

This is a very short summary of what I view as the 5 most important facts in understanding alternative models for LDS truth claims. To the best of my knowledge, every point made in this document is accepted as factual by both LDS and non-LDS scholars (please correct me if I am mistaken and I will alter the document).

1. The 3rd facsimile is incorrectly translated

Joseph Smith mis-translated [the characters above the heads of the figures](#) in the third facsimile.

Joseph refers to the characters in specific locations on facsimile 3 and he gives a translation. [Mormon and non-Mormon scholars agree](#) that “the characters on the fragments do not match the translation given in the book of Abraham.”

More:

- [The Joseph Smith Papyri](#) (youtube)
- [The Book of Abraham: Criticisms, Defenses, and Implications](#)
- [“Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham”](#) (lds.org)
- [A response to “Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham”](#) (Dr. Robert Ritner)

2. The Book of Mormon is packed with 19th century ideas

The well-known Mormon historian Richard Bushman [recently observed](#):

The Book of Mormon has a lot of nineteenth-century Protestant material in it, both in terms of theology and of wording. I am looking for an explanation of how and why it is there.

The Book of Mormon is similar to books of its time, and it addresses concerns specific to 1830 Protestant America. By any measure it contains an immense number ideas, phrases, and theology common to the early nineteenth century. Here are two examples of many:

- There are many points of similarity [with the sermons of Jonathon Edwards Jr. and Sr.](#)
- The book “The Late War”, by Gilbert Hunt, is [very similar to the Book of Mormon in style and content](#). It contains [extensive chiastic structures](#), like the Book of Mormon, and it also contains many [similar Hebraisms](#).

More:

- [Religious and Historical influences on the Book of Mormon](#) (Thomas Donofrio)
- [Anachronistic Christian Doctrine in the Book of Mormon](#)
- [Protestant material in the book of Mormon](#)
- [Anachronistic Biblical phrasing derived from the 19th century](#)
- [New Approaches to the Book of Mormon](#)

3. Spiritual confirmations are common to members of many religions

Members interpret spiritual experiences as a confirmation that their faith is true. But [these confirmations are common to members of many faiths](#) (e.g., Judaism, Catholicism, Seventh Day Adventist, Scientology, Islam, and Divine Truth), many of which hold central tenets that flatly contradict core LDS doctrines.

More:

- [Letter to Mormons and Apologists About Emotional Reasoning](#)
- [Testimony, Spiritual Experiences, and Truth: A Careful Examination](#)

4. LDS leaders taught that the Priesthood/Temple ban was divine

A [1949 First Presidency statement](#) declared:

The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord. . .

The [Lowry Nelson letters](#) and the [Stewart Udall letters](#) demonstrate the unwavering confidence Church leaders of that time had in the divinity of the Black Priesthood/Temple ban and the doctrines and teachings supporting it as well as the manner in which dissent may be treated in the Church.

More:

- [Race and the Priesthood](#)
- [Race and the Priesthood - Response to LDS.org](#)

5. Joseph Smith's polygamy violates ethical principles

In a [recent interview](#), the most faithful LDS apologists on polygamy recounted the feelings of reviewers of their recent book on the topic: “At the end of the book [the book reviewer] didn’t get a warm fuzzy feeling and that’s not really something we think we can deliver with this topic.” And “[a book reviewer says] Joseph Smith has still practiced polygamy. And that’s something that we can’t make go away. We wish that we could.”

- Joseph frequently misled others about practicing polygamy. Mormon apologist Brian Hales [agrees with Fawn Brody](#): “The denials of polygamy uttered by the Mormon leaders between 1835 and 1852, when it was finally admitted, are a remarkable series of evasions and circumlocutions involving all sorts of verbal gymnastics.” ([prevarication](#))

- Joseph was sealed twice to the Partridge sisters in order to hide the first sealing from Emma. (deception)
- Joseph promised a 14 year old girl—one who said “I hated polygamy with my heart”—that marrying him would “secure salvation and exaltation & that of your father’s household & all of your kindred”. (coercion)
- Joseph convinced a seven month pregnant mother, Zina Huntington (happily newlywed to Jacob Huntington) to marry him (Joseph) by saying that he had “put it off till an angel with a drawn sword stood by me and told me if I did not establish that principle [plurality of wives] upon the earth I would lose my position and my life.” (coercion)

More:

- Year of Polygamy (Lindsay Hansen Park)
- Mormon Polygamy Documents
- Joseph Smith’s Polygamy
- Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo
- Plural Marriage in Kirtland & Nauvoo - Response to LDS.org

Additional Reading

- The three-fold nature of the LDS Church: corporate, totalistic, and individual-growth

More Complete Analyses

- The Mormon Challenge (almost all LDS approved sources)
- For My Wife (almost all LDS approved sources)
- A Compilation of the Evidence Against the LDS Church
- Literally: Wrestling with historical curiosities in Mormonism
- An End to Cognitive Dissonance
- The CES Letter (the most famous compilation)
- The Pros and Cons of Mormonism (very objective)