all readily agree upon. The challenge is that individuals may disagree on what is right because even the Lord’s teachings contain contradictions as discussed in Section 9.2. Perhaps the Lord gave us contradictions as test, or as a means of developing discernment.

5.6.7 Sermons on Fear



Overcoming fear has been the subject of sermons in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Let us recognize that fear comes not of God, but rather that this gnawing, destructive element comes from the adversary of truth and righteousness. Fear is the antithesis of faith. It is corrosive in its effects, even deadly.

— President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910-2008), First Presidency Message, 1984 (36)

Anciently, the Lord spoke to Isaac, saying: “Fear not, for I am with thee” (Genesis 26:24). The admonition to “fear not” was clear and direct and meaningful. The promise that “I am with thee” was equally plain and direct and powerful.

Down through the ages the same admonition, the same assurance, has been extended to every living soul who is willing to qualify. And yet, fear is prevalent throughout the earth. It stifles initiative, saps strength, and reduces efficiency. It weakens faith, brings doubts, and begets mistrust. Indeed, it tends to impede the very business of being. How negative, frustrating, and futile is fear.

— Elder Derek A. Cuthbert (1926 – 1991), *New Era*, 1985 (37)

The Lord’s message to you today is the same message He sent through His angels so long ago: “Fear not.” He can say that because He knows more than we do. He sees what we cannot see. He knows what is coming, and, in the eternal scheme of things, it is not as bad as we may think. He knows that we can handle it with His help because He knows how to strengthen and succor us.

—Lloyd D. Newell, *BYU Devotional* (38)

Fear, which can come upon people in difficult days, is a principal weapon in the arsenal that Satan uses to make mankind unhappy. He who fears loses strength for the combat of life in the fight against evil. Therefore, the power of the evil one always tries to generate fear in human hearts. In every age and in every era fear has faced mankind.

As children of God and descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we must seek to dispel fear from among people. A timid, fearing people cannot do their work well, and they cannot do God’s work at all. Latter-day Saints have a divinely assigned mission to fulfill that simply must not be dissipated in fear and anxiety.

—President Howard W. Hunter (1907-1995) (39)

Amidst the confusion of our age, the conflicts of conscience and the turmoil of daily living, an abiding faith becomes an anchor in our lives. Fear is a deadly enemy of progress.

— President Thomas S. Monson (1927 – 2018), *LDS Young Adult Fireside* (40)

Fear is the opposite of faith.

— President Boyd K. Packer (1924 – 2015), Do Not Fear, General Conference, April 2004 (41)

An example from the Book of Mormon highlights the power of the knowledge of the Lord to dispel fear and provide peace even as we confront great adversity.

In the land of Helam, Alma’s people were frightened by an advancing Lamanite army.

But Alma went forth and stood among them, and exhorted them that they should not be frightened, but ... should remember the Lord their God and he would deliver them. Therefore they hushed their fears.

— Elder David A. Bednar, Therefore They Hushed Their Fears, General Conference, April 2015 (42)

Can we exercise the faith to believe and to act accordingly? Can we live up to our commitments and sacred covenants? Can we keep the commandments of God even in challenging circumstances? Of course we can!

We can because God has promised, “All things shall work together for your good, if [you] walk uprightly.” Therefore, let us set aside our fears and live instead with joy, humility, hope, and a bold confidence that the Lord is with us.

— President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear, General Conference, April 2017 (43)

Faith always defeats fear.

— President Henry B. Eyring, Fear Not to Do Good, General Conference, October 2017 (44)

When faced with these storms, we often experience feelings of despair or fear. President Russell M. Nelson said, “Faith is the antidote for fear”—faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (“Let Your Faith Show,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2014, 29). As I have seen the storms that affect people’s lives, I have concluded that no matter what kind of storm is battering us—regardless of whether there is a solution to it or whether there is an end in sight—there is only one refuge, and it is the same for all types of storms. This single refuge provided by our Heavenly Father is our Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

– Elder Ricardo P. Giménez, Finding Refuge from the Storms of Life, General Conference, April 2020 (45)

5.7 Secular Quotes

Overcoming fear has been the subject of numerous quotes.

He who has overcome his fears will truly be free.

– Aristotle (384–322 BC)

Our fears are more numerous than our dangers, and we suffer more in our imagination than in reality.

– Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BC – AD 65)

He who fears (that) he shall suffer, already suffers what he fears.

– Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

— President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945)

Of all the liars in the world, sometimes the worst are our own fears.

— Rudyard Kipling (1865 – 1936)

What's the use of worrying? It never was worthwhile.

- George Henry Powell (1880-1951), Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.

— Marie Curie (1867-1934)

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

- Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)

Worry is a misuse of the imagination.

— Dan Zadra

I just decided that if I had a choice between a world based in scarcity and fear and one based on possibility, then, man, I was choosing possibility.

- Dewitt Jones, National Geographic Photographer

The reason fear is considered the opposite of faith is that fear is negative belief while faith is positive belief. When you believe something will harm you or that something bad will happen you experience fear, however when you believe something or someone will do you good or that something good will happen, you have faith. It is similar to how hot and cold are opposites. Both are temperature descriptions differentiated by the amount of thermal energy available. Faith is positive belief, while fear is negative belief.

— Eytayo Adenuga (46)



I copied the following quote from a friend's Facebook post. I regret that have forgotten which friend this was:

Some people create a Stockholm Syndrome type of attachment to their fear. I see them choosing to remain in or return to their cages after being let out. Like stepping into the sun for the first time, feeling relief to have warmth and love on their faces, only to then return back into their cage and wrap themselves in their comfortable and familiar blanket of fear and self-doubt. Once you realize your fear is a cage which you created, this illusion becomes false.

You have a choice to make...you can either create a bigger, stronger cage to protect your deepest fears, or choose to step out of your cage for the last time. You will look back at your cage that held you prisoner and realize you are your own captor. You will only be truly free when you can come out of your cage forever.

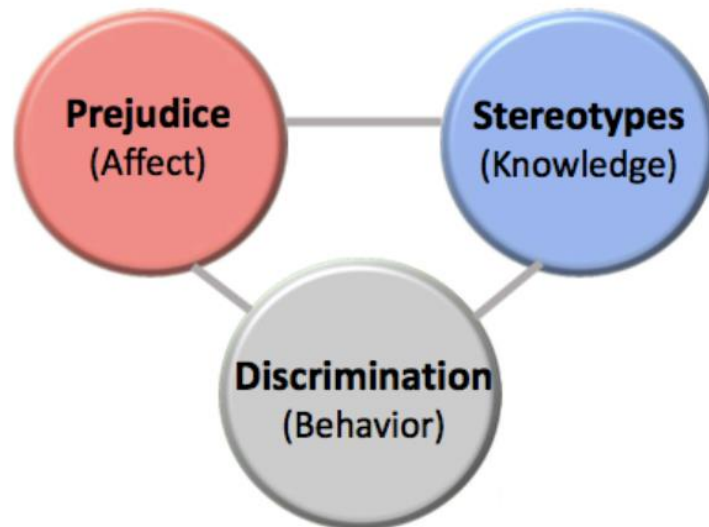
When you choose to do this and make the full leap into complete self love... your cage will disappear completely and you can throw away the key.

5.8 Prejudice & Persecution

Stereotype = belief about others

Prejudice = affective reaction

Discrimination = actual behaviour



Caleb Rosado, Department of Urban Studies, Eastern University, Philadelphia, PA, wrote the following (47):

At the heart of prejudice lies two concepts: ignorance and fear.

All of us tend to have prejudicial attitudes towards others. This type of prejudice or "pre-judgment" is based on ignorance. It is a normal human response to racial, social, sexual and other forms of differences, because all human beings tend to prejudge others on the basis of limited knowledge, especially if they are different from us.

The other factor is fear, and this one goes much deeper than ignorance, for it strikes at the root of prejudice, the issue of privilege and power. What makes racial prejudice so sinister is not just the act of prejudging a person or a group. Prejudice is an inflexible, rational attitude that, often in a disguised manner, defends privilege, and even after evidence to the contrary will not change, so that the post-judgment is the same as the pre-judgment.

Elder Marion D. Hanks (1921 – 2011) gave a speech "Without Prejudice, Without Bigotry" (48) at BYU on March 30, 1965. The focus was on respecting those of other Christian faiths. Race was not mentioned, but the same admonition should be as applicable to race as it was to those of other religions. Here is an excerpt:

Oh, this is a solemn, sweet blessing (love of the Savior) and one that all of us could enjoy if we would. You see, there is no room in it for hypocrisy, bigotry, unkindness, ungraciousness, lack of compassion, or lack of respect. All of these are implicit in the ability to share. You cannot touch the

heart of a man over whose head there hovers the sense of your prejudice and your closed mind and your unfriendly, unfeeling, unkind response to him. You cannot possibly lift or heighten the vision of anyone who sees in you so narrow and senseless a bigotry that he doesn't want to be like you or listen to anything you have to say.

(end quote)

Sadly, there has been historical prejudice against blacks and gays within the LDS Church due to ignorance and fear. The prejudice against blacks officially ended in 1978 as discussed in the next section. The ending of prejudice against LGBTQ+ people is a "work in progress" that will take many years. The LDS Church also has a surprising fear of the Jews, as discussed in Section 7.14.

Elder Dale G. Renlund (49) warned against persecution anyone inside or outside the Church.

The human tendency to be self-righteous and judgmental was also present in Alma's day. As the people "began to establish the church more fully ... the church began to wax proud, ... the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, ... they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure."

This persecution was specifically prohibited: "Now there was a strict law among the people of the church, that there should not any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church, and that there should be no persecution among themselves." The guiding principle for Latter-day Saints is the same. We must not be guilty of persecuting anyone inside or outside the Church.

6 Fear-Based Policies & Teachings in the LDS Church

6.1 Blacks and the Priesthood



The LDS Church's "Official Declaration 2" (50) has this preface:

The Book of Mormon teaches that "all are alike unto God," including "black and white, bond and free, male and female" (2 Nephi 26:33). Throughout the history of the Church, people of every race and ethnicity in many countries have been baptized and have lived as faithful members of the Church. During Joseph Smith's (1805 – 1844) lifetime, a few black male members of the Church were ordained to the priesthood. Early in its history, Church leaders stopped conferring the priesthood on black males of African descent. Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice. Church leaders believed that a revelation from God was needed to alter this practice and prayerfully sought guidance. The revelation came to Church President Spencer W. Kimball (1895 –1985) and was affirmed to other Church leaders in the Salt Lake Temple on June 1, 1978. The revelation removed all restrictions with regard to race that once applied to the priesthood.

The following four paragraphs are taken as excerpts from the LDS Church's Gospel Topics Essay *Race and the Priesthood*. (51)

During the first two decades of the Church's existence, a few black men were ordained to the priesthood. One of these men, Elijah Abel (1808 – 1884), also participated in temple ceremonies in Kirtland, Ohio, and was later baptized as proxy for deceased relatives in Nauvoo, Illinois. There is no reliable evidence that any black men were denied the priesthood during Joseph Smith's lifetime.

In 1852, President Brigham Young (1801 – 1877) publicly announced that men of black African descent could no longer be ordained to the priesthood.

Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else. Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form.

There are different theories on why Brigham Young declared the ban. One had to do with the curse of the Biblical Cain who slew his brother Abel. Those who accepted this view believed that God's "curse" on Cain was the mark of a dark skin. Another was that blacks were said to have been less than fully valiant in the premortal battle against Lucifer and, as a consequence, were restricted from priesthood and temple blessings. Opposition to interracial marriage between blacks and whites was another factor.

6.2 Intermarriage

Brigham Young declared that the penalty for interracial reproduction between whites and blacks was death in 1863 during a sermon criticizing the federal government. (52) This slant was shared by the Utah Territory which passed an anti-miscegenation law in 1888 prohibiting marriages between a "negro" or "mongolian" (i.e. Asian person) and a "white person." (53)

President J. Reuben Clark (1871 –1961) called racial intermarriage a "wicked virus" in an address in the church's official Improvement Era magazine (a predecessor to the current New Era). (54)

The next year, church member Virgil H. Sponberg wrote a letter to Church leaders regarding association with blacks including missionary work. The First Presidency under George Albert Smith (1870-1951) sent a reply on May 5 stating that interaction with blacks should not be encouraged because it would lead to interracial marriage. (55)

President Smith wrote:

From the days of the Prophet Joseph even until now, it has been the doctrine of the Church, never questioned by any of the Church leaders, that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel. Furthermore, your ideas, as we understand them, appear to contemplate the intermarriage of the Negro and White races, a concept which has heretofore been most repugnant to most normal-minded people from the ancient patriarchs till now. God's rule for Israel, His Chosen

People, has been endogamous. Modern Israel has been similarly directed. We are not unmindful of the fact that there is growing tendency, particularly among some educators, as it manifests itself in this area, toward the breaking down of race barriers in the matter of intermarriage between whites and blacks, but it does not have the sanction of the Church and is contrary to Church doctrine.

The “Miscegenation” laws banning interracial marriage remained until they were repealed by the Utah state legislature in 1963. (53)

The previously mentioned LDS Essay *Race and the Priesthood* (51) has disavowed teachings in the past that interracial marriage was a sin, indicating that it was influenced by the racism of the era.



Elder Peter M. Johnson is a general authority Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who was called in April 2019. He is African-American, and his wife Stephanie Lyn Chadwick is white. (56)

What role did fear play in the LDS Church’s denial of priesthood and temple blessings to blacks from the time of Joseph Smith’s death until 1978? And what role did fear have in manufacturing theories about blacks being a cursed race during this time period?

6.3 Civil Rights Movement



George Romney joins NAACP Detroit president Edward Turner and other Civil Rights activists on a march through Detroit's Grosse Pointe suburb (Wikimedia Commons)

Note that these sentiments had other manifestations.

Michigan Governor George Romney (1907-1995), a prominent Mormon, was preparing for a presidential run in 1968. Romney supported the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 and worked on behalf of efforts to include an anti-discrimination plank in the party platform at the Republican Party convention.

The LDS hierarchy took note and worried about his positions on civil rights. Elder Delbert L. Stapley (1896-1978), a high-ranking member of the LDS wrote to Romney deeply troubled. "After listening to your talk on Civil Rights, I am very much concerned. Several others have expressed the same concern to me." The letter was "personal" and not an "official Church position" but it still came on letterhead that read, "The Council of the Twelve." (57), (58)

Stapley directed Governor Romney to read Joseph Smith's position on "the Negro" and "abolition." Stapley commented that when he reflected on Smith's anti-black words, he thought of "what happened to the three of our nation's presidents who were very active in the Negro cause, [and] I am sobered by their demise." (John F. Kennedy had died only five months earlier.)

While Mormons could support "all the privileges, social opportunities, and participation enjoyed by the Whites," Stapley warned, they could not change the fact that the "Lord had placed the curse upon the Negro, which denied him the Priesthood." While Stapley supported some elements of the Civil Rights Bill, he could not support "full social benefits nor inter-marriage privileges with Whites, nor should the Whites be forced to accept them into restricted White areas." In conclusion, Stapley added, "Don't think I am against the Negro people, because I have several in my employ."

Furthermore, Apostle Ezra Taft Benson who would later become President of the LDS Church strongly opposed the Civil Rights movement. He published a book titled *Civil Rights: Tool of Communist Deception*, which was based on his September 29, 1967 General Conference talk. (59) Benson declared:

There is no doubt that the so-called civil rights movement as it exists today is used as a Communist program for revolution in America just as agrarian reform was used by the Communists to take over China and Cuba. This shocking statement can be confirmed by an objective study of Communist literature and activities and by knowledgeable Negroes and others who have worked within the Communist movement.

What role did fear play in Stapley and Benson's positions? What did Stapley mean by "restricted White areas?" Did these include neighborhoods, schools, swimming pools, country clubs, priesthood quorums and temples?



Demonstration at an "all-white" swimming pool, Cairo, Illinois, 1962

6.4 LGBTQ+ Members

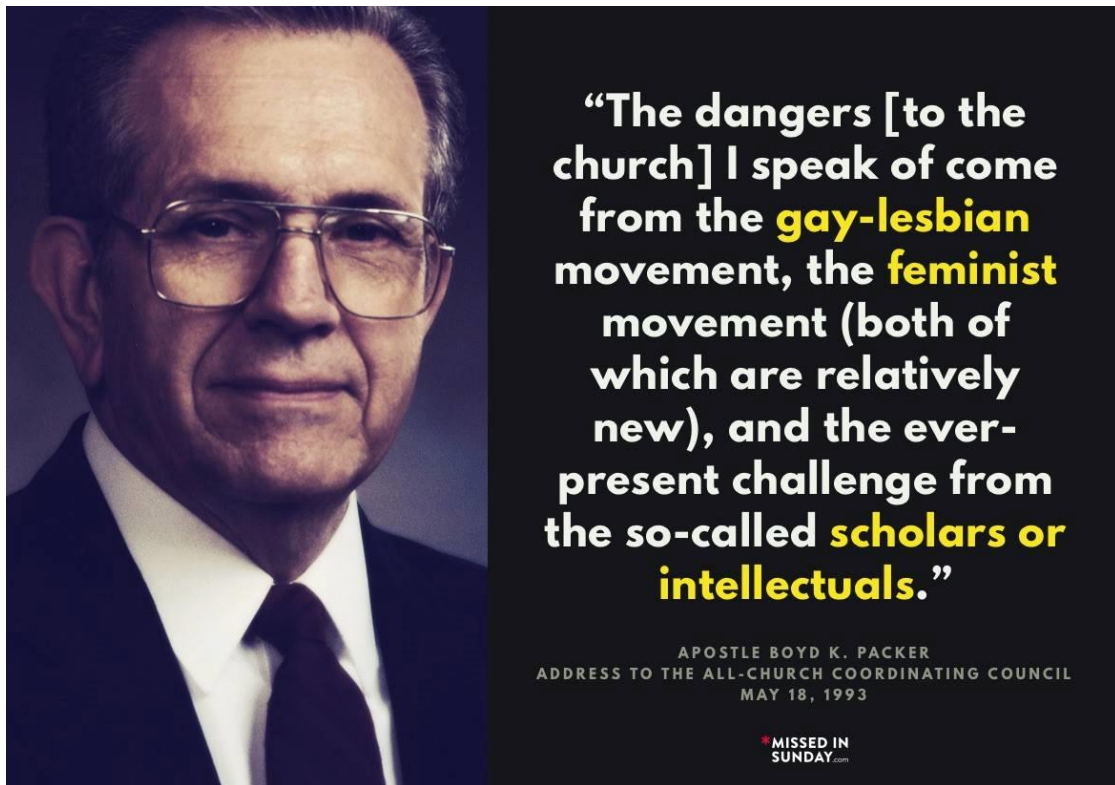
6.4.1 Introduction to LGBTQ+ Issues



Mormons Building Bridges is a decentralized grassroots group composed primarily of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who seek to improve the attitudes between members of the LDS Church and the LGBT community.

The topic of the Church's relationship to its LGBTQ+ members is so complex and polarizing that I feel inadequate to do it any justice. I invite readers to reflect on the role of fear in the following quotes and stories.

6.4.2 Historical LDS Teachings on Homosexuality



There is a falsehood that some are born with an attraction to their own kind, with nothing they can do about it. They are just “that way” and can only yield to those desires. That is a malicious and destructive lie. While it is a convincing idea to some, it is of the devil. No one is locked into that kind of life. From our premortal life we were directed into a physical body. There is no mismatching of bodies and spirits. Boys are to become men --masculine, manly men --ultimately to become husbands and fathers. No one is predestined to a perverted use of these powers.

- Apostle Boyd K. Packer, “Message to Young Men,” General Conference 1976 (60)

There appears to be a consensus in the world that it (homosexuality) is natural, to one degree or another, for a percentage of the population. Therefore, we must accept it as all right. However, when you put a moral instrument on it, the needle immediately flips to the side labeled “wrong.” It may even register “dangerous.” If there has been heavy indulgence, it registers clear over to “spiritually destructive.”

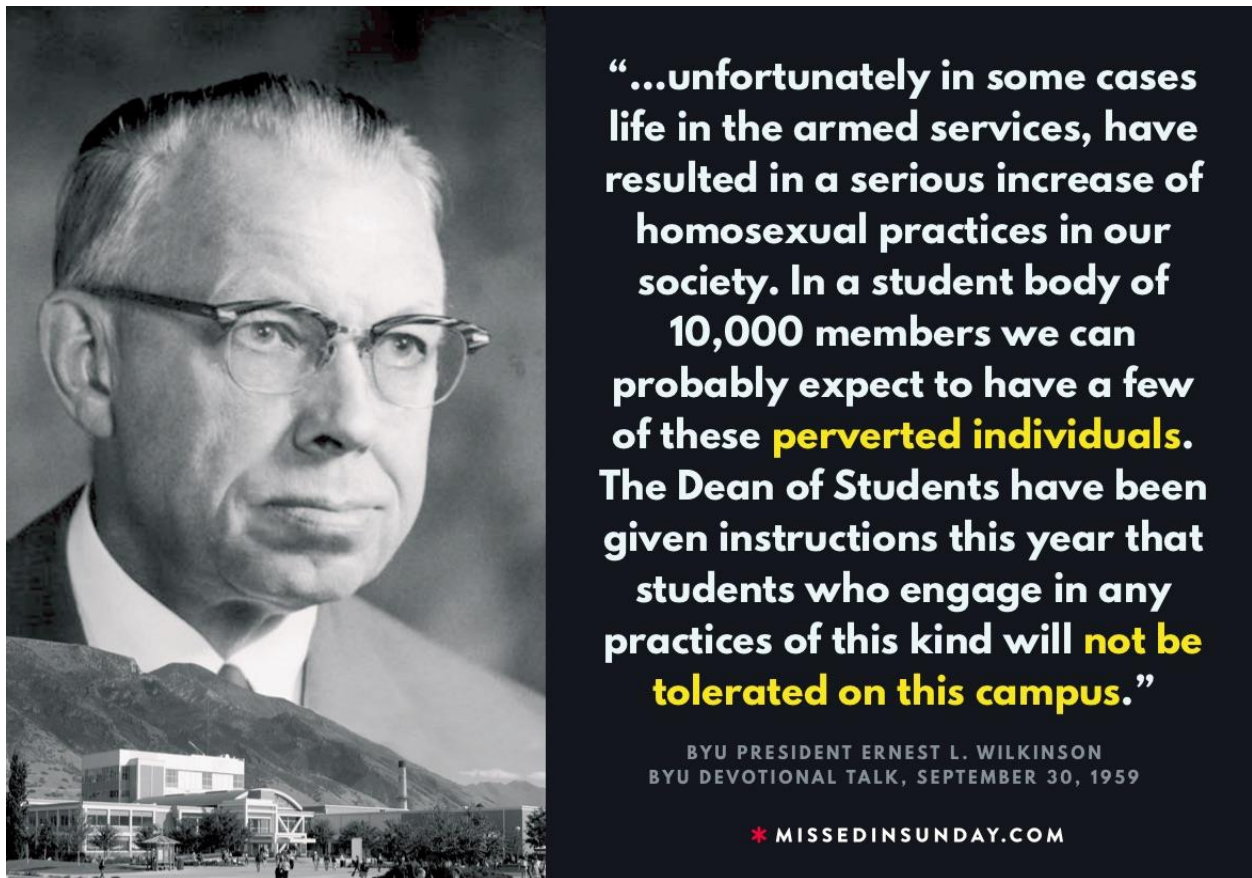
The answer: It is not all right. It is wrong! It is not desirable; it is unnatural; it is abnormal; it is an affliction. When practiced, it is immoral. It is a transgression... Do not be misled by those who whisper that it is part of your nature and therefore right for you. That is false doctrine!

- Apostle Boyd K. Packer, 1978 BYU Fireside, “To the One” (61)

Homosexuality is an ugly sin, repugnant to those who find no temptation in it, as well as to many past offenders who are seeking a way out of its clutches. It is embarrassing and unpleasant as a subject for discussion but because of its prevalence, the need to warn the uninitiated, and the desire to help those who may already be involved in it, it is discussed in this chapter.

- Prophet Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 78 (62)

6.4.3 Electroshock Therapy



Aversion therapy was performed at Brigham Young University in the beginning in 1959 and continuing until 1983 in an attempt order to “cure” young men and young women of homosexuality. (63), (64), (65)

Max Ford McBride, a graduate student, and Dr. Robert Duane Card, his faculty mentor at Brigham Young University, performed electroshock aversion treatments. Young men were jolted with painful electric

shocks to the penis when shown pornographic images of men. One of the subjects, John Cameron, reported that he was also given a double-dose of syrup of ipecac to induce vomiting.

McBride published his work in his Ph.D. dissertation: *Effect of Visual Stimuli in Electric Aversion Therapy*.

6.4.4 LDS Church November 2015 Policy of Exclusion (PoX)

The LDS Church updated its policies in November 2015 regarding those in legal same-sex unions, stating that such couples are apostates from the church. These policies also barred such couples' children, either adopted or biological, from being baptized, confirmed, ordained, or participating in mission service until reaching adulthood and obtaining permission from the First Presidency. (66), (67) Some 1500 members resigned from the Church as a result of this policy according to one news source. (68)

The Church revised its policy again on April 4, 2019, stating that couples in legal same-sex unions would no longer be considered apostate, and that "children of parents who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender may be baptized without First Presidency approval, if the custodial parents give permission for the baptism and understand both the doctrine that a baptized child will be taught and the covenants he or she will be expected to make." However, it also stated that it still considers homosexuality to be a "serious transgression," to be treated in the same way as "immoral conduct" in heterosexual relationships. (69), (70)

6.4.5 BYU Honor Code



Some months after the Church policy revision, the BYU Honor code was changed with the removal of “homosexual behavior” as a violation. This created relief among closeted LGBTQ students who took the opportunity to “come out.”

But Elder Paul V. Johnson, Commissioner of the Church Educational System, issued the following letter. (71)

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

CHURCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM
COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
50 East North Temple Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-0009

March 4, 2020

To students, faculty, and staff of the Church Educational System:

Recently the language of the principle-based Church Educational System Honor Code was updated. Those adjustments included significant doctrinal and behavioral matters that have led to much discussion and some misinterpretation. Out of respect for all concerned, we are providing the following clarifying statement.

One change to the Honor Code language that has raised questions was the removal of a section on “Homosexual Behavior.” The moral standards of the Church did not change with the recent release of the *General Handbook* or the updated Honor Code. There is and always has been more to living the Lord’s standard of a chaste and virtuous life than refraining from sexual relations outside of marriage. Lasting joy comes when we live the spirit as well as the letter of God’s laws.

A foundational doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”). Church leaders have long taught these principles.

Same-sex romantic behavior cannot lead to eternal marriage and is therefore not compatible with the principles included in the Honor Code.

We are grateful for the commitment that all students and employees in the Church Educational System make to live the principles and spirit of the Honor Code.

Sincerely,



Elder Paul V. Johnson
Commissioner, Church Educational System

6.4.6 Oscar Wilde



Performance of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* at BYU's Pardoe Theatre, November 2016

Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde (1850-1900) visited Salt Lake City in April 1892. He gave a lecture at the Salt Lake Opera House and met with President John Taylor (1808-1887).

Wilde again entered the public eye in Utah in 1895, but this time because of his trial in England for sodomy with his longtime companion, Lord Alfred Bosworth. Wilde's story made front page headlines in twenty issues of the *Deseret Evening News* to emphasize the dangers of such deviant practices.

George Q. Cannon (1827-1901), First Counselor in the First Presidency, spoke in October General Conference 1897 (72) about Oscar Wilde (who remains nameless throughout the speech) and his "nameless crime":

"In England a short time ago a man [Oscar Wilde] who had posed in society as a man of culture and of taste, and who lectured upon esthetics, was found to be guilty of a most abominable crime - a crime for which under the old law the penalty was death; a crime which was practiced by the nations of old, and caused God to command their destruction and extirpation. This crime was proved against this man, and some of his associates were what are called noblemen. He was sent to prison. His term of imprisonment having expired, he comes from prison, and is now engaged, it is so published, in writing a book, and, we suppose is received into society, though guilty of this nameless crime. And is this common; If we may believe that which is told to us, without going into researches ourselves, it and other kindred wickedness, is far too common. The same sin that caused

the utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah! This and other abominable crimes are being practiced. How will these be stopped? Only by the destruction of those who practice them. Why, if a little nest of them were left that were guilty of these things, they would soon corrupt others, as some are being corrupted among us. In coming to these mountains we hoped to find a place where we could live secluded from the abominations of Babylon. But here in this secluded place wickedness intrudes itself, and is practiced in this land which we have dedicated to the Lord as a land of Zion! How can this be stopped? Not while those who have knowledge of these filthy crimes exist. The only way, according to all that I can understand as the word of God, is for the Lord to wipe them out, that there will be none left to perpetuate the knowledge of these dreadful practices among the children of men. And God will do it, as sure as He has spoken by the mouths of His prophets. He will destroy the wicked, and those who will be left will be like the Nephites after the wicked were all killed off; they were righteous men and women who lived for over two hundred years according to the law of heaven.

In contrast, Joseph Smith wrote that the cities of Sodom and Gomorra were destroyed for rejecting the Prophets. (73) In addition, the people of those cities worshipped the idol Baal and had sins of pride and idleness.

Note that BYU Theatre has presented Wilde's plays "The Selfish Giant" and "The Importance of Being Earnest" in recent years.

The following are selected quotes from Wilde used in official Church publications.

Oscar Wilde once said, "You can never be overdressed or overeducated." Regardless of what we choose to wear, it's true that we can never be overeducated. There is so much out there to learn, and the Lord has counseled us to "seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, ... even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). (74)

Recognizing the penetrating influence of great music, Oscar Wilde had one of his characters say, "After playing Chopin, I feel as if I had been weeping over sins that I had never committed, and mourning over tragedies that were not my own." (75)

Isn't it interesting how things turn out? The playwright Oscar Wilde wrote: "In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it." (76)

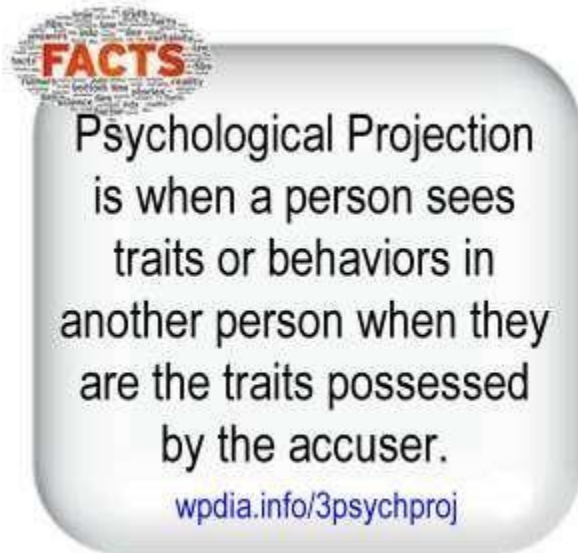
Oscar Wilde once said, "The nicest feeling in the world is to do a good deed anonymously and have somebody find out." My religious faith tells me that every time I do a good deed anonymously, somebody finds out and the world is permanently changed by the residue of it. (77)

Although prayers and religious instruction were part of my high school's curriculum, students were not directly taught anything about Jesus Christ. However, I came across a beautiful story by Oscar Wilde in our English textbook about how a very mean and selfish person is saved by the grace of God and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. I was deeply touched by "Selfish Giant," and I often reread it and pondered how the main character had received a forgiveness of his sins. I contemplated that if Jesus Christ could save a very mean and cruel giant, he must also have power to bring peace into my life. But I did not know where to find this Savior. (78)

The manager “knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing” (Oscar Wilde, Lady Windermere’s Fan, act 3), because for him the value is the price. (79)

Is the Church’s usage of Wilde’s writings and plays to teach gospel principles disingenuous given Apostle Cannon’s denunciation of him in General Conference?

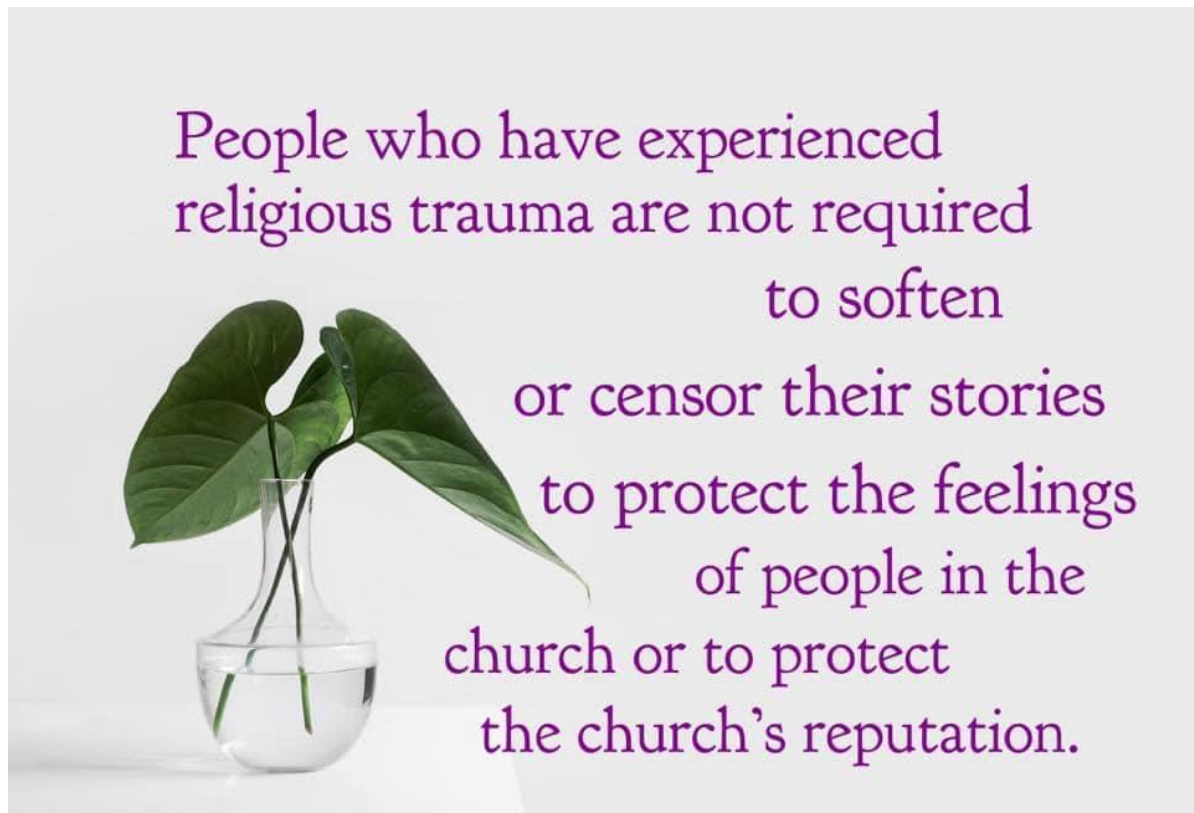
6.4.7 Projection



Projection is a psychological defense mechanism proposed by Anna Freud, daughter of Sigmund Freud, in which an individual attributes unwanted thoughts, feelings and motives onto another person. Thoughts most commonly projected onto another are the ones that would cause guilt such as aggressive and sexual fantasies or thoughts. (80)

Were some clergy who were most vocal in condemning homosexuality trying to cope with their own same-sex urges?

6.4.8 Queer Mormon Sister



The following open letter is from Blaire Ostler and is reprinted with her permission. Her words are direct and sharp. But I humbly ask readers to show her compassion as she faces challenges unique to her non-binary identity that very few of us could begin to understand.

Dear Church Leaders,

I know gender and sexuality are tricky issues, but after reading the latest changes to the handbook, I'd like to clear a few things up.

My gender is not a worthiness marker. It's an expression of who I am and how I interact with my environment.

My biology is non-binary. What can I say? I was literally born this way, and there isn't a medical professional who can tell me why. It hurts when you talk about me like I'm a "mistake" in "the plan" and should "pick a side" because you can't see me as valuable as I am.

My medical history, surgeries, hormones, medications, and "transitional" procedures are none of the Church's business. My genitalia is none of your business even if you feel like you can use it to restrict my participation in the Church. You do it to cis women too and I don't know why so many of them put up with it.

My clothing and gender expressions don't need to be monitored and judged by men in positions of authority. It's creepy. I'm 36 years old and I'll wear what I deem as consistent with my gender, biology, and identity.

I exist. I know I keep messing up your false binaries with my fluidity, bisexuality, biology, gender, and experience, but if your interpretation of Mormonism doesn't include queer folks, well, it's just not a good interpretation. We can do better.

Sincerely, a queer Mormon sister

6.4.9 A Tragic Suicide



Here is a letter that Stuart Matis (1967-2000) wrote which was published in the BYU Daily Universe newspaper (81). Stuart took his own life a few days later, on the steps of his California Church stake center building. (82)

Letter to the editor: Don't stereotype gay people

Dear Editor:

I am gay. I am also LDS. My first same-sex attraction occurred when I was seven, and for the next 25 years, I have never been attracted to women. I realized the significance of my sexuality when I was around thirteen, and for the next two decades, I traveled down a tortuous path of internalized homophobia, immense self-hatred, depression and suicidal thoughts. Despite the calluses on my knees, frequent trips to the temple, fasts and devotion to my mission and church callings such as elders' quorum president, I continually failed to attenuate my homosexuality.

I came out last year. My bishop and my father each gave me a blessing inspired by the spirit that proclaimed that I was indeed gay and that I would remain gay. Thus, I read a recent letter to the editor with great regret. The author compared my friends and me to murderers, Satanists, prostitutes, pedophiles and partakers of bestiality. Imagine having to live with this rhetoric constantly being spewed at you.

My aunt is a psychiatrist in Ogden and has worked with over 1,000 gay Latter-day Saints. Because of her work with these church members, she has been forced by necessity to specialize in homosexuality, depression and suicide.

I implore the students at BYU to re-assess their homophobic feelings. Seek to understand first before you make comments. We have the same needs as you. We desire to love and be loved. We desire to live our lives with happiness. We are not a threat to you or your families. We are your

sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, neighbors, co-workers and friends, and most importantly, we are all children of God.

Stuart Matis, Santa Clara, Calif.

Stuart's friend, Clay Whitmer (1965-2000), committed suicide in the San Francisco Bay Area three weeks after Stuart's death. They had served Mormon missions together in Italy. Clay had been involved with Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons as a member of the San Francisco chapter. (83)

6.4.10 Another Tragic Suicide

President Dallin H. Oaks (84) was asked about church leaders and members' responsibility for the treatment of LGBT individuals that may have precipitated in suicides he stated "that's a question that will be answered on judgment day" and that "nobody is sadder about a case like that than I am."⁶

I asked Brian Bresee, who lost a son, to comment on Oak's quote. I am reprinting his response verbatim and with his permission. Brian's words are sharp and harrowing, but I humbly ask readers to have sympathy for a grieving parent. Brian Bresee's Response:



After having lost our 14-year-old son Samuel to suicide in 2014 after months of being called "Faggot" at our local LDS congregation, Mr. Oak's statement further adds to the pain of our loss. To leave questions connected to the suicide of children to "be answered on judgment day" is a cruel and purposeful avoidance of exploring the church's contribution to these teen suicides, my son's suicide. True to Mr. Oak's statement, the church did indeed aggressively avoid investigating our son's abuse, along with the church policy contribution that created the harmful environment for Samuel. That calculated decision by church officials is leaving future children in harm's way. Just four years after our son's suicide and from the very same local congregation, another child chose suicide while her parents were at church, she was LGBTQ.

There is a tradition found in the LDS Church called 'Lying for the Lord', and that is exactly what Mr. Oaks is doing in his statement. To state that "nobody is sadder about a case like that than I", while at the same time refusing policy change that would prevent it, publicly mocks the intense suffering that parents of teen suicide have experienced.

⁶ I had the opportunity to serve as a hospice volunteer for a year or so. I was wisely trained never to tell a grieving person that "I know just how you feel." I could never imagine telling parents who lost a child to suicide that I was even sadder than they were.

6.5 Self-Pleasuring



Whether polygamy in the Church was started by Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, the use and regulation of procreative power has been an underlying obsession of priesthood leaders since the early days of the Church. This obsession has been rather neurotic in the case of a practice which is euphemistically referred to as “self-pleasuring” in this paper. This practice is a serious sin in LDS Church policy and doctrine.

In his speech and pamphlet *Love vs. Lust*, President Spencer W. Kimball warned, "Masturbation is the introduction of the more serious sin of exhibitionism and the gross sin of homosexuality." (85)

Furthermore, young men and women in the Church are subjected to “worthiness interviews” by their bishops starting when they are about twelve years old. These are one-on-one interviews conducted behind closed doors. They are conducted at least once a year. The bishop then judges whether the young person is worthy to partake of the weekly sacrament or participate in temple ordinances like baptisms for the dead.

The questions in these interviews tend to be similar to those asked in baptismal interviews, such as “Do you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?” But there is one glaring, shame-inducing addition “Do you self-pleasure?” This question is asked by lay bishops who seldom have any medical or psychological training or certification.

Sam Young, a former LDS Bishop, compiled stories of members who have been traumatized by these interviews as well as other abuse forms. (86), (87)

My own contribution is given at: <https://protectldschildren.org/746-thomas-i-cs-12/>

Young was excommunicated by the LDS Church in September 2018 for organizing public rallies against these sexually explicit interviews.

Young identified the following consequences of these interviews based on the submitted accounts:

1. Inappropriate shame and guilt
2. Childhood self-loathing
3. Adulthood self-loathing
4. Normalizing children to sexual questions by adult men. (Grooming)
5. Sexual abuse. (Pedophilia)
6. Impaired sexual relations after marriage.
7. Years of recovery from childhood shaming. Often lasting decades.
8. Suicide Ideation
9. Attempted Suicide
10. Suicide of a loved one or friend.



An LDS youth named Kip Eliason committed suicide on March 2, 1982. (88) He was distraught and filled with self-hate over his inability to stop self-pleasuring. His final note read:

Dear Dad, I love you more than what words can say. If it were possible, I would stay alive for only you, for I really only have you. But it isn't possible. I must first love myself, and I do not. The strange feeling of darkness and self-hate overpowers all my defenses. I must unfortunately yield to it. This turbulent feeling is only for a few to truly understand. I feel that you do not comprehend the immense feeling of self-hatred I have. This is the only way I feel that I can relieve myself of these feelings now. Carry on with your life and be happy. I love you more than words can say.

—Your son, Kip

An LDS psychiatrist Cantril Nielsen paid a death malpractice settlement to Kip's father, Eugene Eliason, in 1983 for prescribing that his patient Kip abstain from self-pleasuring as directed by his bishop. This allegedly contributed to the patient's shame-induced suicide in 1982 over his inability to stop self-pleasuring as recorded in his journal. (89)

The lawsuit leading to the settlement alleged that Nielsen violated professional standards of psychiatric care by prescribing that his patient should follow his Mormon bishop's advice to abstain from self-pleasuring in order to be "worthy," rather than basing treatment on empirical medical evidence required by medical ethics. Medical experts in the case verified the empirical evidence self-pleasuring is not only harmless, but that shamed-based abstinence has a documented history of suicidal risk.

6.6 Church History

6.6.1 Notes

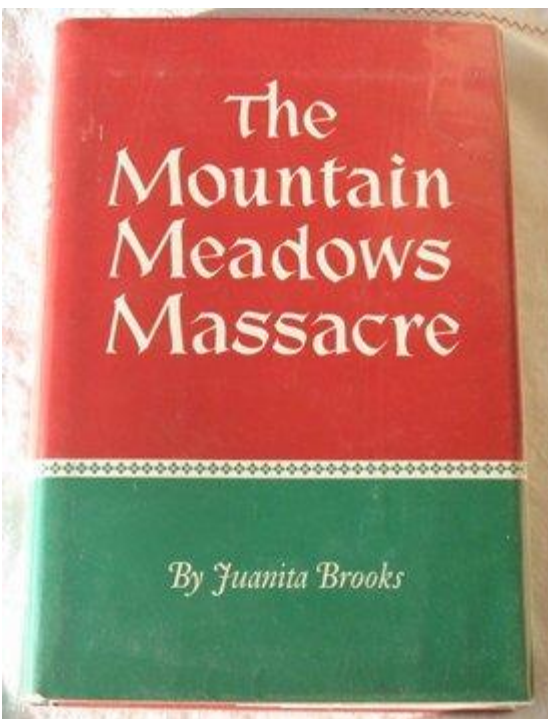
Richard Bushman (90), LDS Scholar, former Stake President, Author of “Rough Stone Rolling” stated in a meeting:

I think for the Church to remain strong it has to reconstruct its narrative. The dominant narrative is not true. It can't be sustained. The Church has to absorb all this new information or it will be on very shaky grounds, and that's what it's trying to do. And they'll be a strain for a lot of people, older people especially. But I think it has to change.

Elder Packer had the sense of “protecting the little people.” He felt like the scholars were an enemy to his faith, and that of the grandmothers living in Sanpete County. That was a very lovely pastoral image. But the price of protecting the grandmothers was the loss of the grandsons. They got a story that didn't work. So we've just had to change our narrative.

Why do Church leaders fear an accurate account of Church History? Is this fear justifiable?

6.6.2 Juanita Pulsipher Brooks



The Mountain Meadows massacre was a series of attacks on the Baker–Fancher emigrant wagon train at Mountain Meadows in southern Utah. The attacks began on September 7 and ended on September 11, 1857, resulting in the mass slaughter of most in the emigrant party by members of the Utah Territorial Militia from the Iron County district, possibly together with some Southern Paiute Native Americans. The emigrant death toll was between 120 and 140. Whether Brigham Young unwittingly provoked the attack with harsh rhetoric or tried to conceal it after the fact are topics of fierce debate.

John D. Lee (1812-1877) was arrested for his role in the attack and was eventually found guilty. He was executed by firing squad on March 23, 1877. Lee was excommunicated from the LDS Church prior to his execution. Lee never denied his own complicity. His defense was that he was being used as a scapegoat by higher Church leaders who had ordered the attack.

Jaunita Pulsipher Brooks (1898 – 1989) wrote a history of the Mountain Meadows Massacre which was controversial for several reasons. One of the reasons was that President David O. McKay posthumously reinstated Lee's membership at the behest of the Lee family in 1961, and ordinances for him were performed in the Salt Lake Temple so that all his former blessings were restored. President McKay sought to keep this restoration confidential, but Brooks intended to publish it for the sake of historical accuracy. Brooks indeed eventually published the reinstatement in the 1962 editions of her massacre history and Lee's biography.

Levi S. Peterson (91) reported:

Stephen L. Richards and LeGrand Richards, both of whom rebuked her (Brooks) for implied disloyalty. "I am at a loss to understand your motive for writing the book," LeGrand Richards scolded after he had, at Juanita's behest, dutifully read *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*. "In view of your statement that you are a loyal member of the church, and interested in its reputation, surely you cannot truthfully say that your book does not injure the reputation of your church and its leaders."

Note that Stephen L. Richards (1879 – 1959) and LeGrand Richards (1886 – 1983) were both apostles in the LDS Church. Stephen L. Richards also served in the First Presidency.

Elder Delbert L. Stapley summoned Juanita to a private interview in June, 1961. When she expressed her conviction that God had purposely delayed the printing of her biography so that news of the reinstatement could be included, the apostle, in her words, "just slapped the table and said, 'IT IS FROM THE DEVIL.'" By way of compromise a subdued Juanita promised to omit the announcement from the first edition of the biography. Members of the Lee family, taking President McKay's threat seriously, congratulated her for her compliance.

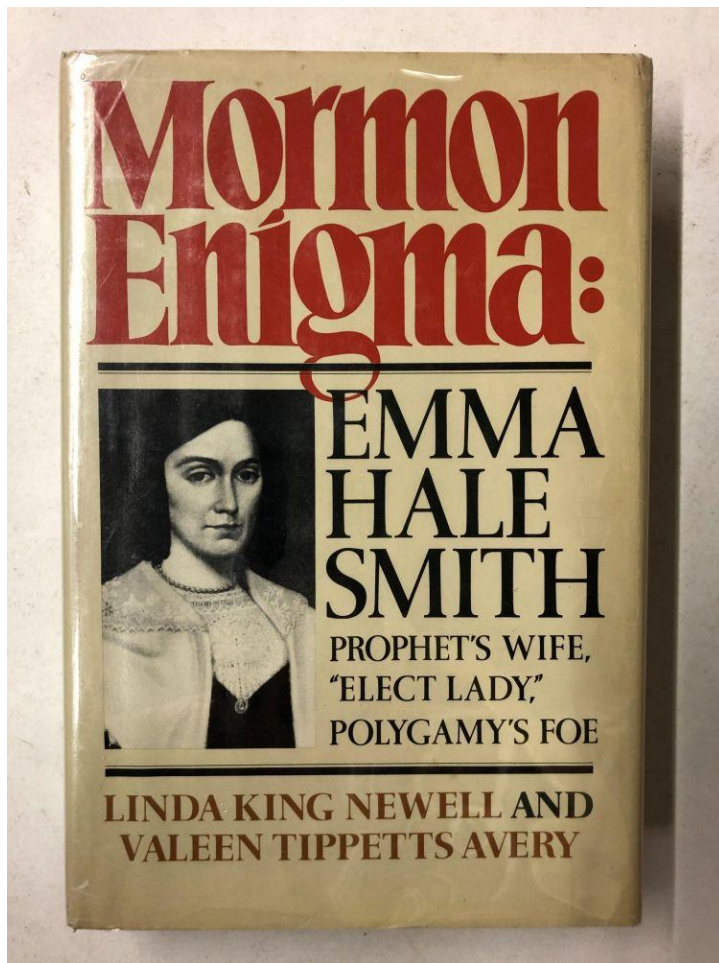
Brooks responded with particular anger to a letter from Jesse Udall (1893-1980), a justice of the Arizona state supreme court and husband of a Lee granddaughter. "I do think," Juanita wrote, "that as an honest historian—as I have tried to be—I owe it to myself and to my readers to tell all the truth, for truth suppressed is its own kind of a lie. So to protect your integrity and to help you keep your word, I must act the part of a prevaricator myself in that I fail to use important and pertinent information or deliberately pretend that I do not have it. This is a role which I do not enjoy playing." (92)

Later, Stapley attempted to initiate excommunication proceedings against her, but President McKay, who had been less than helpful to the author in her quest for Church-held source documents, blocked his efforts. (93)

Why did the leaders of Brooks's day so fear that the Church's reputation would be harmed by the publication of historical facts? Was this fear justified?

LDS Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland, whom Brooks taught English in high school, said in 2007 that he believed Brooks was an "absolutely faithful Latter-day Saint...who had...probably helped the church come to grips with something that all of us wish had never happened." (94)

6.6.3 Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery



Newell and Avery co-authored the book *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, published in 1984. The book won the Best Book Award for interpretive history by the Mormon History Association that same year.

Avery and Newell, both active members of the LDS Church, provided the following note in the book's introduction:

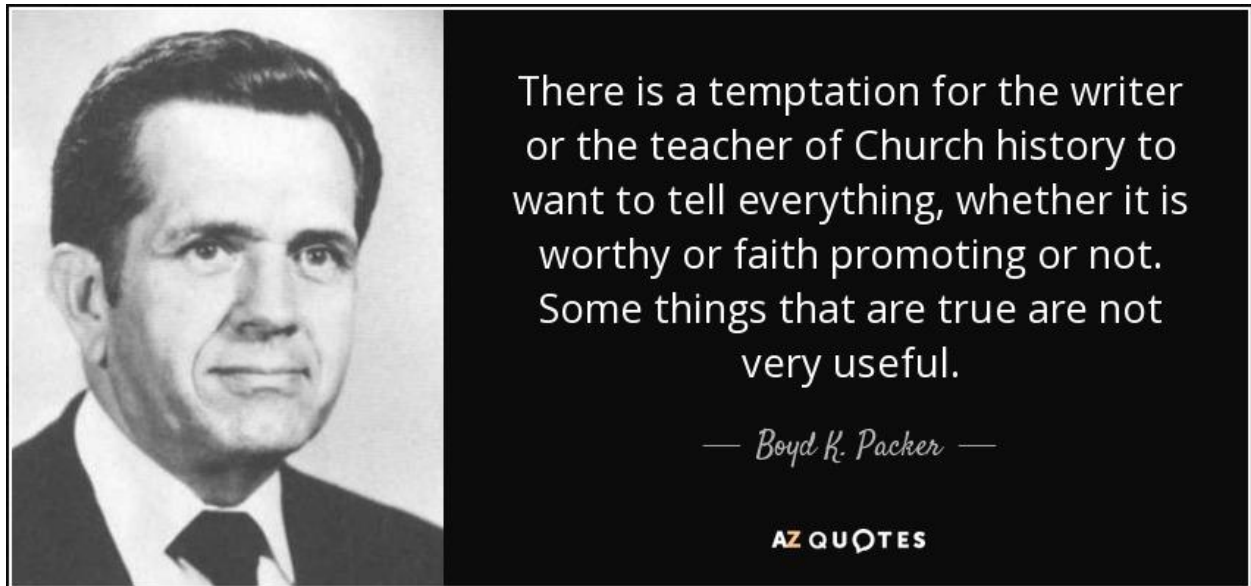
Early leaders in Utah castigated Emma from their pulpits for opposing Brigham Young and the practice of polygamy, and for lending support to the Reorganization. As these attitudes filtered down through the years, Emma was virtually written out of official Utah histories. In this biography, we have attempted to reconstruct the full story of this remarkable and much misunderstood woman's experiences.

LDS Apostles Neal Maxwell and Dallin Oaks met with Newell and criticized the book for portraying a "nontraditional view of Joseph Smith."

Apostle Oaks told Newell:

My duty as a member of the Council of the Twelve is to protect what is most unique about the LDS church, namely the authority of priesthood, testimony regarding the restoration of the gospel, and the divine mission of the Savior. Everything else may be sacrificed in order to maintain the integrity of those essential facts. Thus, if Mormon Enigma reveals information that is detrimental to the reputation of Joseph Smith, then it is necessary to try to limit its influence and that of its authors.

As a result, Newell and Avery were placed on a ten-month restriction from speaking at church. (95), (96)



Does truth derive from authority, or does authority derive from truth?

6.6.4 Members who Leave the Church



Former Mormons often face social stigmatization and are labeled as “apostates” and are considered as “salt that has lost its savor.” Some former members are shunned by their families and local congregations.

Shunning is not a formal action by the ecclesiastical leaders in the LDS Church. However, some words spoken by leaders tend to foster shunning behavior as well as insular thinking and behavior in which those who are no longer members are considered people to be avoided.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson gave the follow warning regarding family members who leave the Church:

The challenge we may confront is remaining loyal to the Savior and His Church in the face of parents, in-laws, brothers or sisters, or even our children whose conduct, beliefs, or choices make it impossible to support both Him and them. ...the Lord reminds us, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” So although familial love continues, relationships may be interrupted and, according to the circumstances, even support or tolerance at times suspended for the sake of our higher love.

"Finding Your Life," D. Todd Christofferson, Apostle, CES Devotional for Young Adults, September 14, 2014. (97)

Active Church members and leaders tend to be fearful towards any current member experiencing a “faith crisis.” They may have knee-jerk reactions, attributing an “apostate’s waywardness” to one or more of the following:

1. Morally weak (i.e., are sinning)
2. Followers of Satan (explicitly or unawares)
3. Prone to taking offense
4. Too lazy to maintain their spirituality
5. Ignorant and/or misinformed about the teachings of the Church.

There are myriad warnings against apostasy by Church leaders. One example from President Brigham Young (98) is:

When men lose the spirit of the work in which we are engaged, they become infidel in their feelings. They say that they do not know whether the Bible is true, whether the Book of Mormon is true, nor about new revelations, nor whether there is a God or not. When they lose the spirit of this work, they lose the knowledge of the things of God in time and in eternity; all is lost to them.

Those who leave the Church are like a feather blown to and fro in the air. They know not whither they are going; they do not understand anything about their own existence; their faith, judgment and the operation of their minds are as unstable as the movements of the feather floating in the air. We have not anything to cling to, only faith in the Gospel.

Furthermore, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (99) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sternly said in a devotional:

Don't you dare bail. I'm so furious with people who leave this church. I don't know whether furious is a good apostolic word. But I am. And I say, what on earth kind of conviction is that? What kind of paddy-cake, taffy-pulled experience is that? As if none of this ever mattered, as if nothing in our contemporary life mattered? As if this is all supposed to be just exactly the way I want it and answered every one of my questions and pursue this and occupy that, decide this, and then maybe I'll be a Latter-day Saint. Well, there is too much Irish in me for that.

Stereotyping former members as sinners or prideful is prejudicial. The truth is that many have left for more mundane reasons such as feeling marginalized by their local congregations or for being the subject of gossip. For example, divorced and single adults may experience difficulty fitting into a church environment which highly values the ideal, heteronormative family.

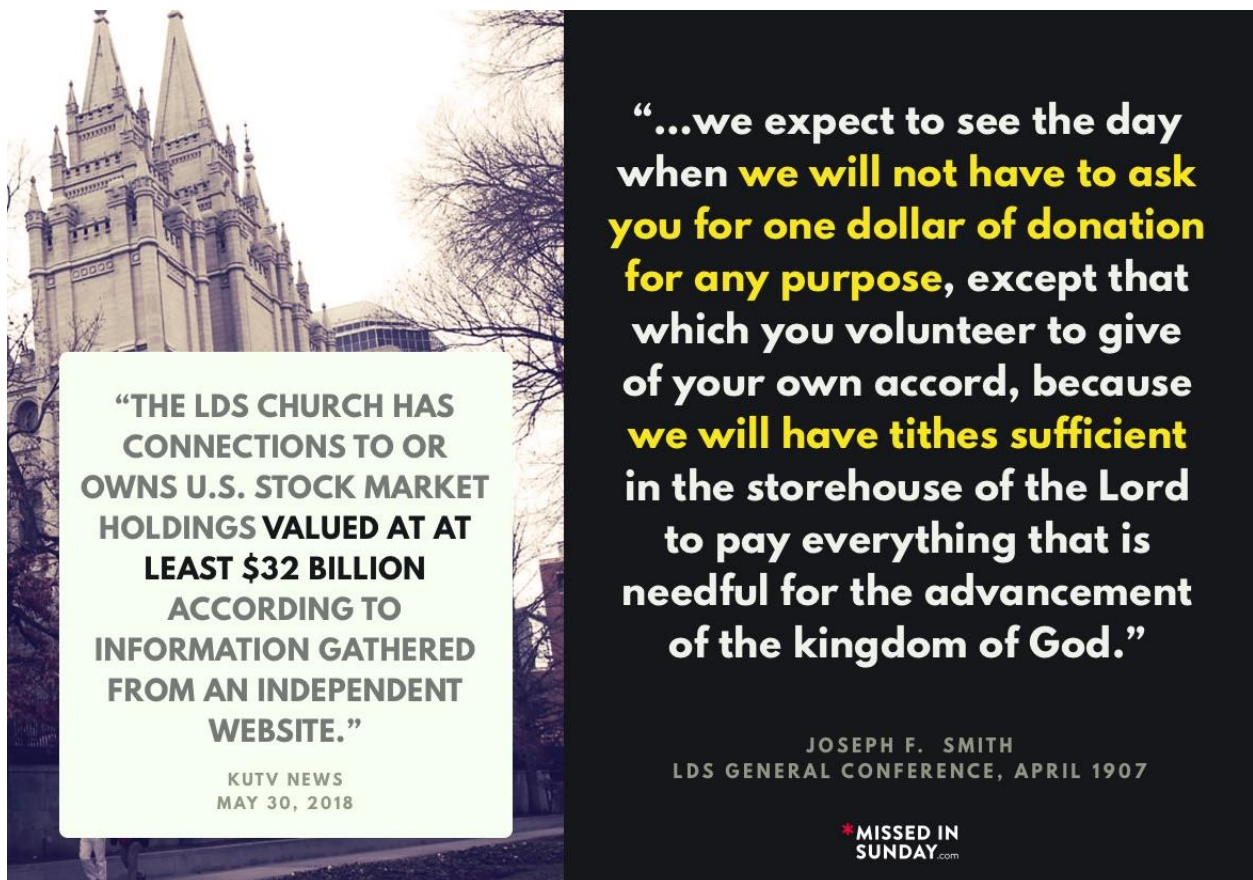
In addition, some lapsed members have experienced Church-related trauma (100). Others may have complex reasons that defy checklist categorization, as President Uchtdorf taught (101):

The search for truth has led millions of people to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, there are some who leave the Church they once loved. One might ask, "If the gospel is so wonderful, why would anyone leave?" Sometimes we assume it is because they have been offended or lazy or sinful. Actually, it is not that simple. In fact, there is not just one reason that applies to the variety of situations.

In contrast, President Uchtdorf (102) more recently characterized departing members as "headstrong" and "unruly."

As we incline our hearts to our Heavenly Father and draw near to Him, we will feel Him draw near to us. We are His beloved children. Even those who reject Him. Even those who, like a headstrong, unruly child, become angry with God and His Church, pack their bags, and storm out the door proclaiming that they're running away and never coming back.

6.7 Finances



“THE LDS CHURCH HAS CONNECTIONS TO OR OWNS U.S. STOCK MARKET HOLDINGS VALUED AT AT LEAST \$32 BILLION ACCORDING TO INFORMATION GATHERED FROM AN INDEPENDENT WEBSITE.”

KUTV NEWS
MAY 30, 2018

“...we expect to see the day when we will not have to ask you for one dollar of donation for any purpose, except that which you volunteer to give of your own accord, because we will have tithes sufficient in the storehouse of the Lord to pay everything that is needful for the advancement of the kingdom of God.”

JOSEPH F. SMITH
LDS GENERAL CONFERENCE, APRIL 1907

*MISSED IN SUNDAY.com

The LDS Church has not publicly disclosed its financial statements in the United States since 1959. Is this omission based in fear?

Ensign Peak Advisors, Inc. (Ensign) was founded as the Church's investment division in the 1960s and was still considered to be a "shoestring operation" into the 1990s. In 2020 it managed about 100 billion dollars in assets according to a Wall Street Journal article. (103)

In addition, the Church owns other assets such as Deseret Cattle and Citrus Ranch east of Orlando, Florida, the world's largest beef ranch, as well as the upscale City Creek Center mall in Salt Lake City.

How will the mall (which cost 1.5 million dollars) fare during the ongoing demise of brick-and-mortar stores across the United States as customers shift to online purchases, etc.?

The LDS Church teaches “provident living” to its members. In keeping with this principle, Elder Robert D. Hales (1932-2017) gave the following story (104) about buying a gift for his wife in a conference talk:

Our wedding anniversary was approaching, and I wanted to buy Mary a fancy coat to show my love and appreciation for our many happy years together. When I asked what she thought of the coat I

had in mind, she replied with words that again penetrated my heart and mind. “Where would I wear it?” she asked. (At the time she was a ward Relief Society president helping to minister to needy families.)

Then she taught me an unforgettable lesson. She looked me in the eyes and sweetly asked, “Are you buying this for me or for you?” In other words, she was asking, “Is the purpose of this gift to show your love for me or to show me that you are a good provider or to prove something to the world?” I pondered her question and realized I was thinking less about her and our family and more about me.

Provident living includes living within one’s means and getting out of debt. Do these teachings contrast with the shopping for fancy coats and other luxury items in the City Creek Center?

The extent to which tithing donations have been applied to the City Creek Center and other investments remains unknown and is a controversial subject. There are unresolved tax implications regarding the use of donations for building up investment portfolios rather than for charity purposes.

A reasonable allowance can be made for churches to establish and maintain a “rainy day fund.” Saving money for the future is prudent vigilance. But how much is really needed? Could a greater portion of donations be used for, say, setting up medical clinics in third-world countries ravaged by malnutrition, malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS/HIV?

How can we create Zion on Earth if there are still poor among us? (see Moses 7:18)

The Prophet Nephi warned:

And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. 2 Nephi 28:12

6.8 Exact Obedience

6.8.1 First Law of Heaven

In our relentless pursuit of perfection, have we become alienated from that very Savior whose true church we so boldly proclaim to be? Like the Pharisees of Jesus time, do we fear that any effort short of letter-perfect obedience will lead to another Babylonian captivity?

Perfectionism was previously and briefly addressed in this paper.

In addition, statements, such as the following by President Russell M. Nelson (105) given to missionaries, are common in the LDS Church and may also be triggering as members inevitably fall short:

Obedience brings success; exact obedience brings miracles.

A similar teaching is “obedience is the first law of heaven.” (106)

Obedience to commandments is a well-established principle throughout the scriptural canon. But these types of teaching may cause members who are lacking miracles to question their own levels of obedience to the point they become anxious and fearful.

The presence or absence of miracles may depend on many factors beyond a member’s control and especially on the Lord’s timing. Jesus taught that our Father in Heaven “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:45)

A returned missionary named Zack Oates (107) wrote that his quest for perfect obedience caused frustration for his companions, ward members and investigators. He wrote:

Despite my efforts for perfect obedience and my expectation of seeing blessings come from it, I felt like a total failure. My entire foundation of how I went about life started to crumble.

I began searching—begging, really—for answers from God. He turned me to Matthew 22:36, where Christ was asked, “Which is the great commandment in the law?”

Christ’s response was a spiritual rebuke for my feigned self-righteous quest for obedience: “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” Although I was familiar with the scripture, a question came to my mind, “Wait...shouldn’t that say obedience?” But “obedience” wasn’t His answer.

Christ’s response was love.


My entire life was changed in that moment. Yes, obedience is the first law, but love is the greatest. I realized that if I had to choose between 100 percent by-the-book obedience and love, at the judgment bar it would be a lot easier to justify love.

Oates further wrote that he experienced a vast improvement in his relationships with others when he focused on love rather than on checklist obedience to mission rules.

6.8.2 BYU Honor Code

Furthermore, BYU students are required to obey the school’s Honor Code exactly. Students are even encouraged to report violators to university officials. The card shown is no longer used but is nevertheless representative of the historically strict obedience culture.

HONOR CODE COUNCIL REFERRAL CARD

Person Involved: Name: SS#: Telephone:	Person making referral: Name: SS#: Telephone:
Violation Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Dress & Grooming <input type="checkbox"/> Hair length or style <input type="checkbox"/> Beard <input type="checkbox"/> Shorts or skirt length <input type="checkbox"/> Modesty <input type="checkbox"/> Earring <input type="checkbox"/> Neat and Clean <input type="checkbox"/> Use of language <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Respect of others <input type="checkbox"/> Word of Wisdom <input type="checkbox"/> coffee <input type="checkbox"/> tea <input type="checkbox"/> tobacco	Did you inform student of referral? Yes No May we use your name? Yes No	

BYU Professor Hugh Nibley (1910-2005) (108) wrote:

The worst sinners, according to Jesus, are not the harlots and publicans, but the religious leaders with their insistence on proper dress and grooming, their careful observance of all the rules, their precious concern for status symbols, their strict legality, their pious patriotism... the haircut becomes the test of virtue in a world where Satan deceives and rules by appearances.

6.8.3 Extreme Obedience

Novelist Orson Scott Card (109) warned:

“Hyperobedience inevitably leads to the sin of pride... You can't help but be a little smug when you know that you tithe more, fast more thoroughly, read scriptures more often, sing hymns more constantly, obey more completely the Word of Wisdom, and, in short, serve God better than those who merely do as commanded and no more.”

President Marion G. Romney (110) tells of this incident which happened to him:

“I remember years ago when I was a bishop I had President Heber J. Grant talk to our ward. After the meeting I drove him home ... Standing by me, he put his arm over my shoulder and said: ‘My boy, you always keep your eye on the President of the Church and if he ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it.’ Then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, ‘But you don't need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray.’”

There is an old saying: “Catholics say the pope is infallible but don't really believe it; Mormons say the prophet is fallible but don't really believe it.”

Does "I was only following orders" work when we stand before God. If our leaders asked us to do something that we felt was wrong morally, doctrinally or spiritually, should we still do it? Will we be blessed for our obedience to a sinful request?

Do LDS leaders have a fear of members following their conscience? Recall the “Man of God from Judah’s” experiences in 1 Kings 13.

In contrast, Joseph Smith (111) taught:

"We have heard men who hold the priesthood remark that they would do anything they were told to do by those who preside over them -- even if they knew it was wrong. But such obedience as this is worse than folly to us. It is slavery in the extreme. The man who would thus willingly degrade himself should not claim a rank among intelligent beings until he turns from his folly.

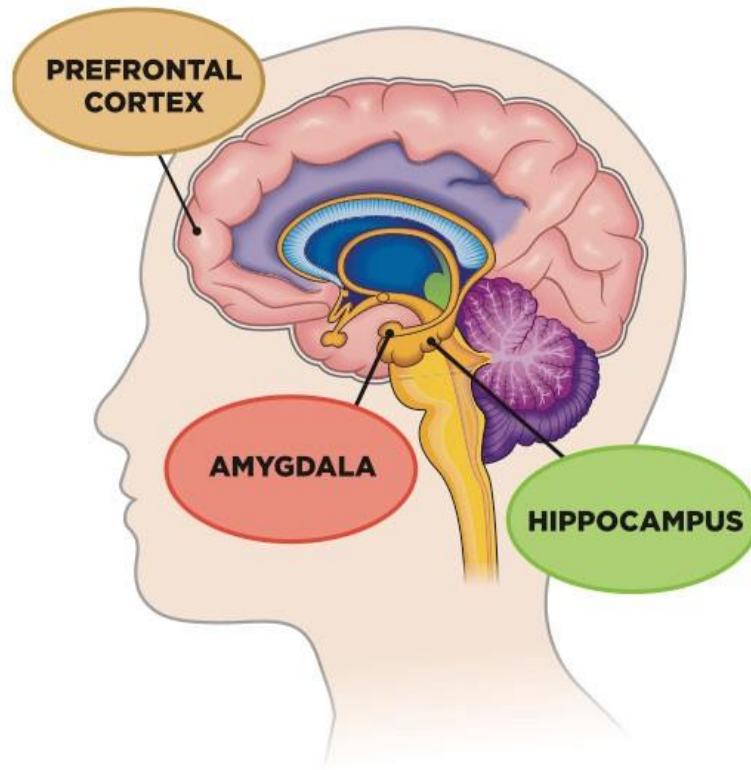
"A man of God would despise this idea. Others, in the extreme exercise of their almighty authority have taught that such obedience was necessary, and that no matter what the Saints were told to do by their presidents, they should do it without any questions.

"When Elders [leaders] of Israel will so far indulge in these extreme notions of obedience as to teach them to the people, it is generally because they [the leaders] have it in their hearts to do wrong themselves."

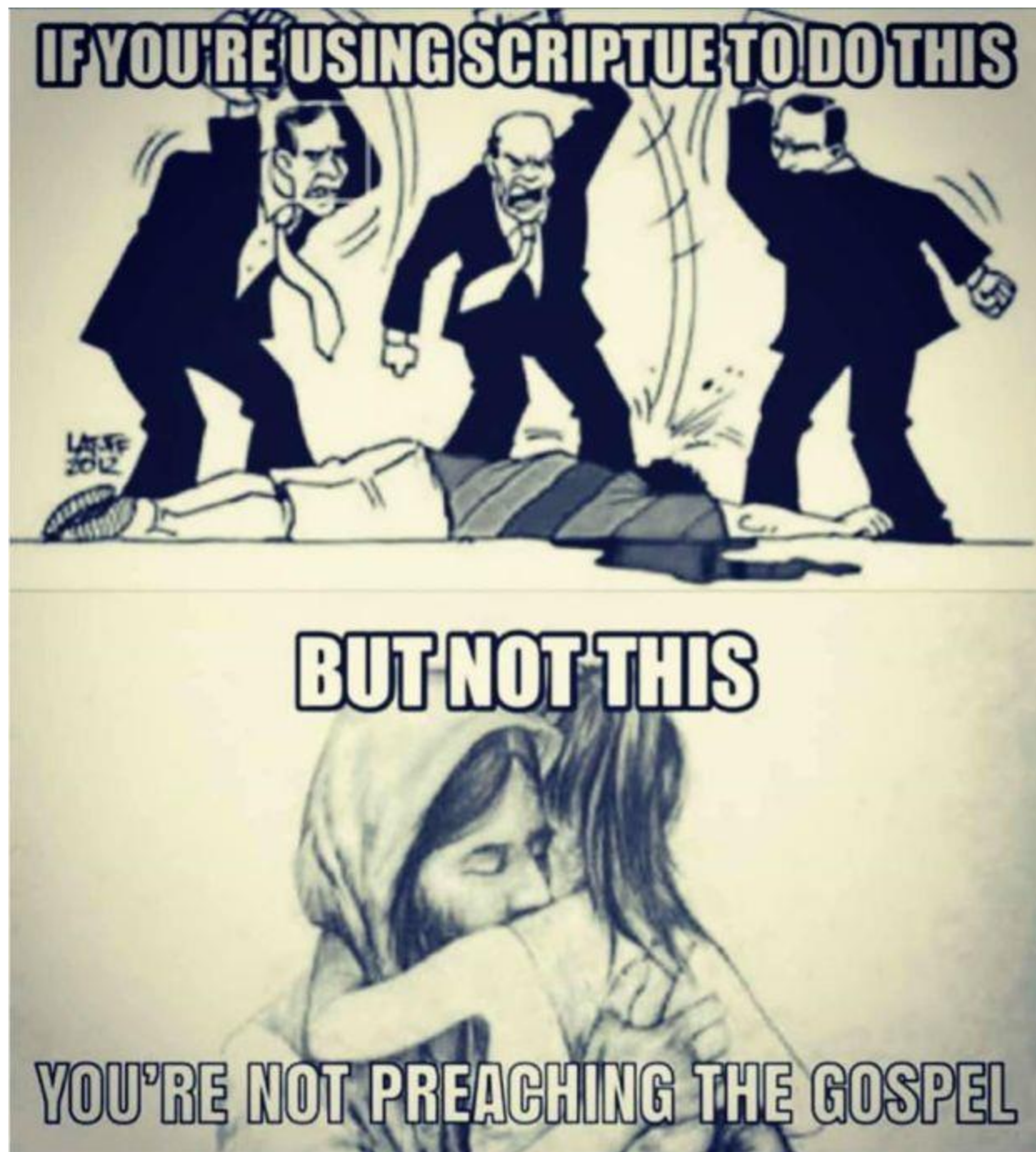
Whom should we trust?

O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm. (2 Nephi 4:34)

6.9 Unrighteous Dominion and Fear



Unrighteous dominion is a recurring subtheme throughout this paper. Its basis may be fear in many cases. It is the “fight mode” half of the “fight or flight mode.” An enraged leader’s brain activity is taken over by his amygdala. His prefrontal cortex shuts down, and he cannot show empathy. Or maybe he had an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex to begin with.



The following quotes provide additional insight.

Scott Stover wrote a Facebook post which he allowed me to share:

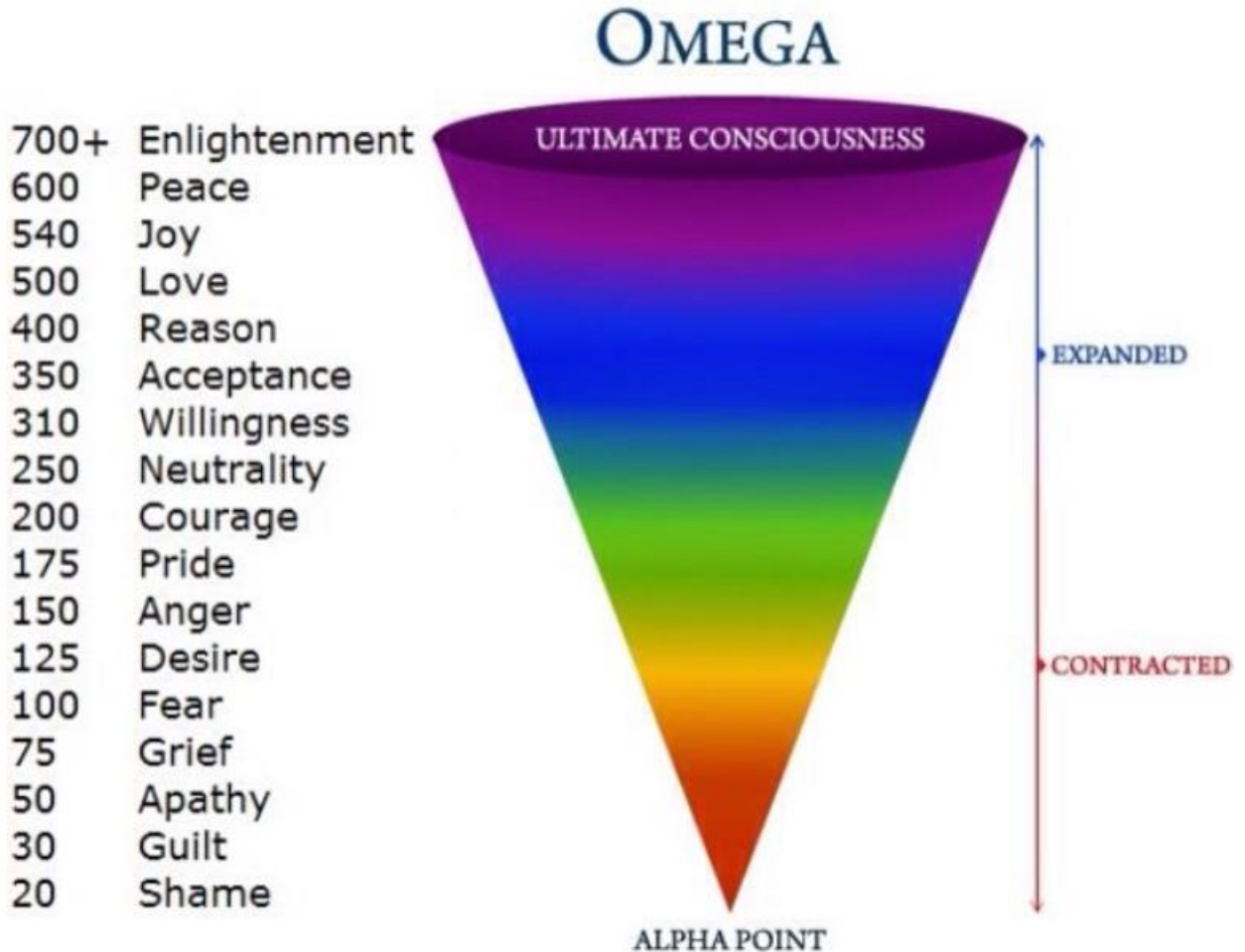
The Gospel of Jesus, that which He came to earth to teach, is so simple...

Love God, your neighbor, and yourself. This is the only commandment. The result is joy...even eternal life. It covers ALL the bases.

The one and only sin is to seek to manipulate and control others for your own benefit. The one and only tool for doing this is some sort of fear. There is no fear in love, so this action is the opposite of love. It covers ALL the bases.

Society has grossly distorted what He taught (love) and used it for the exact opposite (control). It is my desire to reclaim Jesus from those who would use His name to control others.

(end quote)



The Scale of consciousness was developed by Dr David R. Hawkins, MD, PhD. He developed this scale from 1 – 1000, representing logarithmic calibrations of human consciousness and the corresponding level of reality. The actual numbers themselves are insignificant, the chart represents the relationship between the consciousness levels. For example, we can see that ‘fear’ has a much lower vibration than ‘courage’. (112)

Over the years, how many church lessons, sermons, policies and worthiness interviews have been based in fear, guilt and shame?

President Hugh B. Brown (113) wrote:

Neither fear of consequence or any kind of coercion should ever be used to secure uniformity of thought in the church. People should express their problems and opinions and be unafraid to think without fear of ill consequences... We should be dauntless in our pursuit of truth and resist all demands for unthinking conformity.



Doctrine & Covenants, Section 121

[39] We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

[40] Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

[41] No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

[42] By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile

6.10 Women and the Priesthood



Whether women should be ordained to the priesthood has been a contentious issue for some members in recent years. (114), (115) Do male members feel any fear or insecurity regarding women having greater leadership roles?

Could women be allowed to again give blessings by the “laying on of hands” as they were permitted in early Church history? (116) Woman-to-woman blessings were especially common when the recipient was going into childbirth labor.

Could mothers be permitted to stand in the circle when their babies are being blessed?

Some incremental progress is being made given that women can now serve as witnesses for baptisms and temple sealings, as of October 2, 2019. (117)

Mormons need to be better at teaching and accepting that men in leadership positions are not God.

The truth is life is messy.

– Danna Hartline

6.11 Sexual Abuse Cases



There have been numerous allegations that LDS Church leaders have failed to report child abusers to police authorities, thereby allowing perpetrators to continue the abuse. (118), (119), (120), (121)

As an example, the LDS Church paid a three million dollar abuse settlement⁷ to Jeremiah Scott in 2001 for what his attorney described as an attempted cover-up of sexual abuse that Scott suffered from church member Franklin Curtis. The LDS Church denied legal liability in the case, and said it was settling the lawsuit based on "litigation economics" alone. (122)

Does "failure to report" constitute a cover-up, at least in a passive sense? Does God approve of the Church's actions to shield itself by "legal clergy exemptions" in this regard?

What is gained by concealing the sexual abuse by church leaders? Here are some plausible, fear-based reasons for concealing abuse cases or deflecting responsibility. (122)

1. Protect the “good family” name of the perpetrator and the reputation of the LDS Church
2. Downplay the concern that the choice of the perpetrator for that leadership position was not inspired after all
3. Because the LDS Church’s main law firm, Kirton McConkie, recommended covering-up
4. Limit legal and civil liabilities that would come about if the perpetrator confessed
5. Allow the perpetrator to privately repent so that he can be given future leadership callings

Here are some tools that church leaders have used to counsel victims, by advising them to:

1. Prayerfully consider whether he or she was partially responsible for the abuse, according to Elder Richard G. Scott (1928-2015) (123)
2. Forgive the predator and “move on”
3. Remember that some things that are true are not very useful, per President Boyd K. Packer (124)
4. Remember that it is wrong to criticize leaders of the Church, even if the criticism is true, per President Dallin H. Oaks (125), and that this includes leaders who may have failed to report abuse to police

Leaders may also shame the victim, accusing him or her of “false memory syndrome,” or use some other “gaslighting” technique.⁸



⁷ Is it fair to ask whether paying multimillion settlements in abuse cases a proper use of sacred tithing funds?

⁸ Inspired by the 1944 film “Gas Light,” where a husband systematically manipulates his wife in order to make her feel crazy, the term “Gaslighting” is now commonly used to describe behavior that is inherently manipulative.

Social activist Michaela Kennedy-Cuomo (126) wrote:

When trusted institutions take action to underplay the crime and silence the victim, the institution causes significant harm against the healing of the victim and proves that one can perpetrate harm without their being held accountable for the offense.

6.12 Law of Chasity Violation

President Marion G. Romney (1897 – 1988) gave the following story about his father’s counsel prior to Marion’s departure for his mission (127):

When you are released and return, we shall be glad to greet you and welcome you back into the family circle. But remember this, my son: we would rather come to this station and take your body off the train in a casket than to have you come home unclean, having lost your virtue.

Parents can motivate their children to be obedient using love, duty and fear. Leaders can do likewise. In what cases would fear be an effective tool? Can fear-based obedience lead to scrupulosity?

Would offering a missionary who became unclean a pathway to repentance through the atonement of Jesus Christ be more merciful than condemning him?

President Spencer W. Kimball (62) wrote in the Miracle of Forgiveness:

Also far-reaching is the effect of the loss of chastity. Once given or taken or stolen it can never be regained. Even in a forced contact such as rape or incest, the injured one is greatly outraged. If she has not cooperated and contributed to the foul deed, she is of course in a more favorable position. There is no condemnation where there is no voluntary participation. It is better to die in defending one’s virtue than to live having lost it without a struggle.

Kimball’s last phrase had a victim-blaming tone for women who do not fight back. (128)

In addition, kidnapping and rape victim Elizabeth Smart (129) recalled Church teachings on chastity:

You're like this stick of gum, and if you have sex before you're married, it's like someone chews up that piece of gum, and then when you're done, who wants a piece of gum that's already chewed up? No one.

While the intention of the lesson was to teach uplifting, eternal values, the overall message failed to communicate that she was a daughter of loving Heavenly Parents who would love and want her, no matter what.

Even after her rescue, Elizabeth Smart sat through another such lesson, in which she was told:

You're like this beautiful fence, and you hammer these nails in, and then every time you have sex with someone else, it's like you're hammering in another nail. And you can take them out, you can repent of them, but the holes are still there.

"The way we talk about [sex and abstinence] needs to change," Elizabeth Smart said. "People need to realize there is nothing that can detract from your worth. When it comes to rape and sexual violence and abuse, that can never detract from who you are."

6.13 Certainty

Members and leaders of the LDS Church have a need to establish and maintain succinct precise answers to life's most important questions, both spiritual and temporal. The phrase "I know beyond a shadow of a doubt" was used for decades by members who "bear their testimony" of the prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, etc.⁹

In contrast, American Theoretical Physicist Richard Feynman (1918-1988) is attributed to have said:¹⁰

I would rather have questions that can't be answered than answers that can't be questioned.

Peter Eric Enns (130), an American Biblical scholar and theologian, wrote:

Correct thinking provides a sense of certainty. Without it, we fear that faith is on life support at best, dead and buried at worst. And who wants a dead or dying faith? So this fear of losing a handle on certainty leads to a preoccupation with correct thinking, making sure familiar beliefs are defended and supported at all costs. How strongly do we hold on to the old ways of thinking? Just recall those history courses where we read about Christians killing other Christians over all sorts of disagreements about doctrines few can even articulate today. Or perhaps just think of a skirmish you've had at church over a sermon, Sunday-school lesson, or which candidate to vote into public office. Preoccupation with correct thinking. That's the deeper problem. It reduces the life of faith to sentry duty, a 24/7 task of pacing the ramparts and scanning the horizon to fend off incorrect thinking, in ourselves and others, too engrossed to come inside the halls and enjoy the banquet. A faith like that is stressful and tedious to maintain. Moving toward different ways of thinking, even just trying it on for a while to see how it fits, is perceived as a compromise to faith, or as giving up on faith altogether. But nothing could be further from the truth. Aligning faith in God and certainty about what we believe and needing to be right in order to maintain a healthy faith—these do not make for a healthy faith in God. In a nutshell, that is the problem. And that is what I mean by the "sin of certainty."

⁹ The usage of the "shadow of doubt" phrase has become less common in recent years as it has become a cliché.

¹⁰ Whether Feynman ever declared this verbatim is a matter of some uncertainty. But the attributed quote is representative of his sentiments as expressed in verifiable sources.

Do Church members fear uncertainty? If so, has this fear driven them to counterproductive responses, such as pushing out those members with doubts or unorthodox viewpoints? ¹¹

6.14 Polygamy or Plural Marriage

The topic of polygamy is difficult to write about due to its sketchy beginning in LDS Church history and its complex, controversial history. Was it needed to raise up “seed unto the Lord?” Or was it an opening of Pandora’s box?

First, I acknowledge that some people fervently deny that Joseph Smith ever had any wives besides Emma. Interested readers can readily perform Internet searches for books and blogs that take this position.

Joseph Smith declared:

“...What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.” (*History of the Church*, vol 6, p. 411)

Joseph Smith made this statement preaching from the stand to the Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo on Sunday May 26, 1844. If he did have other wives, then these marriages were kept secret. Resolving this conundrum is unnecessary in this document. The point is to consider the consequences of the widely perceived view that Smith was indeed the instigator of plural marriage in the “Latter Days.”

An official LDS Church essay (131) rationalizes:

When God commands a difficult task, He sometimes sends additional messengers to encourage His people to obey. Consistent with this pattern, Joseph told associates that an angel appeared to him three times between 1834 and 1842 and commanded him to proceed with plural marriage when he hesitated to move forward. During the third and final appearance, the angel came with a drawn sword, threatening Joseph with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment fully.

Fear was thus a prime motivation for plural marriage in early Church history. Another official LDS Church essay (132) notes:

The initial command to practice plural marriage came through Joseph Smith, the founding prophet and President of the Church. In 1890, President Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, which led to the end of plural marriage in the Church.

The winding down of polygamy actually took a number of years. But polygamy-induced fear still exists today.

¹¹ Accusing unconventional members as being “unfaithful to the Brethren” is one such tactic.

A male priesthood holder who is married and sealed to one wife may be sealed to another if he divorces the first wife or becomes a widower. A man may thus have two or more wives in the heavenly afterlife. But this possibility is repulsive to many women in the Church today.

Carol Lynn Pearson wrote a book “The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy: Haunting the Hearts and Heaven of Mormon Women and Men.” (133), (134), (135)

Pearson described the background of her book as:

The electrifying, secret whispers of the Prophet Joseph and the loud sermons of Brigham Young still echo through chapels, temples, homes, and hearts, assuring the Saints that we are not yet finished with polygamy.

Because of a survey I conducted that brought more than 8,000 responses from believing and formerly believing Mormon women and men, I can speak with assurance about the pain, confusion and distress that exist around this subject today. The words of the women who told me their stories are an echo of words we have been reading or hearing on the national scene.

“I feel — violated ... intimidated ... held hostage ... used ... threatened ... crazy ... terrified ... powerless ... shamed ... insulted ... devalued ... crushed ... voiceless ... inadequate ... insecure in my marriage ... seen as property, as eternal chattel ... in danger of being destroyed as was Emma Smith ... without dignity ... hopeless ... of lesser value than a man in God’s eyes ... soul sick.”

6.15 Spiritual Basis of Fear

Jesus Christ spent a portion of his mortal ministry healing people from unclean or evil spirits. An example from Mark 5 is:

- [1] And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.
- [2] And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,
- [3] Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:
- [4] Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.
- [5] And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.
- [6] But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,
- [7] And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.
- [8] For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.
- [9] And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.
- [10] And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.
- [11] Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.
- [12] And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

[13] And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

Jesus also cast seven evil spirits out of Mary Magdalene. (Mark 16:9)

Withstanding evil spirits is part of the mortal experience. C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) wrote about this in his fictional book *The Screwtape Letters*, which is often referred to by LDS Church leaders in General Conference meetings and in Church publications. Numerous examples can be found by typing *Screwtape* into the search box at: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/>

Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) wrote:

There are beings in the spiritual realms for whom anxiety and fear emanating from human beings offer welcome food. When humans have no anxiety and fear, then these creatures starve. People not yet sufficiently convinced of this statement could understand it to be meant comparatively only. But for those who are familiar with this phenomenon, it is a reality. If fear and anxiety radiates from people and they break out in panic, then these creatures find welcome nutrition and they become more and more powerful. These beings are hostile towards humanity.

Everything that feeds on negative feelings, on anxiety, fear and superstition, despair or doubt, are in reality hostile forces in supersensible worlds, launching cruel attacks on human beings, while they are being fed. Therefore, it is above all necessary to begin with that the person who enters the spiritual world overcomes fear, feelings of helplessness, despair and anxiety. But these are exactly the feelings that belong to contemporary culture and materialism; because it estranges people from the spiritual world, it is especially suited to evoke hopelessness and fear of the unknown in people, thereby calling up the above mentioned hostile forces against them.

These same unclean spirits may vex those on both sides of unrighteous dominion, causing a multiplication of fear. These tormenting spirits may also subtly infect groupthink, resulting in harmful policies which may be trauma-inducing to subordinates.

In extreme cases, this multiplication of fear may result in catastrophic events.

7 Hebrew Book of Mormon

7.1 Background

סֵפֶר מוֹרְמוֹן

The Book of Mormon, Hebrew & English

Another Testament of Yeshua the Messiah, Son of David, Son of God

Jesus the Messiah is the Torah made flesh and dwelt among us.

Synthesis of 3 Nephi 15:9 & John 1:14.

My interest in Hebrew developed over a period of many years. I had felt a melancholy emptiness in LDS Church meetings, where most of the membership is drawn from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. I have concluded that Ephraim and Manasseh without Judah is as the sound of one hand clapping. I began attending Torah study classes and Shabbat services at local Jewish temple. And I set a goal to read the Book of Mormon in Hebrew but soon discovered that the LDS Church does not offer one.

The Church briefly offered a Hebrew Book of Mormon in the early 1980s. But it was withdrawn so that the Church could establish its BYU Jerusalem Center, as a real or perceived requirement. Ultra-orthodox Jews at the time had protested that the BYU Center would be used for missionary work. So Church leaders made an agreement that no proselyting would be conducted in Israel.

The Book of Mormon teems with scriptures proclaiming that it must go forth unto the Jews, starting with its very title page.

And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations – Excerpt from Book of Mormon Title Page

Wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered among all nations; yea, and also Babylon shall be destroyed; wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered by other nations.

And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind–

and when that day shall come that they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time, the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they should believe these things. 2 Nephi 25:15-16

And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ . . . 2 Nephi 26:12

O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? 2 Nephi 29:5

And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. 2 Nephi 29:13

And it shall come to pass that the Jews which are scattered also shall begin to believe in Christ; and they shall begin to gather in upon the face of the land . . . 2 Nephi 30:7

I have charity for the Jew. 2 Nephi 33:8

And behold, they (The Book of Mormon teachings) shall go unto the Jews; and for this intent shall they go — that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant; Mormon 5:14

Elder Russell M. Nelson affirmed these scriptures in his October 2010 conference talk (136).

You can invite a friend to read the Book of Mormon. Explain that it is not a novel or a history book. It is another testament of Jesus Christ. Its very purpose is “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.”

Each exemplary follower of Jesus Christ can become an effective member missionary. Members and full-time missionaries may walk arm in arm in bringing the blessings of the gospel to cherished friends and neighbors. Many of them are of Israel, now being gathered as promised. This is all part of the preparation for the Second Coming of the Lord.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said “that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” The Book of Mormon teaches of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and is the instrument by which God will fulfill His ancient promise to gather scattered Israel in these latter days.

Elder Nelson was then a member of the “Quorum of the Twelve Apostles” in the LDS Church. He was sustained and set apart as the 17th president and prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Sunday, January 14, 2018.

Like Elder Nelson, I believe that the Book of Mormon can be the instrument for uniting the tribes of Israel including the Jews.

The prophet Isaiah wrote that the Ephraim and Judah must reunite. Isaiah 11:7 proclaims ". . . and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." The lion represents Judah, and the ox is Ephraim. This chapter is repeated in the Book of Mormon.

Members of the LDS Church can embrace their Hebraic roots in order to prepare their hearts and minds for this tribal reunion. They can begin by praying for peace in Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). They can also learn the Shema which Jesus himself recited in Mark 12:28-29.

Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Ehad
Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One

The theology of the Book of Mormon is richer in Hebrew than it is in English. As one example, the title Lord is stated as YHWH in the Hebrew Book of Mormon. YHWH is a form of the Hebrew Hayah (I AM) and is pronounced as Yahweh. The equivalent name in English is Jehovah. The Hebrew Book of Mormon should thus be as much value to LDS members as it is for the Jews.

7.2 Translation Beginning



Inspired by the scriptures, I determined that I would learn Hebrew, make a translation of the Book of Mormon, and publish my ongoing translation on one of my web pages. This project was utterly quixotic, and my Asperger's syndrome played a key role. I prayed to the Lord for His approval of this effort, but I only received a faint answer that "It was up to me."

I began the translation and posted my ongoing efforts in pdf format on my webpage and in a parallel on one of my blogs and added a YouTube video.

http://www.vibrationdata.com/Book_of_Mormon_Hebrew.htm

<https://hebrewbookofmormon.wordpress.com/>

<https://youtu.be/5eWkz8N71u0>

I put a disclaimer on each page that this was my own, amateur translation and was not endorsed by the LDS Church.

Disclaimer: This translation is being made by Tom Irvine, an Indigo child and amateur student of Hebrew. Tom Irvine is neither a prophet nor an apostle. This is a partial translation which is part of an ongoing effort. This translation is not endorsed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This document was last revised August 17, 2017. It should be used for prayerful, personal study only. Please provide feedback via Email: tom@irvinemail.org

7.3 Opposition

In the coming years, I was thrice harshly rebuked by Church Officials who called my stake president and bishop. They feared that my meager, obscure translation would “go viral” and lead the shutdown of BYU Jerusalem. To date, no Jew or Israeli has ever complained to me, and BYU-Jerusalem is still operational. The only complaints that I have received are from Church leaders and a few members.

As an Aspie, I took the Book Mormon’s Jewish scriptures literally, and was unwilling to defer to church policy and authority because I was hyper-focused on sharing this book’s truth with the Jews. But I paid a steep emotional toll. Somehow, I am still an active member of the LDS Church, but am staying for altruistic reasons following the example of the courageous pioneer Levi Savage (1820 – 1910).

Mr. Rob Jex, of the LDS Scripture Committee in Salt Lake City, called me on March 26, 2012 to inform me that LDS Church objects to my translation. I was living in Madison, Alabama at the time.

Mr. Jex requested that I “pull my website.” He was very animated. I listened without interjection until I finally asked, “Who are you?” He explained his title. Then I said, “I am sorry” and abruptly hung up. Mr. Jex had also tried to patch in some other church office building officials but was unsuccessful. I assume that it was these officials who put him up to calling me. He also called my bishop Lon Stevens.

That evening, I took a long walk and prayed about the situation. I received a very strong burning in my heart from the Holy Ghost that I should carry on. I cannot deny the Holy Ghost. Jews will be familiar with the Holy Ghost as the Still, Small Voice which inspired Elijah. (1 Kings 19:12)

Mr. Jex had claimed to be acting under the authority of Elder Quentin L. Cook. I tried repeatedly to call Elder Cook myself for the purpose of clarification and reconciliation but was unable to speak with him directly. I did speak with his secretary who was very skeptical that Elder Cook would have directed Mr. Jex to call me at all. I finally received a very brief message from Elder Cook via his secretary to “be at peace.” I interpreted this as a very polite request to stop bothering his secretary, rather than any direct response to the Hebrew Book of Mormon.

I was comforted to have the Holy Ghost's approval. But I really thought that I was being setup for excommunication through progressive discipline. I was well-aware of the fate of the "September Six" who were formally disciplined for their writings in 1993. (137)

Now it is better that a man should be judged of God than of man, for the judgments of God are always just, but the judgments of man are not always just. (Mosiah 29:12)

7.4 Warning from the Lord

Some months later, I was sitting in a dentist waiting room. There was a Bible on a table which I picked up. I said a silent prayer asking the Lord to direct me to a message, which I fully expected to me verses on love, service, forgiveness or some similar sweet words. I then opened the book to what would otherwise be a random place, which turned out to be 1 Kings 13. I was startled by the sober message of this chapter.



1 Kings 13

[1] And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

[2] And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

[3] And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.

[4] And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.

[5] The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

[6] And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before.

[7] And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.

[8] And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place:

[9] For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.

[10] So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.

[11] Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father.

[12] And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah.

[13] And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon,

[14] And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am.

[15] Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.

[16] And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place:

[17] For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.

[18] He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him.

[19] So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.

[20] And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back:

[21] And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee,

[22] But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

[23] And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back.

[24] And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase.

[25] And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt.

[26] And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him.

[27] And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him.

[28] And he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass.

[29] And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him.

[30] And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother!

[31] And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones:

[32] For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.

[33] After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.

[34] And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

The lion who killed the “Man of God of Judah” was not hungry. The lion did not eat the man. I realized that this a stern warning from the Lord that I must not allow any man to stop me from completing the translation even a prophet! The Lord can and does give direction, commandments and errands to people outside of LDS Church priesthood authority.

I did not make the translation for the LDS Church but rather for the House of Israel. The House of Israel is eternal. The LDS Church is dispensational. My membership in the LDS Church and in the House of Israel has created for me an unfortunate conflict of interest of sorts.

And the Holy Ghost giveth authority that I should speak these things, and deny them not.

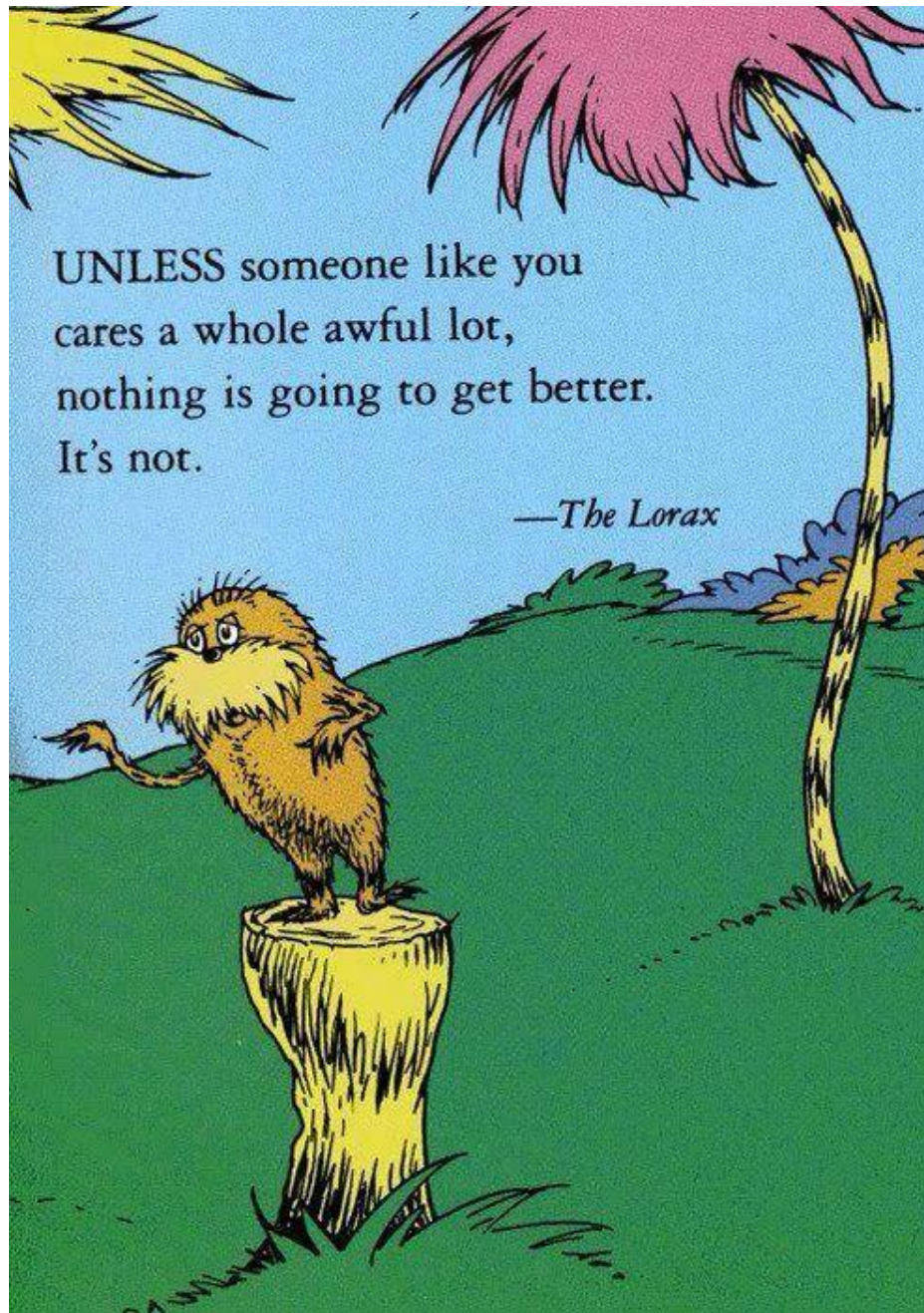
1 Nephi 10:22

Thou hast seen and heard all this; and will ye not declare them?

1 Nephi 20:6

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Acts 4:20



UNLESS someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better.
It's not.

—*The Lorax*

7.5 Further Opposition

Stake President Keith R. Draughon called me into his office in Madison, Alabama, on December 14, 2014. He sternly rebuked me for publishing online my ongoing Hebrew Book of Mormon translation. He claimed to be acting under the authority of Elder Bruce Allen Carlson of the Seventy, who was acting under authority of the First Presidency. So purportedly, the chastisement came from President Thomas S.

Monson. And I was not able to get in a word edgewise with President Draughon. His specific concern was the impact my translation could have on the BYU-Jerusalem Center.

The scriptures state "Come now, let us reason together." (Isaiah 1:18) But this is not to be so in such priesthood encounters.

I offered to resign my membership to save the Church embarrassment, but President Draughon did not respond to my overture. Perhaps this was my Abrahamic test whereby I was required to lay down my membership record on altar instead of my son. Had the President Draughon accepted my resignation, then the LDS Church would have had given up any influence or control over me. Even though I posted my translation on my website, I was not in Jerusalem passing out hardcopies. But I have never had any plans to do so.

The LDS Church stopped short of taking legal or disciplinary action against me beyond rebuke. To have excommunicated me for making and sharing this translation would have been an unconscionable travesty. But expelling me for disobeying the "Brethren" would have been straightforward.

The whole situation was depressing. I never sought martyrdom.

One of my concerns was that I was never able to ascertain how well President Draughon's harsh words represented President Monson in tone or substance. Could I talk with President Monson directly? No, the Church does not work that way. Any concerns are to be directed to local leaders.

Both President Draughon and Elder Carlson have since been released. Elder Carlson is a "General Authority Emeritus." And Rob Jex has transferred to a new position in the Church Office Building if I understand correctly.

As I prayed for further guidance from the Lord in light of this development, the Lord answered me using the Lorax as shown in the previous image.

7.6 Healing Experience

Nearly two years later, I had a sacred healing experience where unseen heavenly beings graciously administered strength to me to carry on November 1, 2016. This was during a Christ-centered energy healing experience in Mesa, Arizona.¹²

This healing came partly as result of my inner struggle as to whether I was worthy to have my temple recommend renewed given my noncompliance with direction from Priesthood authority up to and including President Monson.

I disclosed this noncompliance in both of my temple recommend interviews. But both priesthood leaders signed my recommend anyway. There seemed to be an implied understanding that these leaders were

¹² Alas, Elder M. Russel Ballard has warned against this healing modality. Who among us has the right to invalidate another person's healing experience?

aware that President Draughon and some intermediaries had maybe been over-zealous in rebuking me. And who knows what President Monson ever really thought about this?

As an aside, I have received Emails from LDS luminaries such as Daniel Rona, Richard Holzapfel and others who have taken a positive interest in my work. But I disclose to them that the LDS Church disapproves of my translation. And I rarely, if ever, hear from them again. I cannot blame them.

I forgive everyone. And I sustained President Monson whether he was angry with me or not.

Nephi wrote:

And now, if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he cannot instruct me, that I should build a ship? 1 Nephi 17:51

Then how is that the Lord could not instruct me to translate the Book of Mormon into Hebrew and offer it on my website?

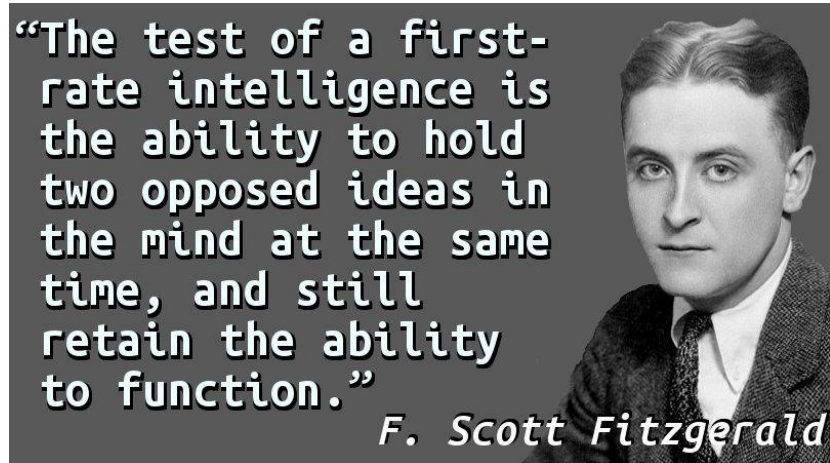
All through these experiences, I continued the translation work and completed the first draft on August 20, 2017, which is posted in the previously given links.

7.7 An Object Lesson as a Sign

I still ruminated about my unpleasant encounters with various priesthood leaders, including some incidents unrelated to the translation. Some of these pensive thoughts were also due to experiences with work bosses. I have lamented that I have been a lightning rod for the short-fused anger of authority figures. My Asperger's syndrome certainly has something to do with this as a cause, effect or both.

One morning the Lord gave me an unusual object lesson. I took a walk in our neighborhood in Madison, Alabama. A strong impression came to my mind that I should ask the Lord for a sign. I hesitated, but the sign came anyway. Two growling dogs charged at me from a backyard open gate. They ran circles around me. I spun round so that I could face the more aggressive of the two dogs. I was startled but not panicked. Then the two dogs ran back to their yard as fast as they had come. Perhaps the dogs had decided that they had already made their "statement." Or perhaps they realized that they would soon get in trouble from their owner for being outside of their yard. The message was clear. The behavior of the dogs mirrored the actions of certain humans toward me. The Lord wanted me to continue my walk even though this very unpleasant experience occurred, which I did.

7.8 More than One Right Answer



The disagreement I had with certain Church leaders over the translation was neither a binary nor proportional “zero sum game” even though the leaders may have regarded it as so. I will offer a plausible model in Section 9 showing how both they and I were “right” in our respective spheres. Cognitive dissonance can be overcome.

7.9 An Attempted Reconciliation



I waited five years. I wanted time to prove that my meager Book of Mormon translation into Hebrew would not result in the BYU Jerusalem shutdown. Still to this day, no Jew or Israeli has complained to me about my translation.

I also waited for President Draughon and Elder Carlson to be released from their respective positions. In addition, President Monson had passed away on January 2, 2018. This delay would at least partially lessen the power imbalance that existing between these leaders and myself.¹³

Over the years, I had heard numerous church lessons that we should meet with those who have hurt us to express our feelings to them and seek reconciliation. (Matthew 18:15-17) Peacemaking, forgiveness and reconciliation are prominent gospel teachings in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere throughout scripture.

Approaching former Stake President Draughon would have been futile because he would have swiftly asserted that he was only the messenger following direction from the priesthood chain-of-command.

I thus resolved to contact Elder Bruce A. Carlson, who was title was now "General Authority Emeritus." I did so on December 8, 2019, after the First Presidency Christmas Devotional broadcast. I located his phone number from some website which required a fee. I made this phone call from my home in Kent, Washington, where I now lived for employment.

This call took courage on my part because it would require that I pour my soul out in a vulnerable manner. There was great risk with some chance of a peacemaking reward. This was also a form of exposure therapy for me since I would be facing my fear of authority figures.

I reached Elder Carlson by phone. I told him the story of President Draughon's rebuking me under his (Elder Carlson's) direction, and I explained the disheartening effect that it had on me. Elder Carlson did not remember the incident at first, but he finally did. Elder Carlson was sympathetic to me at this point. He wanted to verify that I still went to church and took the sacrament. I assured him that I did. I felt relieved that he and I were making a peaceful breakthrough. Perhaps my overactive imagination had been making a mountain out of a molehill all these years.

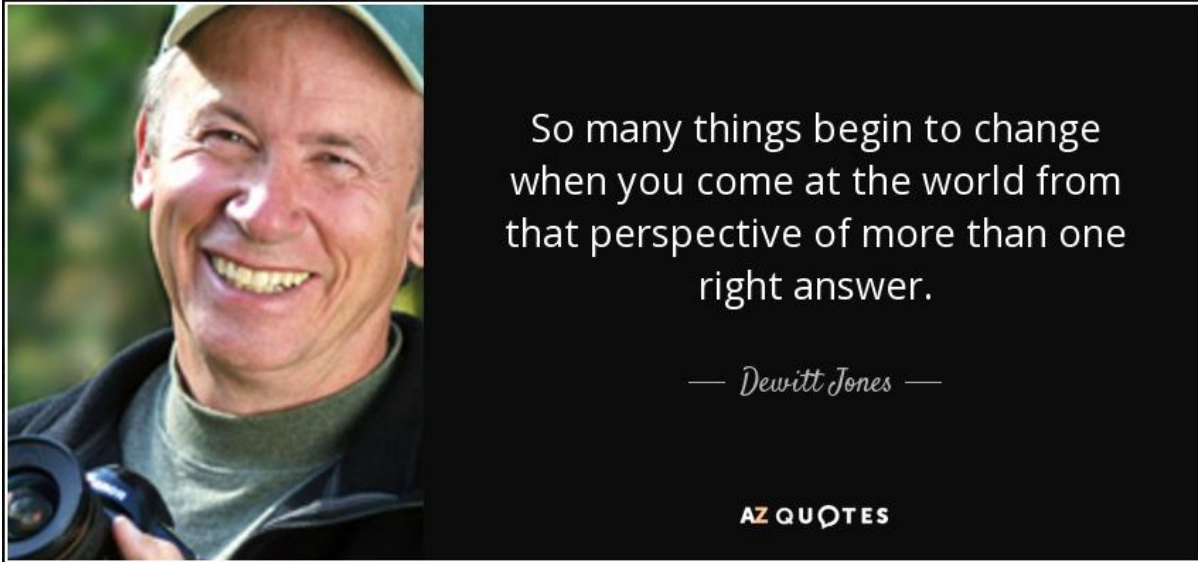
But Elder Carlson became angry with me when he realized that I had proceeded to finish the translation and had continued to share it on my website. He expressed the LDS Church's fear of upsetting hypersensitive relations with the Jews.

Elder Carlson insisted that I "follow the prophet."¹⁴ I replied that the Holy Ghost had directed me to do this work. I then ponderously asked him whether I should follow the Holy Ghost or the Prophet. He adamantly declared that I should obey the Prophet and not the Holy Ghost.

I asked Elder Carlson what did the Book of Mormon title page say (about the Jews and the Book of Mormon)? My attempt at the Socratic method was an epic failure. He snapped back "You know what it says!"

¹³ Power imbalances can be a stumbling block to conflict resolution. One indication of an imbalance is verbal bullying by the person with superior authority.

¹⁴ President Thomas S. Monson had passed away before I made this call to Elder Carlson. I have no idea what President Russell M. Nelson's position is on my translation.



Elder Carlson then abruptly ended the phone call although he did wish me peace at the end even though he also said that I was facing eternal damnation for disobeying church authority, or some such consequence.

Do LDS Church leaders fear members receiving and acting upon inspiration directly from the Holy Ghost?

The scriptural caution against pressuring someone to deny promptings from the Holy Spirit. From 2 Nephi 28:

[5] And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men.

[6] Behold, hearken ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work.

Moreover, the scriptures teach:

For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do. 2 Nephi 32:5

My attempt at some peaceful reconciliation with Elder Carlson was not realized. Hopefully, I will have another opportunity with him in the life hereafter. I do not hold a grudge against him. A few weeks later, I had an epiphany that both he and I were "right" in our respective spheres, as I discuss in Section 9.9.



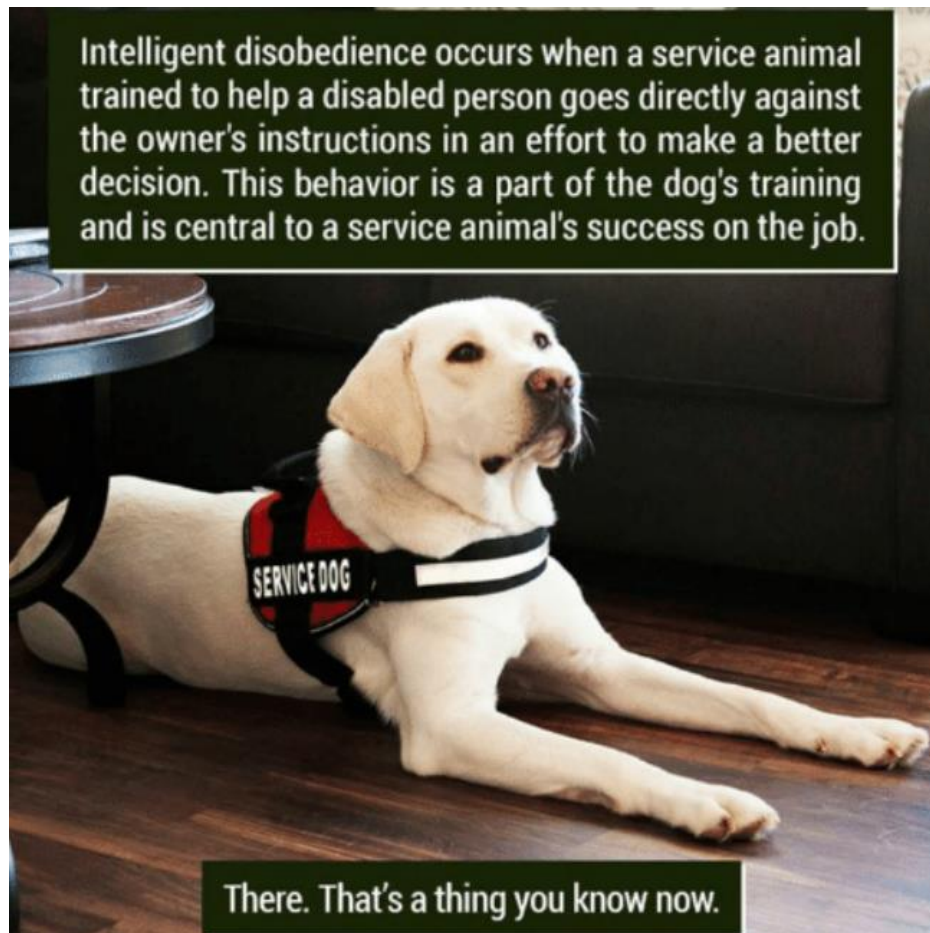
The collective consciousness of society moves and evolves through time, perhaps blinded with this idea that now we have it all figured out. And then there are the people who see things a little differently. The people who can see what other people do not see. And these are the heretics, the brave souls who drive the collective consciousness forward.

The world needs free thinkers to help it to evolve, no matter how hard it pushes back. In speaking your truth, you will likely meet resistance. There will be people who will feel threatened by what you have to say. Keep on saying it. In being true to who you are, there will be people who will be threatened by your courage...be who you are anyway.

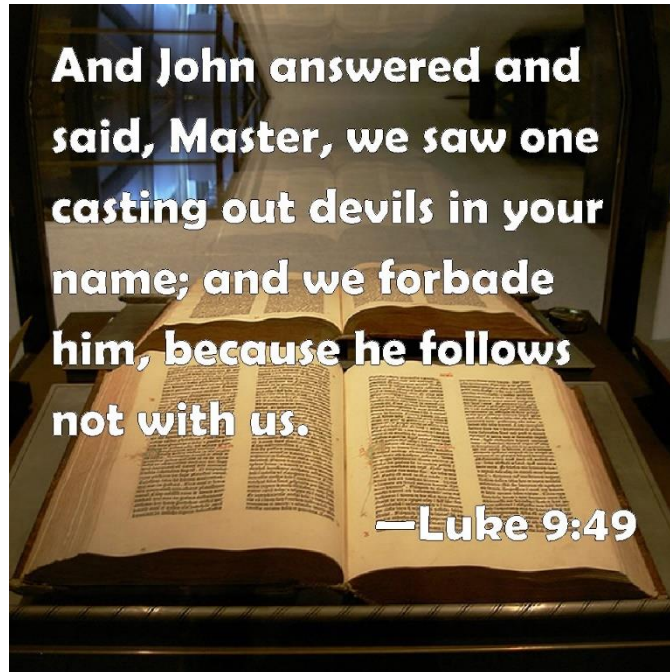
Have faith in who you are. Have faith in what you have to say. You are the salt of the earth, the breath of fresh air, and the balancing force of the world.

– Anna Thompson

7.10 Intelligent Disobedience



An example of intelligent disobedience occurs when a service dog refuses to lead a blind person across a street with oncoming traffic even though the master has commanded the dog to do so. The animal understands that this contradicts the learned behavior to respond to the owner's instructions. Instead it makes an alternative decision because the human is not in a position to decide safely.



The principle of intelligent disobedience is not taught in the LDS Church although it has some scriptural justification.

Luke 9:

[49] And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.

[50] And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Does truth derive from authority? Or does authority derive from truth?

Do what is right; let the consequence follow!

7.11 Some Inspiration from Nehemiah



I drew strength from the Old Testament's Nehemiah as I persevered through opposition in completing the translation.

Remember Nehemiah, who was charged with building a wall to protect Jerusalem. Some wanted him to come down and compromise his position, but Nehemiah refused. He was not intolerant of others; he simply explained, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease ... ?"

- Elder Robert D. Hales, Stand Strong in Holy Places, General Conference, April 2013

We live in times of great challenges and great opportunities. The Lord is seeking men like Nehemiah—faithful brethren who fulfill the oath and covenant of the priesthood. He seeks to enlist unfaltering souls who diligently go about the work of building the kingdom of God—those who, when faced with opposition and temptation, say in their hearts, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down."

- President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, We Are Doing a Great Work and Cannot Come Down General Conference, April 2009

7.12 William Tyndale



William Tyndale (1494 – 1536) was an English scholar who became a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation in the years leading up to his execution. He is well known for his translation of the Bible into English. Tyndale is a celebrated figure in the LDS Church and was featured in a 3-part BYU documentary series on the King James Bible called “Fires of Faith.”

On October 6, in the year 1536, a pitiful figure was led from a dungeon in Vilvorde Castle near Brussels, Belgium. For nearly a year and a half, the man had suffered isolation in a dark, damp cell. Now outside the castle wall, the prisoner was fastened to a post. He had time to utter aloud his final prayer, “Lord! open the king of England’s eyes,” and then he was strangled. Immediately, his body was burned at the stake. Who was this man, and what was the offense for which both political and ecclesiastical authorities had condemned him? His name was William Tyndale, and his crime was to have translated and published the Bible in English.

Tyndale’s work became the foundation for almost all future English translations of the Bible, most notably the King James Version.

- Elder D. Todd Christofferson, The Blessing of Scripture, General Conference, April 2010 (138)

Work was done centuries ago to prepare for our day. Ninety percent of the King James Bible is as translated by William Tyndale and John Wycliffe. We owe much to those early translators, those martyrs.

William Tyndale said, "I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than [the clergy]."

- President Boyd K. Packer, On Zion's Hill, General Conference, October 2005 (139)
-

One of my goals for translating the Book of Mormon into Hebrew was so that an Israeli farm boy in a Kibbutz could know more about this volume of scripture than any Institute Professor at BYU. I will not pretend to have Tyndale's stature or historical significance, but I feel a unique kinship with him.

7.13 More Scriptures

I am not an apostle, but I must also speak and write the things I have seen and heard in the Book of Mormon, even into Hebrew.

Acts 4

[18] And they (rulers, and elders, and scribes in Jerusalem) called them (Peter and John), and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

[19] Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

[20] For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

I must obey God rather than men.

Acts 5

[27] And when they had brought them (Peter and John), they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

[28] Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

[29] Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

7.14 The Underlying Reason for the Opposition

In the end, Elder Carlson's and other leaders' opposition toward me had little to do with the BYU Jerusalem Center or any real or imagined hypersensitive relations between the LDS Church and Jews.

The answer is found in a BYU document written a few years after I was born: A Survey of LDS Proselyting Efforts to the Jewish People Arnold H. Green, 1968. (140) There had been great interest among some local LDS Church leaders in Los Angeles in the 1950s to form bonds with the Jews in that area. This effort had some support from Apostle LeGrand Richards who had written a book "Israel! Do you Know?" Local leaders even created "lesson plans" to teach Jews about the gospel of Jesus Christ, the restoration of Christ's church through Joseph Smith, etc. A "Jewish Mission" was even organized in Los Angeles. Similar efforts were made in Ogden, Utah, New York City and Washington D.C.

This outreach effort was not solely for converting Jews to Mormonism. Some local LDS Church leaders encouraged members to visit Jewish Temples for Shabbat services, celebrate Jewish holidays, learn Jewish folk dances, etc., for fellowship and bridge building. This also enabled LDS members to embrace the Hebraic roots of their own faith.

The beginning of the end of this Jewish proselyting movement occurred in March 1959, when the LDS First Presidency directed that henceforth all proselyting efforts to Jews should be channeled through existing stake missionary organizations, thus discontinuing the experiment Jewish missions.

In addition, Sister Mildred Handy organized "The Yovail Dancers," a group of over sixty LDS youth in Pasadena, California who performed Israeli folk songs and dances and who won awards for their performances. The group was disbanded in 1964 by leaders who were concerned that the dancing was interfering with existing official church programs for these youth.

Arnold Green concluded:

Since 1964 there seems to have been a dearth of attempts organized by Mormons either to convert Jews or to win their friendship, although there have undoubtedly been some which have escaped the author's attention. Likewise, there have likely been other instances prior to 1964 wherein Latter-day Saints, individually or collectively, have tried to get their Jewish cousins to see the light. Those cited above however appear to be the major ones and they serve as an adequate basis for the following conclusion: the Mormon Church has neither officially nor on a large scale undertaken to carry its message to the Jewish people. The sporadic endeavors hitherto attempted have largely been initiated by individual Church members and, while most have been tolerated, none have been encouraged by the Church leaders for their part the "Brethren" apparently feel that the "times of the Gentiles" are lingering on and thus additional time will be required "to turn the hearts of the Jews unto the prophets, and the prophets unto the Jews . . ." (See Doctrine & Covenants 98:17)

(end quote)

Little has changed since 1964 regarding Green's conclusion. The LDS Church membership and leadership have been largely comprised of those from the tribe of Ephraim, with some also from the tribe of Manasseh.

Ephraim and Manasseh have historically been at odds with Judah.

Isaiah 9

[21] Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah.

But the scriptures give a plain imperative that Ephraim and Judah must unite.

Isaiah 11

[7] And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The lion and ox are symbols of Judah and Ephraim, respectively.

[12] And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

[13] The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

Ezekiel 37

[19] Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

[20] And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

[21] Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

[22] And will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.

Ezekiel 37 is about more than just combining scriptures. It also about uniting tribes of Israel.



Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!

Isaiah 28:1

And yet Ephraim remains a tribe of envy, pride and fear, regarding itself as the shining star of God's show.

Ephraim remains unwilling to allow Judah to share center stage. And this is the real reason for opposition to a Hebrew Book of Mormon, whether acknowledged or not.

O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people. 2 Nephi 29:5

When the Jews finally accept Jesus, Yeshua, as their Messiah, HaMashiach, they will not come to the Kingdom of God on Earth as demure church mice. Rather they will enter roaring like a lion, which is indeed the symbol of their tribe.

8 Conclusions

8.1 A Plea

The following Book of Mormon title page excerpt has application well beyond the quality of its text:

And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ.

This statement has been in my mind as I have faced my own struggles.

Church leaders make mistakes because they are “men of their time,” struggling with their own fears. Some are susceptible to groupthink and rigid dogmatism, lacking empathy.¹⁵ The groupthink may cause fears to be multiplied as the leaders go out to speak in various conferences.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. (1 Corinthians 13:8)

If prophecies may fail, then so may Church policies and those who issue them.

Rabbi Saadiah Gaon (882-942), in his Book of Beliefs and Opinions, explains that God deliberately chooses human prophets whose mortal nature is apparent, so that people will not ascribe the miracles they perform to themselves, but rather to God.

Please never let the harmful actions of others or misguided policies turn you away from God, regardless of your church membership status. Jesus loves you!

8.2 A Few Last Quotes on Fear

C.S. Lewis wrote:

Gratitude looks to the Past and love to the Present; fear, avarice, lust, and ambition look ahead.

¹⁵ Perhaps empathy is a spiritual gift that not everyone possesses.

President Uchtdorf taught: (43)

Fear rarely has the power to change our hearts, and it will never transform us into people who love what is right and who want to obey Heavenly Father.

Brent C. Satterfield PhD (141) , wrote the following in his book “Faith to Produce Miracles.”

For some, letting go of rigidity can take on a monumental fear. It becomes tantamount to releasing their faith. Their rigidity and their faith go hand in hand because their relationship to God is largely through fear. The process of releasing faith as an outgrowth of fear and stepping into faith purely out of love is an overwhelming task for many. This is because there is a belief that the only thing that keeps a person safely on the path to God is fear itself. Thus fear is seen as our ally rather than our enemy.

In the telestial world, fear is our ally. It is what we have learned to use to conquer our own natures. Nevertheless, for progression into the state of faith which is of power, fear cannot come with us. Where Christ has gone, the carnal/natural person cannot go. We must learn to release the patterns and limitations of this mortal and fallen world. Perfect love casts out all fear, and God is perfect love. Therefore, there is no fear in heaven.

8.3 Future Research

Danna Hartline asked some thoughtful questions in her thesis, as topics for future research:

1. How can church leaders better acknowledge, address, and validate those suffering within the Mormon Church?
2. How can church leaders help facilitate the healing of those who have stepped away from the Church due to church trauma?
3. Is that ethically their concern?
4. How can leaders help *prevent* trauma within the Mormon Church?
5. How can believing, active Church members offer help for those trying to stay in the religion while healing from church trauma?

I humbly add that recognizing fear as both a cause and effect of trauma is an important step in this prevention and healing process.



Tom Irvine facing the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam.

Elder Lynn G. Robbins gave a talk “Which Way do you Face” in General Conference, October 2014. (142)

Now please read the postscript on the following pages.

9 Postscript, Some Peacemaking Tools

9.1 Introduction

Some further tools and musings from my own experience are given in the following sections. These tools fall far short of being a panacea but may be useful for healing and reconciliation in certain situation.

How can we make peace with those authority figures who exercise real or imagined fear-based unrighteous dominion over us? Possible answers are explored in the following sections.



“Flower Power” is a photograph taken by American photographer Bernie Boston for the now-defunct The Washington Star newspaper. It was taken on October 21, 1967, during the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam's "March on The Pentagon." The photo shows a Vietnam War protester placing a carnation into the barrel of a rifle held by a soldier of the 503rd Military Police Battalion.

9.2 Contradictions

One key is to recognize that contradictions are inherently present in the gospel of Jesus Christ, perhaps as a test or an exercise in developing discernment. A few examples are given in the following table.

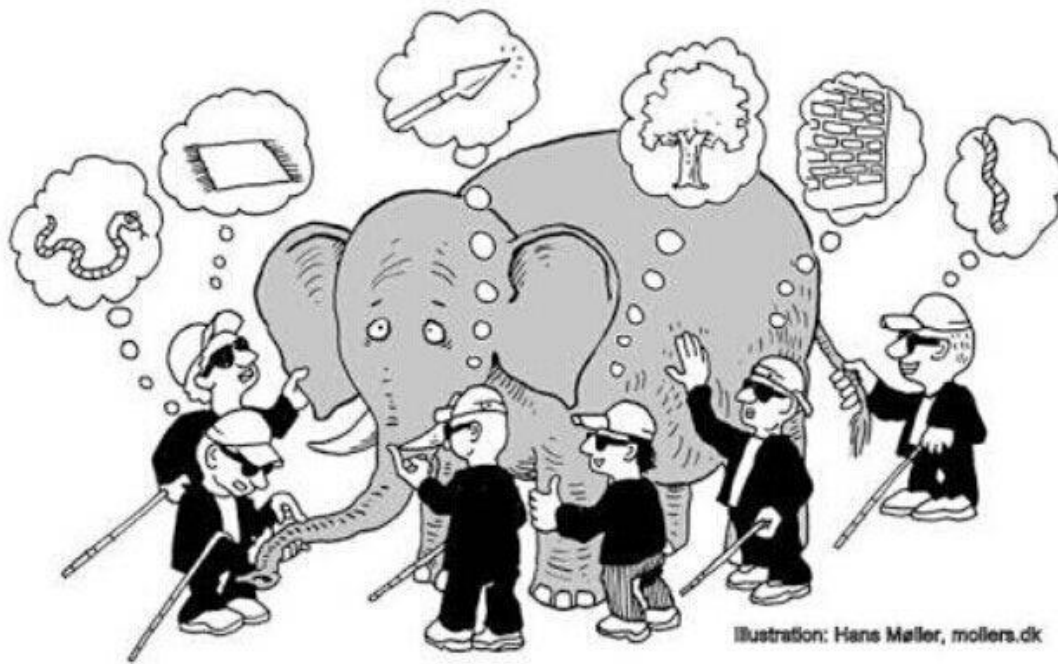
<p>Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John 14:27</p> <p>Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 26:52</p>	<p>I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Luke 12:49</p> <p>Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 10:34</p>
<p>A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John 13:34</p> <p>This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John 15:12</p>	<p>If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Luke 14:26</p>
<p>Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 19:19</p>	<p>For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 10:35</p>
<p>But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 5:44</p>	<p>But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Luke 19:27</p>
<p>Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 5:16</p>	<p>Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 6:1</p>



Additional contradictions examples could be included but are omitted for brevity. The problem is that as members and leaders of the LDS Church, we often latch on to one particular interpretation of a given contradictory polarity. Then we, the men, beat our chests like mountain gorillas as a sign of intimidation to show the superiority of our position according to our priesthood keys, ties to general authorities, learning, pioneer heritage, etc. Trust me, I have seen this behavior at church.

Every scripture that I give in this paper is selected according to my own bias. I freely admit that there are multiple possible meanings behind each of my included scriptures. And I confess that I have likely omitted some scriptures which may have contradicted the ones I have referred to. The same could be said regarding the general authority quotes that I have included.

Respecting the existence of multiple possible viewpoints is a key to resolving misunderstandings.



The elephant & the 6 blind men - multiple interpretations of one reality.

Credit : Hans Moller

9.3 Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden



There is a widely taught principle in the LDS Church that “Obedience is the first law of heaven.” This may have been an extrapolation from Alexander Pope’s quote that “Order is heaven’s first law.” But discernment must precede obedience, especially in the case of contradicting commandments.

The Lord placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The two were in a childlike state of innocence. Even so, the Lord gave them a dilemma. Note that Eve’s original name was “Woman.” She did not receive the name Eve until she and Adam were being cast out of the Garden per the Genesis account.

Genesis 1

[27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

[28] And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis 2

[15] And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

[16] And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

[17] But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

[20] And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

[21] And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

[22] And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

[23] And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

The “Serpent” then appears to the Woman by herself. He tempts her to eat of the fruit from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” There is an exegesis in the teachings of the LDS Church that the Serpent actually reasoned with the Woman. She came to realize that she must partake of the forbidden fruit in order to gain knowledge, progress and bear children. She thus partook. She then plead with Adam that he must also eat the fruit for these same reasons and reminded him that the Lord instructed them that they should remain together. And Adam did eat.

This action brought about the course of human history. The Lord appeared to Adam and the Woman to pronounce the consequences which included...

Genesis 3

[16] Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

[17] And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

[18] Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

[19] In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

It was on the verge of the pair being cast out of the Garden that the Woman became Eve.

[20] And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

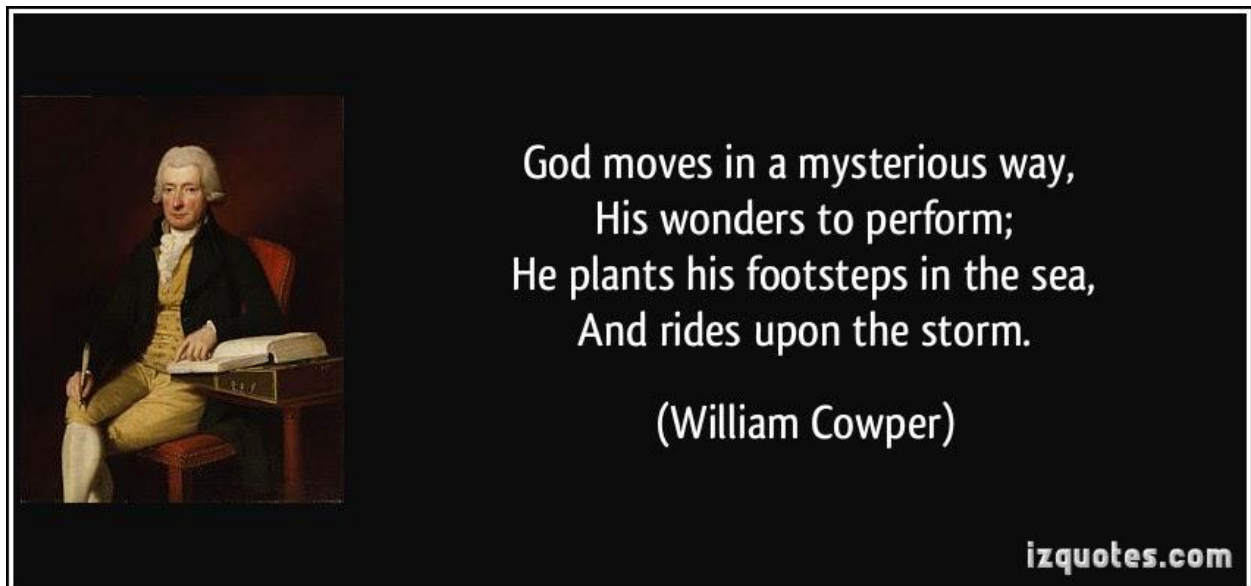
The simple explanation is that Adam and Eve did not have the power of procreation until they had eaten the forbidden fruit and were cast out of the Garden. In order to keep the law of “multiplying and replenishing the earth,” they had to break the law of abstaining from the forbidden fruit. Keeping the one commandment meant breaking the other.

Even in their childlike state, Adam and Eve had to develop and exercise reason and discernment. They had to differentiate between a higher and lesser law.

If God gave contradicting orders to the same couple, then certainly He could give a commandment to one man that diametrically opposed the imperative He gave to another. God's truth is eternal and unchanging. But its dimensions are far beyond man's comprehension. What appears as cognitive incongruity to man, is perfectly sensible to the Almighty.

If God gave a commandment to President Thomas S. Monson or Elder Bruce A. Carlson that there must be no publication of a Hebrew Book of Mormon, then there is no cognitive dissonance in His imperative to me to carry out and share my translation.

Sometimes there is more than one right answer.



The Lord said, "In my Father's house are many mansions." (John 14:2). Likewise, there are many spheres of God's truth.

[8] For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

[9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55

9.4 Listen and Try to Understand

Sister Chieko N. Okazaki (1926-2011) (143) taught:

We must have the courage to speak the truth of our own experience, our own hearts, our own minds, and our own spirits. And then we must have the charity to listen to others share the truths of their own experience. I think this process will take patience. We need to be patient as we find loving ways to say things that may sound hard to other people. We need to be patient as we listen to things that we may not agree with from others. We need to remember that we don't need to judge, we don't need to fix, we don't need to agree, and we definitely don't need to give advice. We just need to listen and try to understand.

9.5 What are you Thinking?

Elder W. Craig Zwick gave a talk "What are you Thinking?" at general conference, April 2014. Here are excerpts from his sermon. (144)

Forty-one years ago I climbed into the driver's seat of an 18-wheel semitruck with my beautiful wife, Jan, and our infant son, Scotty. We were taking a heavy load of construction materials across several states.

In those days there were no seat-belt restrictions or infant car seats. My wife held our precious son in her arms. Her comment "We sure are high off the ground" should have given me a clue about her feelings of apprehension.

As we made our descent over historic Donner Pass, a steep section of highway, the cab of the semi suddenly and unexpectedly filled with thick smoke. It was difficult to see, and we could hardly breathe.

With a heavy rig, brakes alone are not enough to rapidly decrease speed. Using the engine brakes and gearing down, I frantically attempted to stop.

Just as I was pulling to the side of the road, but before we had come to a full stop, my wife opened the door of the cab and jumped out with our baby in her arms. I watched helplessly as they tumbled in the dirt.

As soon as I had the semi stopped, I bolted from the smoking cab. With adrenaline pumping, I ran through the rocks and weeds and held them in my arms. Jan's forearms and elbows were battered and bleeding, but thankfully she and our son were both breathing. I just held them close as the dust settled there on the side of the highway.

As my heartbeat normalized and I caught my breath, I blurted out, "What in the world were you thinking? Do you know how dangerous that was? You could have been killed!"

She looked back at me, with tears running down her smoke-smudged cheeks, and said something that pierced my heart and still rings in my ears: "I was just trying to save our son."

I realized in that moment she thought the engine was on fire, fearing the truck would explode and we would die. I, however, knew it was an electrical failure—hazardous but not fatal. I looked at my precious wife, softly rubbing the head of our infant son, and wondered what kind of woman would do something so courageous.

This situation could have been as emotionally hazardous as our literal engine failure. Gratefully, after enduring the silent treatment for a reasonable amount of time, each of us believing the other person was at fault, we finally expressed the emotions that were churning beneath our heated outbursts. Shared feelings of love and fear for the other’s safety kept the hazardous incident from proving fatal to our cherished marriage.

When our truck cab filled with smoke, my wife acted in the bravest manner she could imagine to protect our son. I too acted as a protector when I questioned her choice. Shockingly, it did not matter who was more right. What mattered was listening to each other and understanding the other’s perspective.

The willingness to see through each other’s eyes will transform “corrupt communication” into “minister[ing] grace.” The Apostle Paul understood this, and on some level each of us can experience it too. It may not change or solve the problem, but the more important possibility may be whether ministering grace could change us.

I bear humble witness that we can “minister grace” through compassionate language when the cultivated gift of the Holy Ghost pierces our hearts with empathy for the feelings and context of others. It enables us to transform hazardous situations into holy places. I testify of a loving Savior who “looketh on [our] heart” and cares what we are thinking. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

(end quote)



The Apostle Paul warned:

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but [only] that which is good [and] edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Ephesians 4:29

I humbly submit that Elder Zwick has given us an important method for peacefully resolving many, if not most, of our disputes with one another.

9.6 Notes on Autism and Asperger's



Continuing with the theme of multiple spheres of truth from the previous section, people with autism and Asperger's exist in altogether different ones than neurotypical people. Indeed, a prominent online support group for people on "the spectrum" is called "Wrong Planet."

LDS members with Asperger's, or high functioning autism, may face difficult challenges particularly with respect to neurotypical, authoritarian priesthood leaders. In some cases, these challenges may be deeply traumatic for the Aspie.

People with Down syndrome are easy to recognize from their neck and facial characteristics. Their behavior then confirms this. Autistic people are less recognizable by their appearance, but their condition is manifested by their behavior. Almost all church leaders will make allowances for Down syndrome people. Some leaders may misunderstand autistic people, but most make allowances for them, as well.

On the other hand, Aspies may appear and act normally most of the time, but also have subtle differences which are perplexing for leaders expecting uniformity, conformity to policies, and respect for priesthood authority.

Aspies tend to regard truth as an independent, immutable entity, and they steadfastly calibrate their own moral compasses accordingly. Truth and logic go hand-in-hand in the Aspie world. Aspies can be very conscientious about following rational rules but disdain man-made policies which appear arbitrary or to compromise eternal principles. Aspies thus tend to have some mistrust of leaders, until those leaders have earned respect in the meritocracy sense.

Aspies are known for being direct, speaking their mind, and being honest and determined. They have little ability or interest in chit-chat. And they easily miss social cues and are oblivious to unwritten social rules and expectations.

Aspies, particularly children, tend to take things very literally. A child may run outside and look up to the sky for falling kittens and puppies if someone says, "It is raining cats and dogs." As Aspies mature, they begin to recognize nuances and figures of speech, but they still have an instinct to take statements as literal, including those in the scriptures.

Teachers, bosses, and police officers often scan people for non-verbal cues that indicate that someone is lying or hiding something, mainly because they deal with sneaky students, employees, and possible criminals. Church leaders may do likewise as they interview or interact with members. But Aspies have their own set of non-verbal characteristics which may include lack of eye contact and repetitive motions. Some Aspies may be straight-faced, showing almost no emotion until their feelings reach a critical mass resulting in a sensory overload meltdown. These traits can be very disconcerting to a neurotypical church leader.

Each of these characteristics may result in deep misunderstandings between the Aspie and his or her priesthood leaders. In some cases, the leader will sternly counsel the Aspie to behave in a more neurotypical manner.



Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917-2008) (145) taught:

Some are lost because they are different. They feel as though they don't belong. Perhaps because they are different, they find themselves slipping away from the flock. They may look, act, think, and speak differently than those around them and that sometimes causes them to assume they don't fit in. They conclude that they are not needed.

Tied to this misconception is the erroneous belief that all members of the Church should look, talk, and be alike. The Lord did not people the earth with a vibrant orchestra of personalities only to value the piccolos of the world. Every instrument is precious and adds to the complex beauty of the symphony. All of Heavenly Father's children are different in some degree, yet each has his own

beautiful sound that adds depth and richness to the whole. This variety of creation itself is a testament of how the Lord values all His children.



DID YOU KNOW...

THE MAORI WORD FOR AUTISM IS **“TAKIWATANGA”*** WHICH MEANS, **“IN HIS/HER OWN TIME AND SPACE.”**

SOURCE: ALTOGETHERAUTISM.ORG.NZ
*COINED BY KERI OPAI IN 2017

ARTC™
Autism Resource & Treatment Center

Keri Opai, a native Maori scholar in New Zealand, devised the word *takiwatanga*. (146) He said, "In my experience, people with autism tend to have their own timing, spacing, pacing and life-rhythm, so I interpreted autism as *takiwatanga*, meaning his or her own time and space." He devised this and other terms not only to fill gaps in the Maori vocabulary, but also to ensure that the terms are nonjudgmental.

Maori, the native language of New Zealand's original Polynesian inhabitants, is spoken by about 125,000 of the country's 561,000 people of Maori descent.

9.7 Fowler's Stage of Faith Development



spiritual growth

James W. Fowler III (1940 – 2015) was an American theologian who was Professor of Theology and Human Development at Emory University. He was director of both the Center for Research on Faith and Moral Development and the Center for Ethics until he retired in 2005. He was also a minister in the United Methodist Church. Fowler (1977) identified the following stages of spiritual growth.

Stage	Description
0	<p>Primal Undifferentiated Faith, 0-2 years</p> <p>This beginning stage is characterized by an early learning of the safety of their environment (i.e. warm, safe and secure vs. hurt, neglect and abuse). Basic ideas about God are usually picked up from parents.</p> <p>If consistent nurture is experienced, one will develop a sense of trust and safety about the universe and the divine. Conversely, negative experiences will cause one to develop distrust with the universe and the divine. Transition to the next stage begins with integration of thought and language which facilitates the use of symbols in speech and play.</p>
1	<p>Intuitive-Projective, 2-7 years</p> <p>Religion is learned mainly through experiences, stories, images, and the people that one comes in contact with. Understanding is very literal.</p>
2	<p>Mythic- Literal, 7-12 years</p> <p>Strong belief in the justice and reciprocity of the universe.</p>
3	<p>Synthetic-Conventional, 12+ years</p> <p>Characterized by conformity to authority and the religious development of a personal identity. Any conflicts with one's beliefs are ignored at this stage due to the fear of threat from inconsistencies.</p>

4	<p>Individual-Reflective, 21+ years</p> <p>A stage of angst and struggle. The individual takes personal responsibility for his or her beliefs and feelings. As one is able to reflect on one's own beliefs, there is an openness to a new complexity of faith, but this also increases the awareness of conflicts in one's belief.</p>
5	<p>Conjunctive, 35+ years</p> <p>Acknowledges paradox and transcendence relating reality behind the symbols of inherited systems. The individual resolves conflicts from previous stages by a complex understanding of a multidimensional, interdependent "truth" that cannot be explained by any particular statement. May return to sacred stories and symbols, but this time without being stuck in a theological box.</p>
6	<p>Universalizing, 45+</p> <p>The individual would treat any person with compassion as he or she views people as from a universal community and should be treated with universal principles of love and justice. Fear and worries are overcome.</p>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an institution is steadfastly Synthetic-Conventional, as reinforced by the correlation program, general conference talks, handbooks, policies, etc. Its historic culture is binary with an “us versus the world” mentality.

Members who progress to stages 5 or 6 may face painful challenges as they express their evolving faith and understanding to conventional members. There is a need for mutual respect, tolerance and peacemaking on all sides.

Scott R. Braithwaite (148), an associate psychology professor at Brigham Young University, said that “These stages of faith I think are helpful because they help us to realize that there’s not just one way to have faith.”

The Lord speaks to us according to our understanding and our stage of faith. So His words to those firmly in the Synthetic-Convention stage will be a Synthetic-Convention message. This sets up a potential misunderstanding when for example He gives Conjunctive inspiration to those in the Conjunctive stage which seemingly disagrees with His teachings to the Synthetic-Convention people.



For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding. (2 Nephi 31:3)

9.8 The Rabbi's Judgment

Rabbi Nilton Bonder (149) wrote that the Biblical expression "knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17) refers not to acquired consciousness of moral categories, but to an acquired access to the tension of contradictory propositions that exist in all Creation. From the eating of the forbidden fruit to this day, men and women have been faced the challenged of perceiving the ambiguities of reality.

Bonder then related the following folk story:

Two Jews sought out a rabbi to settle a dispute. Arriving at the rabbi's house, they found him studying, while his wife sat is a corner of the room. The rabbi inquired, "What is your complaint?"

The first plaintiff laid out his argument in convincing fashion, to which the rabbi reacted, "So *you* are right!" Then the rabbi turned to the second plaintiff: "And what do you have to say for yourself?"

The second plaintiff offered an equally eloquent argument. "So *you* are right," responded the rabbi.

Listening to their conversation, the rabbi's wife broke in: "My dear husband, may you live to be one hundred and twenty years, but for heaven's sake, how can they both be right?"

Stroking his beard, the rabbi concluded: "*You* are right, too!"

Richard Raskin (150) argues that this anecdote can be perceived as fitting into one of three categories:

1. Rolefiasco
2. Tactical Maneuver
3. Exemplary Deviance

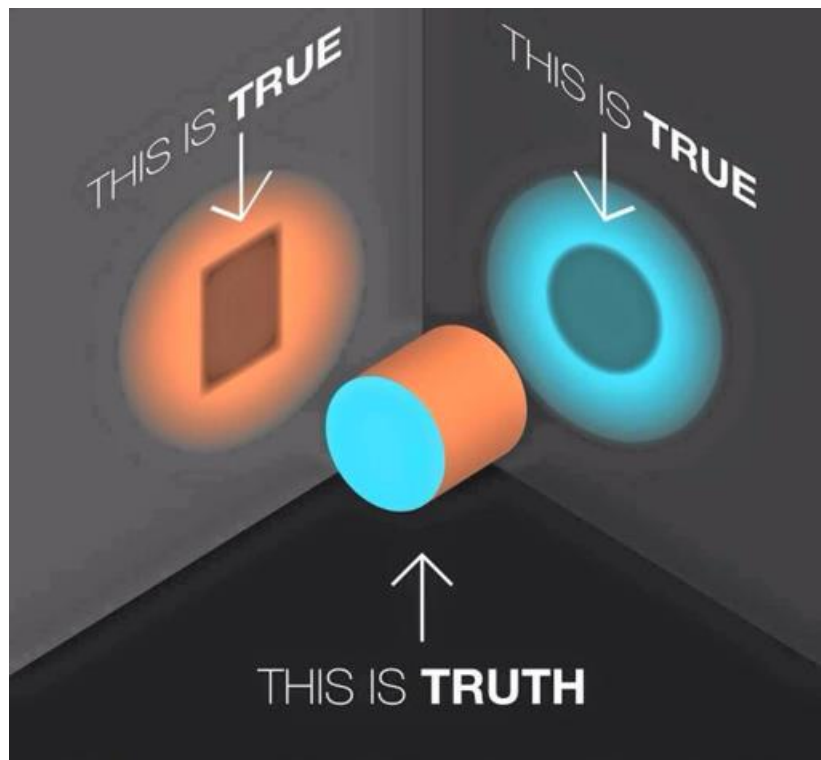
Rolefiasco is absurd wisdom with an exasperating set of answers.

Tactical Maneuver is diplomacy with both plaintiffs and his wife.

The third possibility is that the rabbi wants to ratify the possibility that "this one is right," "this one is right," and "this one is right." Validating the knowledge that is contained within ambiguity and in different brands of logic, this teaching is exemplary of the is more evident side of what is hidden.

One scientific theory argues that there are different ways of "being right." The ability to legitimize these various "rights" is a valuable tool in attaining knowledge.

9.9 Final Thoughts on Elder Bruce A. Carlson and Me



If the Word made Flesh and Dwelt among Us can give contradictory commandments to the first couple, then surely he could give a directive to one man that contradicts his imperative to another. And who is man to prescribe limits on what the Alpha and Omega can and cannot do?

Elder Carlson and his kind are clearly Stage 3, Synthetic-Conventional, on the Fowler scale. He and the others are “good soldiers” who understand and obey the chain of command. Note that Elder Carlson also had a distinguished military career in addition to serving as a general authority.

In contrast, I am Stage 5, Conjunctive, with an appreciation of paradoxes, contradictions and multidimensional truth.

Being at one stage does not give anyone any superiority or validity over anyone else, regardless of whether the two individuals are at the same or different levels. This is neither a contest nor a competition. We are all unique.

I ruminated about a future scene where Elder Carlson and the others who rebuked me would stand in the same heavenly courtroom as my accusers before the Lord who would then judge between us. Then the Lord would finally confirm unto them that what I did was right! I was not looking for revenge, only vindication.

Then I had an epiphany one night as I went to bed that the verdict would be the same as the Rabbi’s in the previous section.

Elder Carlson, flanked by President Draughon, Rob Jex, and possibly President Monson, would lay out their case against me. They would explain the hypersensitivity of relations between the Jews and the LDS Church. They would wax eloquently about priesthood keys and authority and order. They would explain that their concerns were prudent vigilance rather than hysterical fear. The Savior would then exclaim “You are right!” He would then praise them, “Well done good and faithful servants. Thou hast done as I commanded.”

Then I would plead my case, explaining how I was following scriptural imperatives, and recounting how the Holy Spirit confirmed that I was to make and share this translation as precursory work. The Redeemer of Israel would then announce “You are right too! Thou hast also done as I commanded.”

Whether a third party would question how both sides could be right was not part of my epiphany.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “as is” meets the needs of millions of active members, who are largely in Fowler’s Stage 3, Synthetic-Conventional. It is God’s “true Church” within its sphere notwithstanding the “mistakes of men” who were or are “men of their times.”

Again, this Book of Mormon title page excerpt has application well beyond the quality of its text:

And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ.

But the Almighty’s truth is too vast for any one sphere. The Good Shepherd still has “other sheep” and empowers “outsiders” to accomplish great works that Latter-days Saints cannot.

And the King of Kings sometimes gives important assignments to some of us on the periphery.



The Lord loves all his children and has prepared spheres of truth for all of them to grow and serve as they are able and willing.

The Man of Sorrows Acquainted with Grief has also prepared spheres of truth for those who have left the Church because they found its environment to be too toxic for their mental health and well-being.

9.10 Lessons from Lessons from Mystical and Near Death Experiences



One's church membership is seldom a point of discussion between the Son of God and those who have met him in Near Death Experiences (NDEs) according to numerous anecdotal reports. Rather the Prince of Peace is concerned how loving and kind the person has been.

Heaven is about deeds, not creeds. Therefore, persons of many cultures and religions form the societies of heaven.

- Emanuel Swedenborg, Swedish pluralistic-Christian theologian, scientist, philosopher and mystic

There are only two true religions - the religion of love and the religion of fear

*The more spiritually evolved one is, the more one sees truth in different religions;
one less spiritually evolved sees only differences.*

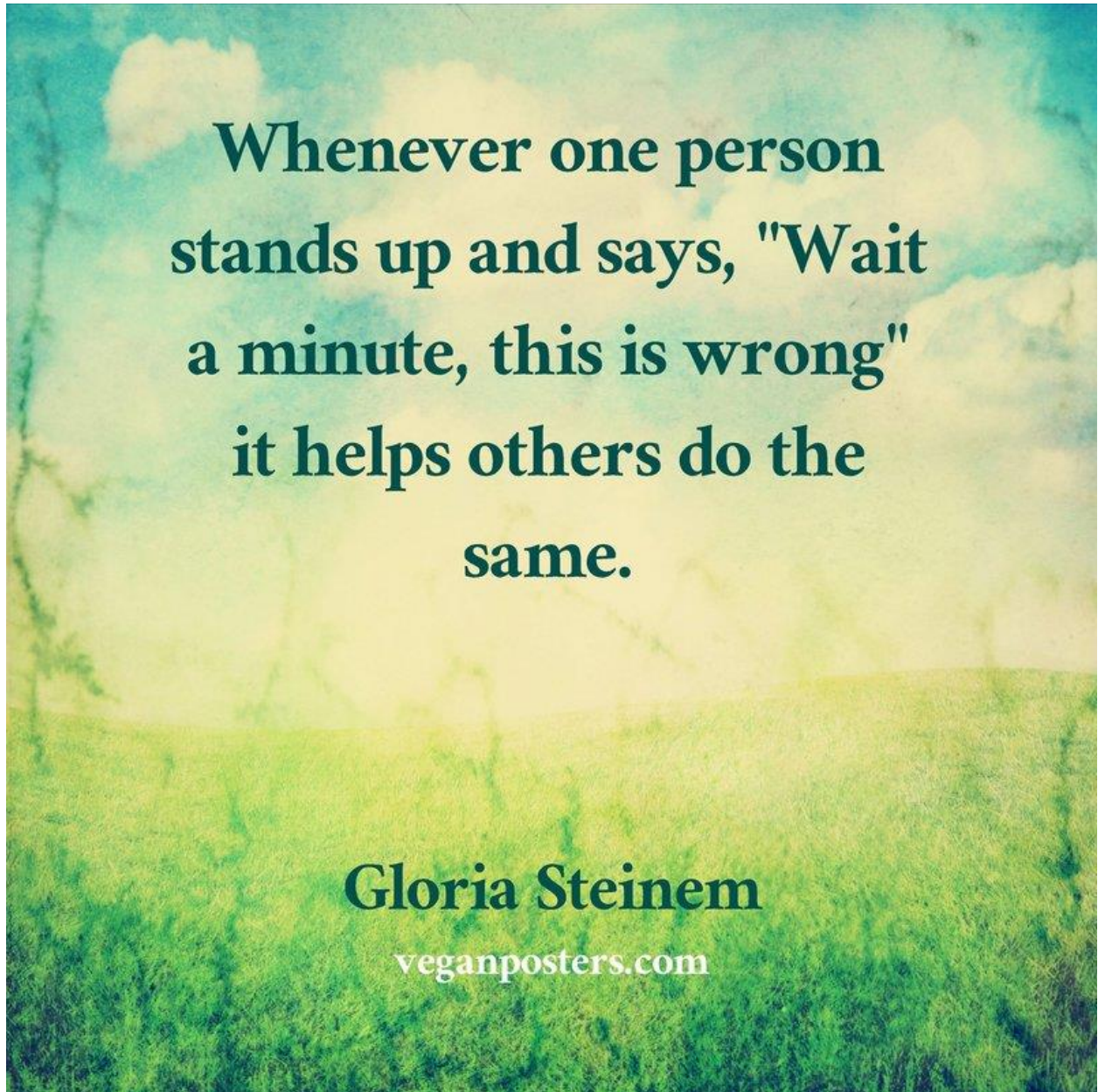
-Sandra Rogers, Suicide Survivor who Experienced an NDE



I wanted to know why there were so many churches in the world. Why didn't God give us only one church, one pure religion? The answer came to me with the purest of understanding. Each of us, I was told, is at a different level of spiritual development and understanding. Each person is therefore prepared for a different level of spiritual knowledge. All religions upon the Earth are necessary because there are people who need what they teach. People in one religion may not have a complete understanding of the Lord's gospel and never will have while in that religion. But that religion is used as a stepping stone to further knowledge. Each church fulfills spiritual needs that perhaps others cannot fill. No one church can fulfill everybody's needs at every level. As an individual raises his level of understanding about God and his own eternal progress, he might feel discontented with the teachings of his present church and seek a different philosophy or religion to fill that void. When this occurs he has reached another level of understanding and will long for further truth and knowledge, and for another opportunity to grow. And at every step of the way, these new opportunities to learn will be given.

Having received this knowledge, I knew that we have no right to criticize any church or religion in any way. They are all precious in his sight. Very special people with important missions have been placed in all countries, in all religions, in every station of life, that they might touch others. There is a fullness of the gospel, but most people will not attain it here. In order to grasp this truth, we need to listen to the Spirit and let go of our egos.

-Betty Eadie, Author who experienced an NDE (151)



You're a ghost driving a
meat-coated skeleton made
from stardust, riding a rock,
hurtling through space.

FEAR NOTHING.



“The first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb, when it comes, find us doing sensible and human things -- praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts -- not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs.”

~ C. S. LEWIS



**No man is an island,
Entire of itself.**

**Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.**

**As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thine own
Or of thine friend's were.
Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send not to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.**

— John Donne

www.TonyMayo.com



**You seriously
have no idea what
people are dealing with
in their personal life.
So just be nice, it's
that simple.**

NATASHA HELFER PARKER
@NHELPERPARKER

AS LONG AS WE
KEEP LIMITING
THE CONCEPTS
OF "GOD" AND
"ETERNITY"....
THE MORE
LIMITED WE
WILL BE IN
OUR CAPACITY
TO LOVE
OTHERS AND
ENJOY ALL
THAT IS GODLY
AND ETERNAL.





People often say that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder,' and I say that the most liberating thing about beauty is realizing that you are the beholder. This empowers us to find beauty in places where others have not dared to look, including inside ourselves.

— *Salma Hayek* —

AZ QUOTES

Doctrine and Covenants 165:3c

Be not consumed with concern about variety in human types and characteristics as you see them. Be passionately concerned about forming inclusive communities of love, oneness, and equality that reveal divine nature.



Community of Christ

"IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE SHARE OUR EXPERIENCES WITH OTHER PEOPLE. YOUR story WILL HEAL YOU AND YOUR story WILL HEAL SOMEBODY ELSE. WHEN YOU TELL YOUR story, YOU FREE YOURSELF AND GIVE OTHER PEOPLE PERMISSION TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR OWN story."

IYANLA VANSANT

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