Gospel Topics Essays Course

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Abstract

This project was designed to answer the call from Elder M. Russell Ballard to know the Gospel Topics Essays “like you know the back of your hand” (Ballard, 2016). The project was completed by taking an 11 day course focusing on the essays. Each day of the course a new essay was addressed, and a document containing quotes about the latest research on each topic was provided. Participants in the course were asked to assemble their portfolio by inserting the scholarly quotes into the margins of the essays in the Gospel Library App so that they would be easily accessible when a question is presented to them. To demonstrate the work completed in the course, this portfolio will cite two to three potentially challenging questions that a student may ask about each essay, then use screen shots to show quotes that have been embedded in the essays margins that help to resolve each question.

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Introduction

In the time it's taken to read this sentence, Google has process approximately 120,000 search inquiries (Google Search Statistics, 2018). Unfortunately, as Elder Neil L. Andersen (2014) reminds us, "Internet information does not have a 'truth' filter." As a result, an overwhelming amount of misleading, and outright false information regarding the church's history and doctrine exists and is being actively spread via less-than-reliable sources on the internet.

Ironically, using that same technology, a person can easily discover an abundance of quotes, and counsel from the church's leaders on how to deal with such misinformation. For instance, then President Dieter F. Uchtdorf (2013) taught:

> Some struggle with unanswered questions about things that have been done or said in the past. We openly acknowledge that in nearly 200 years of Church history—along with an uninterrupted line of inspired, honorable, and divine events—there have been some things said and done that could cause people to question.

Quotes from other members of the twelve make it evident that the Brethren are concerned far less about the fact that many members have questions, as they are with the way in which the members seek to resolve them. For instance, Elder Dallin H. Oaks (2015) counseled, "To be securely rooted in the gospel, we must be moderate and measured in criticism and seek always for the broader view of the majestic work of God." Likewise, in his ever candid tone, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (2013) pleaded with members: "Please don't hyperventilate if from time to time issues arise that need to be examined, understood, and resolved. They do and they will." The comments from Elders Oaks, and Holland seem to indicate

a genuine concern about the approaches many are taking when confronted with challenging doctrinal, and historical questions and concerns.

How then does one take the "broader view" (Oaks, 2015) and avoid "Hyperventilation" (Holland, 2013)? In teaching the pattern for resolving such issues, Elder Quentin L. Cook (2015) taught: "Patiently and humbly studying, pondering, praying, living gospel principles, and counseling with appropriate leaders are the best ways to resolve questions or concerns." While Seminaries & Institutes of Religion teachers typically shy away from assuming the role of the "appropriate leader," in a talk given to S&I employees in 2016, Elder M Russell Ballard explicitly stated that when it comes to resolving doctrinal and historical issues, S&I employees have a responsibility to assume that very role:

> The efforts to inoculate our young people will often fall to you CES teachers. With those thoughts in mind, find time to think about your opportunities and your responsibilities.
>
> Church leaders today are fully conscious of the unlimited access to information, and we are making extraordinary efforts to provide accurate context and understanding of the teachings of the Restoration. A prime example of this effort is the 11 Gospel Topics essays on LDS.org that provide balanced and reliable interpretation of the facts for controversial and unfamiliar Church-related subjects.
>
> It is important that you know the content in these essays like you know the back of your hand. If you have questions about them, then please ask someone who

has studied them and understands them. In other words, 'seek learning, even by study and also by faith' as you master the content of these essays"

That talk, along with the comments of church leaders previously mentioned, is the premise for this project.

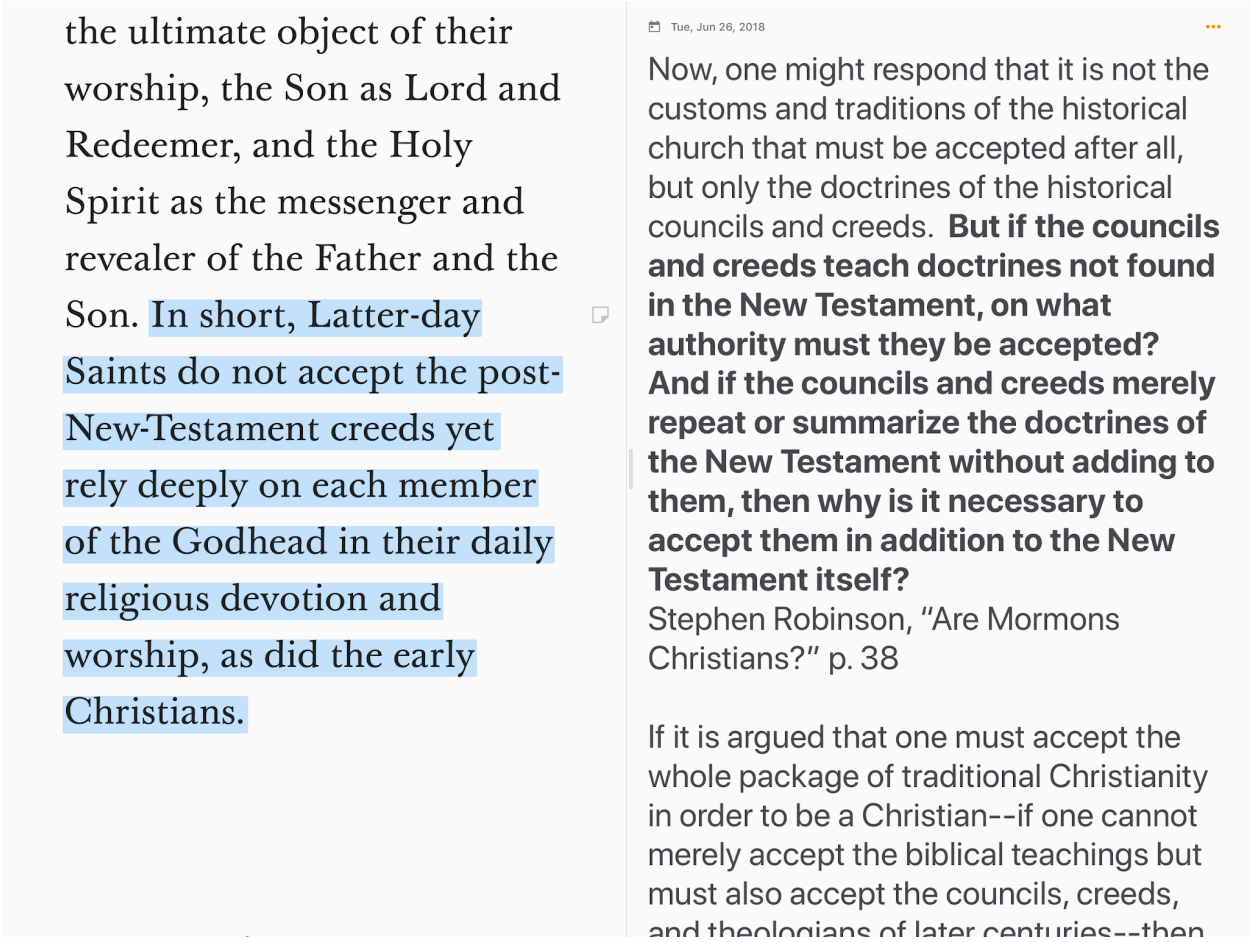
This project consisted of a class on the Gospel Topics Essays in which the instructor and participants explore the best, and most up-to-date research supporting the contents of each essay. The class consisted of ten, 75 minute class sessions, with an eleventh day utilized to compile and submit this portfolio. Throughout the course, participants were provided with a shared document that contained a long list of quotes from scholarly sources, and were asked to insert the quotes into the margins of the essays using the Gospel Library App in hopes of being better prepared to resolve the concerns of future students.

In accordance with the instructions outlined for completion of portfolios, this document will contain samples of quotes that have been embedded in the document rather than a comprehensive list of those quotes. The examples portion of this project will consist of two to three questions that a student is likely to ask, and screen shots of quotes that have been inserted into the margins of the Gospel Library App to make this participant better able to resolve concerns.

Examples of Work

Are Mormons Christians?

1. Why don't Mormons believe in Creeds?
2. What should I think about statements made by early church leaders that just don't seem true?
3. If the Bible has all truth, how can we accept the Book of Mormon?

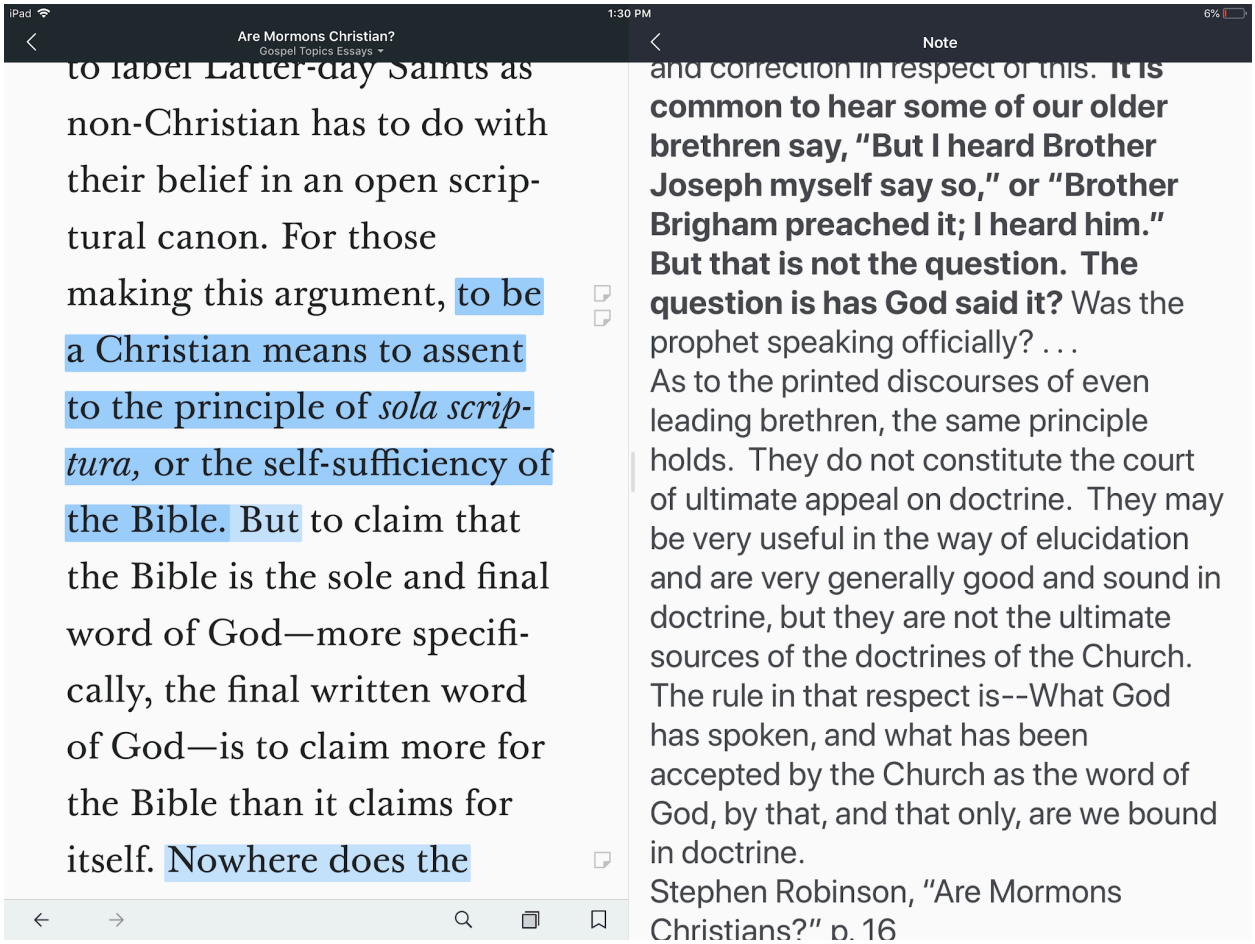


the ultimate object of their worship, the Son as Lord and Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as the messenger and revealer of the Father and the Son. In short, Latter-day Saints do not accept the post-New-Testament creeds yet rely deeply on each member of the Godhead in their daily religious devotion and worship, as did the early Christians.

Tue, Jun 26, 2018

Now, one might respond that it is not the customs and traditions of the historical church that must be accepted after all, but only the doctrines of the historical councils and creeds. **But if the councils and creeds teach doctrines not found in the New Testament, on what authority must they be accepted? And if the councils and creeds merely repeat or summarize the doctrines of the New Testament without adding to them, then why is it necessary to accept them in addition to the New Testament itself?**
Stephen Robinson, "Are Mormons Christians?" p. 38

If it is argued that one must accept the whole package of traditional Christianity in order to be a Christian--if one cannot merely accept the biblical teachings but must also accept the councils, creeds, and theologians of later centuries--then



Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham

1. Where did the Book of Abraham come from?
2. Why does it feel like the Book of Abraham abruptly stops?
3. Why doesn't the text around the facsimiles that has been translated by scholars line up with the text of the Book of Abraham?

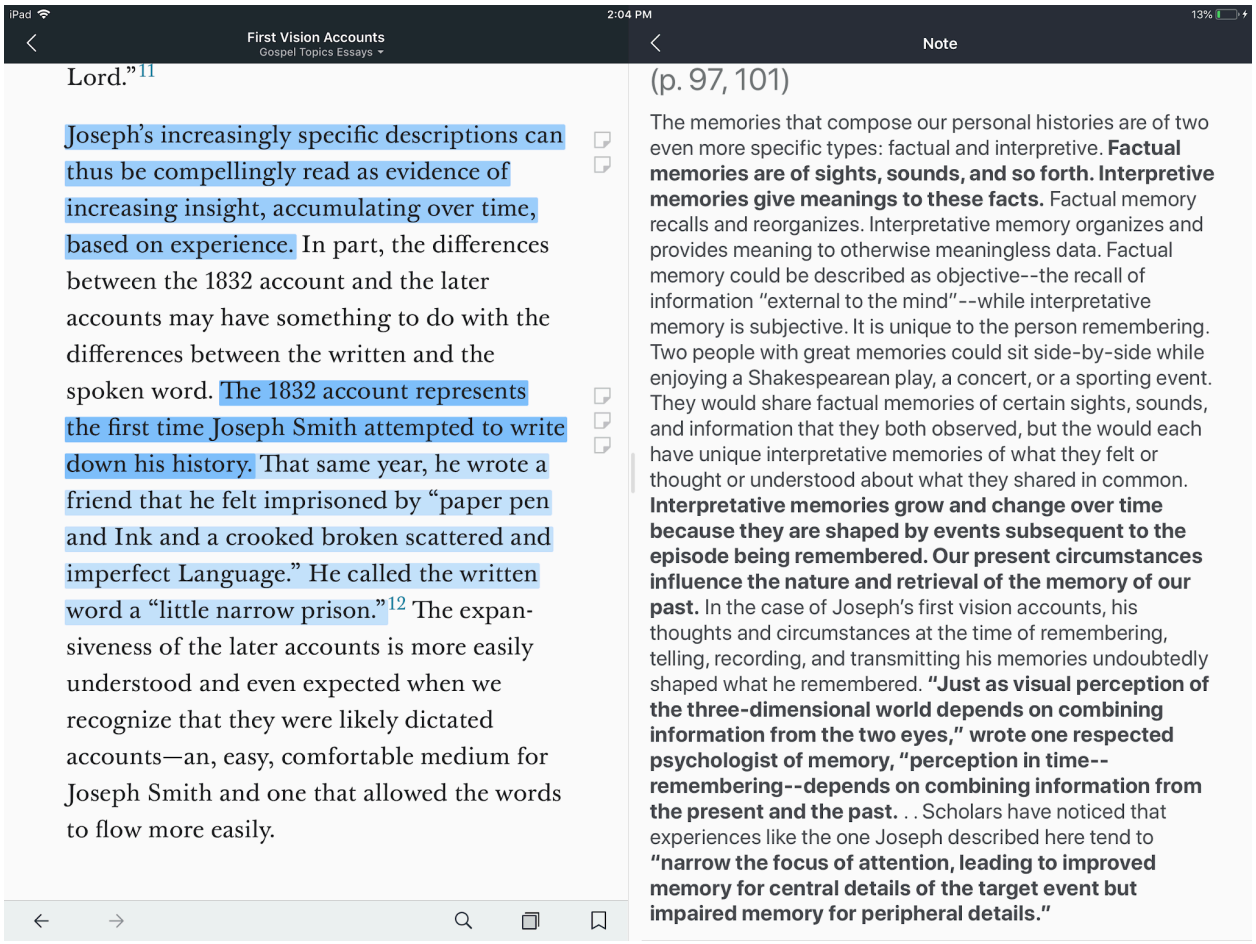
teachings.

The book of Abraham was first published in 1842 and was canonized as part of the Pearl of Great Price in 1880. The book originated with Egyptian papyri that Joseph Smith translated beginning in 1835. Many people saw the papyri, but no eyewitness account of the translation survives, making it impossible to reconstruct the process. Only small fragments of the long papyrus scrolls once in Joseph Smith's

Mon, Jul 9, 2018

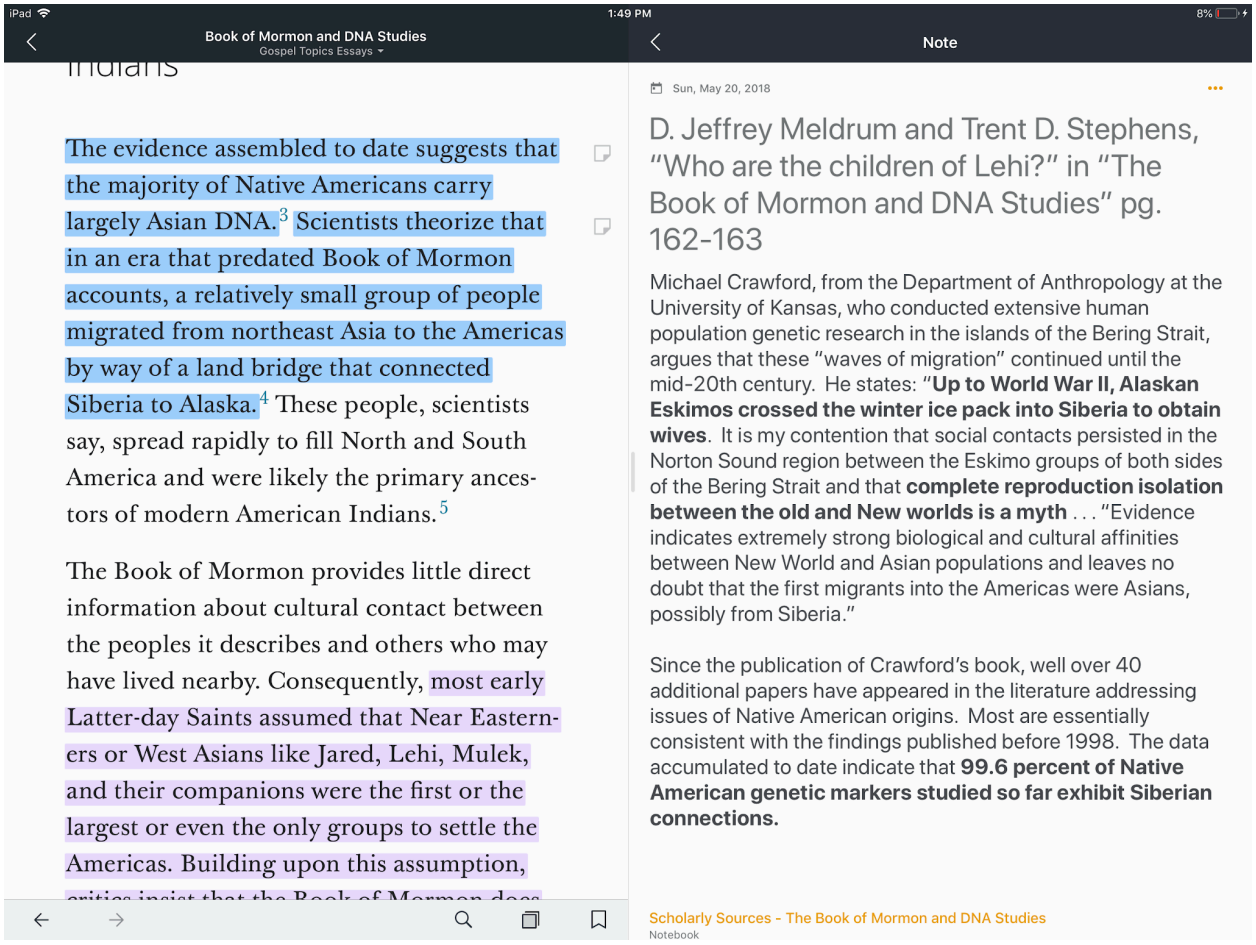
Gee, J. (2018) An Introduction to the Book of Abraham, (p. 24-26)

In 1851 Franklin D Richards--then the newest Apostle of the Church and the new president of the European Mission, headquartered in England--found that the Church members in England, the location with the largest number of Latter-day Saints in the world at the time, had almost no Church literature. E**lder Richards included the Book of Abraham in "a choice selection from the revelations, translations, and narrations of Joseph Smith," published as the Pearl of Great Price.** It was "not adapted, nor designed, as a pioneer of the faith



Book of Mormon and DNA studies

1. If the Book of Mormon people were the first ones on the American continent than why is the DNA of American Indians primarily from Asia?
2. If the Book of Mormon was truly inspired, why would they need to change the words in the introduction from "principal ancestors" to "among the ancestors?"
3. Is it even possible that the American Indians are all descendants from Lehi?


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Book of Mormon and DNA Studies
Gospel Topics Essays
Indians
The evidence assembled to date suggests that the majority of Native Americans carry largely Asian DNA.[3] Scientists theorize that in an era that predated Book of Mormon accounts, a relatively small group of people migrated from northeast Asia to the Americas by way of a land bridge that connected Siberia to Alaska.[4] These people, scientists say, spread rapidly to fill North and South America and were likely the primary ancestors of modern American Indians.[5]
The Book of Mormon provides little direct information about cultural contact between the peoples it describes and others who may have lived nearby. Consequently, most early Latter-day Saints assumed that Near Easterners or West Asians like Jared, Lehi, Mulek, and their companions were the first or the largest or even the only groups to settle the Americas. Building upon this assumption,
Note
Sun, May 20, 2018
D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens, "Who are the children of Lehi?" in "The Book of Mormon and DNA Studies" pg. 162-163
Michael Crawford, from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Kansas, who conducted extensive human population genetic research in the islands of the Bering Strait, argues that these "waves of migration" continued until the mid-20th century. He states: "**Up to World War II, Alaskan Eskimos crossed the winter ice pack into Siberia to obtain wives**. It is my contention that social contacts persisted in the Norton Sound region between the Eskimo groups of both sides of the Bering Strait and that **complete reproduction isolation between the old and New worlds is a myth** . . . "Evidence indicates extremely strong biological and cultural affinities between New World and Asian populations and leaves no doubt that the first migrants into the Americas were Asians, possibly from Siberia."
Since the publication of Crawford's book, well over 40 additional papers have appeared in the literature addressing issues of Native American origins. Most are essentially consistent with the findings published before 1998. The data accumulated to date indicate that **99.6 percent of Native American genetic markers studied so far exhibit Siberian connections.**
Scholarly Sources - The Book of Mormon and DNA Studies
Notebook

Joseph Smith appears to have been open to the idea of migrations other than those described in the Book of Mormon,[8] and many Latter-day Saint leaders and scholars over the past century have found the Book of Mormon account to be fully consistent with the presence of other established populations.[9] The 2006 update to the introduction of the Book of Mormon reflects this understanding by stating that Book of Mormon peoples were "among the ancestors of the American Indians."[10]

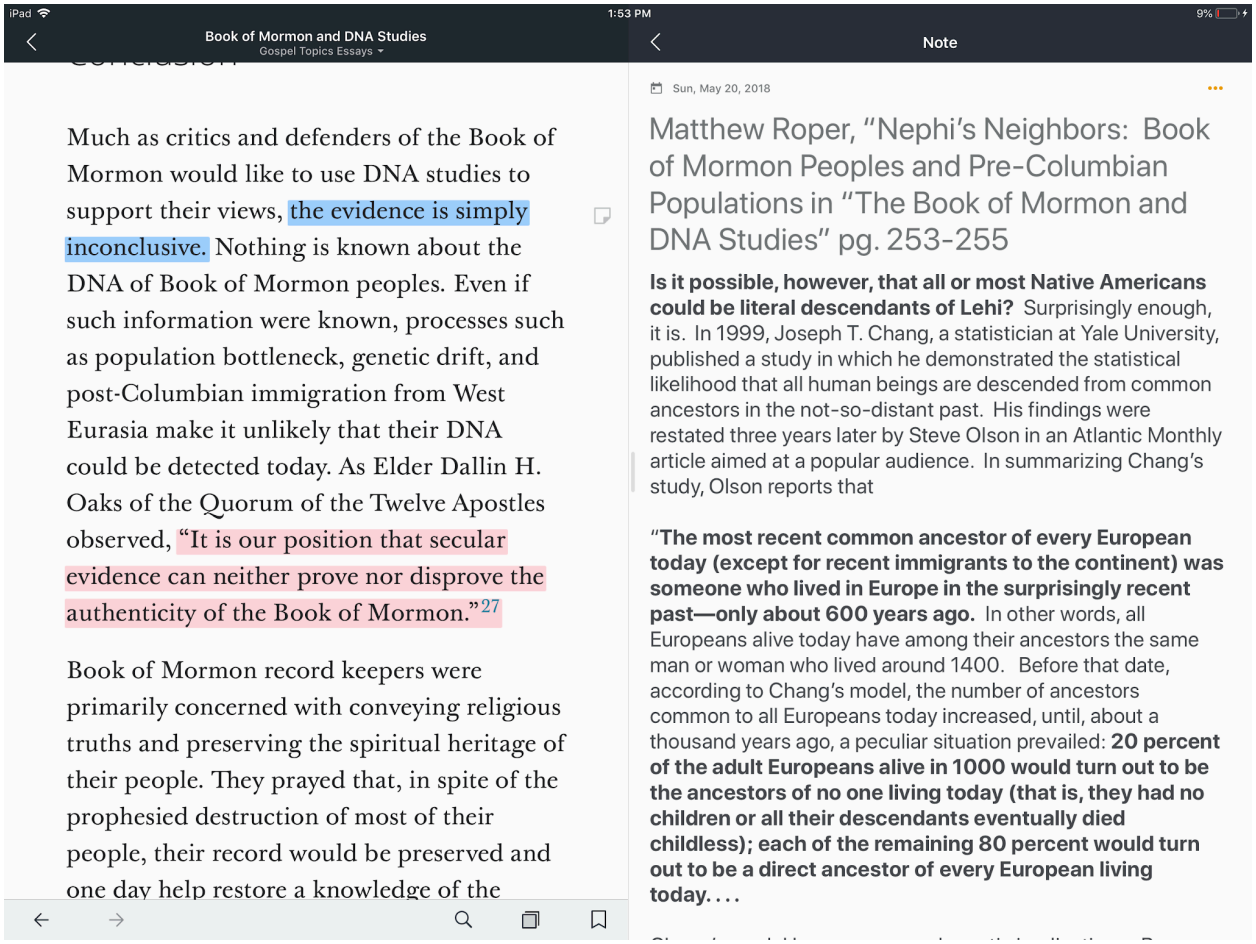
Nothing is known about the extent of intermarriage and genetic mixing between Book of Mormon peoples or their descendants and other inhabitants of the Americas, though some mixing appears evident, even during the period covered by the book's text.[11] What seems clear is that the DNA of Book of Mormon peoples likely represented only a fraction of all DNA in ancient America. Finding and clearly identifying their DNA today may be asking more of the science of population genetics than it is capable of providing.

Sun, May 20, 2018

Recently, some critics, lacking support for their arguments in the Book of Mormon text, have taken to quoting the introduction to the current edition of **the Book of Mormon, which describes the Lamanites as "the principal ancestors of the American Indians." These words first appeared in the 1981 edition and were not found in any previous edition, but these critics tend to cite them as if they are, and always have been, of scriptural stature.** Such an argument reflects a misunderstanding of Latter-day Saint beliefs about scripture and revelation. Simply put, **chapter headings, introductions, and footnotes do not carry any canonical authority.** The term principal ancestors is not scriptural, **nor does such language appear to have ever been used by Joseph Smith,** who never detailed or quantified the nature of the Native Americans Israelite heritage.

Matthew Roper, "Nephi's Neighbors: Book of Mormon Peoples and Pre-Columbian Populations in "The Book of Mormon and DNA Studies" pg. 251

The concepts of kinship bear directly on the Book of Mormon account of a branch of Israel "run[ning] over the wall." The data suggests that a small colony under the leadership of Nephi established a kinship within the fabric of a larger resident population. In effect, it was situation of "them and us" –Lamanites and Nephites. The Nephites were the believers, while the Lamanites were everyone else (see, for example, Jacob 1:14; Alma 3:11). **This perception differs little from the concept of "Jew and Gentile,"** the latter term encompassing all non-Jew. **With final destruction of the Nephite kinship, all who remained in the Americas were "Lamanites." If this interpretation is correct, then the statement from the introduction to the Book of Mormon.**



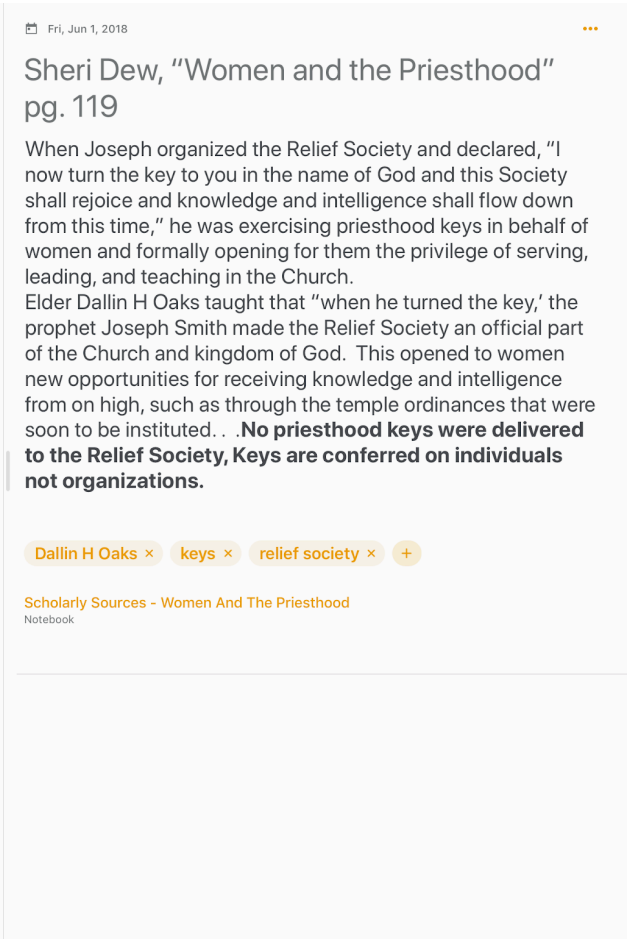
Joseph Smith's Teaching about Priesthood, Temple, and Women

1. Did the original Relief Society have priesthood keys ?
2. How come women in the early church were able to give blessings?
3. How come women today don't have the priesthood?

fulfilled a revelation given to her twelve years earlier, in which she was called an "Elect lady."[19] He also declared to the Society, "I now turn the key to you in the name of God and this Society shall rejoice and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time."[20]

Sarah Kingsley Cleveland, counselor to Emma Smith, expressed the women's sense of divine authorization when she said, "We design to act in the name of the Lord."[21] Emma Smith called upon each member of the Society to be "ambitious to do good," declaring that together they would do "something extraordinary." She anticipated "extraordinary occasions and pressing calls."[22]

Two aspects of Joseph Smith's teachings to the women of the Relief Society may be unfamiliar to members of the Church today. First is his use of language associated with priesthood. In organizing the Relief Society, Joseph spoke of "ordain[ing]" women and said that Relief Society officers would "preside over the Society."[23] He also declared, "I



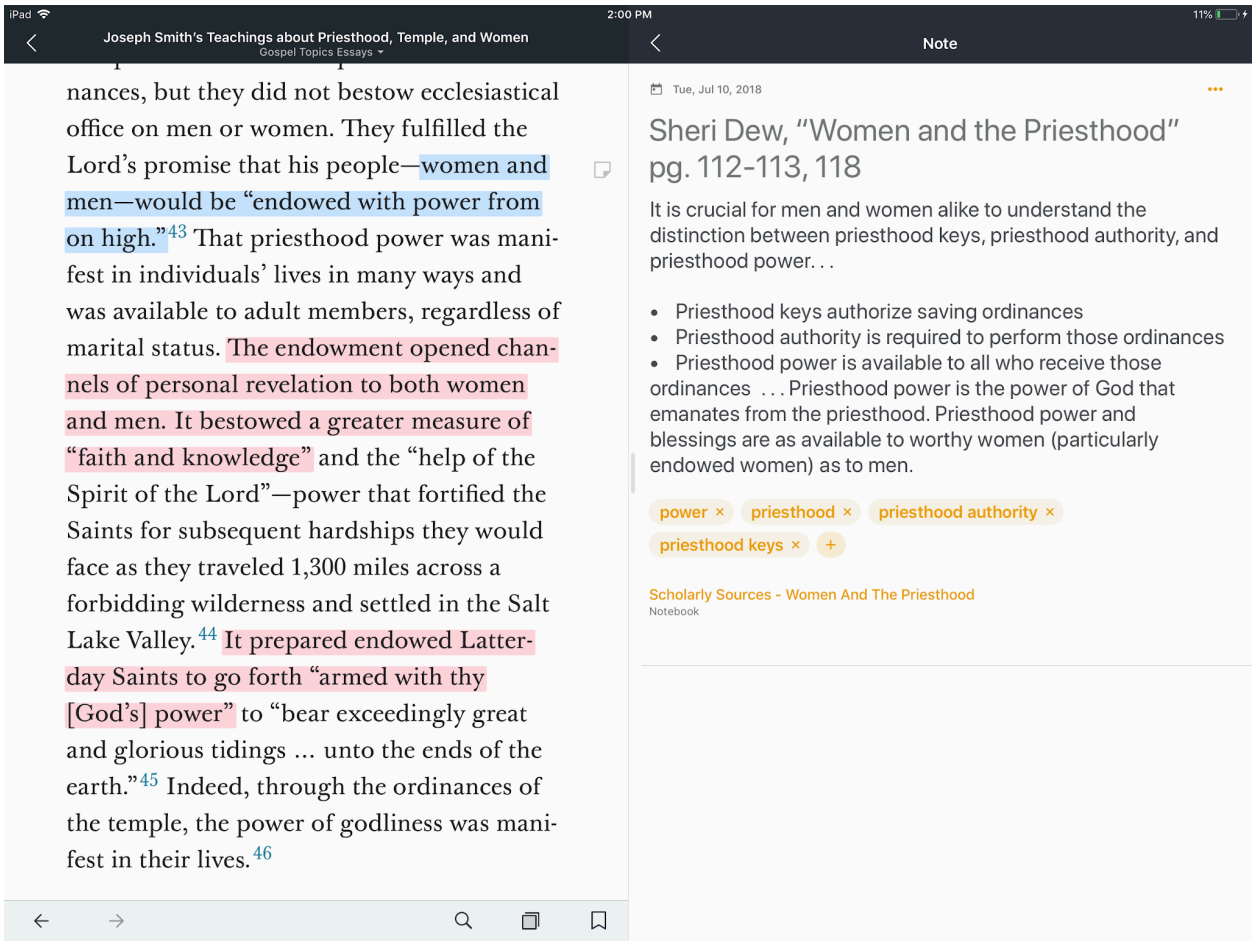
Nauvoo Relief Society minutes record, Joseph said that "it is no sin for any body to do it that has faith," and admonished, "if the sisters should have faith to heal the sick, let all hold their tongues, and let every thing roll on."[30] Some women had performed such blessings since the early days of the Church. At that time, Latter-day Saints understood the gift of healing primarily in terms of the New Testament's teaching that it was one of the gifts of the Spirit available to believers through faith. Joseph Smith taught that the gift of healing was a sign that would follow "all that believe whether male or female."[31]

During the 19th century, women frequently blessed the sick by the prayer of faith, and many women received priesthood blessings promising that they would have the gift of healing.[32] "I have seen many demonstrations of the power and blessing of God through the administration of the sisters," testified Elizabeth Ann Smith Whitney, who was, by her own account, blessed by Joseph Smith to exercise this gift.[33] In reference to these healing blessings, Relief Society general president Eliza R. Snow explained in 1882

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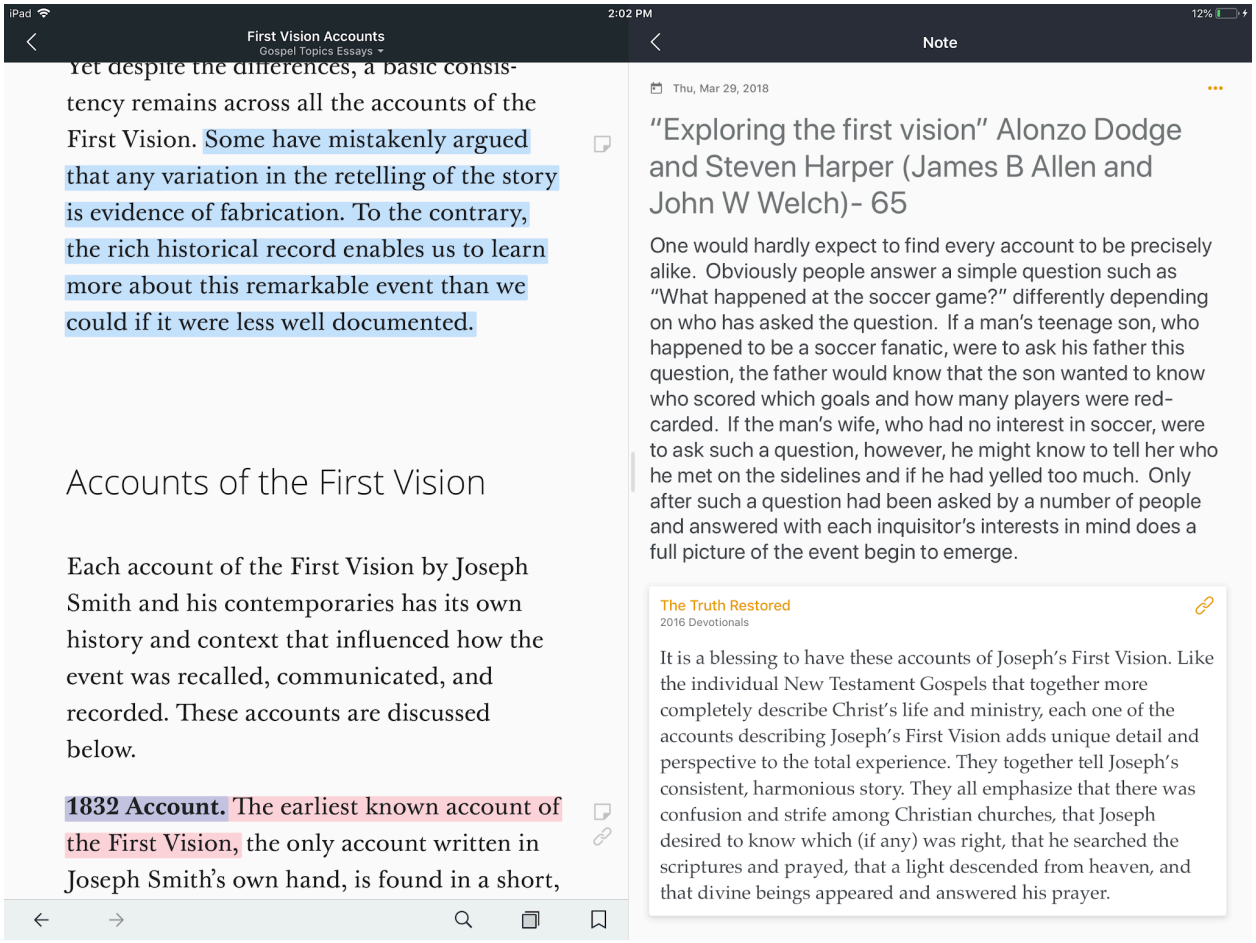
Stapley, J. (2018) The Power of Godliness, p. 82-83

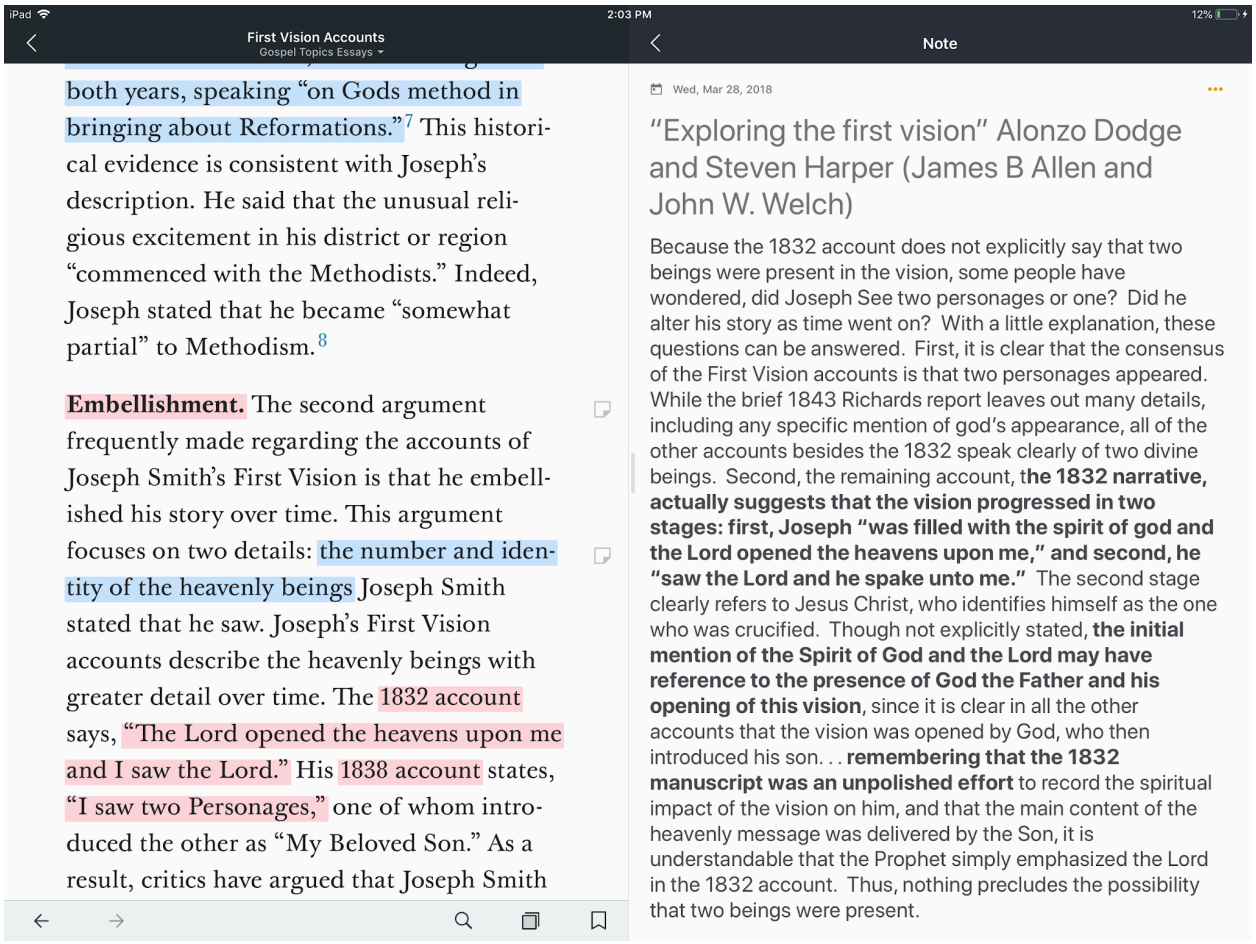
From the moment Joseph Smith revealed the Book of Mormon, with its warning about the lack of healing miracles in the modern world, uals **he consistently sought to endow his people with the power of God and to reveal ritthat would channel God's power to heal.** Like the apostles described in the New Testament, in the first years of the restored Church of Christ, elders either commanded the sick to be made whole or prayed over the sick and laid their hands on them, reflecting divine instruction that exhorted the Saints to administer healing rituals. H**owever, these early healings were not viewed as the exclusive exercise of priesthood authority but instead as general spiritual gifts available to all Saints. Instead of invoking priesthood as the authority of healing, the Saints healed "in the name of Jesus Christ" and this gift was shared by all member—both male and female.** . . For the first eighty years of the church. . . healing and temples were far more interconnected, with Joseph Smith and other church leaders intensifying the association in Nauvoo. **Smith envisioned the temple as a sacred place for healing. Not only did the temple rites and healing rites both include anointing, but from the first formal day of baptisms in the Nauvoo Temple font, people were baptized for their health, a practice that soon became common outside the temple. In addition, the expanded initiation rituals of the Nauvoo Temple liturgy—washing anointing, and sealing, as well as the prayer circle, a form of group prayer limited to temple initiates—were also adapted for healing purposes.** Thus, almost every aspect of the temple ceremonies had a healing analogue. And, as with the Nauvoo Temple liturgy, women served as regular administrators of the healing liturgy.

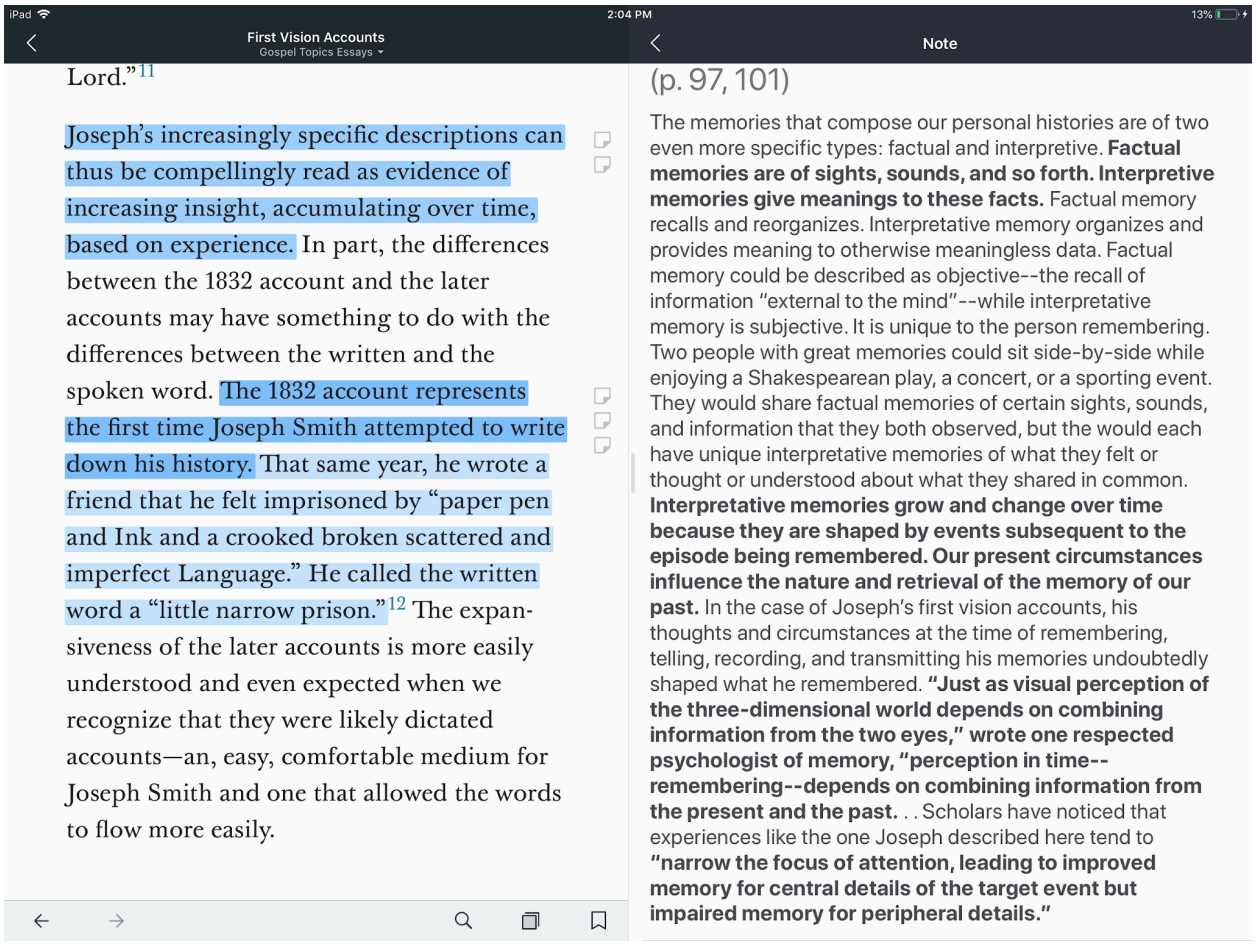


First Vision Accounts

1. Why are there differences in the way Joseph Smith told the story of the first vision?
2. Why do some versions of the first vision make it seem like he only saw one person instead of two?
3. Why does Joseph add new details to the accounts that he uses later in life?


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First Vision Accounts
Gospel Topics Essays
Note
Yet despite the differences, a basic consistency remains across all the accounts of the First Vision. Some have mistakenly argued that any variation in the retelling of the story is evidence of fabrication. To the contrary, the rich historical record enables us to learn more about this remarkable event than we could if it were less well documented.
Accounts of the First Vision
Each account of the First Vision by Joseph Smith and his contemporaries has its own history and context that influenced how the event was recalled, communicated, and recorded. These accounts are discussed below.
1832 Account. The earliest known account of the First Vision, the only account written in Joseph Smith's own hand, is found in a short,
Thu, Mar 29, 2018
"Exploring the first vision" Alonzo Dodge and Steven Harper (James B Allen and John W Welch)- 65
One would hardly expect to find every account to be precisely alike. Obviously people answer a simple question such as "What happened at the soccer game?" differently depending on who has asked the question. If a man's teenage son, who happened to be a soccer fanatic, were to ask his father this question, the father would know that the son wanted to know who scored which goals and how many players were red-carded. If the man's wife, who had no interest in soccer, were to ask such a question, however, he might know to tell her who he met on the sidelines and if he had yelled too much. Only after such a question had been asked by a number of people and answered with each inquisitor's interests in mind does a full picture of the event begin to emerge.
The Truth Restored
2016 Devotionals
It is a blessing to have these accounts of Joseph's First Vision. Like the individual New Testament Gospels that together more completely describe Christ's life and ministry, each one of the accounts describing Joseph's First Vision adds unique detail and perspective to the total experience. They together tell Joseph's consistent, harmonious story. They all emphasize that there was confusion and strife among Christian churches, that Joseph desired to know which (if any) was right, that he searched the scriptures and prayed, that a light descended from heaven, and that divine beings appeared and answered his prayer.


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First Vision Accounts
Gospel Topics Essays
both years, speaking "on Gods method in bringing about Reformations."[7] This historical evidence is consistent with Joseph's description. He said that the unusual religious excitement in his district or region "commenced with the Methodists." Indeed, Joseph stated that he became "somewhat partial" to Methodism.[8]
Embellishment. The second argument frequently made regarding the accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision is that he embellished his story over time. This argument focuses on two details: the number and identity of the heavenly beings Joseph Smith stated that he saw. Joseph's First Vision accounts describe the heavenly beings with greater detail over time. The 1832 account says, "The Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord." His 1838 account states, "I saw two Personages," one of whom introduced the other as "My Beloved Son." As a result, critics have argued that Joseph Smith
Note
Wed, Mar 28, 2018
"Exploring the first vision" Alonzo Dodge and Steven Harper (James B Allen and John W. Welch)
Because the 1832 account does not explicitly say that two beings were present in the vision, some people have wondered, did Joseph See two personages or one? Did he alter his story as time went on? With a little explanation, these questions can be answered. First, it is clear that the consensus of the First Vision accounts is that two personages appeared. While the brief 1843 Richards report leaves out many details, including any specific mention of god's appearance, all of the other accounts besides the 1832 speak clearly of two divine beings. Second, the remaining account, **the 1832 narrative, actually suggests that the vision progressed in two stages: first, Joseph "was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me," and second, he "saw the Lord and he spake unto me."** The second stage clearly refers to Jesus Christ, who identifies himself as the one who was crucified. Though not explicitly stated, **the initial mention of the Spirit of God and the Lord may have reference to the presence of God the Father and his opening of this vision**, since it is clear in all the other accounts that the vision was opened by God, who then introduced his son. . . **remembering that the 1832 manuscript was an unpolished effort** to record the spiritual impact of the vision on him, and that the main content of the heavenly message was delivered by the Son, it is understandable that the Prophet simply emphasized the Lord in the 1832 account. Thus, nothing precludes the possibility that two beings were present.



Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo

1. Was polygamy just a way for early men to have sexual relations with multiple women?
2. Is it true that Joseph Smith married several teenage girls? If so, does that make him a pedophile?
3. How can Joseph be a prophet if he was marrying and sleeping with other men's wives?

Joseph Smith and Plural Marriage

During the era in which plural marriage was practiced, Latter-day Saints distinguished between sealings for time and eternity and sealings for eternity only. Sealings for time and eternity included commitments and relationships during this life, generally including the possibility of sexual relations. Eternity-only sealings indicated relationships in the next life alone.

Evidence indicates that Joseph Smith participated in both types of sealings. The exact number of women to whom he was sealed in his lifetime is unknown because the evidence is fragmentary.[24] Some of the women who were sealed to Joseph Smith later testified that their marriages were for time and eternity, while others indicated that their relationships were for eternity alone.[25]

Most of those sealed to Joseph Smith were between 20 and 40 years of age at the time of their sealing to him. The oldest, Fanny

Sat, Jul 14, 2018

Hales, B. C. (2015) Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding, p. 69

Joseph Smith was certainly virile, having fathered eight children with Emma despite long periods of time apart and challenging schedules, and the number of children later conceived by his widows indicate an impressive fertility in several of the women. **Following the martyrdom, most of his wives remarried** within two years, prior to the Saints leaving for the West. Three of the women became pregnant within weeks after remarrying. **Sarah Ann Whitney**, who was sealed to Joseph Smith for twenty-three months, **married Heber C. Kimball** on **March 17, 1845,** and, based on the birth date of their first child, **became pregnant approximately June 15 of that year**. **She bore Heber Kimball seven children** between 1846 and 1858. **Lucy Walker**, who was sealed to the Prophet for fourteen months, also **married Kimball**. About **three months after their February 8, 1845, marriage, she became pregnant. She gave birth to nine of Kimball's children** between 1846 and 1864. **Malissa Lott**, who was sealed to Joseph Smith in September 1843, **married Ira jones Willes** on May 13, 1849. Their first child was born April 22, 1850, with **conception occurring approximately July 30, 1849 (or eleven weeks after the wedding ceremony). Seven Willes children were born** between 1850 and 1863. **Emily Partridge bore Brigham Young seven offspring between 1845 and 1863. Her sister Eliza married Amasa Lyman and together they had five children between 1844 and 1860. Several other plural wives, like Louisa Beaman, Martha McBride, and Nancy Winchester, also remarried and became pregnant.**

polygamy × polygamy (children) × polygamy (sexual relatio... × +

close friends Heber C. and Vilate Murray Kimball, who was sealed to Joseph several months before her 15th birthday. Marriage at such an age, inappropriate by today's standards, was legal in that era, and some women married in their mid-teens.[26] Helen Mar Kimball spoke of her sealing to Joseph as being "for eternity alone," suggesting that the relationship did not involve sexual relations.[27] After Joseph's death, Helen remarried and became an articulate defender of him and of plural marriage.[28]

Following his marriage to Louisa Beaman and before he married other single women, Joseph Smith was sealed to a number of women who were already married.[29] Neither these women nor Joseph explained much about these sealings, though several women said they were for eternity alone.[30] Other women left no records, making it unknown whether their sealings were for time and eternity or were for eternity alone.

There are several possible explanations for this practice. These sealings may have provided a way to create an eternal bond or

Sat, Jul 14, 2018

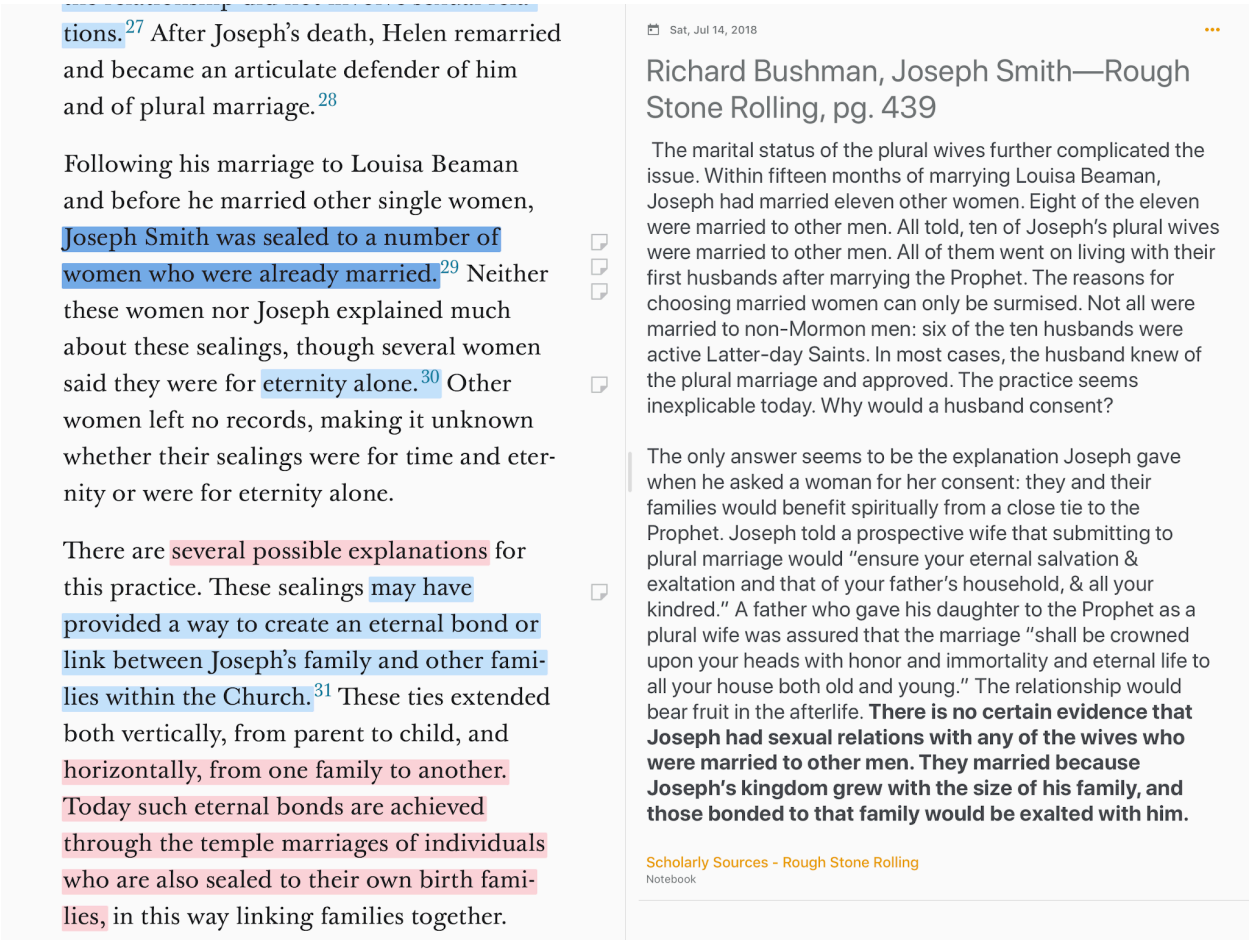
Brian Hales, "Joseph Smith's Polygamy" pg. 70

Much attention has been given to the fact that ten of Joseph Smith's plural wives were teenagers: Helen Mar Kimball (14), Nancy M Winchester (14?), Flora Ann Woodworth (16), Sarah Ann Whitney (17), Sarah Lawrence (17), Lucy Walker (17), Fanny Alger (19?), Emily Dow Partridge (19), Maria Lawrence (19), and Malissa Lott (19). While these ages may seem young to observers in the twenty-first century, it would not have been considered scandalous in the 1840's, although the two fourteen-year-olds may have been eye-brow-raising. Author Kimball Young explained: "By present standards 1954 a bride of 17 or 18 years is considered rather unusual but under pioneer conditions there was nothing atypical about this." For example, **William Clark (of Lewis and Clark expedition) wed sixteen-year-old Julia Hancock in 1808. Jesse Hale, Brother to Emma Hale Smith, the Prophet's Wife, married Mary McKune when she was fifteen, and he was twenty-three. Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, married his wife Lucy when she was only fifteen. In fact, Illinois Governor Thomas Ford, the state official who forced the Prophet to appear at Carthage where he was murdered, married Frances Hambaugh in 1828 she was fifteen, and he was twenty-eight**. There is, however, no evidence of sexuality between Joseph Smith and the two fourteen-year-old wives.

Fanny Alger × Hellen Mar Kimball × Nancy Winchester × polygamy × polygamy (sexual relatio... × Polygamy (Young brides) ×

+

Scholarly Sources - Joseph Smith's Polygamy
Notebook



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There are several possible explanations for this practice. These sealings may have provided a way to create an eternal bond or link between Joseph's family and other families within the Church.[31] These ties extended both vertically, from parent to child, and horizontally, from one family to another. Today such eternal bonds are achieved through the temple marriages of individuals who are also sealed to their own birth families, in this way linking families together.

Sat, Jul 14, 2018

Richard Bushman, Joseph Smith—Rough Stone Rolling, pg. 439

The marital status of the plural wives further complicated the issue. Within fifteen months of marrying Louisa Beaman, Joseph had married eleven other women. Eight of the eleven were married to other men. All told, ten of Joseph's plural wives were married to other men. All of them went on living with their first husbands after marrying the Prophet. The reasons for choosing married women can only be surmised. Not all were married to non-Mormon men: six of the ten husbands were active Latter-day Saints. In most cases, the husband knew of the plural marriage and approved. The practice seems inexplicable today. Why would a husband consent?

The only answer seems to be the explanation Joseph gave when he asked a woman for her consent: they and their families would benefit spiritually from a close tie to the Prophet. Joseph told a prospective wife that submitting to plural marriage would "ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father's household, & all your kindred." A father who gave his daughter to the Prophet as a plural wife was assured that the marriage "shall be crowned upon your heads with honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house both old and young." The relationship would bear fruit in the afterlife. **There is no certain evidence that Joseph had sexual relations with any of the wives who were married to other men. They married because Joseph's kingdom grew with the size of his family, and those bonded to that family would be exalted with him.**

Scholarly Sources - Rough Stone Rolling
Notebook

Race and Priesthood

1. How could the church possibly justify denying black men the priesthood?
2. Did the church just give black men the priesthood because of the social pressure?
3. Does the church still believe that black people are cursed, and were less righteous in the premortal life?

history—from the mid-1800s until 1978—the Church did not ordain men of black African descent to its priesthood or allow black men or women to participate in temple endowment or sealing ordinances.

The Church was established in 1830, during an era of great racial division in the United States. At the time, many people of African descent lived in slavery, and racial distinctions and prejudice were not just common but customary among white Americans. Those realities, though unfamiliar and disturbing today, influenced all aspects of people's lives, including their religion. Many Christian churches of that era, for instance, were segregated along racial lines. From the beginnings of the Church, people of every race and ethnicity could be baptized and received as members. Toward the end of his life, Church founder Joseph Smith openly opposed slavery. There has never been a Churchwide policy of segregated congregations.[3]

During the first two decades of the Church's existence, a few black men were ordained to

Mon, Jul 16, 2018

"Religion of a Different Color," Paul Reeve, pg. 7

Even **Abraham Lincoln**, the future, "great emancipator" announced in 1858 that he was not in favor "of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people." As he saw it, as long as blacks and whites coexisted, **"there must be the position of superior and inferior." In such a situation he favored "the superior position assigned to the white race."** . . .

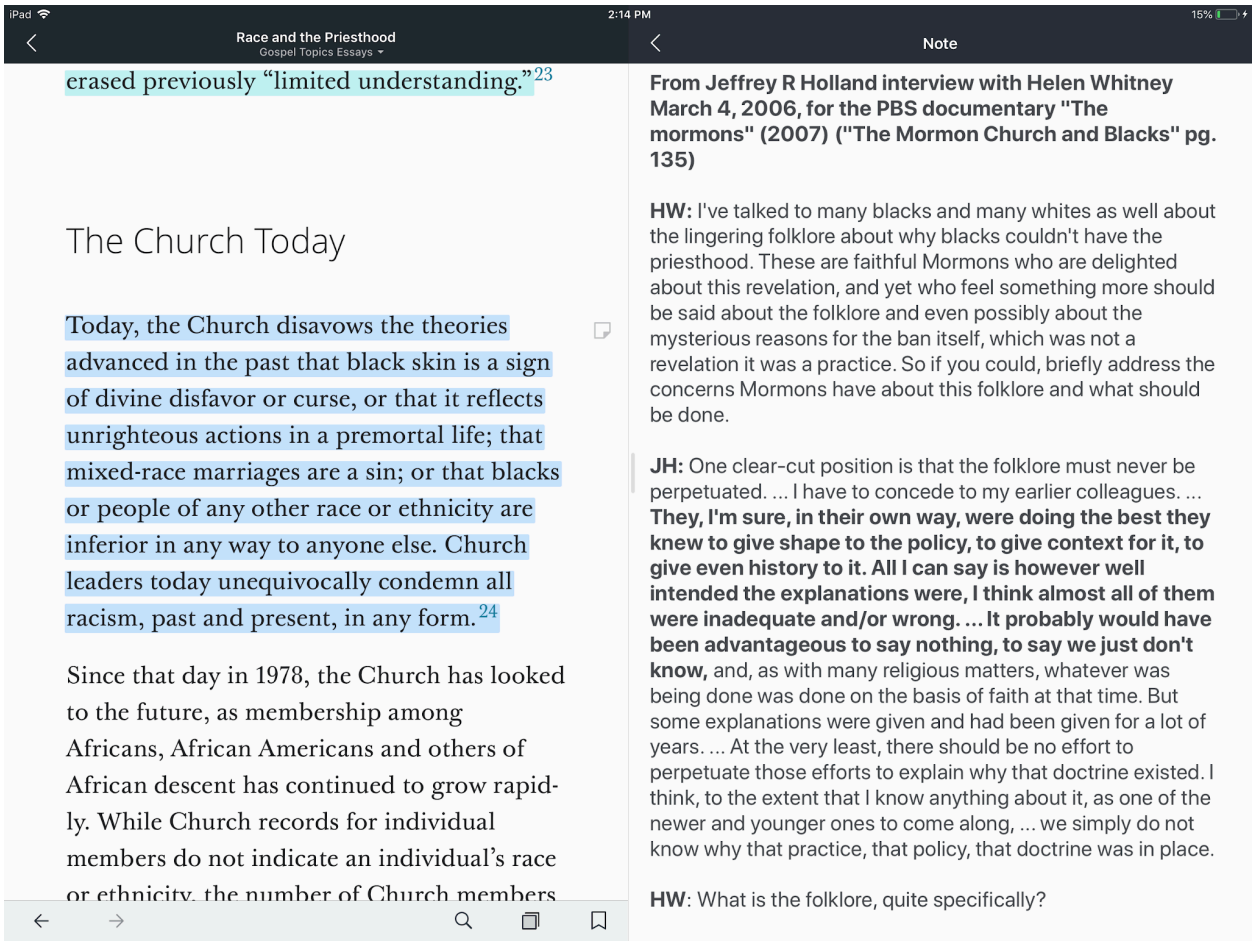
Blacks and the priestho... × +

Scholarly Sources - Religion Of A Different Color
Notebook

ways to the building of the São Paulo temple, a sanctuary they realized they would not be allowed to enter once it was completed. Their sacrifices, as well as the conversions of thousands of Nigerians and Ghanaians in the 1960s and early 1970s, moved Church leaders.[20]

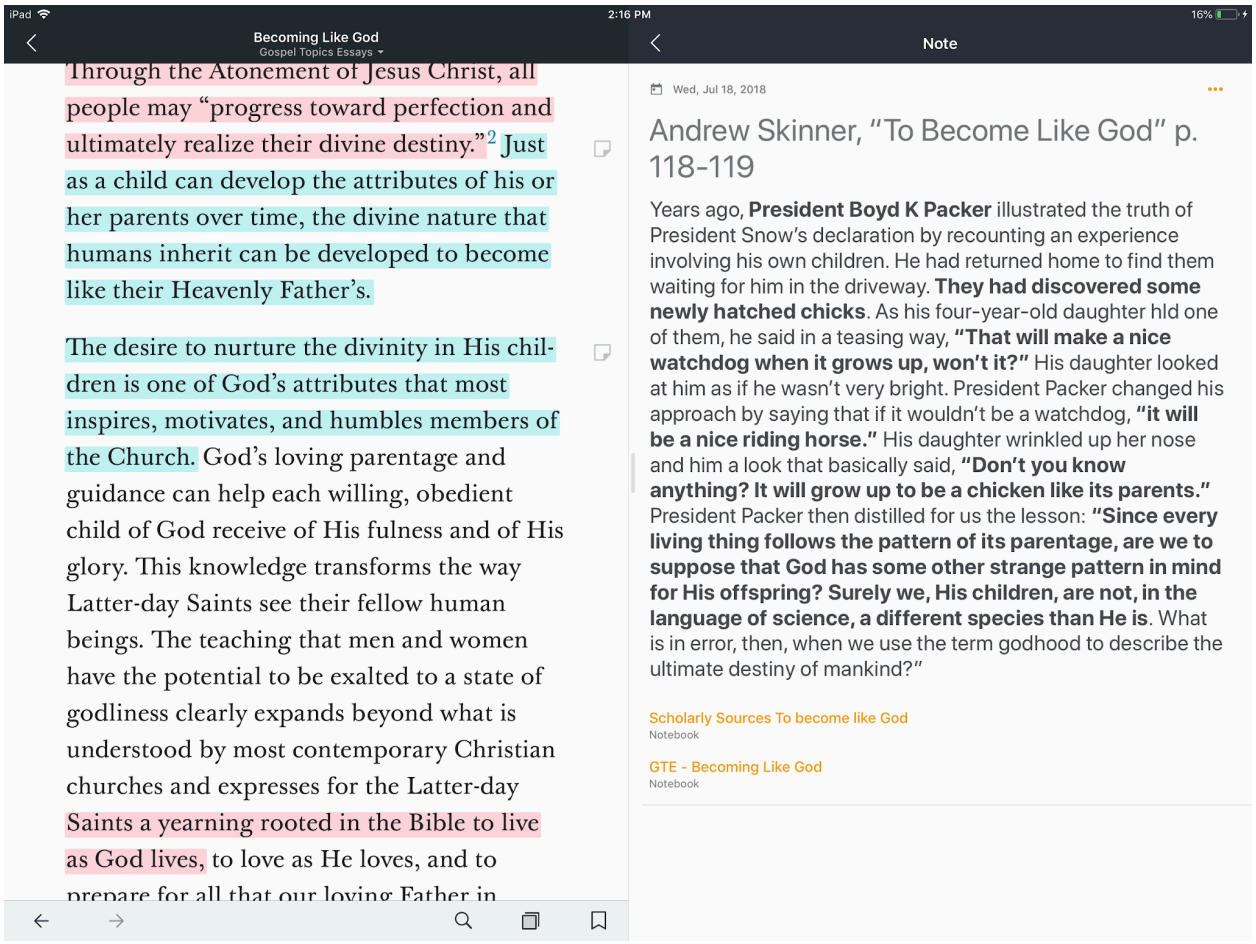
Church leaders pondered promises made by prophets such as Brigham Young that black members would one day receive priesthood and temple blessings. In June 1978, after "spending many hours in the Upper Room of the [Salt Lake] Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance," Church President Spencer W. Kimball, his counselors in the First Presidency, and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles received a revelation. "He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come," the First Presidency announced on June 8. The First Presidency stated that they were "aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us" that "all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the

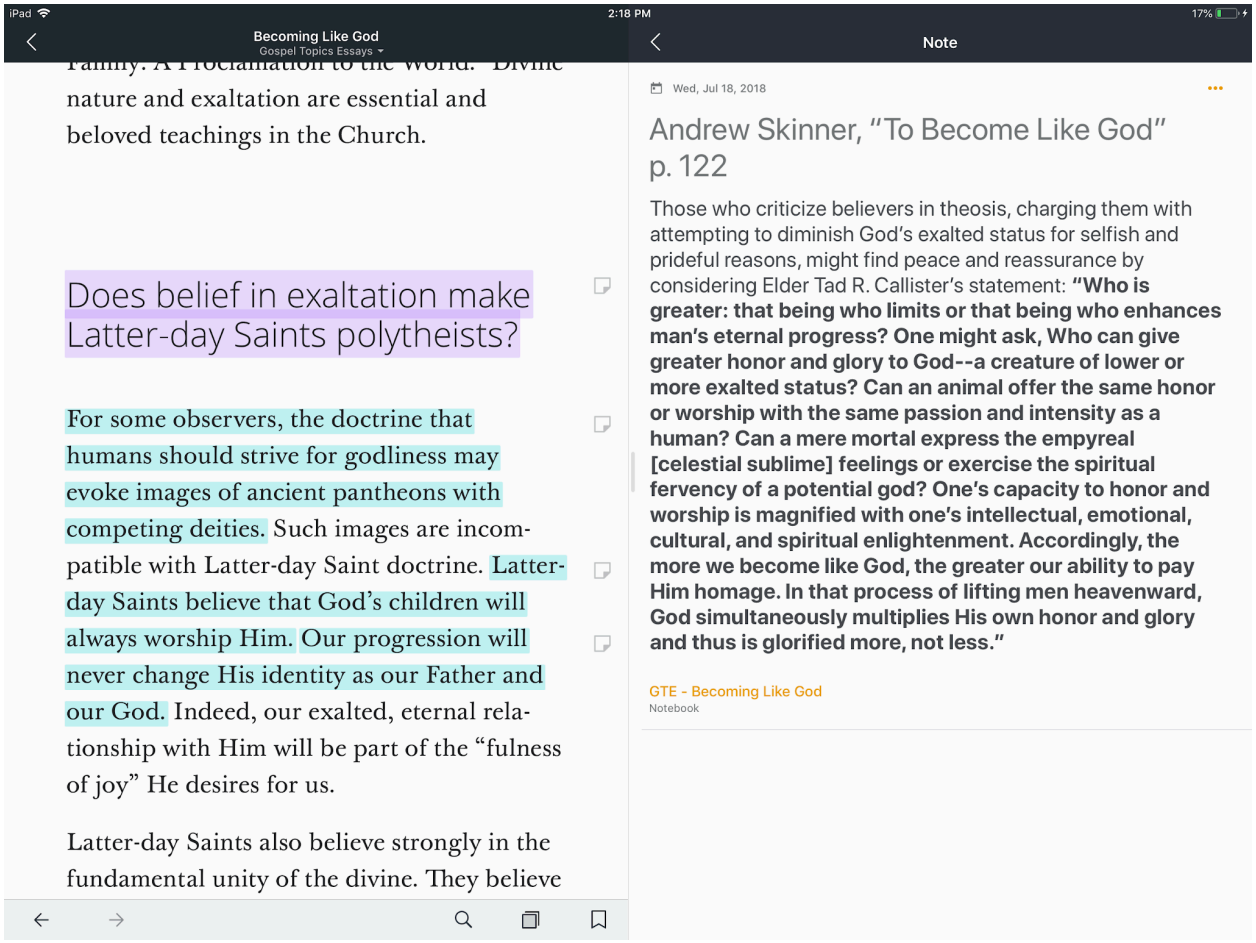
of the importuning and the faith, and because the hour and the time had arrived, **the Lord in his providences poured out the Holy Ghost upon the First Presidency and the Twelve in a miraculous and marvelous manner, beyond anything that any then present had ever experienced. The revelation came to the President of the Church it also came to each individual present. There were ten members of the Council of the Twelve and three of the First Presidency there assembled. The result was that President Kimball knew, and each one of us knew, independent of any other person, by direct and personal revelation to us, that the time had now come to extend the gospel and all its blessings and all its obligations, including the priesthood and the blessings of the house of the Lord, to those of every nation, culture, and race, including the black race**. There was no question whatsoever as to what happened or as to the word and message that came. The revelation came to the President of the Church and, in harmony with Church government, was announced by him the announcement was made eight days later over the signature of the First Presidency. But **in this instance, in addition to the revelation coming to the man who would announce it to the Church and to the world, and who was sustained as the mouthpiece of God on earth, the revelation came to every member of the body that I have named.** They all knew it in the temple. In my judgment this was done by the Lord in this way because it was a revelation of such tremendous significance and import one which would reverse the whole direction of the Church, procedurally and administratively one which would affect the living and the dead one which would affect the total relationship that we have with the world one, I say, of such significance that **the Lord wanted independent witnesses who could bear record that the thing had happened. Now if President Kimball had received the revelation and had asked for a sustaining vote, obviously he would have received it and the**

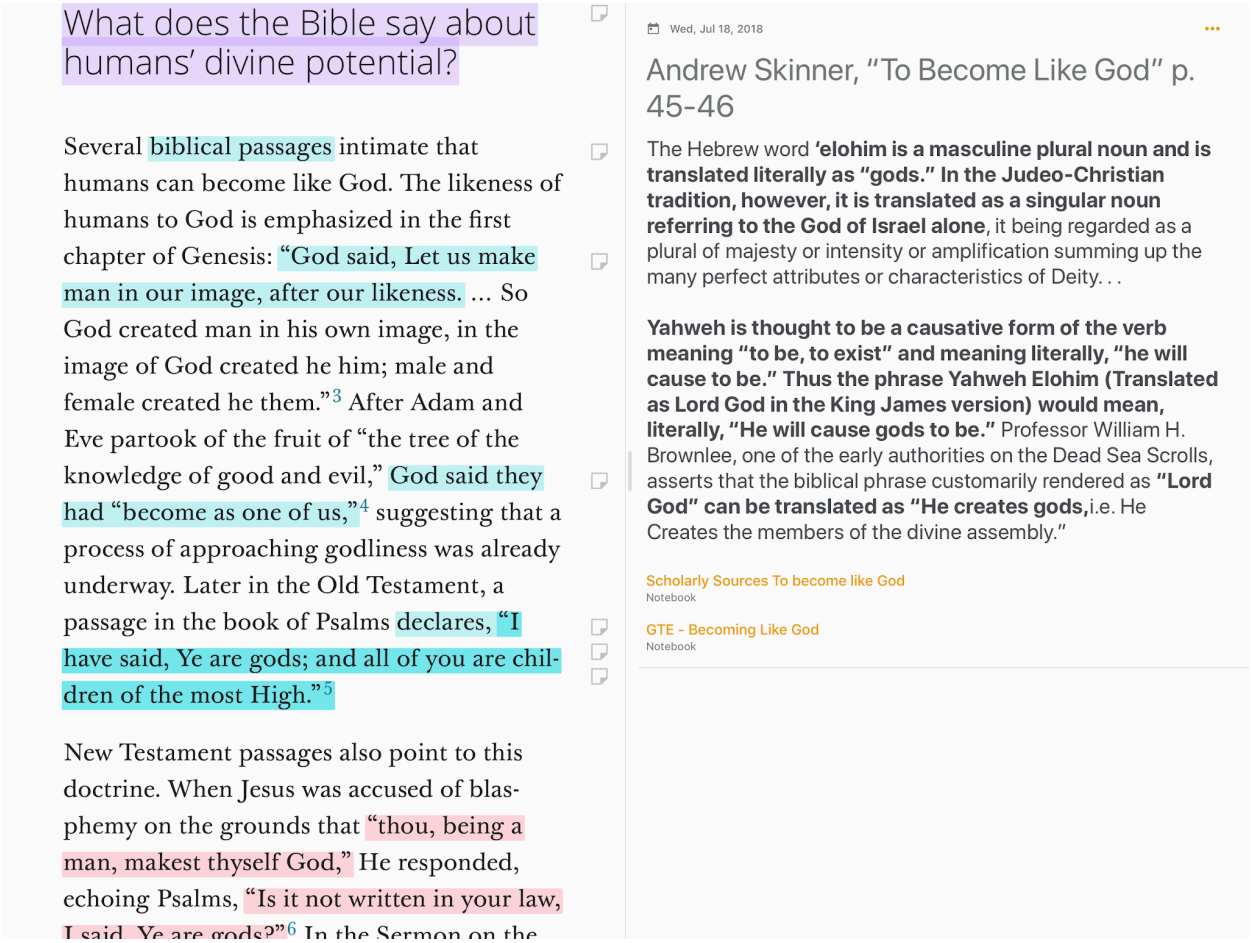


Becoming Like God

1. How can Mormons really think that they are going to become like God?
2. Isn't believing that we can become like God sacrilegious and insulting to God?
3. Do we believe that there's more than one God?


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Becoming Like God
Gospel Topics Essays
Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all people may "progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny."[2] Just as a child can develop the attributes of his or her parents over time, the divine nature that humans inherit can be developed to become like their Heavenly Father's.
The desire to nurture the divinity in His children is one of God's attributes that most inspires, motivates, and humbles members of the Church. God's loving parentage and guidance can help each willing, obedient child of God receive of His fulness and of His glory. This knowledge transforms the way Latter-day Saints see their fellow human beings. The teaching that men and women have the potential to be exalted to a state of godliness clearly expands beyond what is understood by most contemporary Christian churches and expresses for the Latter-day Saints a yearning rooted in the Bible to live as God lives, to love as He loves, and to
Note
Wed, Jul 18, 2018
Andrew Skinner, "To Become Like God" p. 118-119
Years ago, President Boyd K Packer illustrated the truth of President Snow's declaration by recounting an experience involving his own children. He had returned home to find them waiting for him in the driveway. They had discovered some newly hatched chicks. As his four-year-old daughter hld one of them, he said in a teasing way, "That will make a nice watchdog when it grows up, won't it?" His daughter looked at him as if he wasn't very bright. President Packer changed his approach by saying that if it wouldn't be a watchdog, "it will be a nice riding horse." His daughter wrinkled up her nose and him a look that basically said, "Don't you know anything? It will grow up to be a chicken like its parents." President Packer then distilled for us the lesson: "Since every living thing follows the pattern of its parentage, are we to suppose that God has some other strange pattern in mind for His offspring? Surely we, His children, are not, in the language of science, a different species than He is. What is in error, then, when we use the term godhood to describe the ultimate destiny of mankind?"
Scholarly Sources To become like God
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Becoming Like God
Gospel Topics Essays
nature and exaltation are essential and beloved teachings in the Church.
Does belief in exaltation make Latter-day Saints polytheists?
For some observers, the doctrine that humans should strive for godliness may evoke images of ancient pantheons with competing deities. Such images are incompatible with Latter-day Saint doctrine. Latter-day Saints believe that God's children will always worship Him. Our progression will never change His identity as our Father and our God. Indeed, our exalted, eternal relationship with Him will be part of the "fulness of joy" He desires for us.
Latter-day Saints also believe strongly in the fundamental unity of the divine. They believe
Note
Wed, Jul 18, 2018
Andrew Skinner, "To Become Like God" p. 122
Those who criticize believers in theosis, charging them with attempting to diminish God's exalted status for selfish and prideful reasons, might find peace and reassurance by considering Elder Tad R. Callister's statement: **"Who is greater: that being who limits or that being who enhances man's eternal progress? One might ask, Who can give greater honor and glory to God--a creature of lower or more exalted status? Can an animal offer the same honor or worship with the same passion and intensity as a human? Can a mere mortal express the empyreal [celestial sublime] feelings or exercise the spiritual fervency of a potential god? One's capacity to honor and worship is magnified with one's intellectual, emotional, cultural, and spiritual enlightenment. Accordingly, the more we become like God, the greater our ability to pay Him homage. In that process of lifting men heavenward, God simultaneously multiplies His own honor and glory and thus is glorified more, not less."**
GTE - Becoming Like God
Notebook



What does the Bible say about humans' divine potential?

Several biblical passages intimate that humans can become like God. The likeness of humans to God is emphasized in the first chapter of Genesis: "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."[3] After Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," God said they had "become as one of us,"[4] suggesting that a process of approaching godliness was already underway. Later in the Old Testament, a passage in the book of Psalms declares, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High."[5]

New Testament passages also point to this doctrine. When Jesus was accused of blasphemy on the grounds that "thou, being a man, makest thyself God," He responded, echoing Psalms, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?"[6] In the Sermon on the

Wed, Jul 18, 2018

Andrew Skinner, "To Become Like God" p. 45-46

The Hebrew word **'elohim is a masculine plural noun and is translated literally as "gods." In the Judeo-Christian tradition, however, it is translated as a singular noun referring to the God of Israel alone**, it being regarded as a plural of majesty or intensity or amplification summing up the many perfect attributes or characteristics of Deity. . .

Yahweh is thought to be a causative form of the verb meaning "to be, to exist" and meaning literally, "he will cause to be." Thus the phrase Yahweh Elohim (Translated as Lord God in the King James version) would mean, literally, "He will cause gods to be." Professor William H. Brownlee, one of the early authorities on the Dead Sea Scrolls, asserts that the biblical phrase customarily rendered as **"Lord God" can be translated as "He creates gods,**i.e. He Creates the members of the divine assembly."

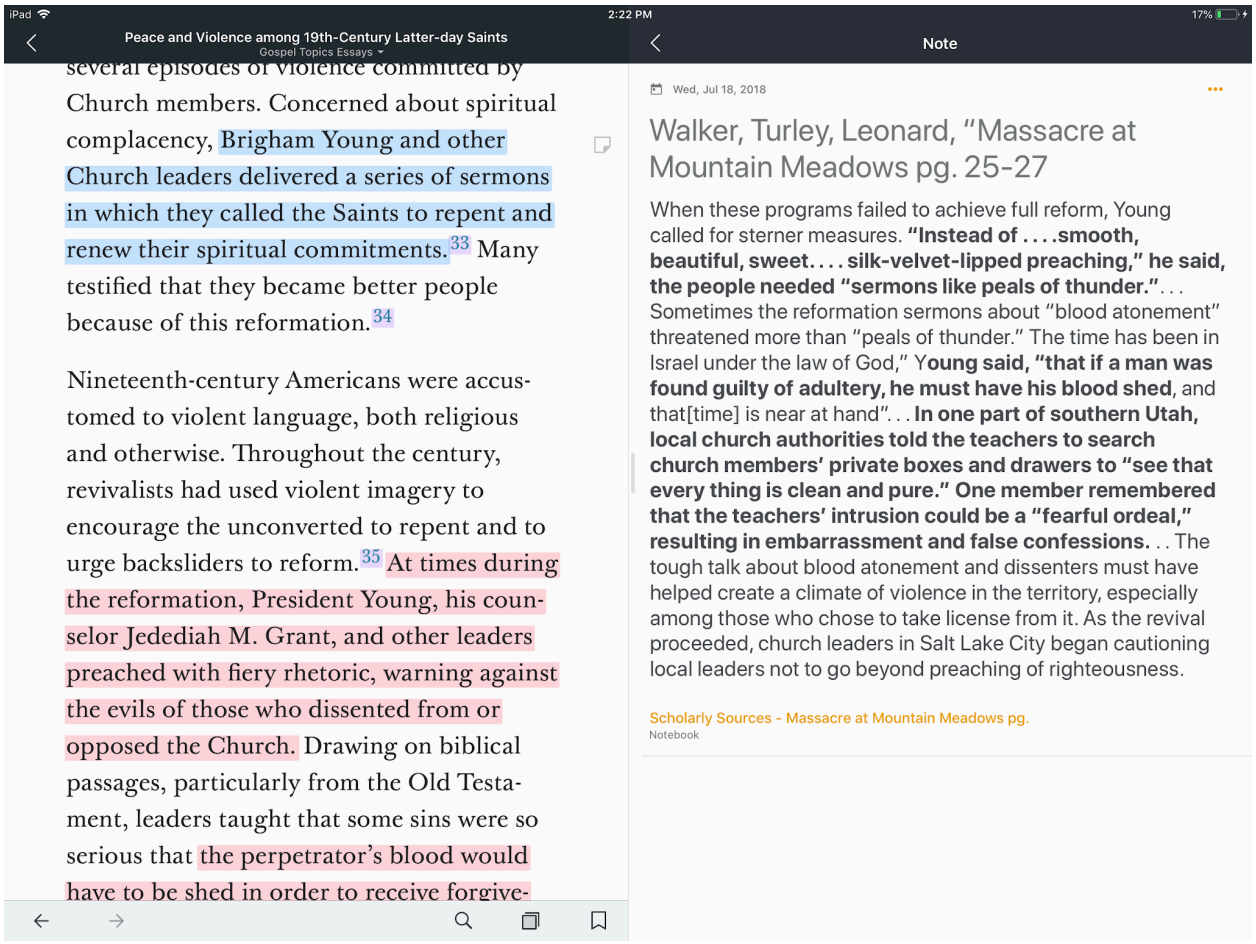
Scholarly Sources To become like God
Notebook

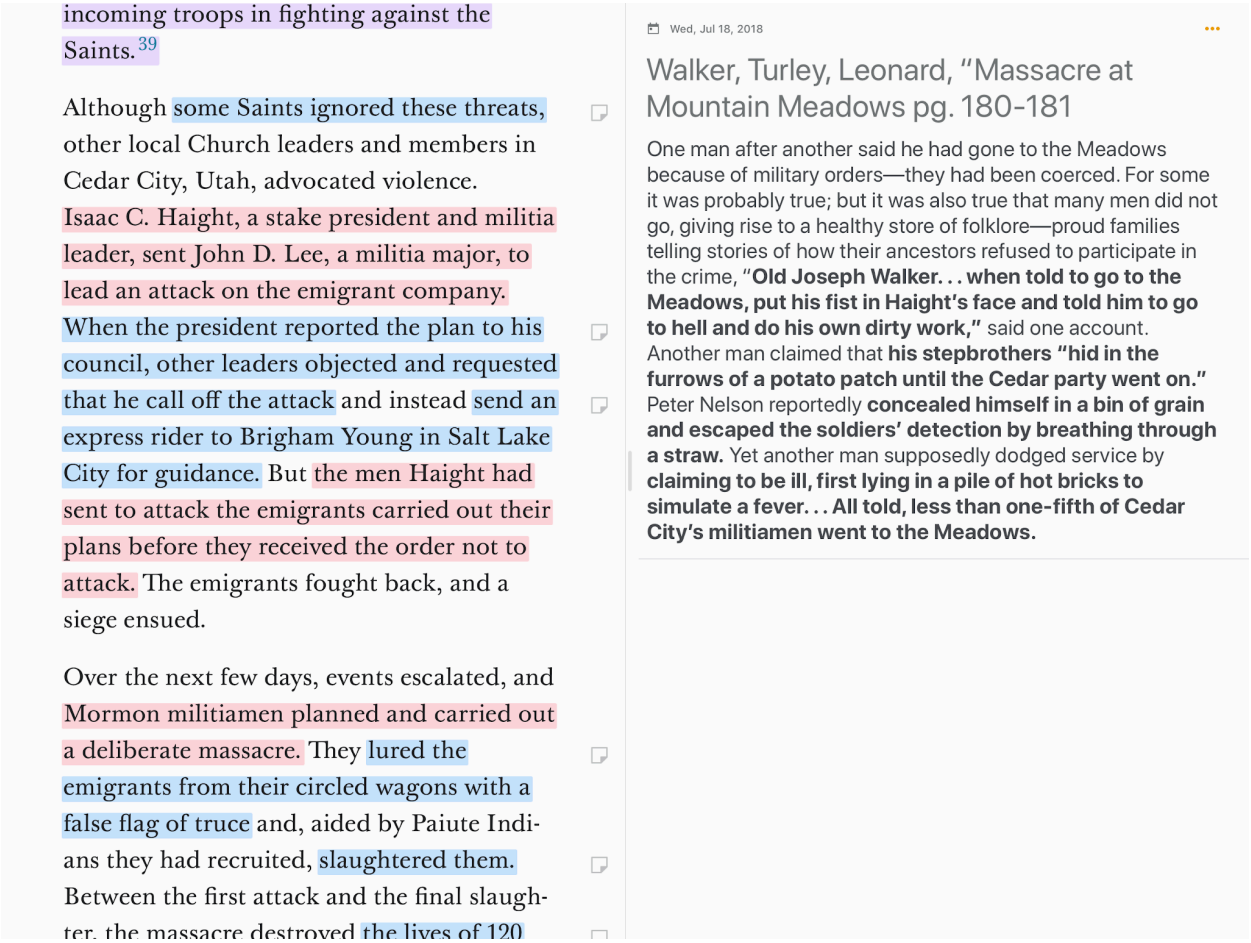
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Peace and Violence among 19th-Century Latter-day Saints

1. What role did Brigham Young have in Mountain Meadows massacre?

2. Did all of the Cedar City Mormons participate?


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Peace and Violence among 19th-Century Latter-day Saints
Gospel Topics Essays
several episodes of violence committed by Church members. Concerned about spiritual complacency, Brigham Young and other Church leaders delivered a series of sermons in which they called the Saints to repent and renew their spiritual commitments.[33] Many testified that they became better people because of this reformation.[34]
Nineteenth-century Americans were accustomed to violent language, both religious and otherwise. Throughout the century, revivalists had used violent imagery to encourage the unconverted to repent and to urge backsliders to reform.[35] At times during the reformation, President Young, his counselor Jedediah M. Grant, and other leaders preached with fiery rhetoric, warning against the evils of those who dissented from or opposed the Church. Drawing on biblical passages, particularly from the Old Testament, leaders taught that some sins were so serious that the perpetrator's blood would have to be shed in order to receive forgive-
Note
Wed, Jul 18, 2018
Walker, Turley, Leonard, "Massacre at Mountain Meadows pg. 25-27
When these programs failed to achieve full reform, Young called for sterner measures. **"Instead of . . . .smooth, beautiful, sweet. . . . silk-velvet-lipped preaching," he said, the people needed "sermons like peals of thunder."** . . . Sometimes the reformation sermons about "blood atonement" threatened more than "peals of thunder." The time has been in Israel under the law of God," Y**oung said, "that if a man was found guilty of adultery, he must have his blood shed**, and that[time] is near at hand". . . **In one part of southern Utah, local church authorities told the teachers to search church members' private boxes and drawers to "see that every thing is clean and pure." One member remembered that the teachers' intrusion could be a "fearful ordeal," resulting in embarrassment and false confessions.** . . The tough talk about blood atonement and dissenters must have helped create a climate of violence in the territory, especially among those who chose to take license from it. As the revival proceeded, church leaders in Salt Lake City began cautioning local leaders not to go beyond preaching of righteousness.
Scholarly Sources - Massacre at Mountain Meadows pg.
Notebook



incoming troops in fighting against the Saints.[39]

Although some Saints ignored these threats, other local Church leaders and members in Cedar City, Utah, advocated violence. Isaac C. Haight, a stake president and militia leader, sent John D. Lee, a militia major, to lead an attack on the emigrant company. When the president reported the plan to his council, other leaders objected and requested that he call off the attack and instead send an express rider to Brigham Young in Salt Lake City for guidance. But the men Haight had sent to attack the emigrants carried out their plans before they received the order not to attack. The emigrants fought back, and a siege ensued.

Over the next few days, events escalated, and Mormon militiamen planned and carried out a deliberate massacre. They lured the emigrants from their circled wagons with a false flag of truce and, aided by Paiute Indians they had recruited, slaughtered them. Between the first attack and the final slaughter, the massacre destroyed the lives of 120

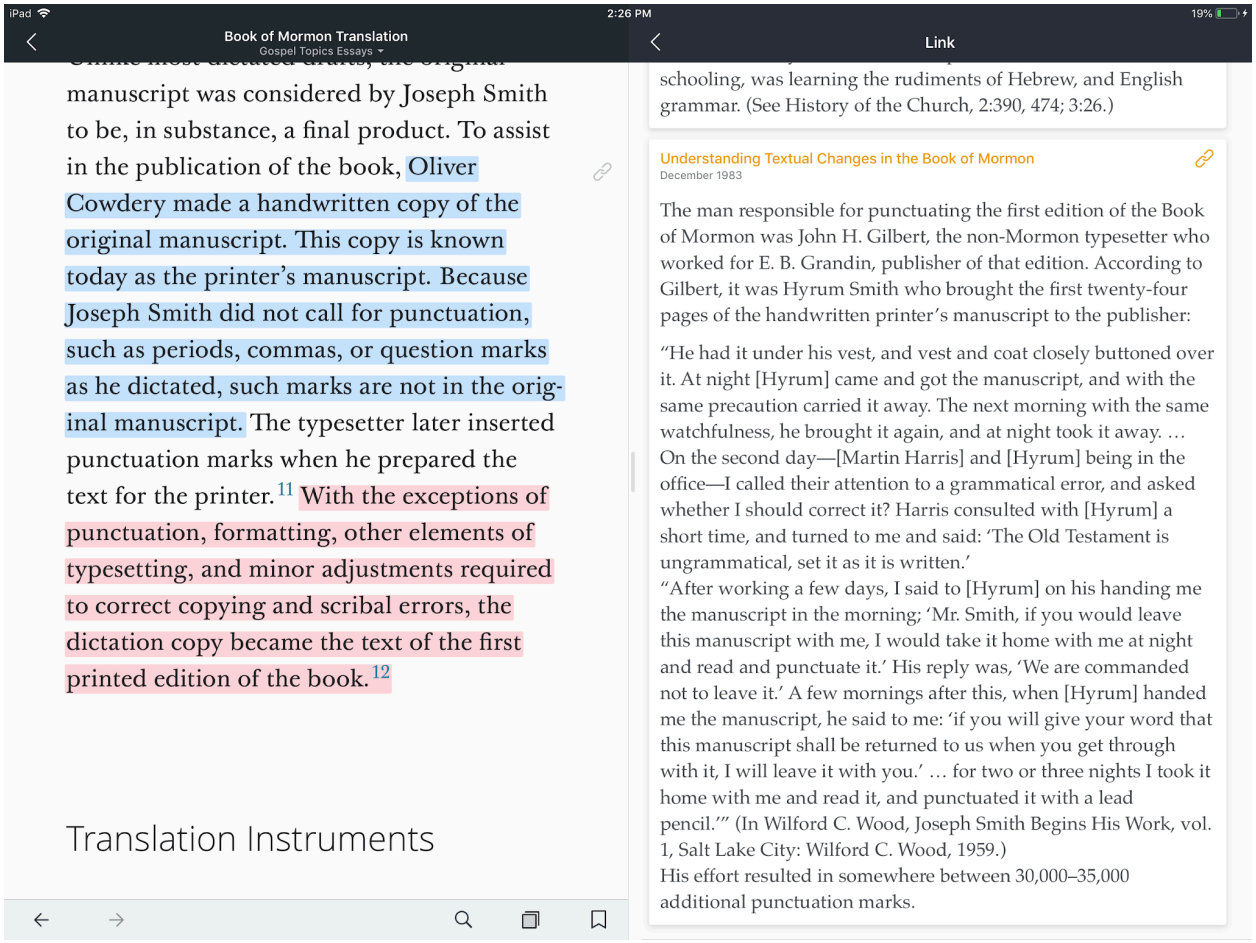
Wed, Jul 18, 2018

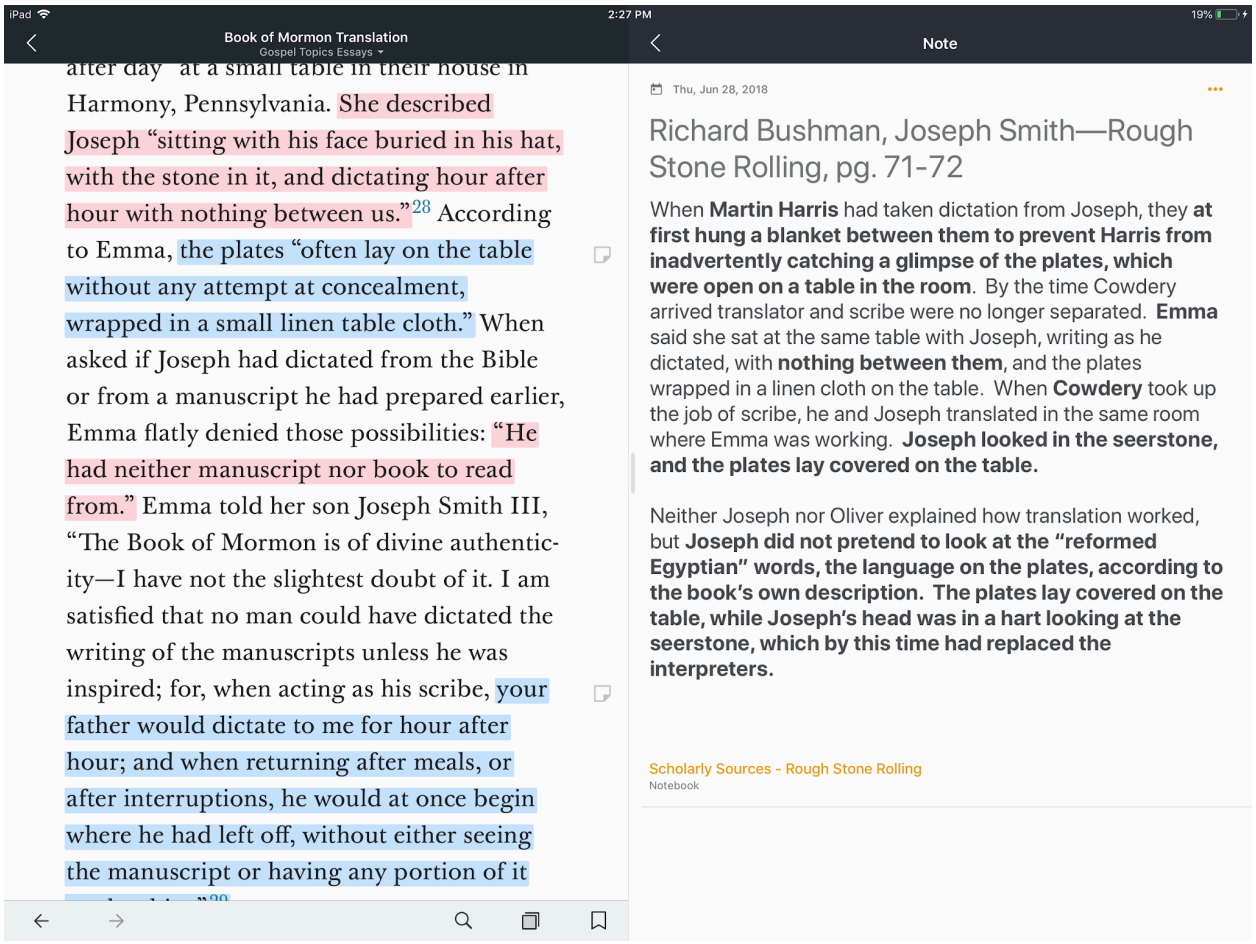
Walker, Turley, Leonard, "Massacre at Mountain Meadows pg. 180-181

One man after another said he had gone to the Meadows because of military orders—they had been coerced. For some it was probably true; but it was also true that many men did not go, giving rise to a healthy store of folklore—proud families telling stories of how their ancestors refused to participate in the crime, "**Old Joseph Walker. . . when told to go to the Meadows, put his fist in Haight's face and told him to go to hell and do his own dirty work,"** said one account. Another man claimed that **his stepbrothers "hid in the furrows of a potato patch until the Cedar party went on."** Peter Nelson reportedly **concealed himself in a bin of grain and escaped the soldiers' detection by breathing through a straw.** Yet another man supposedly dodged service by **claiming to be ill, first lying in a pile of hot bricks to simulate a fever. . . All told, less than one-fifth of Cedar City's militiamen went to the Meadows.**

Book of Mormon Translation

1. Is it true that the Book of Mormon has been changed from the original translation thousands of times?
2. If Joseph translated by looking in a hat with a seer stone, why do pictures show him with a blanket between him and the scribe?
3. If Joseph really had plates, how come no one else could see or touch them?


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Book of Mormon Translation
Gospel Topics Essays
manuscript was considered by Joseph Smith to be, in substance, a final product. To assist in the publication of the book, Oliver Cowdery made a handwritten copy of the original manuscript. This copy is known today as the printer's manuscript. Because Joseph Smith did not call for punctuation, such as periods, commas, or question marks as he dictated, such marks are not in the original manuscript. The typesetter later inserted punctuation marks when he prepared the text for the printer.[11] With the exceptions of punctuation, formatting, other elements of typesetting, and minor adjustments required to correct copying and scribal errors, the dictation copy became the text of the first printed edition of the book.[12]
Translation Instruments
Link
schooling, was learning the rudiments of Hebrew, and English grammar. (See History of the Church, 2:390, 474; 3:26.)
Understanding Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon
December 1983
The man responsible for punctuating the first edition of the Book of Mormon was John H. Gilbert, the non-Mormon typesetter who worked for E. B. Grandin, publisher of that edition. According to Gilbert, it was Hyrum Smith who brought the first twenty-four pages of the handwritten printer's manuscript to the publisher:
"He had it under his vest, and vest and coat closely buttoned over it. At night [Hyrum] came and got the manuscript, and with the same precaution carried it away. The next morning with the same watchfulness, he brought it again, and at night took it away. … On the second day—[Martin Harris] and [Hyrum] being in the office—I called their attention to a grammatical error, and asked whether I should correct it? Harris consulted with [Hyrum] a short time, and turned to me and said: 'The Old Testament is ungrammatical, set it as it is written.'
"After working a few days, I said to [Hyrum] on his handing me the manuscript in the morning; 'Mr. Smith, if you would leave this manuscript with me, I would take it home with me at night and read and punctuate it.' His reply was, 'We are commanded not to leave it.' A few mornings after this, when [Hyrum] handed me the manuscript, he said to me: 'if you will give your word that this manuscript shall be returned to us when you get through with it, I will leave it with you.' … for two or three nights I took it home with me and read it, and punctuated it with a lead pencil.'" (In Wilford C. Wood, Joseph Smith Begins His Work, vol. 1, Salt Lake City: Wilford C. Wood, 1959.)
His effort resulted in somewhere between 30,000–35,000 additional punctuation marks.


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Book of Mormon Translation
Gospel Topics Essays
after day" at a small table in their house in Harmony, Pennsylvania. She described Joseph "sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us."[28] According to Emma, the plates "often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth." When asked if Joseph had dictated from the Bible or from a manuscript he had prepared earlier, Emma flatly denied those possibilities: "He had neither manuscript nor book to read from." Emma told her son Joseph Smith III, "The Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity—I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me for hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it
Note
Thu, Jun 28, 2018
Richard Bushman, Joseph Smith—Rough Stone Rolling, pg. 71-72
When Martin Harris had taken dictation from Joseph, they at first hung a blanket between them to prevent Harris from inadvertently catching a glimpse of the plates, which were open on a table in the room. By the time Cowdery arrived translator and scribe were no longer separated. Emma said she sat at the same table with Joseph, writing as he dictated, with nothing between them, and the plates wrapped in a linen cloth on the table. When Cowdery took up the job of scribe, he and Joseph translated in the same room where Emma was working. Joseph looked in the seerstone, and the plates lay covered on the table.
Neither Joseph nor Oliver explained how translation worked, but Joseph did not pretend to look at the "reformed Egyptian" words, the language on the plates, according to the book's own description. The plates lay covered on the table, while Joseph's head was in a hart looking at the seerstone, which by this time had replaced the interpreters.
Scholarly Sources - Rough Stone Rolling
Notebook

that "God had a work for [you] to do."[2] He informed Joseph that "there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang." The book could be found in a hill not far from the Smith family farm. This was no ordinary history, for it contained "the fullness of the everlasting Gospel as delivered by the Savior."[3]

The angel charged Joseph Smith to translate the book from the ancient language in which it was written. The young man, however, had very little formal education and was incapable of writing a book on his own, let alone translating an ancient book written from an unknown language, known in the Book of Mormon as "reformed Egyptian."[4] Joseph's wife Emma insisted that, at the time of translation, Joseph "could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictat[e] a book like the Book of Mormon."[5]

Joseph received the plates in September 1827 and the following spring, in Harmony, Penn

pp. 7-8

While Joseph was able to prevent his enemies from finding the plates, several of his friends and family touched, hefted, and held the plates or the box where they were stored. Several individuals witnessed them underneath the linen covering and even felt the size and mass of the plates. **One man revealed that he heard the covered plates rattle and "jink" inside their box. Joseph's sister Katherin**e had a similar experience. When she was dusting and cleaning, she remembered seeing "a package on the table containing the gold plates," which she picked up to judge the weight. She remembered that **they were "heavy like gold." Even more revealing, she "rippled her fingers up the edge of the plates and felt that they were separate metal plates and heard the tinkle of sound that the made."** Though Katherine never saw the gold leaves themselves, she saw their shape and witnessed them by both hearing and touch. Most of Joseph's family claimed that they too had similar experiences. **William Smith,** for example, who was just a teenager at the time, later wrote that he had "**hefted the plates as they lay on the table** wrapped in an old frock or jacket in which Joseph and brought them home." Like his sister Katherine, he stated, "He had **thumbed them through the cloth and ascertained that they were thin ssheets of some kind of meta**l." Friends too, like **Alvah Beaman**, also lifted and felt the plates. . . **Martin Harris** later said that he "**hefted the plates many times**, and should think they weighed forty or fifty pounds." In fact, **most of Joseph's closest friends and family testified of touching, hefting, or seeing the plates. . . .**
McKay, Michael, & Dirkmaat, Gerrit, From darkness unto light, pp. 15

Lucy Mack Smith remembered Lucy Harris having a "remarkable dream" that evening. When she awoke the next

Conclusion

The questions and concerns of students who attend Seminaries and Institutes are important to them. In completing this course, I have realized the importance of knowing the Gospel Topics Essays like “the back of your hand” (Ballard, 2016) if you want to be able to help students resolve their concerns. Likewise, I have come to realize the importance of the Gospel Library, and have learned to utilize it in better ways. Moving forward, I hope to continue to meet the call found in Doctrine and Covenants 88, which teaches “As all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” In the future I hope to examine challenging topics including religious liberty, and same gender attraction, compiling resources from scholarly sources, and storing them in the Gospel Library App. In so doing, I am confident that I will be a better religious educator, and better fulfill the objective of Seminaries and Institutes of religion.

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