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What is the Mormon Church really?

Mormon scriptures: a review and focus on Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price and the Book of Abraham

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Review of Scriptures & authority

- What we consider scripture → authority → teaching
- Historical Christian Church: One book—The Bible
 - Revelation progressive, but unchanging
 - Revelation closed with close of canon
- Mormon Church, many sources
 - *Book of Mormon*
 - *Doctrine and Covenants*
 - Smith's "translation" of the Bible
 - *Pearl of Great Price*
 - Continued revelations of "Prophets"
- Next week: Mormon view of God
- Time for questions today.....I hope.....

Reasons why our differing beliefs

- **Mormon view:**
- In the April 2008 General Conference LDS Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland explained the Mormon concept of continuing revelation: "The fact of the matter is that virtually every prophet of the Old and New Testament has **added scripture** to that received by his predecessors . . . If one revelation to one prophet in one moment of time is sufficient for all time, what justifies these many others? What justifies them was made clear by Jehovah Himself when He said to Moses, 'My works are without end, and . . . my words . . . never cease.'" . . . I testify that the heavens are open. . . . I testify that Thomas S. Monson is God's prophet, a modern apostle with the keys of the kingdom in his hands, a man upon whom I personally have seen the mantle fall. I testify that the presence of such authorized, prophetic voices and **ongoing canonized revelations** have been at the heart of the Christian message whenever the authorized ministry of Christ has been on the earth."
 - <http://www.utim.org/newsletters/no116.htm#jst>
- **Christian view:**
- Previous lessons on progressive truth, unchanging character of God
- I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. **Revelation 22:18-19**

Excellent resources

- Wikipedia, for definitions and images
- **Utah Lighthouse™ Ministry, founded by Jerald and Sandra Tanner:**
<http://www.utlm.org/>
 - Former Mormons, excellent website, not pretty or slick, quality CONTENT
 - See FAQs for great overview
 - Very lengthy topical file
 - Many of the lesson material today from it
- <http://www.answeringlds.org/>
- <http://mormonquotes.com>
 - See also Links section



Book of Mormon quick review

- The *Book of Mormon* contains the purported stories of three different groups who sailed to the Americas. The **Jaredites** came to the New World at the time of the tower of Babel. The **Mulekites** came to America from Jerusalem in 586 BC. The major group was the family of Lehi. Two of his sons, Nephi and Laman, became the leaders of the **Nephites** and **Lamanites**.
- The last battle between the two groups, in 421 AD, wiped out almost all of the Nephites. Moroni, the last surviving Nephite, buried the records of his civilization in the Hill Cumorah. Hundreds of years later, Joseph Smith was directed to the spot by Moroni (some records say Nephi), now a resurrected being who had become an angel. Smith then "translated" the record and published it in 1830 under the title "The Book of Mormon."
- Introductory text for potential converts, similar language and some content (almost 20% KJV quotes) to the Bible
- **NO support for historical, archeological, anthropological content**

DOC, Tanner's Description:

- While the Book of Mormon is the main book used in proselytizing, Mormonism's more unique doctrines are found in the *Doctrine and Covenants*—
- These include: pre-earth life [sec. 93], Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods [sec. 107], plural gods [sec. 121; 132], Heavenly Father having a body of flesh and bone [sec. 130], three levels of heaven [sec. 76], eternal marriage [sec. 131], polygamy and progression to godhood [sec. 132], baptism for the dead [sec. 124], and their dietary health code known as the Word of Wisdom [sec. 89].
- **On questions of doctrine, the *Doctrine and Covenants* takes precedent over both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.**

Example: see Kindle version

- **Section 130 Items of instruction given by Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Ramus, Illinois, April 2, 1843. HC 5:323–325.**
- 1–3, The Father and the Son may appear personally to men;
- 22–23, The Father and the Son have bodies of flesh and bones.
- **1 WHEN the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves.** 2 And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy. 3 John 14:23—The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man's heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false. 4 In answer to the question—Is not the reckoning of God's time, angel's time, prophet's time, and man's time, according to the planet on which they reside?

- 12 I prophesy, in the name of the Lord God, that the commencement of the difficulties which will cause much bloodshed previous to the coming of the Son of Man will be in South Carolina. 13 It may probably arise through the slave question. This a voice declared to me, while I was praying earnestly on the subject, December 25th, 1832. 14 I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice. . . . 15 Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; therefore let this suffice, and trouble me no more on this matter. 16 I was left thus, without being able to decide whether this coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing, or whether I should die and thus see his face. 17 I believe the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time. 22 **The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.**

A pattern of Joseph Smith

- To mix the Bible with his words
- Section 4 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, given in 1829, is a good example of the ability of Smith to weave various Bible phrases into his revelations. We have supplied the Bible verses that were used for the wording in Smith's revelation:
 - Now behold, a **marvelous work** is about to come forth among the children of men. [Isaiah 29:14] . . . For behold the **field is white already to harvest**; [John 4:35] and lo, he that **thrusteth in his sickle** [Revelation 14:15] with his might, the same **layeth up in store** [1 Timothy 6:19] that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; And **faith, hope, charity** [1 Corinthians 13:13] and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work. . . . **Ask** and ye shall **receive**; **knock** and **it shall be opened unto you**. [Matthew 7:8]
- **Smith's talent for interspersing biblical phrases from the King James Version in his revelations helped to give them an added air of authority.** From Tanner website
- No matter what the position, demeanor, or and voice of authority: ALWAYS examine CONTENT as measured by God's Word.

Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible

- Shortly after Smith published the Book of Mormon he began working on a corrected version of the Bible. Numerous sections of the *Doctrine and Covenants* refer to this work.
- The LDS Church only prints extracts from Smith's revision in the back of their Bible, KJV only
- However, Smith was not translating from any ancient text, but simply revising the verses as he felt led. Consequently, his work is not accepted by Bible scholars. One example of the way he expanded the text can be seen in John 1:1. The King James Version reads:
 - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
- Joseph Smith, however, changed this verse to read:
 - *In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. . .*

From Tanner website

Joseph Smith puts himself into the Bible

- Smith's expansion of chapter 50 of Genesis, where he inserts a prophecy about himself. In his expanded text we read:
 - *And again, a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; . . . And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; . . . and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father. . .*
- There is no textual evidence for his expansion of Genesis. . .

From Tanner website

Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible

- The *Book of Mormon* mixes the characters from the Old and New Testament, states that the Bible went from the Jews to the Gentiles in its purity, but was then changed. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls it is now clear that Smith's additions to the Old Testament are not supported by ancient manuscripts. Christianity was not taught in the Old Testament.
- Needless to say, there is no manuscript evidence for Smith's additions.
- They are not used in total by the Mormons, the KJV is used with some notes from his translation

Pearl of Great Price

- *The Pearl of Great Price* contains five sections:
- "Book of Moses"
- "Joseph Smith—Matthew"
 - The Book of Moses and Joseph Smith—Matthew are portions of the Book of Genesis and the Book of Matthew (respectively) from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. The Book of Moses also contains teachings and prophecies of Enoch, including his testimony of the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
- "Joseph Smith—History"
 - A first-person narrative of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s life before the founding of the church including an account of the First Vision and other heavenly visitations.
- "The Articles of Faith"
 - The Articles of Faith are a concise listing of thirteen fundamental doctrines of Mormonism composed by Joseph Smith
- "The Book of Abraham"
 - Most controversial

The one ancient Mormon writing that we have a manuscript for is the *Book of Abraham*



History of it

- The *Book of Abraham* is a 1835 work produced by Joseph Smith that he said was based on Egyptian papyri purchased from a traveling mummy exhibition. According to Smith, the book was "a translation of some ancient records ... purporting to be the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus". Smith's translation of the papyri describes a story of Abraham's early life, including a vision of the cosmos.
- The Book of Abraham papyri were thought lost in the 1871 Great Chicago Fire. However, in 1966 several fragments of the papyri were found in the archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and in the LDS Church archives.
- They are now referred to as the Joseph Smith Papyri. Upon examination by professional Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists, the papyri were found to bear no resemblance to Joseph Smith's interpretation, and were common Egyptian funerary texts, dating to about the first century BC.

Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 1—Joseph Smith's reconstructions

- These were reconstructed drawings in the Book of Abraham, made from the papyrus
- There are three of them
- This is the first one



Figures	Joseph Smith's Explanations ⁽¹⁾	Explanations by non-Mormon and Mormon Egyptologists ⁽²⁾ (based on New Kingdom Egypt)
1. The Angel of the Lord	"The Angel of the Lord"	"The god of Osiris (which should have a human head)"
Abraham kneeling upon an altar	"Abraham kneeling upon an altar"	"None compare to the lotus flower, which is the shape of a lot"
The obelisk placed by the obelisk priests, standing before the gods of Eibraham, Librah, Mahanokah, Anahk, and Pharaoh	"The obelisk placed by the obelisk priests, standing before the gods of Eibraham, Librah, Mahanokah, Anahk, and Pharaoh"	"The God Anahk (who should have a jackal's head) allowing the resurrection of Osiris"
The altar for sacrifice by the obelisk priests, standing before the gods of Eibraham, Librah, Mahanokah, Anahk, and Pharaoh	"The altar for sacrifice by the obelisk priests, standing before the gods of Eibraham, Librah, Mahanokah, Anahk, and Pharaoh"	"The sacred bull of Osiris"
The obelisk god of Eibraham	"The obelisk god of Eibraham"	"Carnyx (or perhaps Djehuti) with a falcon's head: one of the four gods of Heliopolis"
The obelisk god of Librah	"The obelisk god of Librah"	"Carnyx (or perhaps Djehuti) with a jackal's head: one of the four gods of Heliopolis"
The obelisk god of Mahanokah	"The obelisk god of Mahanokah"	"Carnyx (or perhaps Hopy with an ape's head: one of the four gods of Heliopolis"
The obelisk god of Pharaoh	"The obelisk god of Pharaoh"	"Carnyx (or perhaps Hopy with a human head: one of the four gods of Heliopolis"
The obelisk god of Pharaoh	"The obelisk god of Pharaoh"	"The sacred crocodile, symbolic of the god Sobek"
Abraham in Egypt	"Abraham in Egypt"	"None taken with offering"
Obelisk representing the pillars of heaven, as understood by the Egyptians	"Obelisk representing the pillars of heaven, as understood by the Egyptians"	"The sacred crocodile in Egyptian art"
Reckoning, signifying expense, or the payment for our souls, but in this case, in relation to the temple, the Egyptian meant it to signify Osiris, in his sign, or the heavens, according to the Hebrew word, Shemayim.	"Reckoning, signifying expense, or the payment for our souls, but in this case, in relation to the temple, the Egyptian meant it to signify Osiris, in his sign, or the heavens, according to the Hebrew word, Shemayim."	"Conventional representation of ground in Egyptian paintings (The word Shemayim is not Egyptian, and the Hebrew word is likely 'correct')"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Abraham

Facsimile 2: Joseph Smith Hypocephalus

- Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God. First in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time. The measurement according to celestial time, which celestial time signifies one day to a cubit. One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of this earth, which is called by the Egyptians Jah-oh-eh. Stands next to Kolob, called by the Egyptians Oliblish, which is the next grand governing creation near to the celestial or the place where God resides.
- Wikipedia has the correct translation



Abraham Facsimile 3

- **Explanation by Joseph Smith**
- Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven; with the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.
- King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head.
- Signifies Abraham in Egypt as given also in Figure 10 of Facsimile No. 1.
- Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, as written above the hand.
- Shulem, one of the king's principal waiters, as represented by the characters above his hand.
- Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.
- Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy, in the king's court.



Wikipedia has the correct translation

Some of many criticisms

- Egyptologist Dr. James H. Breasted, of the University of Chicago noted:
 - "... these three facsimiles of Egyptian documents in the 'Pearl of Great Price' depict the most common objects in the Mortuary religion of Egypt. Joseph Smith's interpretations of them as part of a unique revelation through Abraham, therefore, very clearly demonstrates that he was totally unacquainted with the significance of these documents and absolutely ignorant of the simplest facts of Egyptian writing and civilization."
- Dr. W.M. Flinders Petrie of London University wrote:
 - "It may be safely said that there is not one single word that is true in these explanations"
- Dr. A.H. Sayce, Oxford professor of Egyptology,
 - "It is difficult to deal seriously with Joseph Smith's impudent fraud.... Smith has turned the goddess [Isis in Facsimile No. 3] into a king and Osiris into Abraham."

Defense of the Book of Abraham

- *A number of theories have been presented in defense of the official LDS Church position that the work is a revelation from God, through Joseph Smith, which tells a true story of actual events from the life of Abraham, here are some of them:*
 - Joseph Smith interpreted the documents by revelation, rather than a standard "translation" of text from one language to another, in a process similar to his translation of the Bible.
 - The facsimiles in Egyptian funerary scrolls may have been a mnemonic device.
 - The facsimiles were not penned by Abraham, but by a Jewish redactor many centuries later.
 - The facsimiles represent a corrupted version of a document originally written by Abraham, with Joseph Smith giving the interpretation of the original document.
 - There are other messages and meanings embedded in the text along with the Egyptologist's translations that are unknown to us, and could be where Joseph Smith found his message and interpretation.
- From Tanner website
- None of these valid by any measure of scholarship or sense.

Conclusion

- What is truth?
 - For an extended lesson on it see:
 - Which way to God? . . . Topic #1: How do we know what's true? On <http://www.livelifebymthebook.com>
- **Truth is what corresponds to reality**
- Mormon scripture, basis for all their religion based on previous books, always changing
- Christian faith on unchanging truth in the Bible based on our unchanging God