

A Fingerprint in Scripture

The Long Ending of Mark and the Book of Mormon

An Echo in an in an Ancient Text

The Book of Mormon, presented as a record of ancient peoples in the Americas, concludes with the words of the prophet Moroni. In his final testimony, he records a specific prophecy about the signs that follow believers.

“And these **signs** shall **follow them that believe**; in my name shall **they cast out devils**; they shall **speak with new tongues**; they shall **take up serpents**; and if they drink **any deadly** thing it shall not hurt hurt them; they **shall lay hands on the sick**, and they **shall recover.**”

Mormon 9:24

Where have we heard these words before?

A Direct Match in the New Testament

Mark 16:17-18 (King James Version)

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they **cast out devils**; they shall **speak with new tongues**; They shall **take up serpents**; and if they **drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them**; they shall **lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover**.

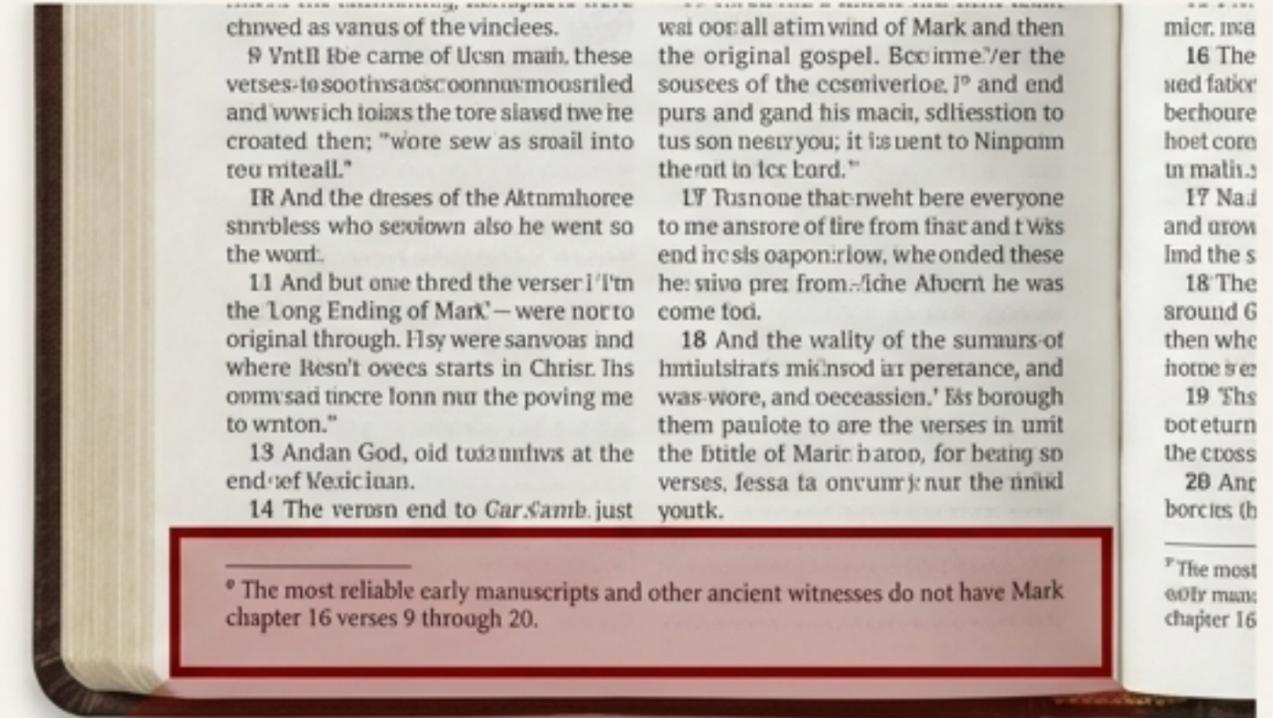
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This is more than a thematic parallel; it's a linguistic copy. The presence of 17th-century KJV English in an ancient American record presents a significant historical problem.

But the Sm Source Itself Is a Later Addition

The problem goes far deeper than a simple anachronism. A near-universal consensus in modern biblical scholarship concludes that these verses—known as the “Long Ending of Mark”—were not part of the original gospel. They were added by a scribe centuries after it was written.



“The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark chapter 16 verses 9 through 20.”

The Scholar's Verdict: Why the Ending Was Added

New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman summarizes the textual evidence that convinces “virtually all textual scholars’ that these verses are a late addition.



Manuscript Evidence: It is absent from the two oldest and best manuscripts of Mark’s gospel.



Stylistic Differences: The writing style varies from what we find elsewhere in Mark. There are a large number of words and phrases in the passage that are not found elsewhere in Mark.



Awkward Transitions: Mary is introduced in verse 9 as if she had not been mentioned yet, even though she is discussed in the preceding verses.

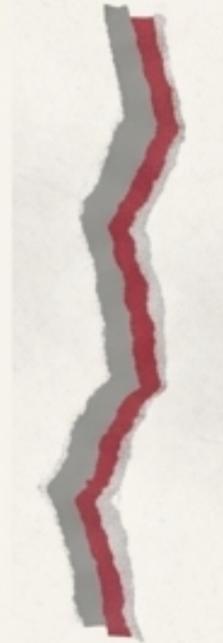


Mark's Original, Abrupt Ending

The original Gospel of Mark likely ended at verse 8. The abruptness of this ending is what probably motivated a later scribe to add a more conclusive resurrection account. The textual seam is jarring.

The Original End (Mark 16:8)

...neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

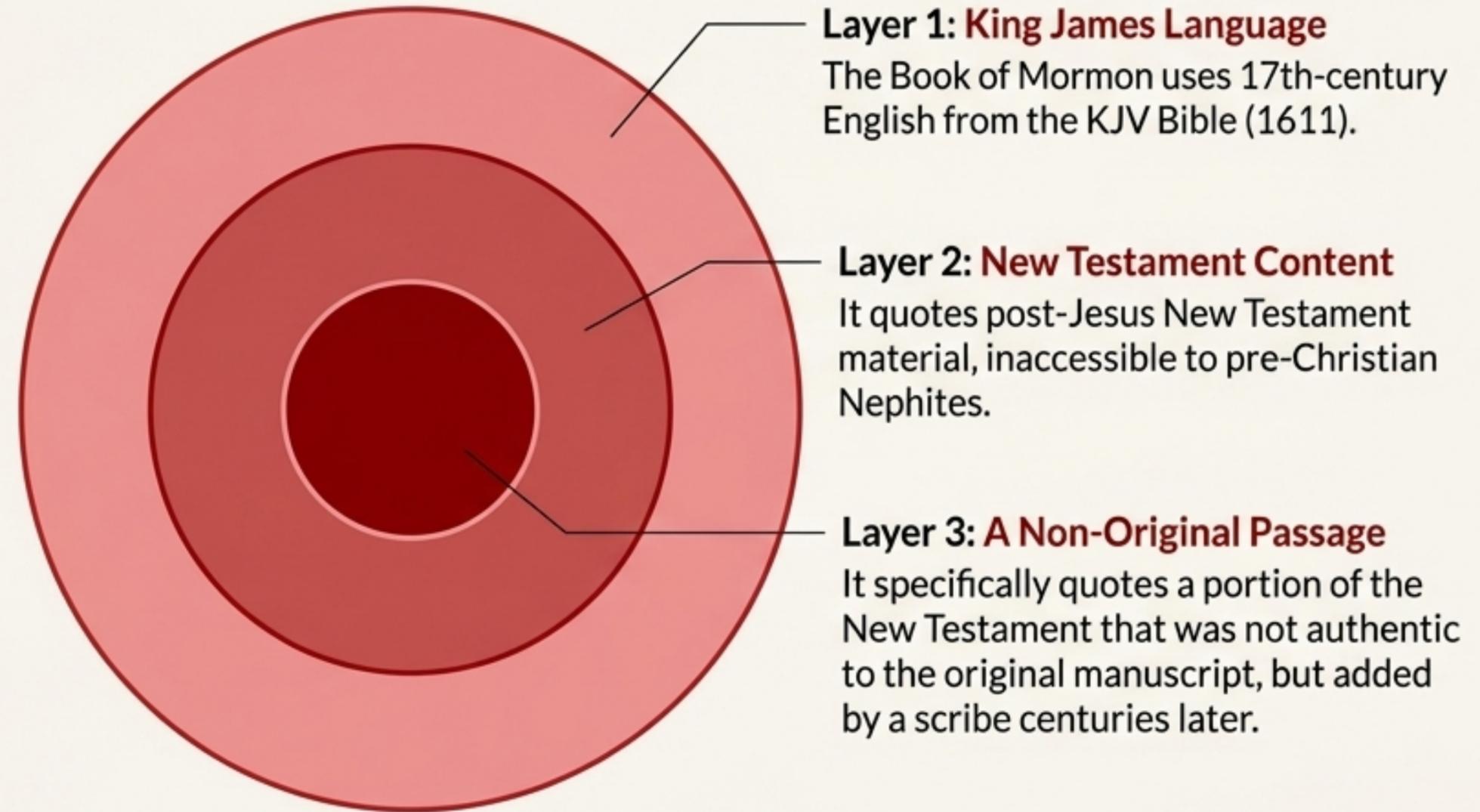


The Added Beginning (Mark 16:9)

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene...

Verse 8 provides a clear conclusion. Verse 9 reboots the narrative, introducing characters as if for the first time. This *textual break* is a key clue pointing to a different author for verses 9-20.

An Anachronism on Steroids



This isn't just one historical impossibility; it's a cascade of them, each layer compounding the problem.

A Consistent Pattern of Composition

The Long Ending of Mark is not an isolated incident. It is part of a clear pattern where the Book of Mormon's author relies heavily on a 19th-century King James Bible as a primary source text.

The Sermon on the Mount

Extensive passages from **Matthew 5-7** are reproduced nearly verbatim in **3 Nephi**.

Literalistic Biblical History

Includes literal interpretations of **Adam & Eve**, the **Global Flood**, and the **Tower of Babel**, reflecting 19th-century beliefs, not ancient records.

Deutero-Isaiah

Quotes passages from **Isaiah** written long after Lehi's family supposedly left Jerusalem with the brass plates.

These are not the hallmarks of an ancient record but the unmistakable fingerprints of a 19th-century creation.

How Apologists Address the Problem

Source: Analysis of arguments from FAIR Mormon & Book of Mormon Central.

Argument 1: Challenge the Consensus

They highlight that “**several scholars**” exist who still argue the Long Ending is authentic, attempting to cast doubt on the scholarly consensus.

Argument 2: Propose a “**Lost Ending**”

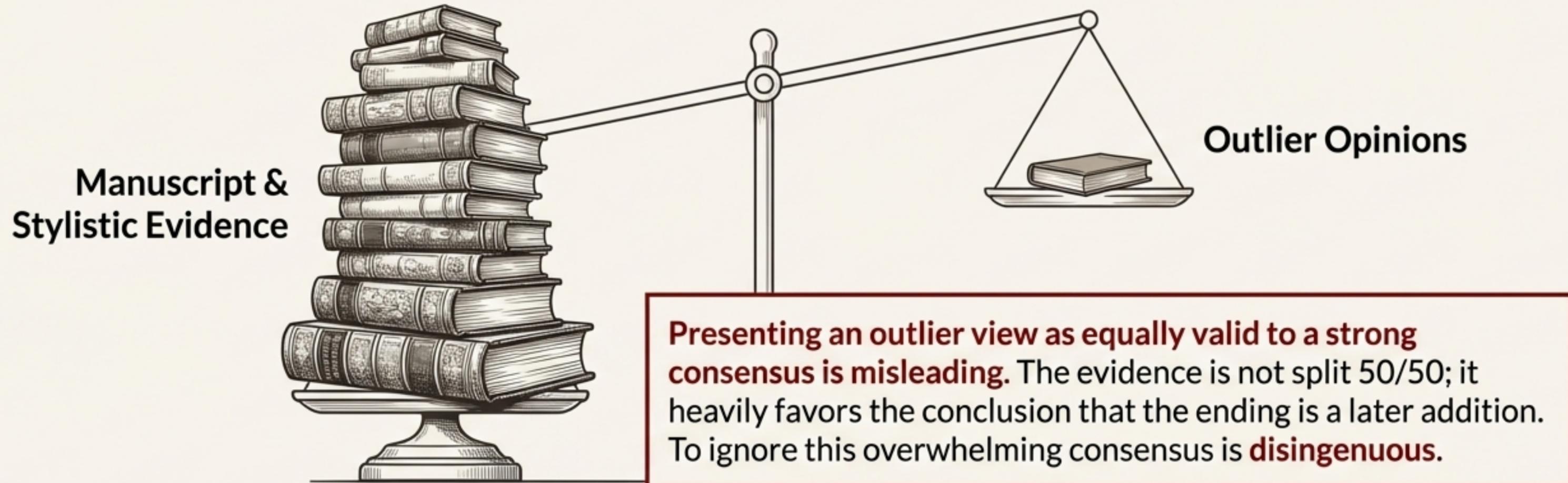
They suggest that even if our current version is a late addition, it might be a replacement for an even earlier, original long ending that was lost.

Argument 3: Use Circular Logic

They ultimately argue that the **Book of Mormon’s testimony** can be used to prove the **authenticity** of the Long Ending of Mark.

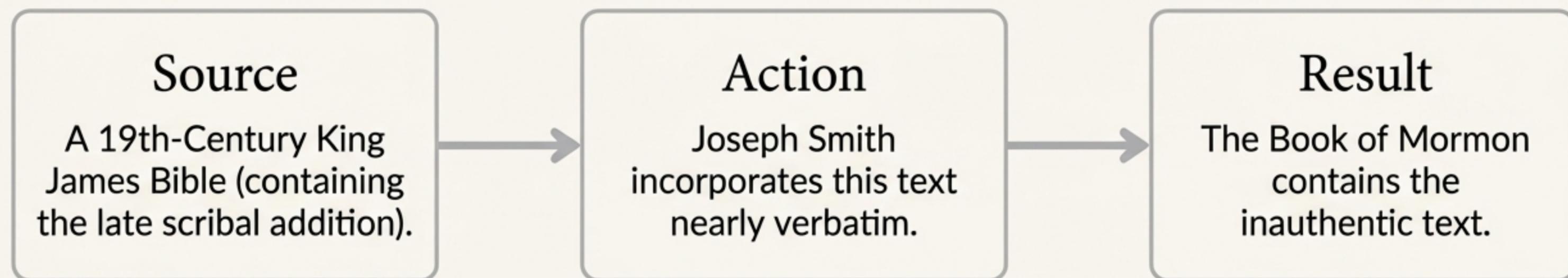
Deconstruction: Consensus vs. Outliers

Citing “**several scholars**” is a tactic that obscures the reality of the academic landscape. While outliers exist in every field, the **overwhelming weight of manuscript, stylistic, and linguistic evidence** has led the **vast majority of textual critics to a firm conclusion**.



Deconstruction: The 'Lost Ending' Is a Red Herring Herring

Arguing that a hypothetical 'lost ending' might have existed is irrelevant to the evidence at hand. Whether the scribe was replacing a lost ending or adding to an abrupt one, the specific text we have *today* is the later addition. The core problem remains.



The identical KJV phrasing proves the source was a modern Bible, not a miraculously restored “original” ending. The Book of Mormon quotes the forgery, not a lost original.

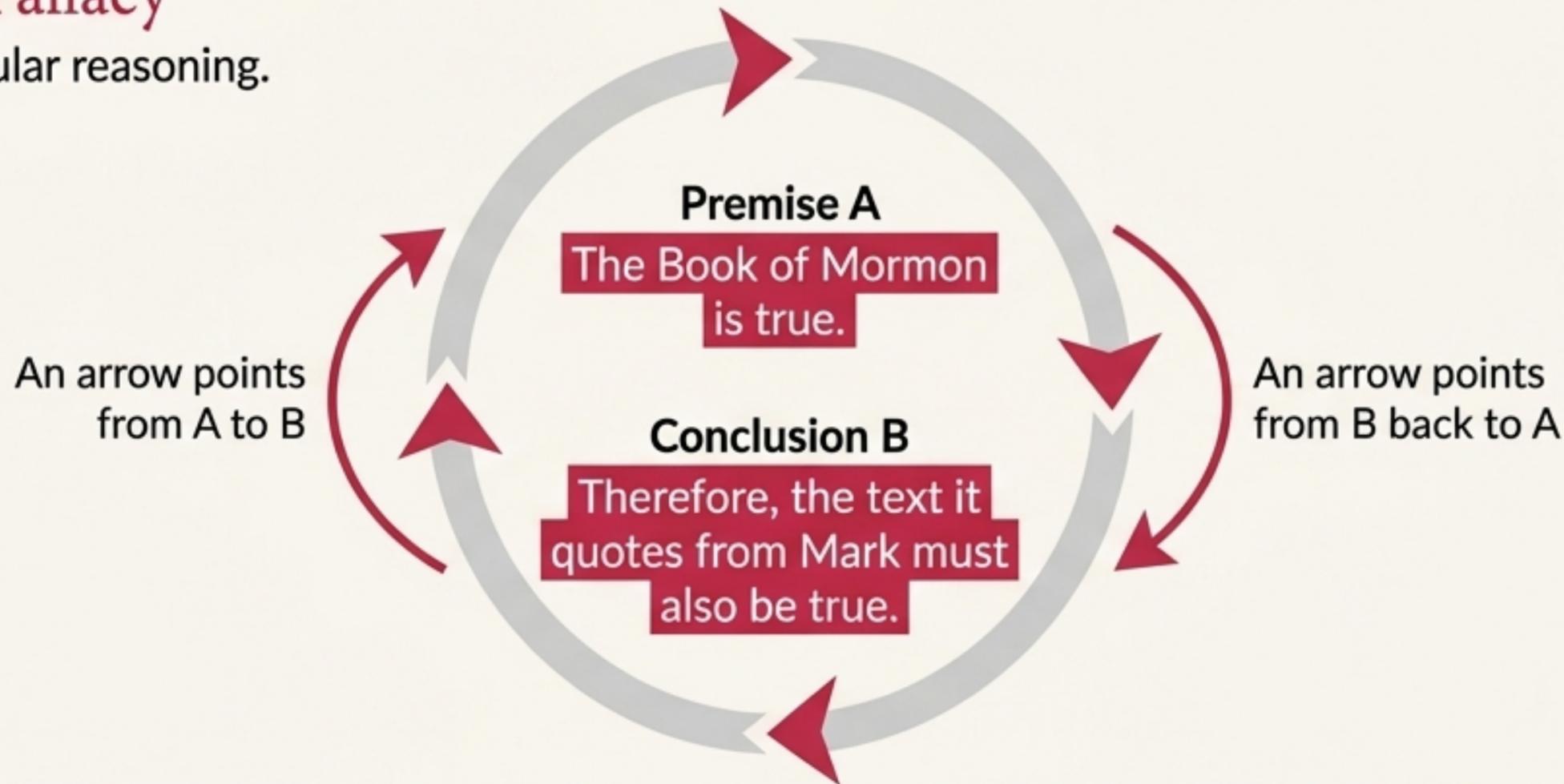
Deconstruction: An Appeal to Circular Logic

The final apologetic argument attempts to use the Book of Mormon itself to validate the problematic biblical text.

> “Belief in the authenticity of these words in the ending of Mark may... benefit from the testimony of the Book of Mormon.”

The Logical Fallacy

This is classic circular reasoning.



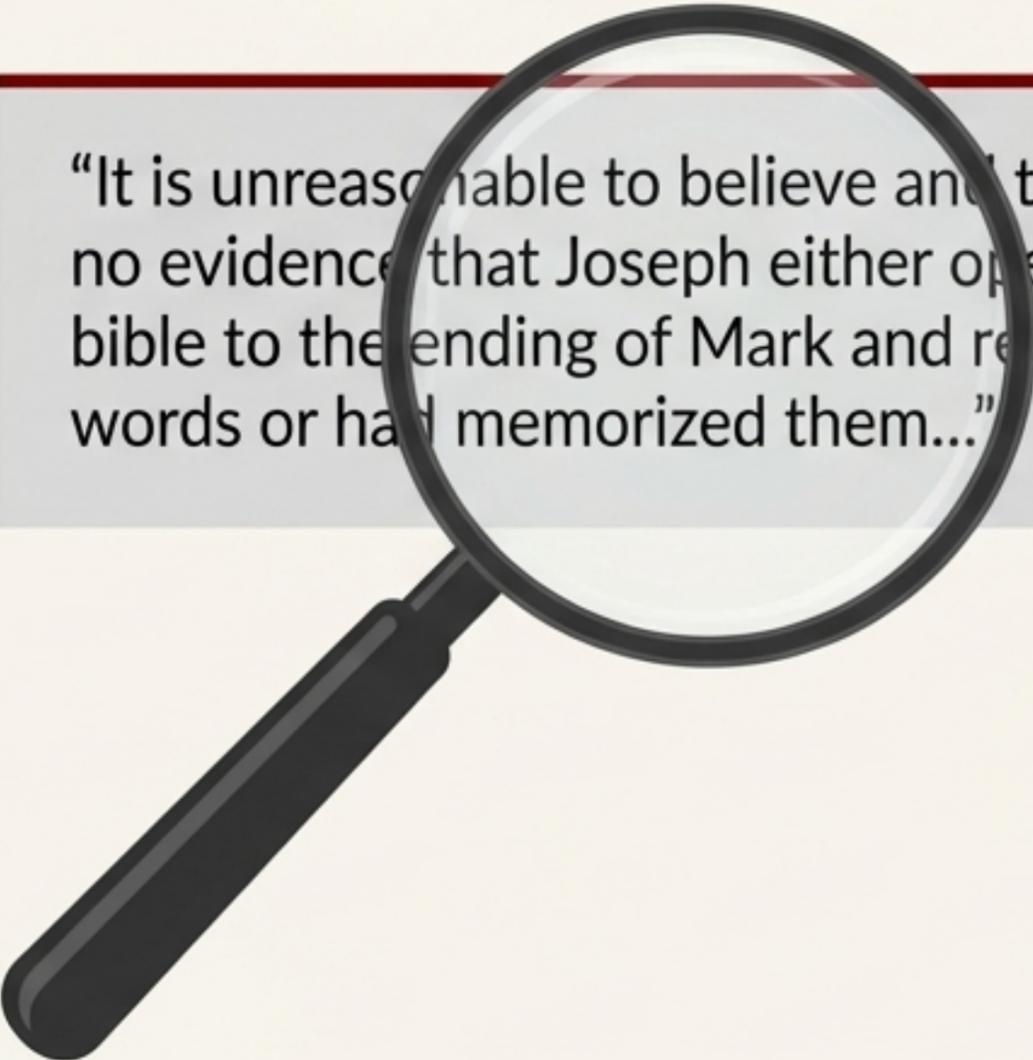
The Flaw

It assumes the very thing it is trying to prove. You cannot use a text of questionable origin to prove the authenticity of another text it borrows from.

Follow the Footnotes: Assertion is Not Evidence

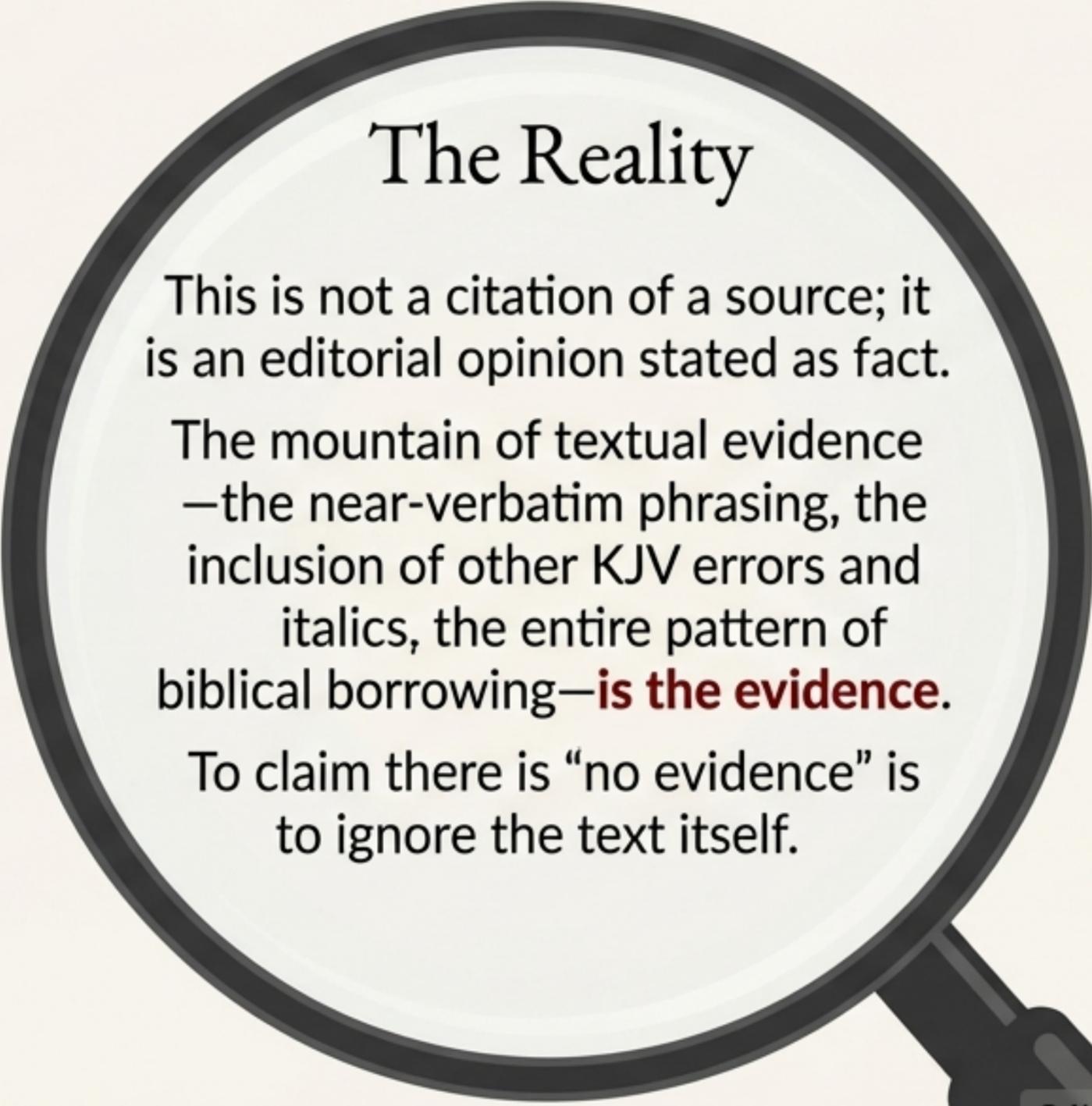
A *Book of Mormon* Central article uses a footnote to claim that Joseph Smith did not use a Bible.

The Footnote's Claim



“It is unreasonable to believe and there is no evidence that Joseph either opened a bible to the ending of Mark and read these words or had memorized them...”

The Reality



This is not a citation of a source; it is an editorial opinion stated as fact.

The mountain of textual evidence—the near-verbatim phrasing, the inclusion of other KJV errors and italics, the entire pattern of biblical borrowing—**is the evidence.**

To claim there is “no evidence” is to ignore the text itself.

Occam's Razor: Which is the Simpler Explanation?



Explanation 1: The Divine Revelation Model

- God preserved ancient plates, then gave Joseph Smith a word-for-word revelation that happened to perfectly match a 17th-century English translation of a non-original, scribally-added portion of the New Testament, complete with its unique KJV phrasing.



Explanation 2: The 19th-Century Composition Model

While composing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith used his King James Bible as a source, incorporating passages he found relevant, including Mark 16:17-18, being unaware of its problematic textual history.

The explanation requiring the fewest unsupported and extraordinary assumptions is the most likely to be correct.

The Unmistakable Fingerprint

The presence of the Long Ending of Mark in the Book of Mormon is not a trivial detail. It is a textual fingerprint that points directly to its origin. It reveals:

- **An Author** who relied on the King James Bible as a source text.
- **A Time Period** before modern biblical scholarship was widely known.
- **A Method** of composition, not ancient translation.



The evidence is not external to the book; it is embedded in the text itself. The words on the page tell the story of their own 19th-century creation.