

# The Mormon Cult

A Former  
Missionary  
Reveals the  
Secrets of  
Mormon  
Mind Control

Jack B. Worthy

# **The Mormon Cult**

**Jack B. Worthy**

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Summary: This book describes the author's work as a missionary in Hong Kong and his experience working in the cinema in Hong Kong after being excommunicated. The author presents an exposé of Mormonism's inherent racism and sexism as revealed in official church documents, including the Book of Mormon and proclamations by the church's "prophets."

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**Cult**, n. 1. A system of religious worship and ritual. 2. A religion or sect considered extremist or false.

—*The American Heritage Dictionary* (Third Edition)

“I suspect that there are few who know better the reality of Satan and his henchmen than does the full-time missionary, for the missionary is exposed to the fiery darts of the adversary, which come whistling overhead as he or she labors in the front lines in our war against sin.”

—Elder Carlos E. Asay of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, “Opposition to the Work of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, p. 67.

## Introduction

Almost everyone who lives in any of the civilized or semi-civilized countries of the modern world has encountered Mormon missionaries at one time or another. Always in pairs, young men about twenty years old, dressed in dark trousers, white shirt and tie, wearing a plastic name badge reading “Elder So and so—Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Or, less often, the missionaries are young women, in their early twenties. Always together, always pleasant and smiling, always wanting to give you a message about religion.

These missionaries seem to be everywhere, which is hardly surprising, since the LDS Church has over 50,000 of them working full time around the globe. This Mormon army is probably the largest modern religious proselytizing force in the world. It’s all the more amazing, then, that these young people are not paid by their church, but are financing their two-year missions with their own savings, or with money from their families back home.

Jack B. Worthy was one of these missionaries. In many ways, Jack’s story is typical, and in other ways quite atypical.

Good autobiographical writing allows the reader to experience someone else’s life, to live for a while in another’s skin. And Jack quickly allows the reader to “become” that devout Mormon boy who voluntarily gave up two years of his young adulthood to serve God and to save souls.

What is typical about Jack’s experience is the idealism and faith with which he embarked on his intensive mission in the service of God. Like all missionaries, he submitted himself to rigorous weeks of preliminary training at the LDS Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, where the regimen is as restrictive and severe as in almost any monastery. Since Jack had been called to a foreign mission, his training also included a crash course in a foreign language.

But what is not quite so typical about Jack’s mission experience is the effect it had on his life and on his relationship to his church.

Almost all former missionaries (generally called “returned missionaries” or “RMs”) agree that their two-year missions were fundamentally life chang-

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ing. Many return with a firm “testimony” of Mormonism, even though they may have had unspoken doubts before. Many insist that their missions were “the best two years of my life!” The mission experience, aside from its religious effects (both on the missionary and upon the converts), almost always enables the missionary to acquire skills that will later prove invaluable in post-mission life: self-confidence, speaking skills, sales techniques, self-discipline, planning, record keeping, and— for those who serve in foreign countries—the ability to speak another language. Mormon missionaries frequently become successful in business or government at least in part because of the skills and training acquired on their missions.

For Jack B. Worthy, however, his mission did not strengthen his testimony. One of the surprising facts about the missionary experience is that it can just as easily destroy a missionary's testimony as build it up. The church is aware of this, although its leaders do not admit it officially. In private, however, they acknowledge that two out of every five missionaries will eventually leave the church, largely because of their mission experience. Some missionaries even abandon their mission before completing it, in spite of tremendous pressure to finish it “honorably,” and despite the shame they must endure when they return home. Regardless of the real reason for not completing a mission, the folks back home generally assume that the missionary was sent home early because of some terrible sin (usually assumed to be sexual) committed while on the mission.

In this book, Jack takes us on his journey of awakening to the problems with his mission and his church. Facing up to reality, removing the rose-tinted spectacles, seeing the ugly facts, is rarely a pleasant experience for anyone. It is a necessary step to becoming an adult, however, and we see this process occurring in this honest young man.

Another fundamental change in Jack's life, which was a direct result of his mission, was that he ultimately chose to return to the site of his mission (Hong Kong) and settle there permanently. Whereas missionaries are under strict rules not to adapt to native customs or to participate in native culture (or even read local newspapers or watch local television), Jack, no longer a missionary, was no longer bound by those rules, and now had the task of integrating himself into the local culture. As someone of a completely different ethnicity and background, he faced a severe challenge, in spite of his mission-learned mastery of the language. But he succeeded.

One of the frequent effects of leaving the religion of one's youth— especially if it is an all-embracing, all-controlling religion, such as Mormonism

(as much a culture as a faith)—is the burning desire to write about one’s life-changing experience. In a way, that’s a form of self-therapy. Jack’s story is by no means the only account in print of a former Mormon missionary’s apostasy. But it is certainly one of the most interesting and most readable.

And that is partly because it is rather unusual. Jack’s life after his mission has by no means been ordinary. I have never had the opportunity to meet Jack personally, but we have been acquainted for a number of years through the Internet, mostly in connection with various ex-Mormon e-mail discussion groups. I have been able to share in the progress of this book over several years, and have enjoyed the many stories of his experiences as a student in Texas, as a resident of San Francisco’s Chinatown, and his later careers in Hong Kong, ranging from movie actor to equipment salesman.

Jack is presently a teacher at a Hong Kong school, and is working toward an advanced degree in Chinese Studies. He is completely integrated into Chinese life, married to a Chinese woman, and involved in raising a family. His observations about the similarities of Chinese culture and Mormon culture are especially insightful.

You are about to share a glimpse into a very interesting life.

—Richard Packham, Founder, Ex-Mormon Foundation

## Preface

The most common question people ask me is how I went from being a Mormon missionary to being irreligious. Until now, I never had a short answer to this question, because my transition was long and complex. But finally I have a brief response that even my publisher likes: read this book.

People often ask me what Mormons believe, and that usually leads to an interesting follow-up question: How could anyone believe *that*? My answer to these questions is the same: read this book.

On several occasions I have woken from nightmares, relieved to find out that my nightmare was just that—only a bad dream. In these dreams, I had committed a terrible act that would adversely affect the rest of my life. Each time after waking, I suddenly realized that I wouldn't suffer the terrible consequences of that act, because I had not actually committed it.

Only once in my life have I woken from a dream and thought, "Oh no! It really happened!" Rather than waking from a nightmare, I had woken from a pleasant dream into a nightmare. What I had forgotten while sleeping came flooding back when I awoke. I had committed an act that is, according to Mormon doctrine, second only to murder, and that entails a fate worse than death.

This book tells the story of my privileged birth, indoctrination, and missionary service. It tells of my sin and my excommunication from the Mormon Church for committing this sin—a sin for which I will pay, I am told, for all eternity. And if I understand that correctly, that is a long time.

There is a missionary story that clearly illustrates just how seriously Mormon culture judges my crime. In 1998 Elder Bradley Borden, a Mormon missionary, was stabbed by drunken Russians while serving his mission in Russia. Dale Borden, Bradley's father, was contacted by Church leaders after the incident. Brother Borden said that when he realized Church leaders were contacting him about his missionary son, he was "worried that [Bradley] had done something unworthy." In other words, Brother Borden was worried that his son Bradley had done what I did on my mission. Bradley hadn't, however, and Brother Borden was therefore relieved to hear that his son had instead

been stabbed in the stomach, suffering wounds to his upper intestines, liver and pancreas. Brother Borden quoted a Mormon cliché: “You see, we’d rather have [our son] come home in a pine box than do something unworthy.”<sup>1</sup>

Bradley’s companion, Elder José Manuel Mackintosh, was stabbed to death.

I was less fortunate; I returned home unharmed and unworthy.

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1. *The Arizona Republic*, October 19, 1998.

## **A Note on Terminology**

Some of the terms that follow are either unique to Mormonism or are used by Mormons in unique ways. The first time such terms appear, they are in **bold type**. The glossary at the back of the book provides definitions for all of them.

# The Indoctrination Process

“With very few exceptions, the religion which a man accepts is that of the community in which he lives, which makes it obvious that the influence of environment is what has led him to accept the religion in question.”

—Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not a Christian*

## The Mormon Show

*The Truman Show* was a movie about a television reality show of the same name: “The Truman Show.” The TV show was filmed inside a giant domed studio the size of a small town. The town inside the dome was an artificial world in which everything, including the ocean and the sky, was human made. Truman, the first person lucky enough to be legally owned by a corporation, was born inside the town, and was raised to believe that the human-made, corporate-owned studio he lived in was a real and natural world. Everyone in Truman’s life, his parents, his friends, and his associates, were all actors, each doing their part to create his false reality. Everyone except Truman knew that his life was a manufactured reality.

In an interview within the movie, the actor who played the part of Truman’s best friend in the television show said, “It’s all true. It’s all real. Nothing here is fake. Nothing you see on this show is fake. It’s merely controlled.” In a sense, that was true. Truman’s reality was entirely designed and controlled by humans, but because he believed in it, it was his reality and was therefore every bit as real to him as everyone else’s reality is to them.<sup>1</sup>

In another interview within the movie, the woman who played the part of Truman’s wife said that “The Truman Show” “is a lifestyle. It’s a noble life. It is . . . a truly blessed life.” She believed that doing her part, day in and day

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1. An obvious question of ethics arises: should anyone be granted the right to knowingly fabricate another’s reality? If so, who should have that right, and why? If not, who should stop them, and how? Obviously there are no easy answers to these questions when they refer to people’s own children.

out, to perpetuate Truman's belief in a fabricated reality was a noble, blessed calling.

Mormon indoctrination attempts to duplicate what was done in "The Truman Show." Rather than using a physical dome to separate Mormons from the outside world, The Mormon Show uses a psychological dome, locking Mormons safely inside a feeling-based reality. This feeling-based reality has to coexist alongside a contradictory fact-based reality, so keeping the dome impermeable is no easy task. **Apostle**<sup>2</sup> James E. Faust told **members** they must work harder at it, saying, "Somehow, some way, we must try harder to make our homes stronger so that they will stand as sanctuaries against the unwholesome, pervasive moral dry rot around us."<sup>3</sup>

Just like Truman's friends and family, the actors in The Mormon Show are trained to consciously create a false reality for children, both their own and the children of others, members and nonmembers alike. They are made to believe that doing so is "a noble [and] blessed life."

All cultures inculcate subjective views of the world in children. All cultures are therefore guilty of raising children to have inaccurate views of reality. However, this usually occurs unintentionally on a subconscious level.

Because all cultures see things differently, it should be obvious that no single culture has an entirely accurate view of reality. Unfortunately, however, people have a propensity to believe that one culture sees things much more clearly than the rest. They also believe that they were lucky enough to be born into the one and only superior culture. The anthropological term for this is ethnocentricity.

Mormon culture makes a very conscious effort to teach children to believe in a specific version of reality, and it warns them about the dangers of contrary beliefs and ideas. All cultures with beliefs and practices that differ greatly from Mormon culture are said to be wrong and misguided at best, and inspired by Satan at worst. Rather than trying to reduce children's natural tendency toward ethnocentricity, Mormonism strongly encourages it.

The Mormon Show uses a very effective three-step program of child indoctrination: first, indoctrinated parents are commanded to indoctrinate their children; second, parents and others who are responsible for teaching children are given detailed instructions on how to indoctrinate them; and

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2. The lexicon of Mormonism includes terms that are unfamiliar to outsiders, and it defines some familiar words differently (for example, Jews are "Gentiles"). All these terms (or phrases) are defined in the glossary at the back of the book.

3. James E. Faust, "The Greatest Challenge in the World—Good Parenting," *Ensign*, November 1990, p. 32.

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third, they carry out the indoctrination. Mormonism then adds one key ingredient that makes the whole process of indoctrination work very well: Mormons teach children that the truth of Mormonism is proved through feelings. This means that no evidence is required, and that no amount of conflicting empirical evidence could ever prove **the Church** to be false.

### The Lord Commands You to Indoctrinate Children

A key book of LDS scripture is called the *Doctrine and Covenants* (*D&C*), which, if you recall, is a collection of revelations given to Joseph Smith and other church leaders during Smith's time. To Mormons, the *D&C* is no less the word of God than is the Bible. In fact, the commandments from the Lord that are recorded in the *D&C* are more powerful and immediate than commandments recorded in the Bible because they are comparatively contemporary and are directed specifically at Mormons. In the *D&C*, God commands parents to indoctrinate their children to be Mormons: "But I [God] have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (*D&C* 93:40). And all Mormons clearly understand that there is only one source of "light and truth."

There is another verse in the *D&C* that is more explicit, and church leaders frequently quote it when they want to remind parents about God's commandment to indoctrinate their children. The verse says, "And again, inasmuch as parents . . . teach [their children] not to understand [church] doctrine . . . the sin be upon the heads of the parents" (*D&C* 68:25). In the April 1902 **General Conference**, Apostle Matthias F. Cowley quoted this verse, and in case anyone missed the point, he then explained that God meant it is "a sin to thus neglect the sons and daughters that have been committed to our care. . . . [I]t is the duty of every father and mother to . . . indoctrinate them in the principles of the **gospel**."<sup>4</sup>

**President** Spencer W. Kimball was the prophet when I was growing up. Regarding parents' duties to indoctrinate their children, he said, "We must be energetic and devoted in supporting the efforts of parents to build **testimonies** and faith in their children."<sup>5</sup> In a **fireside** talk given in San Salvador, El Salvador in January 1997, President Gordon B. Hinckley told members to

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4. Matthias F. Cowley, *Conference Report*, April 1902, p. 72.

5. Spencer W. Kimball, "Train Up a Child," *Ensign*, April 1978, p. 2.

“[r]ear [children] in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. God will hold those accountable who do not do so.” Being told to do something by a prophet of God is not the same as getting advice from a friend. It is the equivalent of being commanded directly by God.

Dwan J. Young used to be the Primary General President, heading the top tier of the organization called **Primary**. This organization is in charge of indoctrinating the Church's young children. Sister Young extended the commandment to teach children when she said, “we are all teachers of children—parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, priesthood leaders, **ward** members, neighbors.”<sup>6</sup> The obvious conclusion from this is that all Mormon adults are commanded by God to indoctrinate all children.

## How to Indoctrinate Children

Mormon parents who are indoctrinated themselves will naturally want to indoctrinate their children, while those who are not indoctrinated will do whatever they think is best, regardless of what Church leaders say. In other words, the commandment to indoctrinate one's children is most effective with the parents who are most likely to do it anyway. Therefore, church leaders focus heavily on keeping adults indoctrinated, and then supplement this with explicit instructions for indoctrinating children.

Child indoctrination is a frequent theme in the *Ensign*, one of the Church's official monthly magazines. The *Ensign* contains a regular feature called “Family Resource Guide,” which advertises reading and audio materials designed to help members indoctrinate their children. A Bible verse, Proverbs 22:6, heads this regular feature: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” That sums up the ultimate goal of the indoctrination: to ensure that children believe in Mormonism so strongly and so deeply that their belief can't be erased or replaced by other belief systems. The instructions for indoctrination include three parts:

1. Start when children are very young.
2. Frequently tell them you know the Church is true.
3. Get them to frequently say they know the Church is true.

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6. Dwan J. Young, “Teach Children the Gospel,” *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 78.

## Start When Children Are Very Young

**Brother** and **Sister** Hasler wrote an article for the *Ensign*, using a title inspired by Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a Child.” They said that their sixteen-year-old son told them he was now at an age where he had to learn things for himself. The Haslers reluctantly agreed, but they were content in the fact that years of indoctrination had permanently affected their son. They said:

Years of **family home evening**, family prayer, and scripture study [in short, years of indoctrination] had laid a foundation that he could reject, perhaps, but not ignore. Once truth is etched in the heart by the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, it becomes an integral part of a person and must be dealt with. A child so taught will never be the same!<sup>7</sup>

An important part of this lesson from the Haslers is that parents must indoctrinate their children starting when they are very young. Waiting until a child is sixteen is much too late. In fact, age is often cited as a critical factor. Thomas S. Monson,<sup>8</sup> former **First Counselor** in the Church's **First Presidency**, and current prophet, said, “The formative years of a child should be used for building a life firmly set in a foundation of the gospel.”<sup>9</sup> **Elder** Monson also warned parents against exposing children under eight to information that contradicts Mormon beliefs:

Dr. Glenn Doman, a prominent author and renowned scientist, reported a lifetime of research in the statement: “The newborn child is almost an exact duplicate of an empty computer, although superior to such a computer in almost every way . . . What is placed in the child's brain during the first eight years of his life is probably there to stay. If you put misinformation into his brain during this period, it is extremely difficult to erase it.” This evidence should provoke a renewal of commitment in every parent: “I must be about my Father's [God's] business.”<sup>10</sup>

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7. John W. and Marjorie E. Hasler, “Train Up a Child,” *Ensign*, April 1999, p. 50.

8. In January 2008, Monson succeeded President Gordon B. Hinckley as the LDS prophet.

9. Thomas S. Monson, “An Invitation to Exaltation,” *Tambuli*, August–September 1986, p. 2.

10. Thomas S. Monson, “Teach the Children,” *Ensign*, November 1997, p. 17.

In my case, I'm sure that my indoctrination into the Church began as soon as I was old enough to talk. I can't remember that far back, of course, but that is what happens to all children of active members. It's an integral part of growing up Mormon. An important part of the process consisted of adults in the church repeatedly telling me a standard list of specific "truths." My parents taught me to fully trust those adults and assured me that the things those adults told me were true. Parental indoctrination is firmly reinforced by indoctrination from other adults.

Sister Anne G. Wirthlin, First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency, referring to a group of two and three year olds, said, "In their pure, childlike faith, their spirits were receptive to the truths they were being taught."<sup>11</sup> She then went on to explain the method by which those LDS children's indoctrination would be ensured: "That experience will be repeated for them in their nursery class Sunday after Sunday." Adding some scientific backup, she quoted from an article entitled "Fertile Minds" from *Time* magazine: "From birth, a baby's brain cells proliferate wildly, making connections that may shape a lifetime of experience. The first three years are critical."<sup>12</sup>

Church leaders obviously understand that human cognitive development is a natural biological process that can be manipulated by controlling the environment in which children grow and develop. Predictably, however, the fact that children are such easy targets of indoctrination is interpreted as being part of Heavenly Father's plan. Sister Wirthlin rhetorically asked, "Is it surprising that our Father in Heaven fashioned the minds of very young children to be so capable of learning at a time when they need to be taught who they are and what they must do?" But Heavenly Father obviously didn't think it through, since it works equally well for all belief systems, and church leaders admit this every time they warn parents against exposing their children to any belief system other than Mormonism.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Anne G. Wirthlin, "Teaching our Children to Love the Scriptures," *Ensign*, May 1998, p. 9.

12. J. Madeleine Nash, "Fertile Minds," *Time*, February 3, 1997, p. 49.

13. On March 17, 1997, *Mother Jones* contributing writer Michael Krasny interviewed biologist Richard Dawkins, author of *The Selfish Gene*. The following excerpt from that interview gives an explanation quite different from Anne Wirthlin's as to why children are so gullible:

MK: You're known for your atheism and your comment that "religion is a virus." Are you more tolerant toward religion these days?

RD: No. I am often asked to explain as a biologist why religion has such a hold. The theory is this: When a child is young, for good Darwinian reasons, it would be valuable if the child  
(cont'd next page)

## Frequently Tell Them the Church Is True

Being successfully indoctrinated is referred to as “having a **testimony**,” which is a church member’s knowledge that the Church, and everything that goes along with it, is true. Adults are taught how to help their children gain their own personal testimonies. Apostle Loren C. Dunn told parents they should:

. . . bear their testimonies to their children in the home—actually express to your children exactly what it is about the Church you know to be true. If we think our children know these things just because they live in the same house with us, we are mistaken. We need to say the words so our families can feel the same spirit of testimony that we have felt.<sup>14</sup>

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believed everything it’s told. A child needs to learn a language, it needs to learn the social customs of its people, it needs to learn all sorts of rules—like don’t put your finger in the fire, and don’t pick up snakes, and don’t eat red berries. There are lots of things that for good survival reasons a child needs to learn.

So it’s understandable that Darwinian natural selection would have built into the child’s brain the rule of thumb, “Be fantastically gullible; believe everything you’re told by your elders and betters.”

That’s a good rule, and it works. But any rule that says “Believe everything you’re told” is automatically going to be vulnerable to parasitization. Computers, for example, are vulnerable to parasitization because they believe all they’re told. If you tell them in the right programming language, they’ll do it. Computer viruses work by somebody writing a program that says, “Duplicate me and, while you’re at it, erase this entire disk.”

My point is that the survival mechanism that makes children’s brains believe what they’re told—for good reason—is automatically vulnerable to parasitic codes such as “You must believe in the great juju in the sky,” or “You must kneel down and face east and pray five times a day.” These codes are then passed down through generations. And there’s no obvious reason why it should stop.

There’s an additional factor in the virus theory, which is that those viruses that are good at surviving will be the ones that are more likely to survive. So, if the virus says, “If you don’t believe in this you will go to hell when you die,” that’s a pretty potent threat, especially to a child. Or, if it says, “When you become a little bit older you will meet people who will tell you the opposite of this, and they will have remarkably plausible arguments and they’ll have lots of what they’ll call evidence on their side and you’ll be really tempted to believe it, but the more tempted you are, the more that’s just Satan getting at you.” This is exactly what many creationists in this country have been primed with.

14. Loren C. Dunn, “How to Gain a Testimony,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 84.

The December 1989 *Ensign* included an article titled, “How to Help Our Children Gain a Testimony.” It said parents need to tell their children that they know the Church is true. It said, “No matter what their ages, our children need to hear our testimonies and faith-promoting stories.” It suggested that after Church **meetings** parents “can testify of the truthfulness of what [they] have heard and felt.” Children should then be taught to say these things themselves at home. Once they “begin to feel comfortable expressing themselves at home, they can be encouraged to bear testimony in **fast and testimony meeting**.”

### Get Them to Frequently Say That the Church Is True

The core steps for building testimonies in children are quite simple: parents bear their testimonies to their children and then instruct their children to do the same, first privately, then publicly. Elder Carl B. Cook of the Quorum of the **Seventy** quoted Apostle Henry B. Eyring, who said, “First we can teach some sacred truth. Then, we can testify that we know what we have taught is true.”<sup>15</sup> Elder Cook explained that the home is the best place to teach children how to “express heartfelt feelings” as “a prelude to testimony bearing.” He said that an “integral part of family communication” should be the discussion of gospel principles and the sharing of spiritual feelings. He provided examples of scripts that parents can use. One script went like this: “Today in **sacrament meeting** I felt the **Spirit** confirming the truth of the counsel given by our **bishop**.” The next step is to then get children to say such things themselves, and Elder Cook suggested some questions parents could ask to get their children started: “Would you like to tell me what you are feeling now? What did you feel in your heart as we discussed this principle?”

Bearing these testimonies at home is only the beginning. Elder Cook said, “Parents are responsible to teach their young children how to bear their testimonies in public settings, [which is] a natural extension of the testimony bearing experiences family members have at home.”<sup>16</sup> Similar instructions have also come straight from the top in the form of a letter from the First Presidency dated May 2, 2002:

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15. Henry B. Eyring, quoted in “When Children Want to Bear Testimony,” *Ensign*, December 2002, p. 29.

16. Carl B. Cook, “When Children Want to Bear Testimony,” *Ensign*, December 2002, p. 29.

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Parents and teachers should help children learn what a testimony is and when it is appropriate for them to express it. It may be best to have younger children learn to share their testimonies at such times as family home evening or when giving talks in Primary until they are old enough to do so in a fast and testimony meeting.

To return to my own upbringing, I was made to speak specific “truths” to an audience, which is a very powerful reality-molding technique. Mom, or a Sunday school teacher, stood at my side and carefully whispered the words into my ear for me to repeat. In this manner, I told large groups of people that I “knew” Joseph Smith was a prophet, that this was God’s one and only true Church, and that the *Book of Mormon* is the word of God. I was thus initiated into a culture in which such proclamations of knowledge are publicly made again and again and again by every active member. And only by active members who are respected members of the Mormon community—which is something even young children understand. Performing this type of guided and coaxed public witnessing is an integral and constant part of growing up a Latter-day Saint.

Children are trained to stand in front of hundreds of people and say that they know the Church, and everything else that goes along with it, is true. They are not expected to merely profess belief or faith; they are expected to profess knowledge. Elder Emerson R. West said, “We should have the courage to say ‘I know’, [sic] [which is] a powerful and moving phrase when spoken with sincere conviction.”<sup>17</sup> It is powerful and moving because when we repeatedly say to other people that we “know” something is true, our belief in it increases. Apostle Boyd K. Packer said, “A testimony is to be *found* in the *bearing* of it!” [his emphasis]. He said this after admitting that “[i]t is not unusual to have a [Mormon] missionary say, ‘How can I bear testimony until I get one? How can I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is true?’” Then, as if it should be obvious, he rhetorically asked, “Can you not see that it will be supplied as you share it?”<sup>18</sup>

And indeed it will, which is why the Mormon method of social indoctrination is so successful. It is a culture of ubiquitous public witnessing, and every respected member absolutely must participate. Elder West admitted that

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17. Emerson R. West, “This I Know,” *Ensign*, December 1993, p. 26.

18. Boyd K. Packer, “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, January 1983, p. 51.

“children are limited in knowledge and experience,” but added that “they have positive feelings about the gospel which they can learn to recognize and share.” In other words, they should be taught to accept “positive feelings” as evidence of truth, and “should be taught early in life to bear their testimonies.”<sup>19</sup> According to Apostle Packer, the result will be that Mormon children go from “saying” the Church is true to “knowing” that it's true. In the same way, they will also “know” that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that the *Book of Mormon* is the word of God.

The magic ingredient that makes it all work so well is that everything is based on feelings. There are *Ensign* articles that teach parents and Primary teachers to build up children's trust in them, and then to use this trust to convince the children that any feelings they have while learning about the Church are from the Holy Ghost. Adult members are instructed to tell children that they, the children, have felt the Spirit, which is telling them that the things they have just been taught are true.

As a result of this methodical psychological programming, children's testimonies become linked to the natural, tingly feelings that everyone experiences in life. These types of feelings can come from listening to music, or from feeling nervous before and during public speaking, which is a frequent activity for Mormons that begins in childhood. Mormon children are raised to believe that these natural human feelings and emotions are the promptings of the Spirit, which is telling them that the Church is true. They are taught that no amount of information can trump these feelings, no matter how high its quality, how logical, or how plentiful. Anyone who tries to persuade Mormons that Mormonism is untrue has been influenced by Satan and his followers to say such things. And Mormons who are tempted to consider any evidence that disproves the Church are *themselves* influenced by Satan.<sup>20</sup>

This powerful and effective method of mind control links the truth of Mormonism to both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Believers have been conditioned to feel anything from calmness to ecstasy when exposed to anything even remotely linkable to the Church's truthfulness. It is referred to as a **burning in the bosom**. Such pleasant feelings may be triggered by hearing a talk at church, by singing a hymn, by being in the presence of other Mormons (especially Mormon leaders), or simply by thinking about something church related while sitting at home on the sofa.

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19. Emerson R. West, “This I Know,” *Ensign*, December 1993, p. 26.

20. See footnote 13.

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At the same time, believers are conditioned to feel anything from slight anxiety to outright panic when exposed to whatever church leaders have defined as bad; of course it is impossible to provide an exhaustive list, so members often must decide for themselves what is or isn't "bad." Uncomfortable feelings come from committing (or even contemplating) a Mormon-defined sin, by reading what is, or might be, considered to be "anti-Mormon" literature (this book you're now reading, for example), by hearing someone criticize the Church or its leaders, or, most interestingly, by being in any cultural environment that is too foreign to allow Mormons to feel the Spirit, which is equated with the pleasant feelings described above. There seems to be a direct correlation, therefore, between the strength of a person's testimony on the one hand, and the degree to which he or she is ethnocentric on the other; each strengthens and reinforces the other.

All of an indoctrinated member's feelings, both pleasant and unpleasant, are interpreted as a form of evidence that proves Mormonism to be true. Those who end up losing their belief in Mormonism are amazed to eventually discover that their feelings prove only one thing: humans have emotions that are triggered by any number of things for any number of reasons. They discover this when those feelings interpreted as being from the Spirit continue to manifest themselves even after they leave the Church. These feelings are not Mormon; they are human. The only thing unique about Mormon feelings is the frequency and intensity with which they are focused on and developed, as well as, of course, the interpretation they are given.

One person who lost his belief in the Church is Simon Southerton, a former bishop from Australia, who recalls:

Australia beat America in the America's Cup yacht race. To most Americans this was a non-event but for many Australians it was a huge thrill. Australia came from behind in the series to snatch victory in the face of almost certain defeat. I felt intensely warm feelings in my heart, as though it was going to burst. I had felt similar feelings when I was teaching discussions as a missionary. I could not understand why the strong emotional feelings I felt with such an event were essentially indistinguishable from what I had learned to interpret as the feelings of the Spirit. They were similar to the feelings I felt as I watched *The Sound of Music*, or *Fiddler on the Roof* or *Les Miserables*.<sup>21</sup>

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21. Simon is a genetics scientist who wrote *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (Signature Books, 2004). It provides scientific evidence that challenges the Church's claim that American Indians are descendants of Jews. (cont'd next page)

After shaking free of Mormon indoctrination, former believers realize, somewhat embarrassedly, that the same emotions that proved to them that the Church was true are just as effective at proving the divinity of football, first dates, and their favorite singer.

Edward T. Hall is an anthropologist who is considered by many to be the founder of intercultural communication studies. When trying to understand another culture, he said:

It is so important to pay attention to your feelings. . . . The main thing that marks my methodology is that I really do use myself as a control. I pay very close attention to myself, my feelings because then I have a base. And it is not intellectual.<sup>22</sup>

His methodology is similar to Mormon indoctrination. However, whereas Dr. Hall focuses on his feelings in order to understand and appreciate certain aspects of other cultures, as well as his own, Mormons use their feelings to judge the traits of other cultures as either good or bad, depending on how closely they resemble Mormon culture. Dr. Hall's goal is to *reduce* ethnocentricity, while the goal of Mormonism is to *increase* ethnocentricity and to use it as a tool to strengthen the psychological dome that houses the reality of The Mormon Show.

### The Doctrine in Indoctrination

Now you know how testimonies are born, nurtured, and cemented into place. Once a member has a testimony, he or she believes whatever **the brethren** say. In fact, believing everything the brethren say is the very definition of "having a testimony." With that in mind, let's take a look at what the brethren have said over the years.

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21. (cont'd) In Simon's story explaining his departure from Mormonism, he refers to "a statement published by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. concerning the *Book of Mormon*. In very strong language this statement spoke of a complete lack of evidence for any connection between the Old World and the New World." He explains that "[t]his is significant because the *Book of Mormon* teaches that America was populated by a very small group of Jews that traveled from Jerusalem around 600 B.C. [and] I had been told in seminary [the Mormon version of catechism] that the Smithsonian had been known to use the *Book of Mormon* in their research [to study ancient America]. The statement utterly refuted this claim. In fact the Smithsonian have grown tired of responding to Mormons who regularly contact them to see how the *Book of Mormon* is helping them out."

22. "Gifts of Wisdom: An interview with Dr. Edward T. Hall," *The Edge: The E-Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Summer 1998, Vol. 1 (3).

## Where Did We Come From?

Mormon doctrine is best told as a story, which all started once upon a time on a planet that revolves around a very big star at the center of the universe.<sup>23</sup> A single day on that planet is equal to a thousand of our earth years. The name of the big star is **Kolob**, and an important man lies under Kolob's radiance on the planet that revolves around it. The piece of work this man is best known for is the planet we presently occupy. He has created uncountable others, but this is the only one that is so incredibly wicked that, in the end, the whole thing will need to be firebombed.

Before we were all born—in fact, before anyone who has ever lived on Earth was born—we all lived together with this man, whom we now call **Heavenly Father**. We technically have no beginning because we have all existed eternally as intelligences. Our spirits have a beginning, however, and they were created by Heavenly Father, which is why we call him Heavenly Father. You don't hear about his companions much, but you know the old cliché: behind every successful man lies a successful woman. In this case there are several, because, according to Brigham Young, Heavenly Father was a polygamist.

In the same way that our lives begin and end here on Earth, just like our parents' lives did, we also have the same type of beginning and ending as our heavenly parents. They, like us, started out as people, and we, like them, can become gods. Because we have “been born of Him in the Spirit,” we have “inherited the very attributes which He possesses” and are therefore “God's embryo.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, if you're good and do what you're told, you'll grow up to be exactly like God.

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23. “. . . and I saw the Stars that they were very great, and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God; . . .and the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God. . . . And the Lord said unto me . . . that Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the revolutions thereof, that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest. This is the reckoning of the Lord's time, according to the reckoning of Kolob.”

—*The Pearl of Great Price*, First Edition, The Book of Abraham, p. 23 (Published By F. D. Richards, 1851)

24. “We are His children in very deed, having been born of Him in the spirit, and we have inherited the very attributes which He possesses. They are in us, and they make us God's  
(cont'd next page)

Our two eldest siblings were really smart boys. You have probably heard of them. The name of the first born was Jesus and the second was Lucifer.<sup>25</sup> They separately drew up plans to create Earth and then have us all be born there so that we could get physical bodies, die, be judged according to our behavior, and then finally be resurrected with perfect bodies that are forever in their prime—something even Estée Lauder doesn't promise.

Lucifer presented his proposal first, which is always a disadvantage. He suggested to Heavenly Father that everyone should get perfect scores on their tests. He said this could be done simply by giving everyone no choice but to follow all the test's rules. A lot of people—spirits, that is—thought this was a great idea. There must have been a lot of mumbling and head nodding, just as there would be if a teacher proposed giving every student an A+ on the French Literature final.

(Speaking of head nodding, this is a good time to point out that when we were spirits in the **pre-existence**, we had “the same shape and form as the physical body. The spirit body then has arms, legs, a head, and a mind.”<sup>26</sup> When we are in our prime in this life, we look like our spirits do, and after we die, we'll get our same bodies back, blemish and handicap free, and forever in their prime. Not a bad deal, really.)

Jesus' proposal was much more complicated than Lucifer's. His idea was to give everyone the choice to either follow or break the rules, a concept called **free agency**. We would all be graded according to how closely we followed the rules, with the breaking of some rules being judged more severely than others.

The thing that may have clinched the deal for Jesus was the fact that, in his proposal, he said all the glory would go to Heavenly Father in the end. By contrast, Lucifer, who was going to do all the work making everyone obey the

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embryo, We believe that as we are now God once was, and . . . He has become what He is, and as He is, man may become, on the same principle.”

—Elder George F. Richards, *Conference Report*, April 1913, p. 82.

(The ultimate goal of each of us, therefore, is to someday become a God [or one of the behind-the-scenes wives of a God] and create our own planets so that we can inhabit them with the bodies of our own spirit children, and, if we choose, think of our own special ways to destroy the ones that don't listen.)

25. “He [Jesus] was the Firstborn of the great family to which we belong, so we call him not only our Redeemer, but our Elder Brother.”

—President Charles W. Penrose, *Conference Report*, April 1920 (morning session), p.32.

26. Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, *Conference Report*, October 1964, p.10.

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rules, didn't offer to hand all the glory over to Heavenly Father. What did I tell you about going first? Lucifer probably would have changed a couple of details in his proposal if he'd known what Jesus was going to say.

It was understood that everyone would sin if they had free agency, but people could repent of most sins and be forgiven. For that to work, according to Jesus' plan, Jesus would be born on Earth, get tortured, and be crucified. The fact that this made absolutely no sense was explained away as being incomprehensibly profound.

We know that Heavenly Father chose Jesus' plan and that we are now living it out. Therefore, to see the details of the plan, all we have to do is examine the history of our world. As is often the case, Brigham Young provides us with the most intriguing version. According to him, Heavenly Father, Michael the archangel, and the Adam who lived in the Garden of Eden are all the same person. That means Heavenly Father is not only the father of our spirits but is the human ancestor of all of us as well.

Heavenly Father (Adam) moved into the Garden of Eden, which was located in Jackson County, Missouri, with one of his wives named Eve. Roughly 4000 years later, when it was Jesus' turn to appear on the scene, Heavenly Father physically begat Jesus in the flesh with the woman we all know as the Virgin Mary. In other words, He "knew" Mary in the biblical sense but respected her enough in the morning to allow her to keep the title of Virgin. You may be tempted to smile, but don't; Brigham Young threatened damnation upon anyone who makes light of this doctrine.<sup>27</sup>

This deal with Mary was perhaps another detail of Jesus' plan that appealed to Heavenly Father. But whatever the reason, Heavenly Father was not the only one who chose Jesus' plan; most spirits did as well. Of those who

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27. "When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a *celestial body*, and brought Eve, *one of his wives*, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, *the Archangel*, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken—HE is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do . . . When the Virgen [sic] Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was *not* begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; and when he took a tabernacle, it was begotten by *his Father* in heaven, after the same manner as the tabernacles of Cain, Abel, and the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve . . . Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven. Now, let all who may hear these doctrines, pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation."

—Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50–51 (April 9, 1852) [emphasis in original]

did, they either really liked the plan, or they realized there was going to be a serious conflict and decided it was safer to choose the stronger side, the one with Heavenly Father on it. “We should also keep in mind that the greatest of all military men was the Son of God himself [Jesus]. In the war in heaven [that ensued from this argument], he led the forces of righteousness against the rebellion of Lucifer.”<sup>28</sup> It must have been pretty obvious which side would win, so two-thirds of the spirits stood safely behind it. The remaining one third of the spirits, all of whom wanted to fight for a guarantee of good grades, joined Lucifer’s rebellion.

“[T]here was war in heaven, actual combat,”<sup>29</sup> and it was a fight to the finish. Jesus and “the loyal spirit hosts . . . vanquished Lucifer and his rebellious legions, winning the right to take bodies upon this planet.”<sup>30</sup> Lucifer and his warriors were cast from heaven, sentenced to an eternity without bodies, and they now dwell on earth, still in spirit form, tempting us all to do dastardly things to ourselves and each other, all because they’re sore losers and therefore want us all to fail our tests.

Not everyone on the side of righteousness fought so valiantly. Some played it safe and said they were for Jesus’ plan, but when there was a call for volunteers to go to the front lines, they probably looked around at nothing in particular and whistled nonchalantly. Suffice it to say they didn’t raise their hands, and they are now paying a price for it.

Apostle George F. Richards said, “The Negro is an unfortunate man. He has been given a black skin.” Even worse, according to Elder Richards, is that black<sup>31</sup> men are “not permitted to receive the Priesthood and the ordinances of the **temple**, necessary to prepare men and women to enter into and enjoy a fullness of glory in the **celestial kingdom**.” The reason for this is “that as spirit children of our Eternal Father they were not valiant in the fight. . . . [They were not] valiant in the **spirit world** in that war in heaven. Somewhere

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28. Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, *Conference Report*, October 1970, p.79.

29. Melvin J. Ballard, *Conference Report*, October 1918, p.149.  
(There is no explanation anywhere in official Mormon literature as to how spirits could engage in “actual combat.”)

30. Orson F. Whitney, of the Council of the Twelve, *Conference Report*, October 1925, p.101.

31. I do not use the term African-American because Mormon doctrine regarding black people refers to all blacks of African origin, wherever they might live today.

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along the line were these spirits, indifferent perhaps, and possibly neutral in the war." Elder Richards then warned that "it does not pay in religious matters, matters that pertain to our eternal salvation, to be indifferent, neutral, or lukewarm."<sup>32</sup> Just look at what having such attributes did to black people: it made them black people.

The Church's second prophet, Brigham Young, explained that we "see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind." The prophet Brigham then kindly explained how this class of humans originated. They are the result of a curse that was put on Cain because "Cain slew his brother." The consequence of this act of murder was that "the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin"—the unfortunate state that Apostle Richards was referring to. But it gets worse, Brigham Young tells us that after the flood "another curse is pronounced upon the same race—that they should be the 'servants of servants;' [sic] and they will be, until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionists cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree."<sup>33</sup>

Some readers are surely wondering why Cain's descendents weren't all drowned in the flood. It turns out, according to President John Taylor, that after the flood "the curse that had been pronounced upon Cain was continued through Ham's wife, as he had married a wife of that seed. And why did it pass through the flood? Because it was necessary that the devil should have a representation upon the earth . . ."<sup>34</sup>

The curse to be servants did not end with the Civil War or the Civil Rights Movement, nor will it ever end; it will last forever. In a talk given at Brigham Young University (BYU) on August 27, 1954, Apostle Mark E. Petersen explained how this works, interpreting it as something "merciful":

Isn't the mercy of God marvelous? Think of the Negro, cursed as to the priesthood . . . This Negro, who, in the pre-existence lived the type of life which justified the Lord in sending him to earth in the lineage of Cain with a black skin, and possibly being born in darkest Africa . . . In spite of all he

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32. George F. Richards, *Conference Report*, April 1939, pp. 58–59.

33. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7, 1859, p. 290.

34. John Taylor, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 22, August 28, 1881, p. 304.

did in the pre-existent life, the Lord is willing, if the Negro accepts the gospel with real, sincere faith, and is really converted, to give him the blessings of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If that Negro is faithful all his days, he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there as a servant, but he will get celestial glory.<sup>35</sup>

Blacks aren't the only race of people that started out as whites but ended up cursed. As mentioned earlier, the *Book of Mormon* tells us why Native Americans aren't white people like they used to be: "wherefore, as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people, the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them. And thus saith the Lord God, I will cause that they shall be loathsome unto thy people."<sup>36</sup> These loathsome people look an awful lot like Asians, so it's only natural that Mormons might wonder about all the other dark skinned races around the world.

In the same speech quoted above, Elder Petersen cleared this up for them:

Is there reason then why the type of birth we receive in this life is not a reflection of our worthiness or lack of it in the pre-existent life? . . . [C]an we account in any other way for the birth of some of the children of God in darkest Africa, or in flood-ridden China, or among the starving hordes of India, while some of the rest of us are born here in the United States? We cannot escape the conclusion that because of performance in our pre-existence some of us are born as Chinese, some as Japanese, some as Latter-day Saints. . . . A Chinese, born in China with a dark skin, and with all the handicaps of that race seems to have little opportunity. But think of the mercy of God to Chinese people who are willing to accept the gospel. In spite of whatever they might have done in the pre-existence to justify being born over there as Chinamen, if they now, in this life accept the gospel and live it the rest of their lives they can have the Priesthood, go to the temple and receive endowments and sealings, and that means they can have exaltation.

This means that all people of color were less valiant than whites in the War in Heaven, and their dark skin is the smoking-gun proof. Since we know

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35. This concept of blacks being blessed by being in the presence of greatness, even as servants, is not unlike what Hegel believed. He wrote that "The polygamy of the Negroes has frequently for its object the having many children, to be sold, every one of them, into slavery." He thought they looked upon slavery as "the occasion of the increase of human feeling among the Negroes," and that it enabled them to participate "in a higher morality and the culture connected with it."

36. *Book of Mormon*, 2 Nephi: 5:21–22

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that all people of color were not truly in favor of Jesus' plan, then that means only a minority of all the spirits in heaven were. Of the two-thirds of heaven's spirits who were allowed to be born on Earth, only the white ones were decidedly in favor of Jesus' plan, and even a lot of those seem to have changed their minds.

Reading the Bible, one can only wonder if perhaps the war is still being fought. At one point, for example, Heavenly Father wiped out nearly everyone on our planet, saying he wished none of his kids had ever been born.<sup>37</sup> The linguist Noam Chomsky, who as a child read the Bible in Hebrew with his Hebrew-scholar father, observed that:

[T]he Bible . . . is basically polytheistic, with the warrior God demanding of his chosen people that they not worship the other Gods and destroy those who do—in an extremely brutal way, in fact. It would be hard to find a more genocidal text in the literary canon, or a more violent and destructive character than the God who was to be worshipped.<sup>38</sup>

Bertrand Russell said, “We read in the Old Testament that it was a religious duty to exterminate conquered races completely, and that to spare even their cattle and sheep was an impiety.”<sup>39</sup> Russell was criticizing what Mormon Apostle Robert D. Hales referred to as “a marvelous story about Samuel and Saul . . . Before one battle, Samuel told Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites and all of their animals, as Samuel had been told by the Lord.” Unfortunately, however, “[a]fter their victory, Saul and his army brought back the best of the animals.” This was a sad state of affairs. “Saul had practiced selective obedience because he had [not] destroyed all the animals.”<sup>40</sup> Elder Hales thinks it is one's duty to murder anything that moves if that is what God's spokesman tells one to do.

It seems logical to conclude that the genocidal extermination of the Amalekites, the Canaanites, and nearly all the people of Noah's time was an extension of the War in Heaven. And the fight appears to have continued into

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37. “And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.”

—Genesis 6:6–7

38. Noam Chomsky, Internet *ChomskyChat* forum, May 1998.

39. Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays*, p. 163 (Unwin Paperbacks, 1950).

40. Robert D. Hales, “Return with Honor,” *Ensign*, June 1999, p. 7.

present times in the form of the Cold War and the “War on Terror.” Apostle Ezra Taft Benson said that “communism is turning out to be the earthly image of the plan which Satan presented in the pre-existence. The whole program of socialistic-communism is essentially a war against God and the plan of salvation—the very plan which we fought to uphold during ‘the war in heaven.’” Benson said, “The fight against godless communism is a very real part of every man’s duty who holds the priesthood . . . a struggle against the evil, satanical priestcraft of Lucifer. Truly it can be called, ‘a continuation of the war in heaven.’”<sup>41</sup>

This means we can praise the biblical tactics carried out by the United States against Cambodian peasant farmers when President Nixon said, “I want them to hit everything,” and Kissinger passed on this genocidal order to carry out a “massive bombing campaign in Cambodia [using] [a]nything that flies on anything that moves.”<sup>42</sup>

We can also be assured of the righteous nature of the “War on Terror.” Just when the U.S. started bombing Afghanistan, President Hinckley said that “[t]he conflict we see today is but another expression of the conflict that began with the War in Heaven.”<sup>43</sup> And two years later, just before quoting verses about the War in Heaven from the book of Revelation, President Hinckley concluded that “[t]he present war [in Iraq] is really an outgrowth and continuation of that conflict [in Afghanistan].”<sup>44</sup>

This theological “war” also extends to domestic politics. Many African-Americans weren’t just fence sitters during the Cold War; they were decidedly on the wrong side of the war. Apostle Benson warned us that “the so-called civil rights movement as it exists today is a Communist program for revolution in America.”<sup>45</sup>

Apostle Benson was very devoted to preventing the advancement of African-Americans’ political power. He even allowed one of his talks to be used as the foreword to an overtly racist book titled *The Black Hammer: A Study of Black Power, Red Influence and White Alternatives*, by Wes Andrews and Clyde Dalton (Desco Press, 1967). On page 83 the book mentions “the

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41. Ezra Taft Benson, *Conference Report*, October 1961, pp. 70–71.

42. Elizabeth Becker, *New York Times*, 27 May 2004.

43. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Times in Which We Live,” *Liahona*, January 2002, p. 83.

44. Gordon B. Hinckley, “War and Peace,” *Liahona*, May 2003, p. 79.

45. Ezra Taft Benson, September 1967. Quoted in *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, by D. Michael Quinn, 1997, p. 98.

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Negro's need for complete subservience to the Great White Fathers in Washington." The most appalling feature of the book is its cover, featuring the decapitated, profusely bleeding head of a black man. Ezra Taft Benson later went on to become the Church's prophet, seer and revelator from 1985 to 1994. He was the top spokesman for Heavenly Father, meaning he was responsible for telling us all how to live our lives.<sup>46</sup>

While growing up, I was fully aware of, and accepted, the Church's racist doctrines as they were taught to me at the time. By the time I came along, it was no longer official doctrine that blacks were cursed descendents of Cain who stood on the sidelines during the War in Heaven. The Church did still have official racist teachings, however, and these had long been public knowledge; so had the fact that black men were not allowed to hold the priesthood. As a result, BYU was being boycotted, and some universities were refusing to compete with BYU's sports teams. Even more seriously, the IRS was considering denying the Church its tax-free status as a religion.

Inevitably, the prophet soon received a revelation from God, and in 1978 men with "flat nose[s] and black skin" were suddenly allowed to hold priesthood power. Roughly coinciding with this revelation, members were told that the story about the origin of blacks—that they were fence sitters in the War in Heaven and descendents of Cain—was nothing but a speculative theory with unknown authorship. Most members, including myself, were ignorant of the fact that the Church's former apostles and prophets were the actual authors of this "theory," and that it had previously been taught openly as gospel truth.

I had accepted this ludicrous story about the origin of black people as fact, and then pushed it aside as a speculative theory when I was told to do so. Like all members, I did not consider these beliefs to be racist, nor did I comprehend in the least how utterly cruel and disgusting it is to indoctrinate dark skinned children to believe that their appearance is a curse from God. The Church has never apologized for, nor officially retracted, any of its racist doctrines. The teaching that Native Americans were cursed by God with "a skin of blackness . . . [and that God] cause[d] that they shall be loathsome" is still official, canonized doctrine. And, I'm sorry to say, there are plenty of dark skinned children born and raised inside the dome of The Mormon Show.

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46. See D. Michael Quinn's *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, 1997, Chapter 3, for a detailed treatment of Ezra Taft Benson. Quinn reviews Benson's dedication to radical anti-communism and his avid support of the John Birch Society.

Now you know the story of where we all came from, and you know the how-the-elephant-got-its-trunk type story that explains why we all look the way we do. But why are we here? What sort of test did Jesus prepare for us?

### Why Are We Here?

We were sent here to get bodies and be tested. Our lives must therefore be entirely devoted to scoring high on the test, which has two parts:

1. Believe
2. Obey

What must we believe? We must believe the story of our origin, which you now know. We must believe in Heavenly Father, the same God written about in the Bible, and in His son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. We must believe that they are three separate beings, two of which now have bodies of flesh and bone. We must believe everything in the Bible, as far as it is translated correctly. We must believe in the *Book of Mormon*, which has no mistranslations because Joseph Smith did such a marvelous job. We must believe that God has one, and only one, true church, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We must believe that the men at the head of this Church are prophets and apostles of God, and that their job is to tell us what God requires us to do.

We must believe all these things. We must believe them so strongly that we can publicly say we “know” they are true. And if we don’t believe they are true, then we must publicly say “we know these things are true” until we believe what we say.

To make the test hard, our memories of our pre-existence were entirely wiped out so that we would have to believe in Heavenly Father on faith alone. We have to believe He is real, despite the fact that He gave us reasoning capabilities, and despite the fact that “[n]one of us has ever seen this being; none of us has ever heard him, except in the silence of our own heads; none of us can produce a piece of evidence as large as a mustard seed that what we think of as God is anything more than a thought. . . . [W]e have no trace [of God], except for the testimony of scribes writing of events neither they nor those around them ever witnessed.”<sup>47</sup> And we must believe in Him despite there

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47. Stephen Chapman, a columnist and editorial writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, during a debate in late 1999 with former *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan on the question, “Is there a God?”

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being plenty of evidence contradicting the stories we've been told by His prophets, for example the tale about the world being approximately six thousand years old.

In order to make the test extra difficult, the prophet Joseph Smith spoke of the inhabitants of the moon, whom he described as tall people that dress like Quakers and live to approximately one thousand years of age. As if that wasn't hard enough, the prophet Brigham Young tested us even further when he told us about “the inhabitants of the sun. Do you think it is inhabited? I rather think it is. Do you think there is any life there? No question of it; it was not made in vain. It was made to give light to those who dwell upon it, and to other planets; . . .” In the same sermon, he warned us “who the real fanatics are: they are they who adopt false principles and ideas as facts, and try to establish a superstructure upon a false foundation. They are the fanatics; and however ardent and zealous they may be, they may reason or argue on false premises till doomsday, and the result will be false.”<sup>48</sup>

There is a simple formula to the belief portion of the test. I was taught on several occasions that all one really needs to believe is that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. If you believe that, then you will believe that he saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in a vision. You will believe that he translated the *Book of Mormon* with the help of God, and that it is therefore the word of God. You will also believe that the Church Smith founded is God's only true church. In short, if you believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet, you will believe every single thing about Mormonism.

It's that simple. All you have to do is believe that this man who had at least thirty-three wives, and who “propos[ed] to females as young as twelve, [had] sexual relationships with polygamous wives as young as fourteen, . . . [and] marriage and sexual cohabitation with foster daughters, . . .”<sup>49</sup> was a prophet of God, who was chosen by Him to tell all of us exactly how to live our lives in order to pass Jesus' test. If we believe that about Joseph Smith, then by logical extension we will believe it about his successor Brigham Young and every other prophet up to the present day. All that is required of Mormons is that they believe and obey what these men say. Brigham Young, who had more than fifty wives, said, “I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call Scripture.”<sup>50</sup>

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48. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 13, July 24, 1870, p. 271.

49. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, p. 89.

50. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 13, January 2, 1870, p. 95.

The second part of the test is to obey the Church's leaders, referred to as **General Authorities**. Everything Mormons are required to do is referred to as a "commandment" from God (meaning a commandment from the Church's General Authorities), and a constant preoccupation in Mormon culture is working out the details of these commandments. Members frequently talk about what, exactly, they are required to do or not do; they analyze and discuss what the prophets, apostles, and other General Authorities meant when they said this or that. This is necessary because many of God's commandments are far from clear.

Take the commandment from Exodus 20:13, for example: "Thou shalt not kill." Like all commandments, it is an imperative in the second person. That means that God, the speaker of the command, is excluded. This commandment was not broken, therefore, when He drowned all His children except for a select few in Noah's day. It is we humans who must never kill.

This would be clear and simple if God didn't give us conflicting commandments, such as the one from Exodus 22:18: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Suddenly we're confused. Who decides who the witches are? Who is to kill them? How?

The Mormon doctrine of **blood atonement** is a more recent example of a commandment that conflicts with "Thou shalt not kill." According to this doctrine, some sins are not covered by Christ's atonement, and therefore require the sinner to personally atone for his or her own sin. This personal atonement requires the sinner's life to be taken and his or her blood to be literally shed onto the ground. Addressing the members of the Church, Brigham Young said:

Will you love your brothers and sisters . . . when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? . . . I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins . . . This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it . . . That is the way to love mankind.<sup>51</sup>

More confusion. Who decides which people are guilty of a blood atonement sin? Who is supposed to show their love for these people by killing them? How should the killing be done so as to properly fulfill its purpose?

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51. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, 1857, pp. 219–220.

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The General Authorities deliver sermons semi-annually in Salt Lake City at General Conferences. Devout members greatly look forward to these sermons.<sup>52</sup> Sermons at modern day General Conferences don't include anything as controversial as the doctrine of blood atonement. In fact, most Mormons would be very surprised to read the above quote from Brigham Young. Instead, today's members learn the latest official policy regarding which books and movies are appropriate to read and watch, or how a woman can best fulfill her roles as wife, mother, and homemaker. Regarding the role of women, Sister Julie Beck, the **Relief Society** General President, said in a General Conference in 2007 that Mormon mothers with testimonies “desire to have children”; that “young couples should not postpone having children”; that mothers are in charge of “cooking, washing clothes and dishes, and keeping an orderly home”; and that they should consider “their homes as a pre-missionary training center” for their sons. How can a woman ever know for sure if she is adequately fulfilling these “commandments”?

Mormons frequently discuss what types of thoughts, behaviors and lifestyles are acceptable for **worthy** Mormons. Is it okay to drink coke? How many children are enough? Under what circumstances is it all right for a woman to work outside the home? Can tithing be calculated after taxes rather than before?

The **law of tithing** requires members to give ten per cent of their income to the Church. A predecessor to the law of tithing was God's command to establish the **United Order of Enoch** (also called the **law of consecration**). Speaking to church members—through Joseph Smith of course—God said, “consecrate all thy properties, that which thou hast unto me, with a covenant and a deed which can not be broken; and they shall be laid before the bishop of my church . . .”<sup>53</sup> This Order of Enoch was a communalistic order that attempted to follow the Marxist ideal, “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.”

Church members had a hard time with this commandment. God soon “saw [that they] could not live it, and [therefore] revealed the law of tithing to take its place temporarily.”<sup>54</sup> The Church will some day reinstate the law of consecration when its members are ready to abide by this higher law, but

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52. I loved listening to General Conferences when I was a teenager. You can see and hear the most recent session online at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org).

53. *A Book of Commandments*, 1833, Chapter XLIV, verse 26.

54. Elder Reed Smoot, *Conference Report*, October 1901, p. 6.

“[b]efore we [try again to] enter upon the law of consecration, which is the celestial law of God in finance, it is necessary that we should take the training that we are now having under the law of tithing.”<sup>55</sup> For the time being, then, members are only required to obey the law of tithing, a much easier law that merely requires members to pay ten percent of their total income to the Church.

Growing up in the Church, I frequently heard people discuss whether tithes should be calculated before taxes or after. Church leaders have never officially said anything about this, but many members, even those struggling to make ends meet, pay ten percent of their gross income to be sure they are fully complying with the law of tithing.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance that the Church places on the commandment to pay one’s tithes. To help members out, the *Ensign* occasionally includes articles that teach fiscal responsibility and budgeting. Why budget? Because, as an April 1998 *Ensign* article explains, it “ensures we can pay our tithing and other offerings.” Not only is the ability to pay tithing a benefit of budgeting, it is an essential step in the budgeting process. This is because the Lord provides financial blessings to those who pay their tithes. It is only logical, therefore, that tithing payers will have an easier time making ends meet than non-tithe payers. And if we carry this logic one step further, we will see that people can actually come out of poverty by tithing to the Church. Finally, a solution to world poverty.

A former prophet actually suggested this for all the miserably poor people living in the Philippines. President Hinckley, Heavenly Father’s mouthpiece, gave a talk to the Cebu Mission missionaries in 1997. He told them that if poor Filipinos, “even living in poverty and misery . . . will accept the gospel and live it, pay their tithes and offerings, even though those be meager, . . . they will have rice in their bowls and clothing on their backs and shelter over their heads. I do not see any other solution.” Hinckley’s piece was—yes—titled “Solution For Poverty.”<sup>56</sup>

Some commandments are related to marriage. Early on, polygamy was a requirement. Brigham Young said, “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.”<sup>57</sup> To help the men obey this commandment in peace, Brigham warned all the members—I’m sure he

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55. Apostle Francis M. Lyman, *Conference Report*, October 1899, p. 34.

56. *Ensign*, August 1997, p. 7.

57. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 11, August 9, 1866, p. 269.

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was talking especially to the women here—not to “deny the plurality of wives,” or, he said, “I promise that you will be damned.” He said they weren't even allowed to “deny it in [their] feelings.”<sup>58</sup>

Surprisingly, some women complained. Not surprisingly, Brigham Young couldn't stand their whining and warned them to pipe down or leave. He made an announcement to “all the women of this community,” saying, “I am going to give you [two weeks to] . . . determine whether you wish to stay with your husbands or not, and then I am going to set every woman at liberty and say to them, . . . [they] have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, or they may leave . . .”

Giving his own wives the benefit of the doubt, the prophet said, “I know what my women will say; they will say, ‘You can have as many women as you please, Brigham.’” But he was displeased with other women in the community, saying he wanted to “go somewhere and do something to get rid of the whiners.” He wanted “the wives and the children [to] say amen to what [the man] says, and be subject to his dictates, instead of their dictating the man, instead of their trying to govern him.”

He instructed the men to “say to [their] wives, ‘. . . [I]f you stay with me you shall comply with the law of God, and that too without any murmuring and whining. You must fulfil the law of God in every respect, and round up your shoulders to walk up to the mark without any grunting.’” “Sisters, I am not joking,” Brigham insisted, “there is no cessation to the everlasting whining of many of the women in this Territory.” He was so frustrated by it, he resorted to prophetic threats, saying, “[I]f the women will . . . continue to despise the order of heaven, I will pray that the curse of the Almighty may be close to their heels, and that it may be following them all the day long.” Needless to say, this threat was extremely frightening to those who believed it.

Being sympathetic to the women's plight, Brigham acknowledged that he understood Heavenly Father had put “a curse upon the woman that is not upon the man, namely, that ‘her whole affections shall be towards her husband,’ and what is the next? ‘He shall rule over you.’” This is God's doing, though. Brigham was merely an obedient servant who was passing on the message. He warned these women, who surely had nowhere else to go: “[Y]ou must bow down to it, and submit yourselves to the celestial law [of

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58. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, July 14, 1855, p. 266.

polygamy]. You may go where you please, after two weeks from to-morrow; but, remember, that I will not hear any more of this whining.”<sup>59</sup>

Later, when the Church wanted Utah to become a state, the then-prophet received a revelation. Polygamy on Earth is no longer a commandment, though it is still possible in the afterlife for those who do well on their tests. On Earth, Mormon women no longer have to share their husbands, and the curse of their husbands ruling over them has been gradually diluted. In the pre-1990 temple ritual, sister members had to raise their right hands, as in a court of law, and were told to “solemnly covenant and promise before God, angels, and these witnesses at this altar that you will each observe and keep the law of your husbands, and abide by his [sic] counsel in righteousness. Each of you bow your head and say ‘Yes.’” Changes were made to the ritual in 1990, and an LDS woman is now only required to “obey the Law of the Lord, and to hearken unto the counsel of her husband, as her husband hearkens unto the counsel of the Father.”

President Hinckley said that “in attaining the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom, the man cannot enter without the woman, neither can the woman enter without the man.”<sup>60</sup> And members must go through certain rituals to make it to the highest degree of glory. In addition to being baptized and becoming a member of the LDS Church, they must also go through a marriage ceremony inside a temple, which **seals** them to their spouses in **celestial marriage**. If not, then “when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are **worthy** of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.”<sup>61</sup>

The fate of people who never marry, or who have spouses that aren't worthy, is to end up serving, for all eternity, those people who succeeded at the very thing they failed at. Talk about twisting the knife. This encourages people to put pressure on their spouses to remain faithful and obedient Mormons. Married Mormons who stop believing that the Church is true find themselves in a very awkward situation. They must either live a lie or risk breaking up their families. It's a very effective way to retain (tithe paying) members who would otherwise opt out without hesitation.

The chances of making it to the highest degree of glory in the Celestial Kingdom are better for men than for women, because a man can be sealed to

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59. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, September 21, 1856, pp. 55–57.

60. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Daughters of God,” *Ensign*, November 1991, p. 97.

61. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:16.

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more than one woman. Men have it better in another way as well: women who are sealed to husbands in the temple must first go through the temple's endowment ceremony, which is the ceremony where they are made to promise that they will "hearken unto the counsel of [their] husband[s]." (The intention of this book isn't to convert people to Mormonism, but some men just might consider ten percent of their income to be worth the benefit of having wives that are commanded to "hearken unto the[ir] counsel.")

Unworthy members and nonmembers are not allowed inside the temple, and they are therefore forced to wait outside while the wedding of a loved one takes place. Imagine not being allowed to attend your child's wedding—how cruel! If your child joins the Church and you are a nonmember, or an unworthy member, that is exactly what will happen. Unworthy members with testimonies already feel a tremendous sense of shame and guilt for being unworthy. This is compounded by the public display of unworthiness when they are refused admission to the weddings of relatives or friends.

There is a series of commandments called the **law of chastity**. This law includes a list of specific taboos related to sex and modesty. Girls and women must dress modestly. Everyone must "[a]bstain from premarital sex, petting, necking, sex perversion, masturbation, and preoccupation with sex in thought, speech, and action," according to a Church pamphlet titled "For the Strength of Youth." Beginning at the age of twelve, girls and boys are interviewed one on one by their bishops and specifically asked about such things as "Do you masturbate?" "Have you ever participated in heavy petting?" or "Do you have immoral thoughts?" are also common queries, although the explicitness of the questions is up to the bishop. Some will just ask, "Do you obey the law of chastity?" or "Are you morally clean?" Mormon youth understand what those questions mean, and know that they are supposed to confess any form of sexual behavior or "unclean" thoughts.

There is a commandment called the **Word of Wisdom** that strictly forbids members from drinking any alcohol, coffee, or tea. Members are advised to refrain from drinking caffeinated soft drinks as well. They absolutely must not use tobacco or any type of drugs whatsoever, other than medicinal drugs. In fact, Utah leads the nation in per capita use of antidepressants, which many speculate is related to the high demands the Church puts on mothers with testimonies.<sup>62</sup>

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62. Dr. Kent Ponder, a Mormon psychologist who did doctoral research on the psychology of cognitive-dissonance conflict, wrote an open letter to LDS therapists that describes in some detail the problems caused by the Mormon one-size-fits-all culture. He titled it "Mormon Women, Prozac® and Therapy." (continued next page)

Members are commanded to attend church regularly. They must keep the **Sabbath**, which means, in addition to attending church, they must never shop, eat in restaurants, see movies, or patronize any business on Sundays.

Members must never speak ill of, or disagree with, Church leaders. Apostle N. Eldon Tanner said, “When the prophet speaks the debate is over.”<sup>63</sup> The brethren have said that members must never criticize the brethren [General Authorities], even if the criticism is true. You would think they would try to say this with a straight face, but I saw Apostle Dallin H. Oaks say it on the PBS special called “The Mormons,” and, amazingly, he said it with a grin.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps they can't help themselves. To appreciate their difficulty, try saying the following to someone without smiling: “You must never criticize me, even if the criticism is true.

The last commandment I'll mention is the command to do missionary work. Joining the Church and keeping the commandments are the only way anyone can return to live with Heavenly Father. Therefore, members have been commissioned to do their very best to get anyone and everyone to join the Church.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “[W]e have an affirmative, positive, definite obligation resting upon us to do missionary work. This matter of carrying the gospel message to the world is not something that we can choose to do or not, if and when we may find it to be convenient. We are under covenant to do it ‘at all times . . . and in all places . . . even until death.’”<sup>65</sup> It is supposed to be constantly on members' minds when associating with nonmembers, and for especially devout Mormons it always is. Mormons are like Amway representatives: all their acquaintances are potential converts.

This commandment to do missionary work had a major impact on me because all Mormon boys are commanded to serve fulltime **missions** when they turn nineteen. Not long before I began my mission, Elder Robert L. Blackman of the Quorum of the Seventy addressed “the young men of the Church.” He told us that President Kimball had “stated that every young man should serve a mission.” He then rhetorically asked, “Do you sustain him as

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62. (cont'd) Dr. Ponder's piece is available at <http://packham.n4m.org/prozac.htm> and <http://www.exmormon.org/mormon/mormon197.htm>.

63. N. Eldon Tanner, “The Debate Is Over,” *Ensign*, August 1979, p. 2.

64. “The Mormons” can be viewed online at: <http://www.pbs.org/mormons/view/>.

65. Bruce R. McConkie, of the First Council of the Seventy, *Conference Report*, October 1960. His quote was from Mosiah 18:9 in the *Book of Mormon*.

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a prophet? If you do, your only response should be, ‘When? I’ll be prepared.’”<sup>66</sup>

Despite such statements, Mormons go out of their way to tell nonmembers that all missionaries serve voluntarily. In actuality, though, the only voluntary missionaries are girls and retired couples. All the boys are commanded to go, and they clearly understand this because they hear it constantly while growing up inside the reality bubble of The Mormon Show. Elder Christian Hans, who served as a missionary in the Arkansas Little Rock Mission, was quoted in *New Era* saying that “[e]ligible boys are commanded to serve missions.”<sup>67</sup> Saying that missionaries all go voluntarily, however, sounds less cultish, so that is what members say to nonmembers. But all Mormon boys know the truth.

Ezra Taft Benson said, “The Lord needs every young man between the ages of 19 and 26, worthy, prepared, and excited about serving in the mission field.”<sup>68</sup> Elder H. Bryan Richards of the Quorum of the Seventy told parents to teach their sons that God “wants every able and worthy young man to serve a mission.”<sup>69</sup> A **Gospel Doctrine** manual says, “Through his prophets, the Lord has repeatedly commanded every worthy, able young man to serve a full-time mission.”<sup>70</sup> President Thomas S. Monson, the current prophet, said, “The command to go has not been rescinded. Rather, it has been reemphasized. Today thousands of missionaries are serving in response to the call.”<sup>71</sup> In case anyone still didn't get it, Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy spoke to Mormon boys and their parents, specifically addressing any of them who “would justify [them]selves in not doing [their] duty to God [by serving a mission]”:

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66. Robert L. Backman, “To the Young Men of the Church,” *Ensign*, November 1980, p. 40.

67. “Q&A: Questions and Answers,” *New Era*, December 1992, p. 17.

68. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 1988, p. 178.

69. H. Bryan Richards, “As for Me and My House, We Will Serve the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 1998, p. 43.

70. *Old Testament Gospel Doctrine*, 33: Sharing the Gospel with the World, p. 162. (Gospel Doctrine is the name of the Sunday school class that adults attend. It is where adults discuss what God’s commandments are, and all discussions are based on Gospel Doctrine lesson manuals that are written at the Church's headquarters.)

71. Thomas S. Monson, “The Army of the Lord,” *Tambuli*, April 1990, p. 28.

If I could speak separately to each of you young men and your parents who so justify, I would say with all the power of speech I could generate, Just who do you think you are? What right do you have to match your wisdom with that of God, who through His prophets has issued a firm decree, a solemn mandate, that the restored gospel must be declared to all the world by the voice of His disciples? This means you! <sup>72</sup>

Now you know where we came from, and that we are here to believe and obey. Now let's look at what we can expect after we die, depending on how well we do on our test.

### Where Will We Go After We Die?

A three-tier grading system was sketched out in Jesus' plan. People will go to one of three kingdoms according to how well they do on the test. The Celestial Kingdom will be the highest, the brightest, and the best. Father in Heaven will live there and will never visit any of the lower kingdoms because he refuses to be in the presence of anyone who is anything less than perfect. The second kingdom will be called the Terrestrial Kingdom, and it will be like the moon is to the sun in comparison to the Celestial Kingdom. Jesus, and anyone living in the Celestial Kingdom who wants to, can visit relatives and friends down in the Terrestrial Kingdom. The lowest kingdom is the Telestial Kingdom. It will be like the stars are to the moon in comparison to the Terrestrial Kingdom. This is where all the really serious sinners will end up, but even this place will be so much better than Earth, according to Joseph Smith, who saw all the kingdoms in a vision, that if any of us saw it we would want to commit suicide on the spot so we could go there immediately.

It is ironic that a religion that threatens its members with the loss of salvation to keep them in line teaches that even the worst sinners will end up in a place that is paradise compared to Earth. The eternal misery and despair that sinners will suffer is going to come from knowing that, as good as the Telestial Kingdom is, things still could have been much, much better. For all eternity, sinners will angrily mumble, "Damn it! I should have believed in that story about Joseph Smith and the gold plates!"

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72. William R. Bradford, "Sanctification through Missionary Service," *Ensign*, November 1981, p. 49.

## The Purpose of the Indoctrination

The reasons for creating The Mormon Show are not too hard to see and understand if you live outside the dome. The system allows a relatively small group of people to control a lot of other people. Church leaders are respected and revered to a very high degree. I have heard many stories of people crying because they were in the presence of an apostle or a prophet, which is reminiscent of the young Red Guards, who, during the Cultural Revolution in China, wept uncontrollably with joy at the sight of Chairman Mao in Tiananmen Square. Having that kind of power over people is, without doubt, intoxicating.

The Mormon reality dome allows leaders to direct people's lives under the pretext that they are merely passing on messages from Heavenly Father, the great director in the sky. In the early days of the Church, there was little concern for what outsiders thought. Church leaders were therefore able to design a social structure upon a belief system that pandered to their primal instincts, forcing women to fully and subserviently take on the roles that the leaders wanted them to play. Charles Darwin pondered the lifestyles of primeval man, and his conclusion brings to mind the lives of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young:

Judging from the social habits of man as he now exists, and from most savages being polygamists, the most probable view is that primeval man aboriginally lived in small communities, each with as many wives as he could support and obtain, whom he would have jealously guarded against all other men. Or he may have lived with several wives by himself, like the Gorilla.<sup>73</sup>

More and more, church leaders have been forced to concern themselves with what the rest of the world thinks. As a result, the brethren's rhetoric and the Church's doctrines have gradually changed over the years to become more palatable to gentiles; polygamy was rejected and people of all colors are now allowed membership on equal terms—racist doctrines aside. The result is that most Church members today would be surprised to read at least some of the preceding quotes from Church leaders.

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73. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 1871. This view of primeval life has been disproven by modern anthropological research, which finds serial monogamy to be the most common type of marriage practiced in band and tribal societies.

I believe the greatest motivation for Church leaders today is the reward of being highly revered. After becoming indoctrinated, members stay because they fear losing their eternal salvation, or they fear losing their family, or they fear that leaving the Church would result in unhappiness and misery because they are indoctrinated to believe that that is what would happen, or they fear all of these things at once. Since indoctrinated members will choose to stay anyway, it seems logical that they would have a strong incentive to climb the ladder of Mormon political power. Despite a popular misconception, financial incentives are certainly not the driving force, because for any man to get anywhere near the top of the central hierarchy that runs the Church, he must prove himself through years of devotion, in the form of donated time and money at the local level, where there is no paid ministry.

What is life like for the average member? Life in the Mormon dome cannot be simplistically described as the endurance of psychological and financial exploitation combined with a very rewarding camaraderie with a community of like-minded people who derive a sense of purpose in obeying the commandments. The Mormon community is a social network that welcomes every member with open-armed enthusiasm to every single planned activity—and there is a never-ending supply of planned activities. To people who would normally be left out of, or perhaps ignored at, social gatherings in other types of communities, Mormonism offers a pleasant lifestyle. Teenagers who might be bullied or insulted at school would appreciate feeling fully accepted at all of the well-planned and highly structured Church activities. And if they'd ever miss an activity, Church members would likely go out of their way to tell such teenagers that they were missed.

At the same time, however, the Mormon community can be a source of serious misery for those with traits or personalities that clash with its clearly defined norms of acceptable behavior and its endless list of expectations. Some people are inherently more curious, and therefore develop an unquenchable desire to reconcile modern-day Church statements with previous Church statements, such as those from Brigham Young. Their investigations and questions will be sincere, and will stem from knowing that the brethren, from Joseph Smith to the present-day prophet, are divinely inspired. Therefore they assume that today's Church leaders could only consider their reading the sermons of early Church leaders and reading about early Church doctrine as a good thing. When curious members who follow this path are told to "be careful," many of them realize something isn't quite the way it should be.

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Gay people are also misfits in Mormon culture. If a person is gay, this fact absolutely must be kept secret. Gay Mormons learn to hate themselves. Few are ever accepted by their families for who they are.

Another type of person who doesn't feel entirely comfortable as a Mormon is one who has a strong need to express himself or herself in unique and artistic ways. The repetitive lifestyle of Mormonism that demands conformity of dress and behavior, and major time commitments to Church activities, feels boring and bland to artists and nonconformists.

Leaving the Mormon reality dome usually damages family relationships in painful ways, so people with traits and personalities that clash with the culture suffer whether they stay or go. Sadly, members are taught to believe that Mormonism is right for every single human on the planet—that the Church is perfectly compatible with every person who has all the good traits of human nature. If a person has trouble fitting in, therefore, there is something seriously wrong with that person. If a member is unhappy, unmotivated, or if their life seems meaningless or unfulfilling, then the solution is always the same: they need to be more diligent in obeying the commandments and carrying out their Church duties. This is the only path to happiness, they are told. The irony, however, is that it is the same path that led to their unhappiness.

For better or worse, I am a product of The Mormon Show. It molded me throughout my formative years, and my heritage goes back to its beginning on both sides of my family. What follows is a description of the part I played, a part that strays strikingly far from the script.

# Life Before My Mission

## An Elite Birth

My childhood was as “apple pie” as they come. I grew up in Nebraska with its steamy summers, brittle winters, and those few days of absolute paradise that separate the two. I came into the world five years to the day after Madonna was born, and fourteen years to the day before Elvis died. I’m not sure if that’s auspicious or ominous, but I do know that according to official Mormon doctrine I was one of the privileged elite. I was born white, American, Mormon, and male. My **patriarchal blessing** even tells me I was born “into a Royal Family . . . being a descendent of Abraham.”

My mother lost a lot of blood when I was born. It almost killed her, and that made me extra special: if something comes at a high price, people tend to believe that it’s especially valuable. Because of my supposed greatness, my mother held high expectations for me. Active members with strong testimonies measure success according to a person’s achievements within the Church, and my mother thought I was going straight to the top. “There’s the future president of the Church,” she said, looking down at the precious newborn creature in her arms—a prophecy I was reminded of whenever my behavior warranted it.

It was no trivial claim. The President of the Church is a prophet of God, no different from Abraham, Moses, or Isaiah. It’s the highest position a mortal can hold.

Not long after my return from the hospital, I was given a **baby’s blessing** during a fast and testimony meeting. This blessing officially gave me my name, which was then recorded in the Church’s records. I was blessed by my father, who was assisted by other Melchizedek Priesthood holders.

Baby’s blessings look rather like a group huddle at a basketball game, but the men involved are all wearing suits and ties rather than jerseys and trunks, and their palms are facing upward instead of downward. The baby lies atop their collected palms and is rocked up and down to keep it calm and quiet. When this doesn’t work, and it often doesn’t, the baby’s cries flood the

**chapel** through a microphone that is held up to the blesser's mouth by one of his assistants.

I was now officially a member on record. I had to strive to be “perfect” and “Christ-like” and was supposed to feel guilty each time I inevitably fell short. A lot was expected of me, but I had good and loving parents, so this didn't translate into parental pressure—it merely set up my parents for great disappointment.

We went to church every Sunday without fail. Before each meal we folded our arms across our chests, closed our eyes, and bowed our heads while one of us said the **blessing**. We frequently had family prayers, which were almost always given down on our knees, either facing each other in a circle, or with each of us leaning with our elbows resting on a chair. On Mondays, we had family home evening, which included prayers and a church-related lesson.

When I turned eight, I was baptized in our church's baptismal font, a large, rectangular, box-shaped tub that descended below floor level. There was a small room in front of the font with enough space for about twenty people to view the baptism. The room and font were positioned between the men's and women's bathrooms, and stairs led from each bathroom down into the font from either side. When it was almost time, my father and I went into the bathroom and changed into white trousers and white shirts.

Barefoot and looking like angels, my father and I descended the steps into the font, which was like walking down the steps of a swimming pool. There was a bathtub-type faucet near the top of one of the font's walls that, if I recall correctly, had to run for about an hour before each baptism. The water was a nice, warm temperature. It went almost up to my chest. My father put his left arm around my shoulders and raised his right arm, as one does when being sworn into political office, or at a court of law. Then he said, “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” Holding me with both his hands, he gently pushed me backward and submerged me entirely.

From the first breath I took upon emerging from the waters of baptism, I was held accountable for everything I said and did. At least that's what I was taught, and in a very serious manner, but at that age kids will be kids. My behavior didn't change, and I went on doing typical boy things, such as liberating frogs from creek banks and introducing them to the luxury of a cardboard box. I later progressed from doing typical boy things to doing typical teenager things. But Mormons don't want their kids to be typical; they want

them to be peculiar, which means that they want them to be unusually religious and righteous.<sup>1</sup>

Had I grown up in one of the largely (or entirely) LDS communities in Utah or Idaho, I would have had a real “Truman Show” upbringing, and perhaps I never would have strayed from being “peculiar.” But my indoctrination did not take place in isolation. I was exposed to the real world with all its wonderful temptations, and from the ages of twelve to sixteen, my behavior and desires conformed more to the wilder sides of the 1970s American youth culture than to the Church’s ideals of strong faith and strict obedience.

That doesn’t mean my indoctrination failed. My upbringing “had laid a foundation that [I] could reject, perhaps, but not ignore.” The Church had become “an integral part of [me, which was something that had to] be dealt with. A child so taught will never be the same!”<sup>2</sup> Even though I had submitted to peer pressure that caused me to wander away, my indoctrination ensured my eventual, prodigal-son return. After a few years of wandering off the straight and narrow path that leads to God’s kingdom, I made a sudden, dramatic change. I began to wholeheartedly play the role of a believer in The Mormon Show—something all faithful members with rebellious children dream about.

### In the Wake of the Sixties

The ‘60s was a time when future presidents and legislators—and it would be unfair to the respected field of journalism if I didn’t mention Sam Donaldson and his colleagues—smoked marijuana. Bill Clinton said he never inhaled, and when Sam heard what Bill said, he made sure everyone knew that he himself did inhale.

As a young teenager, I had thick, flowing red hair that reached to my shoulders, and I regularly broke the Word of Wisdom. With nothing much to do growing up amid the fields of wheat, corn, and sorghum in Nebraska, it should come as no surprise that in the wake of the ‘60s I began smoking pot

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1. “The Latter-day Saints are expected to be a peculiar people, because of their lives and examples; and they are expected to preach the Gospel by example, if they are not always called upon to preach by precept.”

—Apostle Francis M. Lyman, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, October 9, 1892, p. 162.

“. . . that we might become . . . a peculiar people—peculiar only in that we keep the commandments of God and work righteousness upon the earth.”

—President Joseph F. Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 3, July 16, 1893, pp. 310–311.

2. “Train Up a Child,” by John W. and Marjorie E. Hasler, *Ensign*, April 1999, p. 50.

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in the sixth grade. My friends and I hoped that the tetra-hydro-cannabinol it contained would affect our minds, and to our delight it worked every time.

We were young boys who called each other “man” and got “fried” smoking weed imported from Mexico. Adopting the working class image designed by the marketers at the Miller Brewing Company, we also had our “Miller Times.” Rather than immediately following tough work shifts, however, our Miller Times came whenever we could get someone’s older brother to buy us some beer.

An eight-year-old Jewish boy lived in our neighborhood. When I was in junior high, he would come running over to my friend's house after school with a tiny handful of Thai stick that he'd gotten from his kitchen fridge, which was where his father kept his stash. The boy then smoked it with us, but, like Clinton, he never inhaled. He didn't seem to care for it, and was probably only in it for the pats on his back and the high fives he got each time he ran over with a tightly clenched fistful of the good stuff. This was part of a rebellious, peer-conforming phase of mine that lasted until I saw the light at the age of sixteen, when Heavenly Father, through the Holy Ghost, told me to stop.

My consumption of marijuana and alcohol was taken much more seriously by my parents and myself than it was by my **nonmember** friends. I therefore guarded the secret of my smoking and drinking with religious vigor, and whenever I was among members I dutifully behaved as I was expected to. There's a joke that says it's all right to go fishing with two Mormons but not one, because one Mormon will drink all your beer. Mormons who don't live the **gospel** (often referred to as **Jack Mormons**) are careful to keep their sins out of view of other Mormons who may spread the news back to fellow Church members. I hid my sins and partook of the sacrament unworthily, which is typical of young Mormon kids who participate in worldly sins.

Short of running away from home, there is little if anything that a sinful child of active Mormon parents can do to avoid going through the motions of being a believing Mormon. So throughout my childhood I was an active participant in the organization; I went to church every single Sunday and attended other church activities during the week. I dutifully attended all my bishop **interviews**; and I lied. When I turned twelve, I was **ordained** a **deacon** in the Aaronic Priesthood and started blessing and passing the sacrament. At fourteen, I was ordained a **teacher**.

None of my church participation was by choice, but there were attempts to make me believe it was. One Sunday, for instance, I asked my mother if I

had to go to Primary. “You’re old enough to decide that for yourself,” she said. That got my attention. I wasn’t sure how to respond. I was ten years old at the time, and I did feel old enough to decide this for myself. As her words sunk in, I felt pleasantly surprised about the control I seemed to have suddenly been granted over my own church attendance.

“I decide not to go,” I said.

She smiled kindly and said, “You made the wrong decision. Now get dressed.”

Like all good parents, my mother did her very best to persuade me to want the things she believed were good for me. She was no different from those parents who try patiently and creatively to get their children to enjoy doing homework and eating vegetables. But I, like most normal children, wasn’t easily convinced. And my mother, like most parents, resorted to making me understand the inevitable: you’ll be happier if you like it, but like it or not, you’re going to do it.

Freedom and happiness in Mormonism are connected to obedience and belief; it is a concept that compels Mormon youth to become true believers. Church leaders don’t merely want people to obey—they want them to desire to be obedient. A time tested technique for accomplishing this is to make members feel uncomfortable, and therefore unhappy, if they break any of the Church’s commandments.

During a talk,<sup>3</sup> Elder Jack H. Goaslind of the Presidency of the Seventy quoted a scripture from the *Book of Mormon* that all Mormons know by heart: “Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). Of course “wickedness” is defined as breaking any of Heavenly Father’s commandments, so Elder Goaslind was just stating the obvious when he went on to say, “The commandments are guides to happiness.” Mormon indoctrination makes members believe that people who don’t follow the Church’s commandments are neither truly free nor truly happy.

This concept is nothing new. Religious leaders throughout history have said that when people learn to desire doing whatever God commands, they will be happy and free. Confucius said, “At [the age of] seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right.” Rulon Jeffs, the former leader of the notorious **Fundamentalist** Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, said, “I want to

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3. “Happiness,” by Jack H Goaslind, *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 52.

tell you that the greatest freedom you can enjoy is in obedience.”<sup>4</sup> And even mainstream Mormons can tell you exactly who Rulon wanted his community of believers to obey: Rulon Jeffs.

My mom was patient with me, knowing in her heart that my rebel phase would end someday, and that I would eventually mend my ways, cut my Samson-length hair, and serve a mission for the Church. She was right about everything; I abandoned my wicked ways to walk the less contentious road of belief. Deep down I “knew,” like all Mormons do, that it was the only path to freedom and happiness, something that was strongly reinforced on the 26th of June 1979, the day I received my **patriarchal blessing**.

The stake patriarch laid his hands on my head and, “by the authority of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood,” told me that before I came to this earth I had covenanted to fulfill certain responsibilities. I had made these covenants with both Heavenly Father and my “earthly parents.” The patriarch said, “you must make the choice from this point forth as to what your course will be.” If I did what the brethren said I was supposed to do, I would “preside over branches of the Church” and would “be able to handle [weighty matters] as the Lord would handle them were He here to take care of them Himself.” The patriarch also said, “the windows of Heaven will be opened and pour out upon you.”

Those blessings would only come to me if I were obedient, however. The patriarch warned that disobedience “would destroy you and deny you that blessing which would otherwise be yours. For with that same degree of illumination that can come to you by the Spirit of the Lord, in the opposite direction darkness and confusion would be yours if you do not follow the path of righteousness.” My patriarchal blessing made it very clear that there was no middle road for me. I was either going to have the windows of heaven opened to me, or I was going suffer darkness and confusion to that “same degree.”

The patriarch recorded the blessing and a hard copy was later typed up for me to keep and refer to. My own personal promises and threats from God had thus been canonized, and I was encouraged to read and ponder it often.

## My Conversion and Testimony

Sooner or later, like all indoctrinated children of active LDS parents, I had to decide which direction to take regarding the Church. It was “an inte-

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4. Quoted in *Under the Banner of Heaven*, by Jon Krakauer, p. 12.

gral part of [me that] must be dealt with.” I doubt any child of active member parents has escaped being converted to one degree or another. The only real questions about conversion are, How strongly? At what age? and, Will it stick? For me it came very strongly at the age of sixteen, and it stuck hard—for about five years, with effects that lingered for at least a decade beyond that.<sup>5</sup>

It’s not surprising that I had a strong conversion at a relatively early age. I had better-than-average experiences growing up in the Church. Even throughout my rebellious, long-haired phase I was well accepted and liked by members of all ages. I had a personality that the Mormon culture rewards. I was outgoing, humorous, confident, and a relatively good speaker compared to many of my church-going peers. I was the son of well-liked, respected parents, both of whom almost always held at least one calling or another. My dad even served as our ward bishop for a time.

I had the right type of personality, so it was not difficult for me to fit comfortably into the Church’s culture; as well, outright rejection of it would have made my home life very unpleasant. On top of that, my deep rooted indoctrination made me feel guilty and scared about my sins at the subconscious level. All things considered, it seems only natural that my intense Mormon indoctrination would cause me to ultimately reject mainstream American youth culture. Conforming to the expectations of my parents and the Church made life easier because it eliminated the guilt, fear, and contention I experienced as a sinner. The family contentions were minor in my case because I had exceptional parents, but I implicitly understood there would be problems if I never converted.

My conversion took place soon after I was ordained a **priest**. That sounds like an impressive title, but it’s just the natural progression of all sixteen-year-old male Mormons who pass the **interview** with their bishop—whether honestly or not. My conversion was a watershed event that changed my life profoundly. I grew up surrounded by people literally testifying to me over and over that they knew the Church was true. Nevertheless, I still had to find out for myself. I needed a testimony of my own. I had to know for myself that all of it was true.

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5. I’m talking about religious belief only; culturally, I will always be a Mormon and will always feel most at home and in tune with other Americans raised as Mormons. Ironically, the religious beliefs of Mormons prevent many of them from having a close and meaningful relationship with someone like myself, which is why there is a community of ex-Mormons. We associate with each other to replace the relationships we’ve lost.

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A person could go about this by studying empirical historical evidence from reasonably objective sources. He or she could also look at obviously subjective sources with varying and conflicting opinions in an attempt to understand all the differing views and biases. That is what a rational person would do. But I was raised inside the Mormon dome, so studying it in that way never crossed my mind. I had been taught early on that the only reliable evidence about the Church—in fact the only evidence at all worth looking at—comes from the Church itself. This evidence can be undeniably confirmed, not through logical, deductive reasoning, but by the emotional feelings we were taught from early childhood to recognize as being from the Holy Ghost.

Having been born and raised in the culture, I understood these methods of acquiring knowledge very well, so I knew exactly what to do. I fasted for three days; I went seventy-two hours without a single bite of food. At the end of the fast I saw a miraculous change in my appearance: I had lost weight. That wasn't the miracle I was searching for, though, so before concluding my ritual fast—a process that purifies the body and brings one closer to God—I prayed and asked for an answer as to whether or not the Church was true. And it came. I now had a testimony. It was that quick, that simple, and that inevitable.

The natural result of gaining a testimony—one part of the giant package—was that I was going to serve a mission. It was a commandment. I understood this before I fasted, which meant I knew I would be sacrificing two years of my life for the Church. The outcome of my fast, therefore, was not trivial. Besides a two-year mission, I would also have to start living my life according to the dos and don'ts of Mormonism. Mormon kids regularly attend bishop interviews, where they are specifically asked about their compliance to the rules.

Church leaders were all boys themselves once, so they are able to give practical advice to the next generation of testosterone-filled, alpha-male candidates. They advised us to “avoid pornography like the plague,” and when dirty thoughts appeared in our young minds (there was no pretending they wouldn't), they told us to replace them with wholesome thoughts by, for example, reciting a verse of scripture or humming the tune of a hymn. Pornography and lascivious thoughts were the kindling and match that lit the fire of masturbation, and that was a horrendous, guilt-inducing no-no. The advice Mormon leaders give for avoiding masturbating is impressively creative. One of the classics, tying one's hand to a copy of the *Book of Mormon*,

most probably works for boys who aren't ambidextrous, but if they use a hardback copy, they risk turning an itchy nose into a bloody one when they instinctively reach to scratch it in the middle of the night.

I was required to confess to my bishop any infractions of the commandments. These confessions were, and still are, conducted face to face. The same was, and is, true for girls; and there are no female bishops. Unlike Catholic confession, in which people only confess what they choose to confess, questions about masturbating and other "sins" are specifically asked of children beginning at the age of twelve. (If not specifically asked, then questions about sexual behaviors and thoughts are asked indirectly with questions such as "Are you morally clean?" or "Do you ever have impure thoughts?" Interviews vary from bishop to bishop.) For some, this is how they first learn what the word masturbation means. The only way to forego the confession of this natural act, therefore, is to lie—taking the fifth is not an option.

When my father was bishop, he was responsible for conducting these interviews. He didn't seem to like having to ask me if I masturbated any more than I liked being asked. I clearly remember a time when he interviewed me while we were sitting in our car parked outside a McDonald's. After asking everything else that he was required to ask me, he nonchalantly said, "And you don't masturbate or anything like that, do you?" I had the feeling he wanted me to just say "no," and then we could go get our Big Macs and be done with it. Of course I complied.

There is something even worse for Mormon boys than the embarrassment of confessing a bout of masturbation to their dad or to another grown man wearing a suit and a tie: guilt, the incredible, pent-up self-loathing that makes a person's whole body weak, and his mind foggy and confused, guilt that makes it impossible to look in the mirror without despising what one sees.

My psychology professor at BYU told us that, according to studies based on private surveys, ninety-seven per cent of males have masturbated. And in his opinion the remaining three per cent were suffering from memory loss when they filled out their surveys. So if masturbation is not a question of *if*, but rather *how often*, then guilt is not a question of *if*, but *how much*.<sup>6</sup> Mormon culture increases the guilt by holding up the supposedly exception-

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6. This guilt is not only caused by proactive sins. Just believing that you don't live up to God's standards, which is practically a given in Mormonism, can depress a person. I was never comfortable looking in the mirror until I rid myself of that large baggage of guilt that very many Mormons feel, which is something that took me several years after my departure to do. This type of guilt is difficult to understand unless it is experienced first hand.

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al boys (who don't really exist) as ideal role models that one must try to emulate.

Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, spoke during the Priesthood session of the April 1975 general conference. In his talk, entitled "A Self-Inflicted Purging," he said:

We shouldn't have a problem with masturbation. I know one fine father who interviewed his 11-year-old son and he said, "Son, if you never masturbate, the time will come in your life when you will be able to sit in front of your bishop at age 19, and say to him, 'I have never done that in my life,' and then you can go to the stake president when you are interviewed for your mission and tell him, 'I have never done that in my life.'" . . .

The father again interviewed the young man, who is now 18 years old, and he asked the son about masturbation. The son said, "I have never done that in my life . . ."

My Psychology 101 professor at BYU was a kind man, who was of course well educated in the field of psychology. Since all BYU professors are Church members, he clearly understood the culture, and therefore had well-informed, professionally based opinions about the psychological effects of growing up in the Church. Possibly, he was trying to counter some of these effects when he told us that masturbation was natural and common, and that we should feel grateful for having sexual urges and properly functioning sexual organs. He told us it meant we could live normal, happy lives. It's sad to know that there are university students who need to hear that.

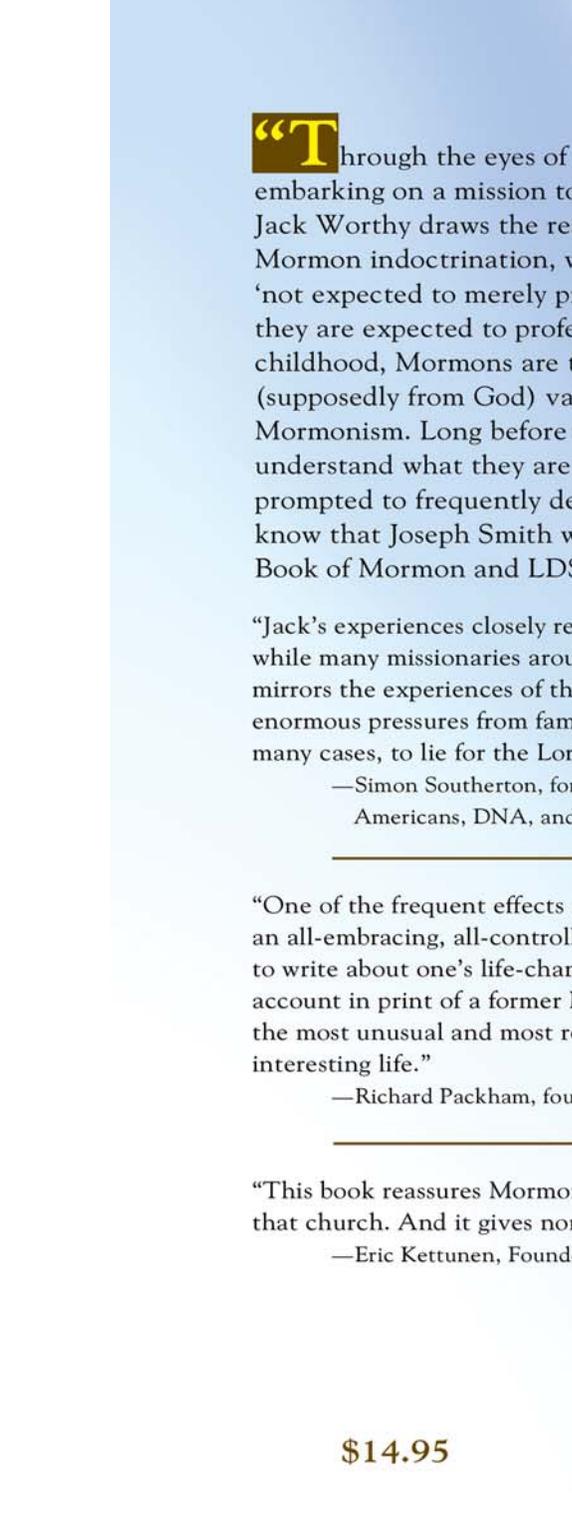
Considering my lifelong indoctrination, the result of my fast was inevitable—despite the implications. If I had received no answer from the Holy Ghost, I would have remained stuck in limbo without having resolved that "integral part of [me that] must be dealt with." And if I had concluded the Church to be false, there would have been serious difficulties at home. A dependent, sixteen-year-old Mormon cannot expect his or her parents to accept such a conclusion without their applying plenty of pressure to go back and ask the Lord again and again until the right answer is reached.

Ultimately, the easiest choice for LDS children is to discover that the Church is true, and they subconsciously know it. Many Mormon boys miraculously gain strong testimonies just before they are to serve their mandatory missions. This enables them to survive the sacrifice of two years of their lives.

My conversion was not a complete sacrifice. It wasn't entirely about making commitments and avoiding unpleasantness. The pleasant aspects of

Mormon culture (at least in my case) made being a believer pretty good on the whole. In fact, whenever I felt that I was in good standing with Heavenly Father, life was hard to beat. I felt totally at peace with myself. If I paid my tithes, attended all my Church meetings and activities, and abstained from clearly defined sins, then I believed I was fulfilling every one of my moral obligations as a human being.

I didn't have to fret about my hungry contemporaries at home and abroad, or the economically and politically oppressed; they resided outside of my jurisdiction. I was encouraged to feel sorry for them, but not to feel any sense of social, political or economic solidarity. And I knew that later, as a missionary, my duty would be to help people in one way and one way only: save their souls by converting them to Mormonism. I knew that ultimately that was all anyone in the world really needed.



**T**hrough the eyes of a young man embarking on a mission to Hong Kong, Jack Worthy draws the reader into the world of Mormon indoctrination, where the faithful are ‘not expected to merely profess belief or faith; they are expected to profess knowledge.’ From childhood, Mormons are taught that warm feelings (supposedly from God) validate the truths of Mormonism. Long before they are old enough to understand what they are saying, LDS children are prompted to frequently declare in public that they know that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that the Book of Mormon and LDS Church are true.

“Jack’s experiences closely resemble my own as I struggled with feelings of inadequacy while many missionaries around me claimed an emotional hot line to God. Jack’s story mirrors the experiences of thousands of young Mormon missionaries dealing with the enormous pressures from family and church leaders to conform, to shun doubt and, in many cases, to lie for the Lord.”

—Simon Southerton, former Mormon bishop and author of “Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church”

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“One of the frequent effects of leaving the religion of one’s youth—especially if it is an all-embracing, all-controlling religion such as Mormonism—is the burning desire to write about one’s life-changing experience. Jack’s story is by no means the only account in print of a former Mormon missionary’s apostasy. But it is certainly one of the most unusual and most readable. You are about to share a glimpse into a very interesting life.”

—Richard Packham, founder Ex-Mormon Foundation

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“This book reassures Mormons that life will be much better outside the confines of that church. And it gives non-Mormons a fascinating glimpse inside the cult.”

—Eric Kettunen, Founder, “Recovery from Mormonism” ([www.exmormon.org](http://www.exmormon.org))

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