

If Joseph Smith Got It Right, Who Got It Wrong?



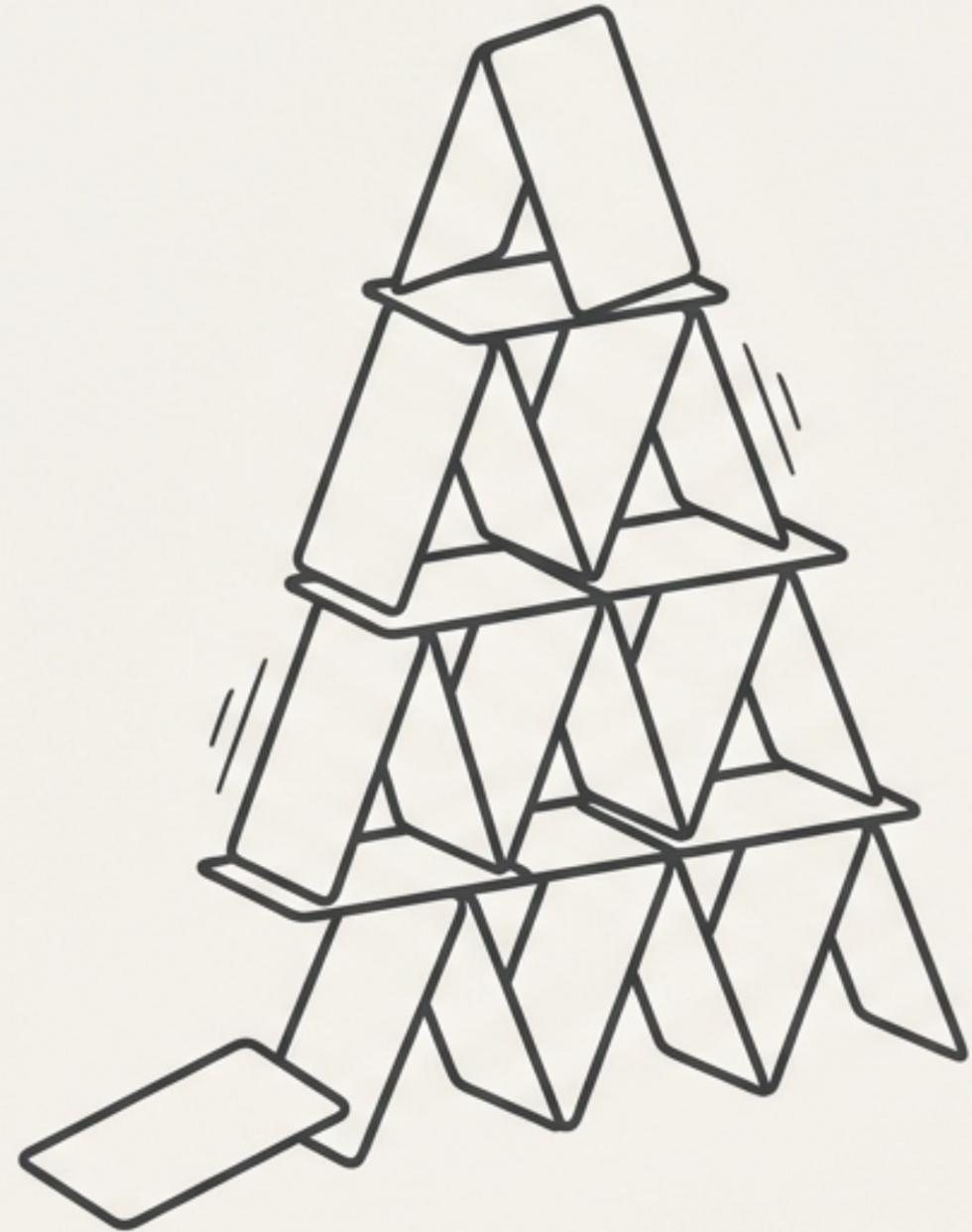
A Thought Experiment on the
Consequences of Belief

The Premise: An All-or-Nothing Proposition

The core claims of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are presented as a **single, indivisible package**. This isn't a cafeteria of beliefs; it's a foundational structure where every piece depends on the others.

"Our whole strength rests on the validity of that first Vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud... There is no middle ground. It is the Church and Kingdom of God or it is nothing."

- Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church



What One Must Believe for the Church to Be True



The First Vision

Joseph Smith saw God the Father and Jesus Christ as two separate, physical beings in 1820.



Priesthood Restoration

John the Baptist, along with Peter, James, and John, appeared physically to restore divine authority to the earth.



The Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith translated a literal, ancient record from physical gold plates containing the language "Reformed Egyptian."



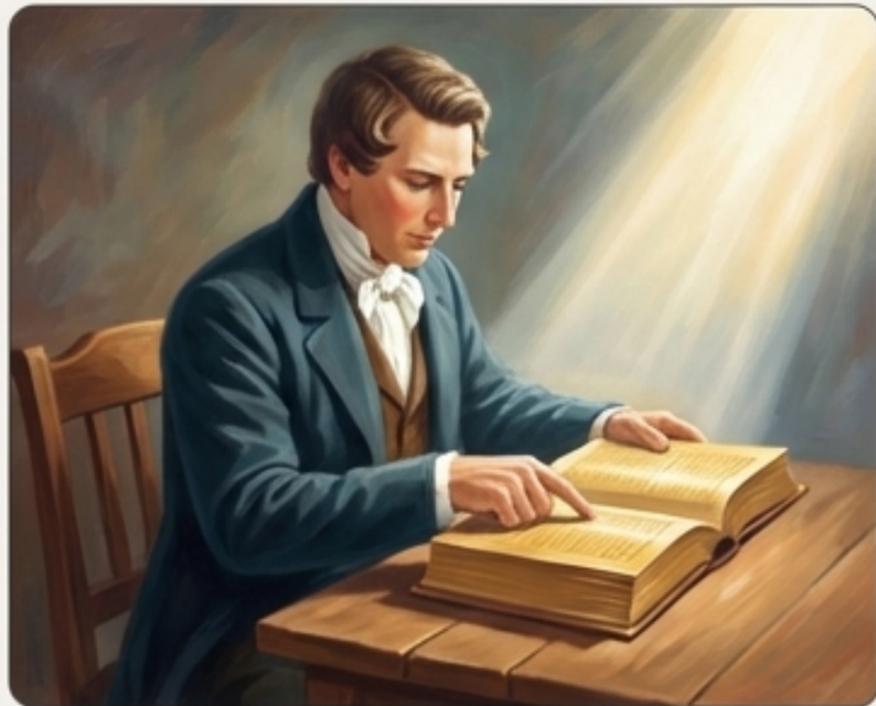
Literal Biblical Events

The Book of Mormon requires the literal history of Adam and Eve (in Missouri), a global flood that wiped the Americas clean, and the Tower of Babel.

Treasure Digging Was the Method, Not Just the Prequel

Joseph Smith's work as a "seer" in a treasure-digging company was not merely practice. The exact same methods and tools—a seer stone placed in a hat to receive visions—were used to locate the gold plates and to produce the text of the Book of Mormon.

To accept the Book of Mormon as a divine translation, one must also accept the legitimacy of folk magic and treasure digging as a valid means of revelation from God. Early church apologist Hugh Nibley himself once argued that if these claims about the seer stone were true, it would be "the most devastating case against Mormonism."



The Official Story



The Historical Method

The Turning Point

**OKAY, LET'S ASSUME ALL OF THAT IS TRUE.
IF JOSEPH SMITH GOT IT RIGHT...
WHO GOT IT WRONG?**

Consequence: The Entire Field of Egyptology is Wrong

Mormon Claim

Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham from ancient Egyptian papyri written by Abraham's own hand.



The Conflict

The source papyri were rediscovered in 1967. Egyptologists, using the Rosetta Stone as a key, identified them as common funerary texts known as "The Book of Breathings." Joseph Smith's translation bears no resemblance to the actual text.



The deceased, Osiris,
[name], justified,
whose word is true.
[Section from the Book of Breathings]

The Implication

For the Book of Abraham to be a correct translation, our understanding of the Egyptian language, derived from the Rosetta Stone, must be fundamentally incorrect. Every Egyptian document translated since the 19th century would therefore be wrong.

Consequence: Modern Biology and Genetics are Invalidated

Mormon Claim

1. Native Americans are primarily descendants of Israelites who migrated from Jerusalem ~600 BCE.
2. All humanity descends from Adam and Eve, who lived ~6,000 years ago.



The Conflict

1. Population genetics and DNA studies overwhelmingly show Native American ancestry traces back to Asia over 30,000 years ago.
2. The theory of evolution, supported by fossil and genetic evidence, shows Homo sapiens have existed for over 200,000 years.

“If evolution is true, the church is false.” - Joseph Fielding Smith

Consequence: The Archaeological and Linguistic Record is a Lie

The Claim



The Book of Mormon describes continent-spanning civilizations with large populations, metallurgy (steel), domesticated animals (horses), wheeled vehicles (chariots), and massive battles involving hundreds of thousands of soldiers.



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The Implication

The entire archaeological profession must be fundamentally incompetent or mistaken about the history of the Americas.

The Conflict



Obsidian Blade (Macuahuitl)

One hundred and fifty years of archaeology in the Americas has found no evidence for any of these claims in the relevant time period. No steel swords, no horse bones, no chariots, no skeletons from massive battles, and no trace of a language called "Reformed Egyptian."



Mayan Pottery



Chichen Itza (Ancient City)

Consequence: Centuries of Biblical Scholarship are Mistaken

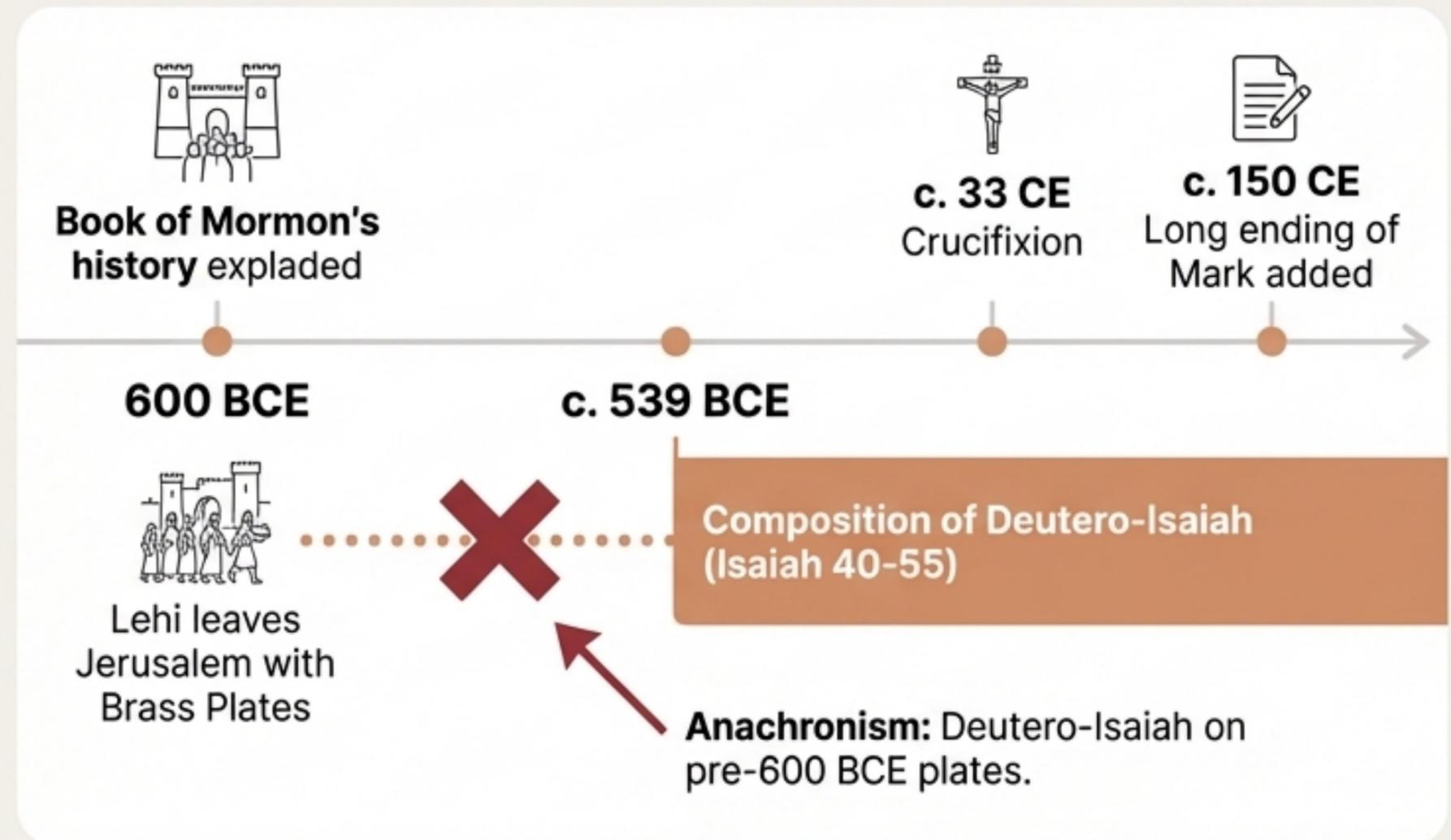
Mormon Claim

The Book of Mormon contains lengthy passages from the Bible (specifically the King James Version) that were supposedly on brass plates from 600 BCE, including chapters from Isaiah and the long ending of Mark.

The Conflict

Modern biblical scholarship, accepted by most mainstream Christian and Jewish scholars, has established:

- “Deutero-Isaiah” (chapters 40-55) was written *after* 600 BCE and could not have been on the plates.
- The long ending of Mark was added by scribes centuries after Christ.
- KJV translation errors are perfectly replicated in the Book of Mormon.



The Implication

The consensus methods and findings of textual criticism and historical analysis of the Bible must be rejected.

Consequence: Racism is Divinely Ordained

Mormon Claim

Foundational scriptures (Book of Mormon, Book of Moses) explicitly state that a dark skin color is a curse from God, a sign of divine disfavor to make a people "loathsome" and unenticing.

The Implication

If these scriptures are the literal word of God, then modern understandings of racial equality are incorrect. The idea that dark skin is a curse would be a divine truth, not a 19th-century prejudice.

Historical Context

Spencer W. Kimball, in 1960, claimed Native American children in Mormon foster homes were becoming "several shades lighter... changing to whiteness and delightsomeness."



Consequence: The Word of Wisdom vs. Science and History

Mormon Claim

The Word of Wisdom (D&C 89) is a divine revelation on health, given to Joseph Smith ahead of its time.



The Conflict: History

The revelation was not unique; its prohibitions mirror the teachings of the popular **Temperance Movement** active right where Joseph Smith lived.

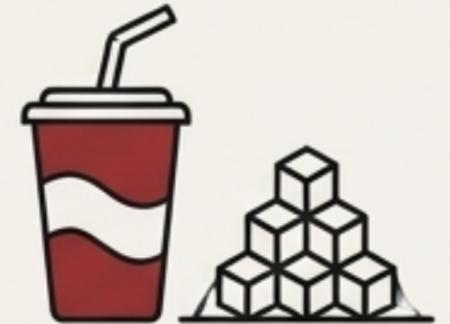


The Conflict: Science

It bans "hot drinks" like coffee and tea, which numerous studies show have health benefits. Meanwhile, it permits highly sugary drinks, a major contributor to modern health crises. The logic is inconsistent (e.g., iced coffee is banned, but hot chocolate is okay).



+ Health Benefits



- Health Crises

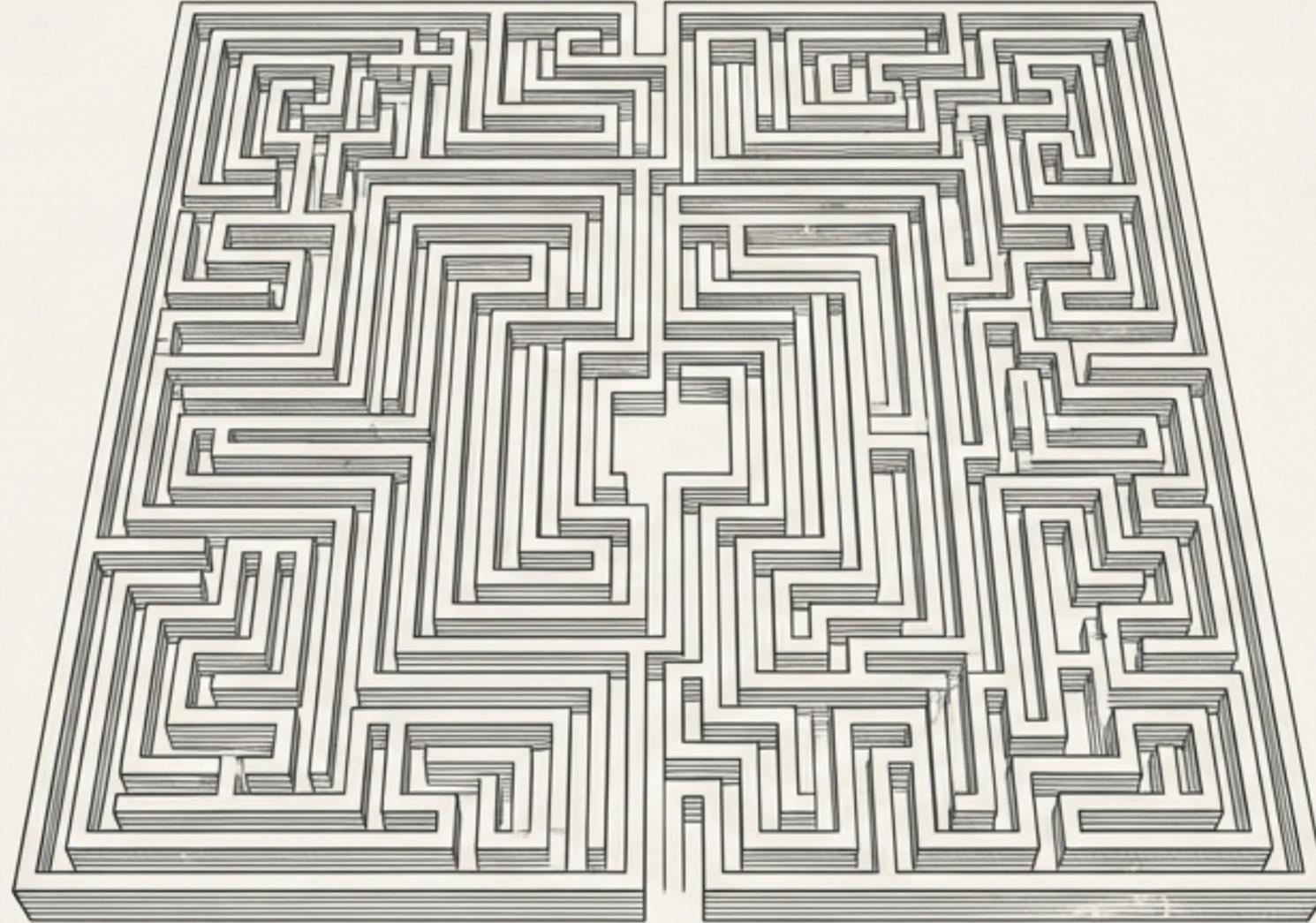
The Implication

Modern nutritional science is fundamentally wrong, and the historical record of 19th-century social movements is misleading.

Consequence: God is a Trickster (Or is Incompetent)

The Apologetic

A common defense is that God intentionally allows for contradictions and lack of evidence to test our faith.



The Problem

This framework requires a God who:

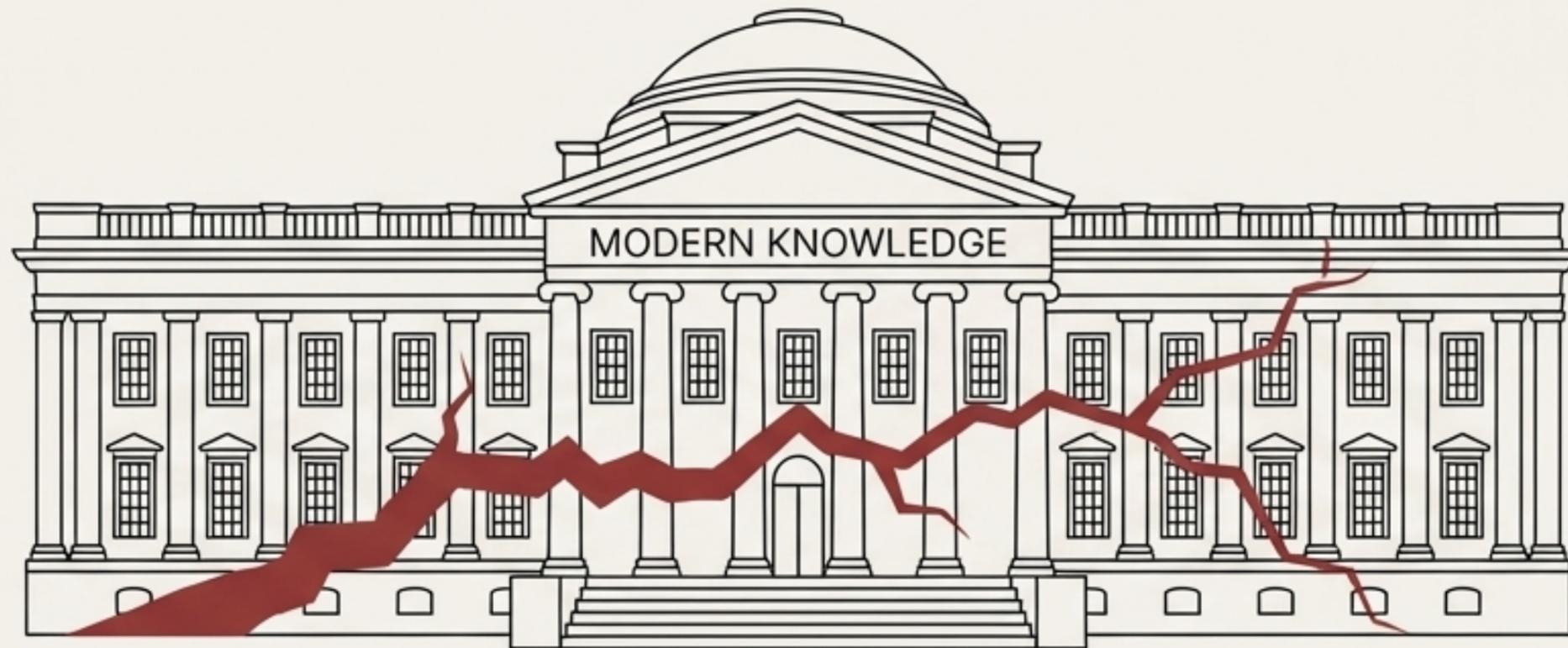
- Intentionally makes his prophet's "translation" of the Book of Abraham appear fraudulent.
- Plants misleading evidence for evolution and genetics across the entire planet.
- Creates a plan of salvation so confusing and evidence-averse that only 0.06% of his children on Earth ever find it.

The Question

Is it more likely that God is actively planting red herrings and making it nearly impossible to believe, or that **the claims were man-made** to begin with? This is the **"trickster God" dilemma**.

The Intellectual Cost of the Premise

To accept the foundational claims of Mormonism as literally true, one must conclude that the consensus of the following fields is fundamentally wrong:



Egyptology



Archaeology



Biblical Scholarship



Genetics



Linguistics



Nutritional Science



Biology & Evolution



Geology



History

Which Explanation Is Simpler?



Hypothesis A

Nearly every major field of modern science and humanities has been systematically and **fundamentally mistaken** in its methods and conclusions for over 150 years. A **worldwide conspiracy** of incorrect data exists.

Hypothesis B

A 19th-century man, when creating a new religion, reflected the common knowledge, cultural myths, racial biases, and scientific limitations of his time.

A Question of Intellectual Integrity

This analysis isn't meant to attack faith, but to validate the intellectual and emotional struggle of those who examine the evidence. It asks a final question:

“What if the simplest answer—the one that resolves every contradiction without requiring the rejection of all modern knowledge—points to the conclusion that it just isn't true? ...If I can lessen someone's anguish and pain over these issues just a little bit, then it's worth it.