

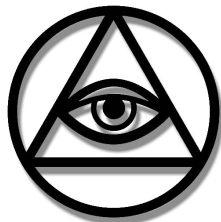
Cults and Other “Gospels”

Recognizing and Understanding the Differences



Cults and Other “Gospels”

- ◆ **Remember our definition of a “cult”**
 - ◆ I've recommended six questions to ask yourself about any religious groups that seem at least potentially suspicious to you...
 1. Does the group have a prophet/founder who is revered by followers and claims to have *special* revelation from God or from angels?
 2. Are there authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to* or *instead of* the Bible?
 3. Does the group view itself as the one *true* church, founded because the *true* gospel was lost in the early centuries of the church?
 4. What does the group believe regarding the Trinity? Is Jesus fully God, the second person of the Trinity? Is the Holy Spirit fully God, the third person of the Trinity?
 5. How does the group believe we are *saved*? By grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ, or by faith plus good works?
 6. What belief does the group hold regarding life after death? What is its concept of Heaven and Hell?



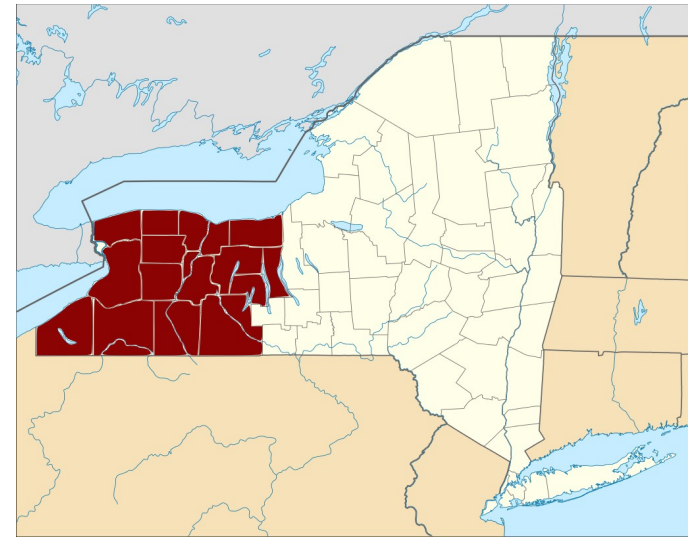
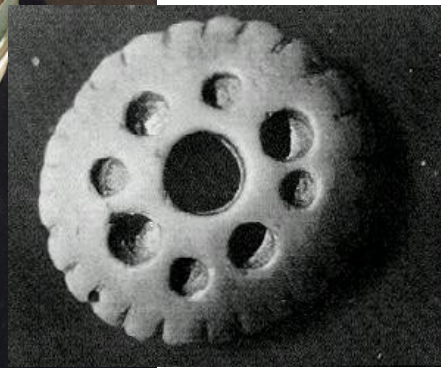
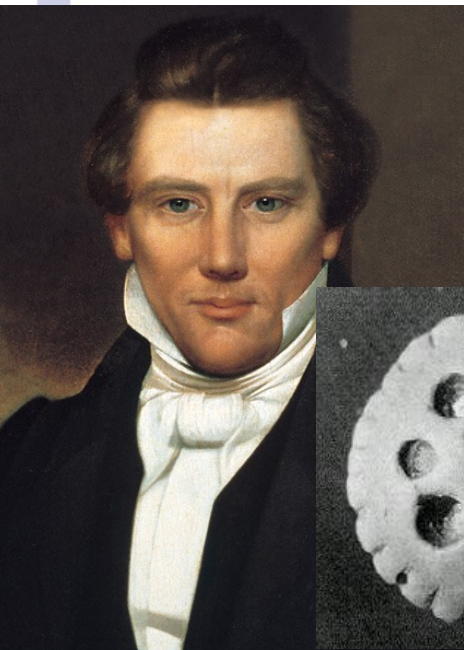
Cults and Other “Gospels”

- ♦ Introduction to Cults
- ♦ Peoples Temple
- ♦ **The Mormons**



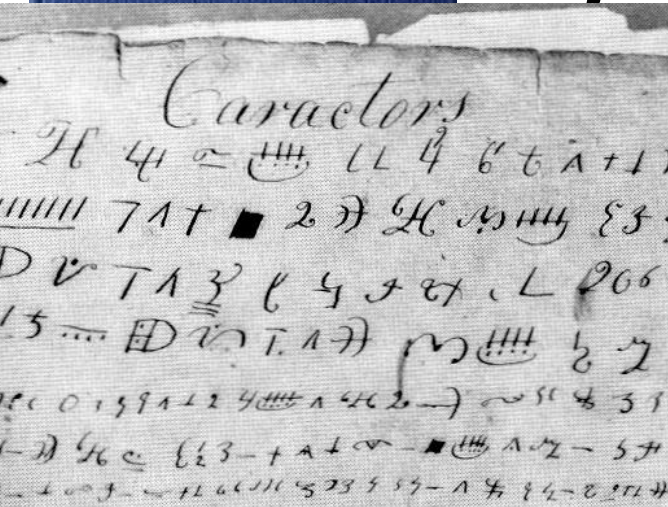
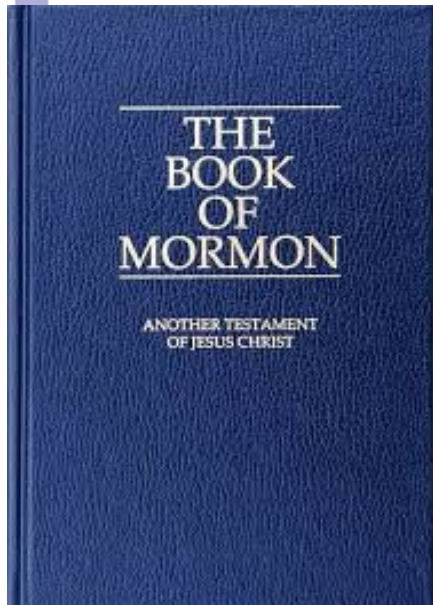
Mormons

- ♦ **Let's go through our six questions...**
 - ♦ **Who is their founder?**
 - ♦ **Joseph Smith, who was born in Vermont in 1805 but grew up in west New York's "burnt district"**
 - ♦ **He and his father were famous in the area for being paid to use their "peep stones" to find buried treasure for people in the forest (even though he was sued at least *twice* for fraud, and forced to admit under oath that "he could not see in a stone now, nor never could; and that his former pretensions in that respect were all false. He then promised to give up his old habits of digging for money and looking into stones...")**



Mormons

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 - ◆ **He and his father were famous in the area for being paid to use their "peep stones" to find buried treasure for people in the forest**
 - ◆ **But in 1820, he was visited by God the Father and Jesus Christ, who informed him that every existing Christian church was false and corrupt**
 - ◆ **Later, the angel Moroni appeared to him and told him to use his "peep stone" to find and dig up a series of golden plates which Moroni had buried in New York 1,200 years before, when he was still just a human, Jewish prophet**
 - ◆ **Once translated from their original Reformed Egyptian, the plates gave Smith the text that became the *Book of Mormon* —another authoritative Scripture that would help Smith found a *true* church in these latter days...**



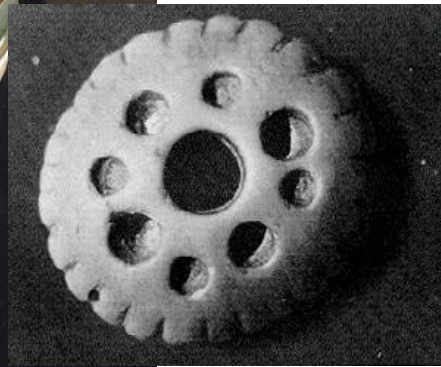
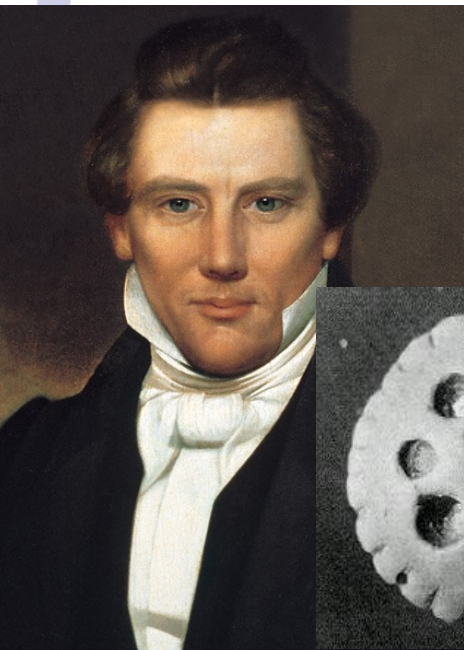
Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ So how did a relatively uneducated man like Smith translate the Reformed Egyptian, if trained Egyptologists didn't even have a clue about it?
 - ♦ He used his “peep stone” technology again and translated the plates using magic “spectacles” made by looking through “peep stones” called the Urim and the Thummim...

(NOTE: These stones were actually in the Bible as part of the High Priest's breastplate—and some versions of 1 Samuel 14:41 suggest that they may have been used a bit like “flipping a coin” is today in order to discern God's will)

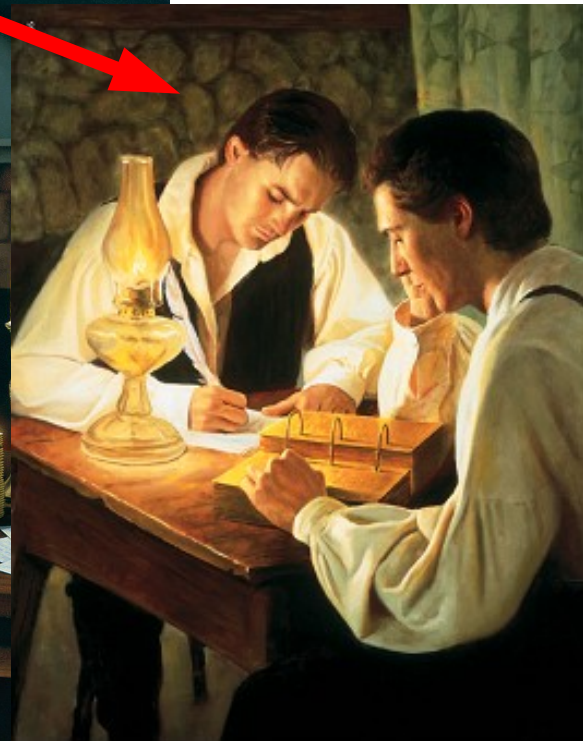
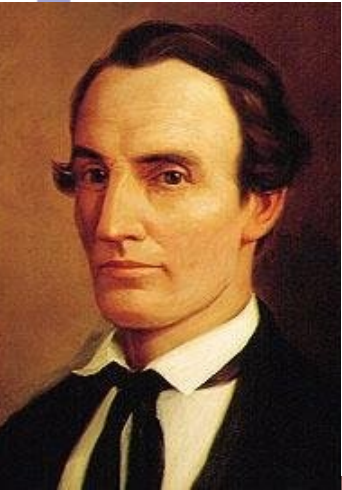


Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ But though a lot of Mormon art shows Joseph poring over the plates to translate them, that's not the way that he actually said that it happened
- ♦ Instead, he dictated them to his good friend, Oliver Cowdery, who faithfully transcribed Smith's words... but not like this...



Mormons

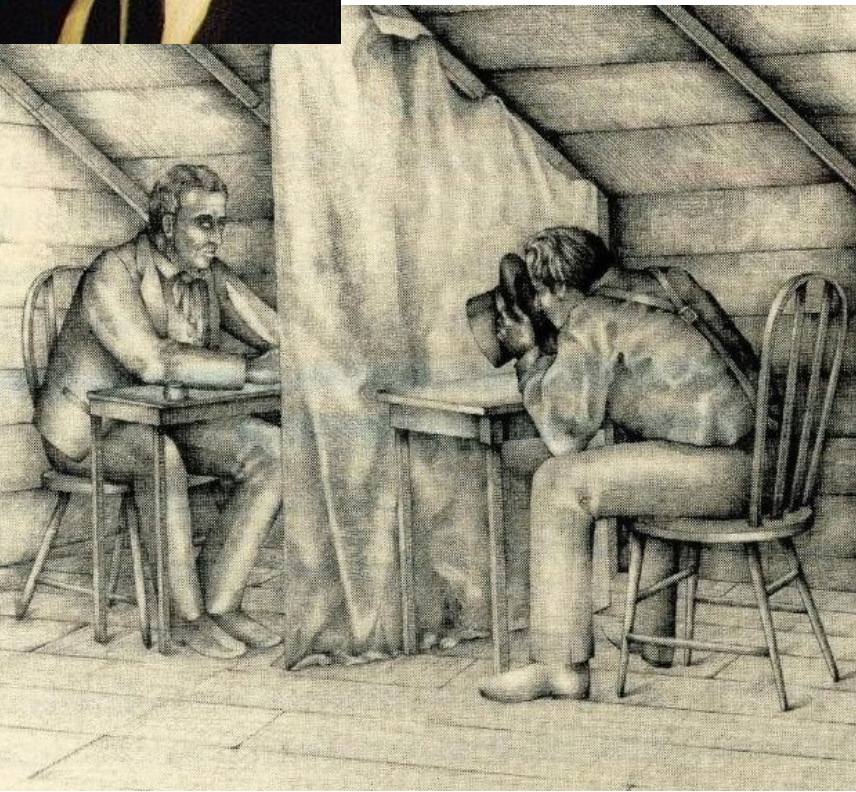
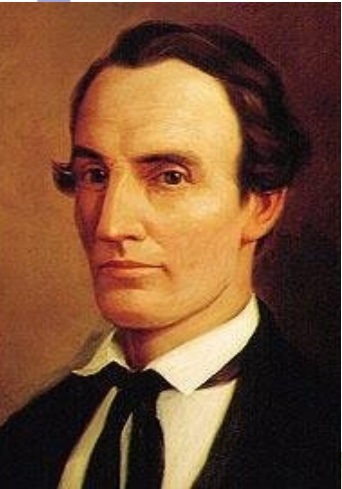


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- ♦ Instead, he dictated them to his good friend, Oliver Cowdery, who faithfully transcribed Smith's words... but not like this...
- ♦ Instead, a sheet separated Cowdery and Smith so that only Smith could ever actually see the plates

(NOTE: A handful of people testified on oath that they did actually, personally see the physical plates themselves... though all of them later either recanted or tweaked their oaths and/or left the Mormon church...)

- ♦ (For instance, Smith's friend Martin Harris later admitted that he actually “never saw the plates with his *natural eyes*, only in *vision* or *imagination*”)

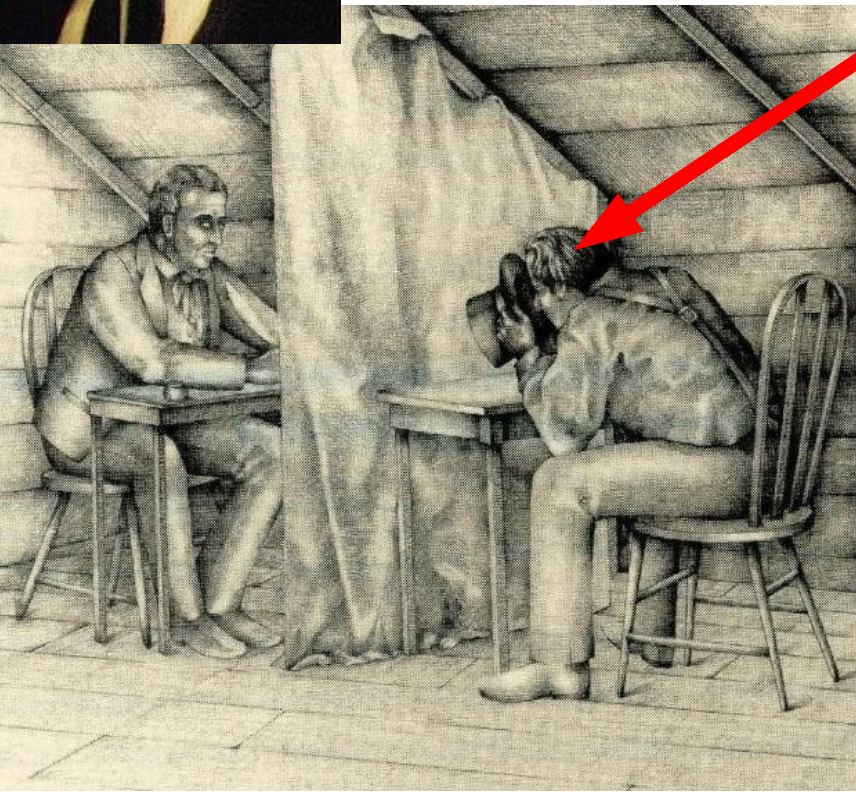
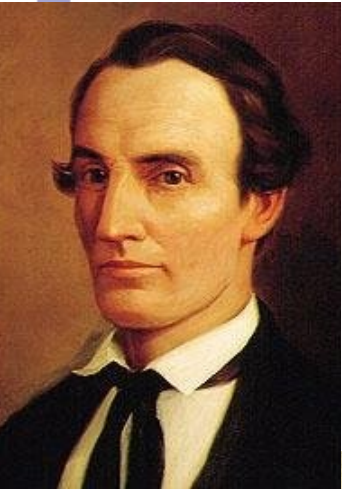


Mormons



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“Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe... Thus the *Book of Mormon* was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.” —David Whitmer in *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (1887)

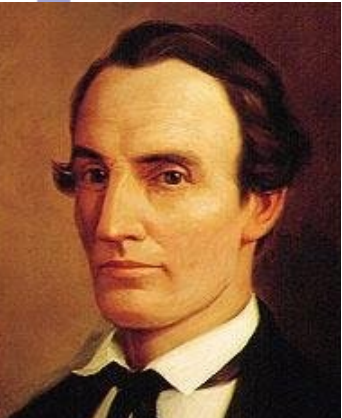


Mormons



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“Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat...”

- ◆ Interestingly, Smith loaned the first transcribed 116 pages to Martin Harris so that Harris could show them to his wife... who then promptly *lost* all 116 pages...
 - ◆ But instead of just simply divinely re-translating those pages again, Smith decided that if he tried to do so, evil men would alter the original pages and then deliver them up as specious “proof” that Smith had just made it all up

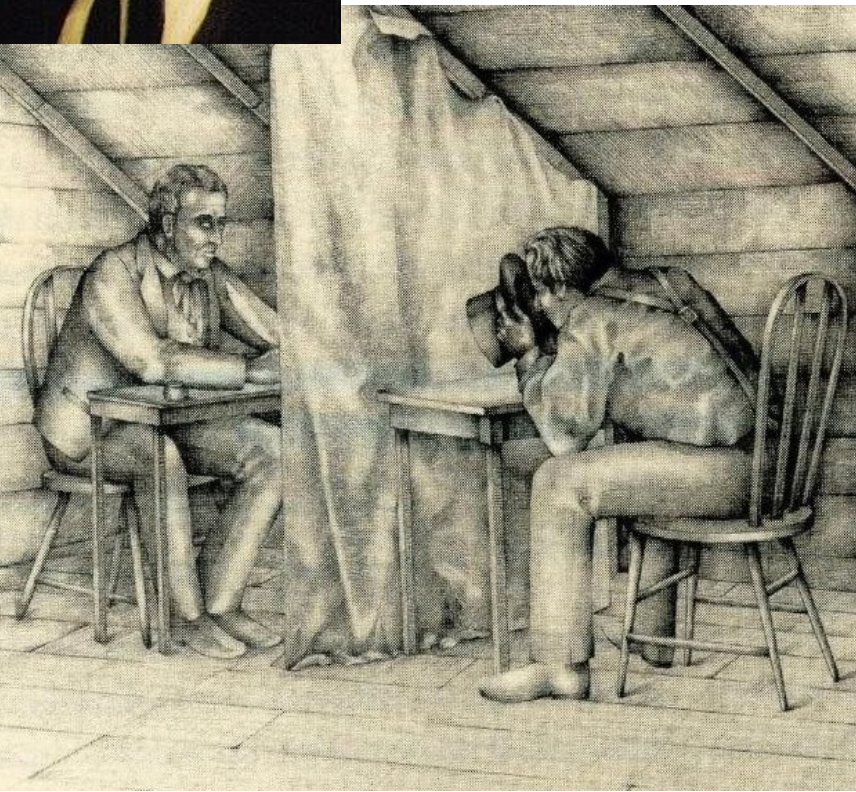
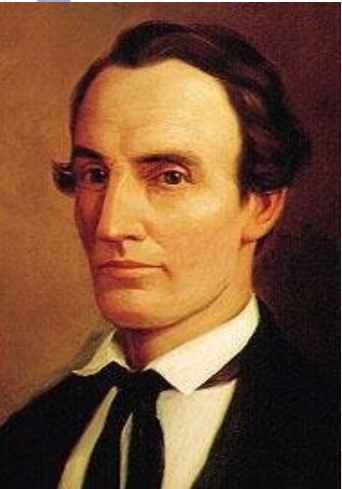


Mormons



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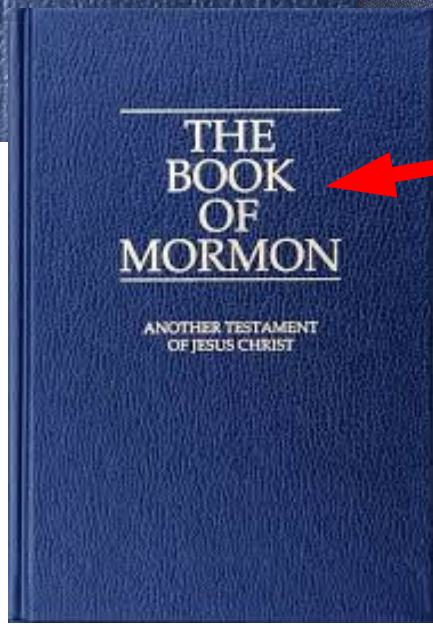
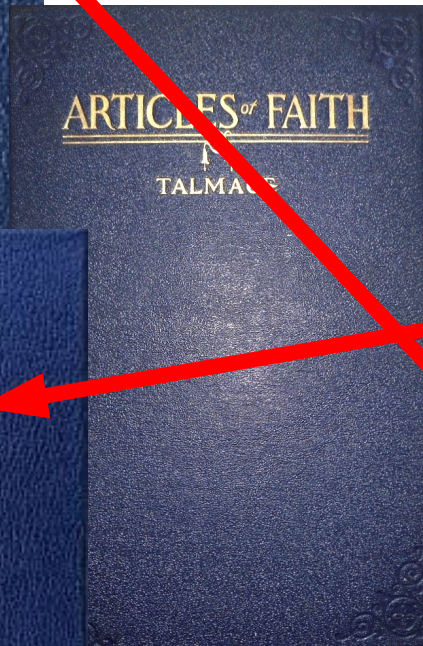
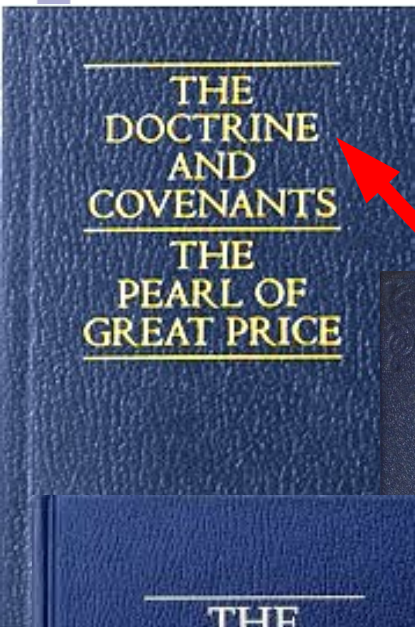
“Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat...”

- ❖ Interestingly, Smith loaned the first transcribed 116 pages to Martin Harris so that Harris could show them to his wife... who then promptly *lost* all 116 pages...
- ❖ Note that to Mormons, it's crucial that the *Book of Mormon* is not only divinely *inspired*, but also divinely *translated*
 - ❖ This is why the *Book of Mormon* is more to be trusted than the Bible itself—because there was no taint of human interpretation to its creation whatsoever



Mormons

- ◆ Let's go through our six questions...
 - ◆ Do they have any authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to or instead of* the Bible?
 - ◆ *The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, The Pearl of Great Price, Articles of Faith, etc.*
 - ◆ The problem is, once you start “tweaking” the **T**ruth, then you kind of have to *keep* tweaking it, because your tweaks don't hold up under scrutiny since you've damaged **T**ruth's structural integrity
 - ◆ So, a series of new prophecies and pronouncements have emerged over the years to subtly and/or significantly *change* Mormonism here and there
 - ◆ For instance, in the *Book of Mormon's* Jacob 2:24, God actively castigates kings David and Solomon for having “many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me” while in the later Doctrine and Covenants 132:39 (after polygamy was solidly established in the church), God declares that, “David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me”

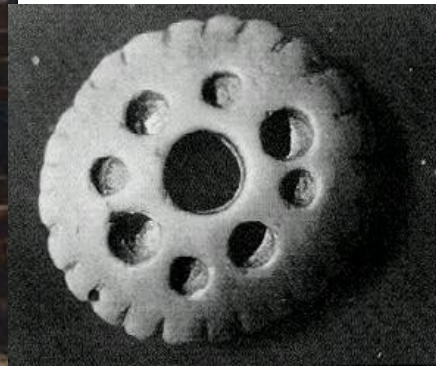


Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ Polygamy was a relatively early doctrine favored by Joseph Smith—he just didn't inform his wife, Emma
- ♦ As early as 1831, he told 12-year-old Mary Rollins that she was destined to be one of his wives
 - ♦ She balked at the idea at first, but Smith informed her that they had been created by God before the beginning of time, and they'd been sexually active together in their Heavenly pre-existence
(NOTE: Mary wasn't the first girl he'd told that to—in 1830, his earlier conduct with the teenaged Stowall girls had come under scrutiny
(back in 1825, when he had unsuccessfully used his “peep” stones to look for a silver mine for their father)



Mormons



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(assuring her that “adultery is no crime”))



Mormons



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Mormons



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(who was staying with the Smith family, and whose bed he would regularly slip into at night)

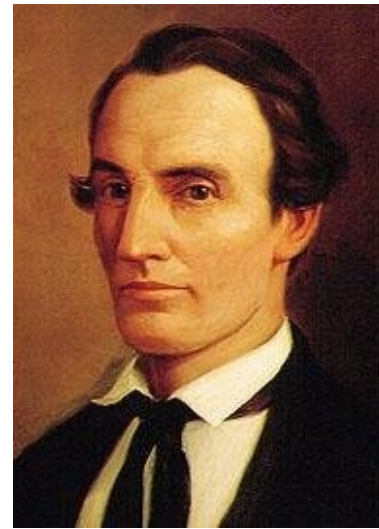


Mormons



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- ♦ As early as 1831, he told 12-year-old Mary Rollins that she was destined to be one of his wives
- ♦ In fact, the only reason that he finally started preaching polygamy was that Emma finally personally found him in bed with teenaged Eliza Partridge
 - ♦ Even Oliver Cowdery confronted Smith in 1837 about the growing allegations of sexual impropriety—and particularly about the eyewitness testimony that Smith had actually been seen having sex with local teenager Fanny Alger in a deserted barn—at which point, Smith excommunicated him
 - ♦ The first two (of nine charges) were:
 - 1) that Cowdery supported lawsuits against church leaders
 - 2) that Cowdery was “seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery”



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

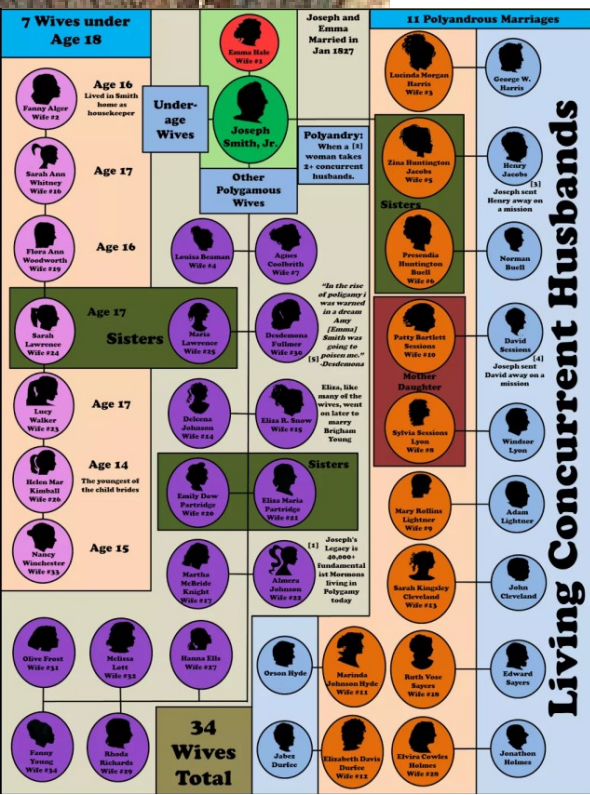
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- ◆ In fact, the only reason that he finally started preaching polygamy was that Emma finally personally found him in bed with teenaged Eliza Partridge
- ◆ In all, Smith had between 27-40 wives, not including the other women and girls that he'd just had sex with



(one third of whom were between ages of 14-20 another one third of whom were already married to someone else... including Smith's friends...)

- ◆ Orson Pratt's wife, Sarah—whom Smith *also* propositioned—once testified,

“Joseph did not think of a marriage or sealing ceremony for many years. He used to state to his intended victims, as he did to me: “God does not care if we have a good time, if only other people do not know it.” He only introduced a marriage ceremony when he had found out that he could not get certain women without it...”

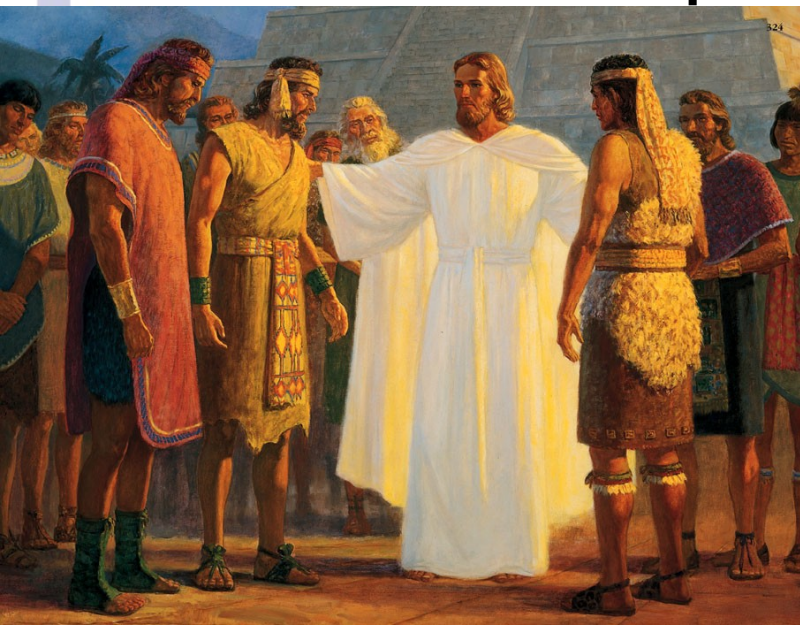


Mormons

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 - ◆ **Do they have any authoritative writings or scriptures *in addition to or instead of* the Bible?**
 - ◆ ***The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, The Pearl of Great Price, Articles of Faith***
 - ◆ **The problem is, once you start “tweaking” the **T**ruth, then you kind of have to *keep* tweaking it, because your tweaks don't hold up under scrutiny**
 - ◆ **But in point of fact, Christians are often surprised to crack open the *Book of Mormon* itself and find very little in it that is truly theologically bizarre (other than Jesus visiting the Nephites after His post-resurrection appearances in Israel)**

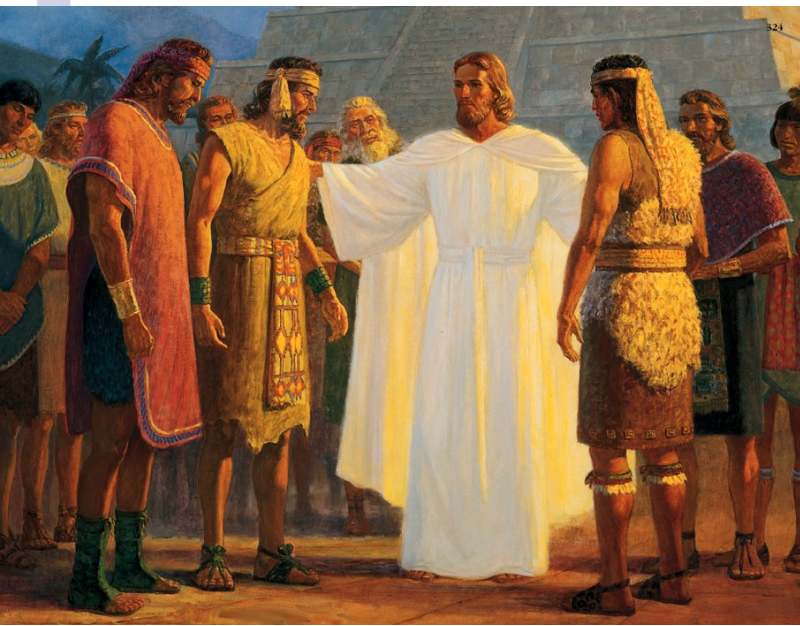
(NOTE: Remember what Mark 16:19 says that Jesus did immediately after meeting with His disciples for the last time?

“After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.”)



Mormons

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Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ For instance, the Book of Mormon speaks of “silks... cattle, oxen, cows... sheep... swine... goats... horses... asses... elephants...” (in Ether 9:17-19), “swords... cimeters [*sic*]... breast-plates... arm-shields... head-plates... armor...” that the Jews made use of in America (in Alma 43:18,19, 16:13 and Ether 15:15)
- ◆ But the Smithsonian has officially countered with, “Thus far no iron, steel, brass, gold and silver coins, metal, swords, breast-plates, arm-shields, armor, horses and chariots, or silk have ever been found in pre-colonial archeological sites...”

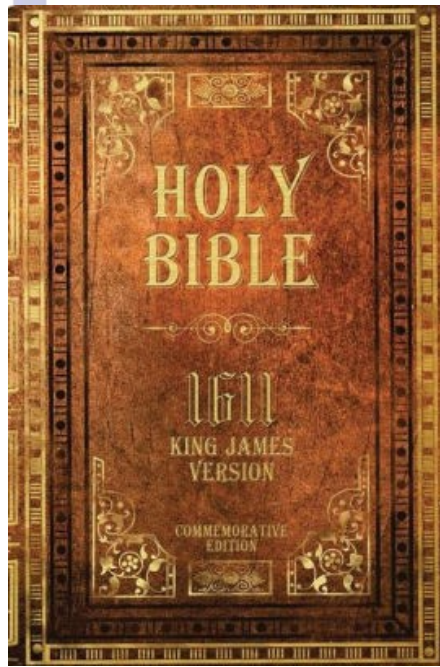
◆ “Furthermore, cattle, sheep, swine, horses and asses, such as we know them, were introduced in the Americas by Europeans in post-Columbian times. No actual elephants have been found in any archeological site.”

◆ As many Christian apologists have rightly noted, no *Biblical* historical data have ever been archaeologically *disproven*, while no *Mormon* historical data have ever been *proven*—including place names, events, etc.



Mormons

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 - ◆ **But in point of fact, Christians are often surprised to crack open the *Book of Mormon* itself and find very little in it that is truly theologically bizarre—instead, it just reads like really bad history and lots of stuff stolen outright from the King James Bible...
... which actually really ends up being a problem, since the King James Bible was translated from Hebrew and Greek in 1611, while the *Book of Mormon* was supposedly translated from Reformed Egyptian in the 1820s, when people just didn't speak Jacobian English like that any more...
... so why would there be whole passages that are translated word-for-word the same...?
(even at those rare points where the KJV was actually *wrong*...?)**

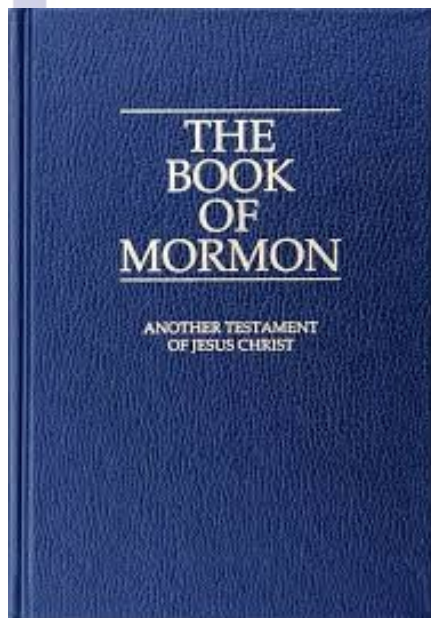


Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ For example, Isaiah 5:25 in original Hebrew says—
“על־כן חרה אפ־יהוה בעמו ויט ידו עליו ויכהו וירגזו ההרים ותהי
נבלתם כסוחה בקרב חוצות בכל־זאת לא־שב אפו ועוד ידו נטויה”
- ◆ And in the King James Version, it says—
“Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”
- ◆ Amazingly, 2 Nephi 15:25 *also* says—
“Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”
- ◆ Two verses, written centuries and continents apart, in different languages, translated *exactly* the same—even though English had changed in 200 years (that's like translating Spanish and Chinese into English the same way, two centuries apart)

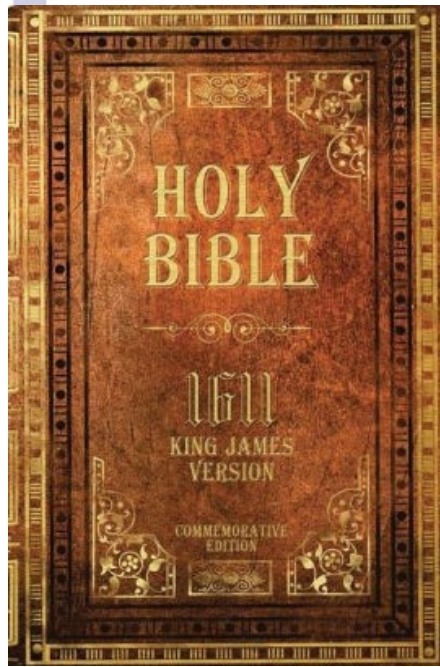


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 - ♦ But the KJV—excellent though it was for its day—struggled to translate an obscure verb in Hebrew though more ancient texts were discovered later on that helped us learn how it *should've* been translated



Mormons



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- ♦ A more literal, linguistically correct version reads—
“On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people, and He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses **lay like refuse** in the middle of the streets. For all this His anger is not spent, but His hand is still stretched out.”
 - ♦ Two verses, written centuries and continents apart, in different languages, translated *exactly* the same—
—even though English had changed in 200 years
—and yet *making the same translation error*
(remember that Spanish-Chinese analogy...?)

HOLY BIBLE
NASB

NEW AMERICAN
STANDARD BIBLE



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

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“על-כן חרה אף-יהוה בעמו ויט ידו עליהם ויכהו וירגזו ההרים ותהי נבלתם כסוּחָה בקרב חוצות בכל-זאת לא-שב אפו ועוד ידו נטויה”
- ◆ Logically, what are our options here?
 - ◆ Was Mormon led astray in his original, “divinely inspired” composition?
(in a language that no expert in the field has ever even heard of)
 - ◆ Was Joseph Smith led astray in his “divinely inspired” translation?
(of golden plates that no one else ever even saw)
 - ◆ Or was Smith just copying whole passages of his King James Bible?
 - ◆ Which option seems the most plausible?
 - ◆ Would it make any difference if I told you that there have been nearly 4,000 changes to the “Divinely-inspired” and “Divinely-translated” *Book of Mormon* since it was first published in 1830?
(NOTE: There have also been thousands of changes to the Doctrine and Covenants since they were first published as well)

THE
DOCTRINE
AND
COVENANTS
THE
PEARL OF
GREAT PRICE

THE
BOOK
OF
MORMON

ANOTHER TESTAMENT
OF JESUS CHRIST



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ One more example from the *Pearl of Great Price*—
- ◆ Sometime around 1835, Joseph Smith bought some ancient papyri from a traveling mummy exhibition

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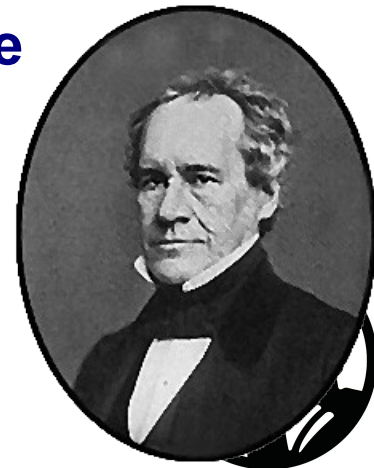
ANOTHER TESTAMENT
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EXPLANATION

- Fig. 1. Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown on his head, representing the Priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven; with the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.
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- Fig. 6. Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.

The facsimile on the left is part of what he had shown to Professor Anthon (who had called it "a singular scrawl" and a total fake)



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- ◆ The facsimile on the left is part of what he had shown to Professor Anthon
- ◆ The facsimile on the right was Smith's drawing of a legitimate papyrus—probably a funerary text
 - ◆ But the “explanation” that Smith gives for it in the *Book of Abraham* is utterly, ridiculously inaccurate



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- ◆ Fig. 1 is supposedly Abraham, sitting on Pharaoh's throne, wearing Pharaoh's crown and holding Pharaoh's scepters “by the politeness of the king,” but the seated figure is clearly the god Osiris (god of the afterlife), and not the patriarch, as can be determined by the style of his headdress and the testimony of the glyphs located above and below
 - ◆ Note also the stylized hawk face, commonly representative of the hawk-god, Horus, becoming the green-faced god, Osiris, at the point of death



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- ◆ Figs. 2 and 4 are not the king and the prince, as the Mormon interpretation says, but are, in fact, *females*
 - ◆ Note their body builds, style of dress, and different sort of eye make-up
 - ◆ Fig. 2 is the goddess Isis (consort of Osiris) and Fig. 4 the goddess Maat (goddess of justice), as can be determined by the unique headpieces worn by those goddesses by which they can always be identified, as well as by the glyphs above them



Mormons



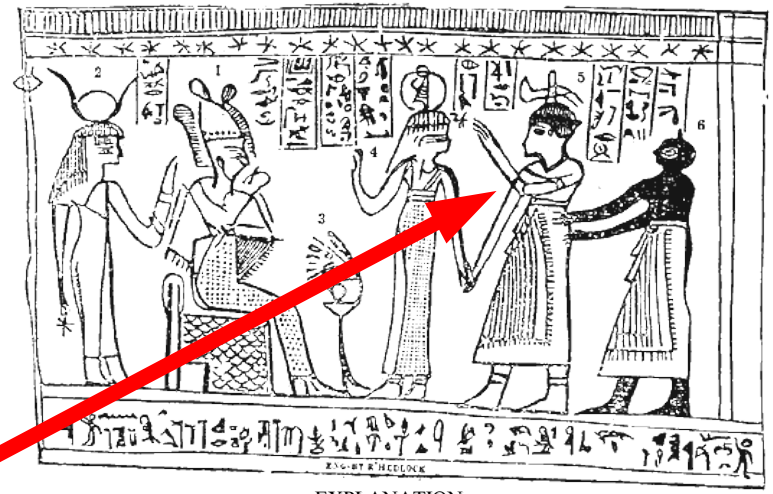
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- ◆ Fig. 5 (being led in by hand by Maat) is not a “waiter” for the king, as Smith proclaims, but rather the deceased person that this papyrus is all about (again, attested to by the glyphs)

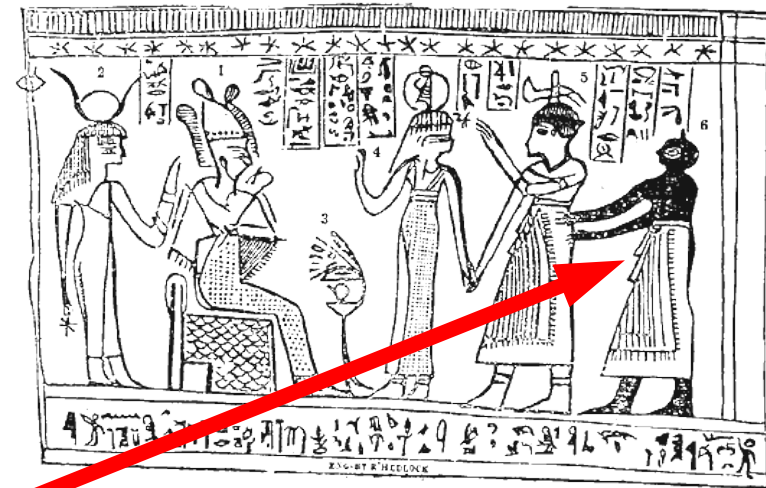
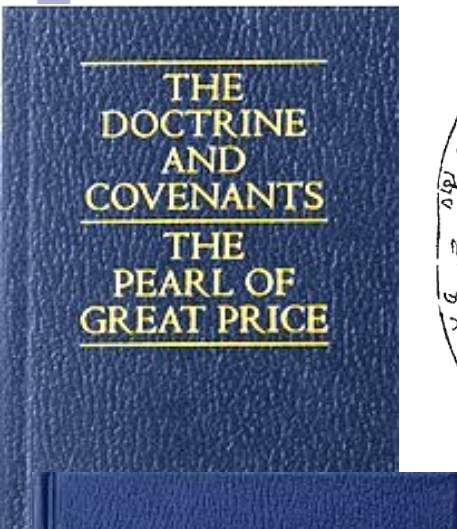


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- ◆ Fig. 6 is not a slave—which Smith just assumed, due to the figure's dark skin—but rather, Anubis (god of death), who was often portrayed either as having the head of a jackal or, in his more human form, as having dark skin (once again, also attested to by the glyphs)

In fact, the odd head structure suggests that Smith's rough drawing may have missed the jackal's head that was originally there...



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- ◆ And yet, all of this is taken by Mormons as authoritative *Scripture*, more trustworthy for eternal salvation than the *Bible*...

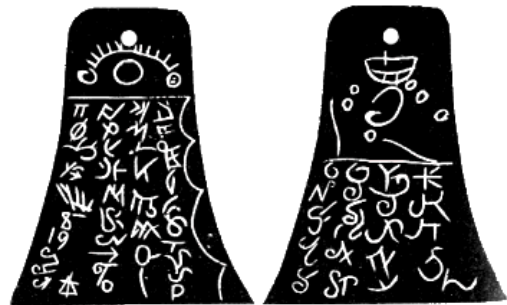


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Funky little teaching moment...

- ◆ Okay, just one more example—
 - ◆ In 1843, a collection of small, brass plates were unearthed in Kinderhook, Illinois—not far from the then-headquarters of the church in Nauvoo
 - ◆ The plates were covered with strange symbols, which Smith quickly declared definitively to be Reformed Egyptian, and he began to translate them
 - ◆ “I have translated a portion of them and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth.”
—Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*



Mormons



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 - ◆ In 1843, a collection of small, brass plates were unearthed in Kinderhook, Illinois—not far from the then-headquarters of the church in Nauvoo
 - ◆ But in 1879, local blacksmith Wilbur Fugate admitted to etching the plates as a hoax that he had perpetrated, along with Bridge Whitten and Robert Wiley
 - ◆ Mormon leaders were quick to claim that Fugate's confession was *itself* the hoax
 - ◆ But in 1966, one of the Kinderhook Plates was recovered and tested at Brigham Young University and Northwestern University, and the tolerances and composition of its metal proved entirely consistent with the facilities available in a 19th century blacksmith shop—and, more importantly, traces of nitrogen were found in what were clearly acid-etched grooves (which is exactly how Fugate had described making them in the first place)



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 - ◆ In general, even the most die-hard Mormon today accepts that the Kinderhook Plates were a fraud
 - ◆ But the problematic question still remains, “How did Joseph Smith successfully translate the nonsensical scribblings of a hoax?”



Mormons



Funky little teaching moment...

- ♦ Putting Joseph Smith's history all together, what really seems the most plausible to you?
 - ♦ That he *really did* find golden plates—that no one else ever saw—and translated them from behind a sheet?
 - ♦ That he *really did* get a message from God that he should have sex with *a lot* of teenaged girls?
 - ♦ That he *really didn't* just plagiarise the KJV?
 - ♦ That he *really didn't* just make stuff up about the papyri that he'd bought?
 - ♦ That he *really didn't* just make stuff up about the fake Kinderhook plates?
 - ♦ Or that he was an opportunistic fraud—like he had already been found in civil court?

