

**CONFIDENTIAL**

# The Case of the Disappearing Introduction



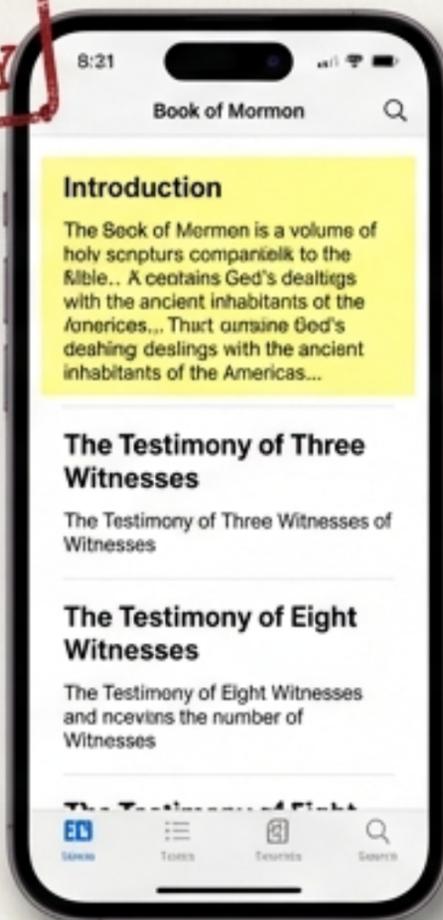
An investigation into the recent, unannounced, and quickly reversed changes to the Book of Mormon's foundational text.

# First It Changed. Then It Vanished.

CONFIDENTIAL

In late 2023, the LDS Church quietly rolled out a completely rewritten introduction to the Book of Mormon in its public-facing app. By early December, after the change was discovered and discussed online, the new introduction was removed, and the old text was restored. This is a breakdown of the evidence.

EXHIBIT A:  
CHRONOLOGY



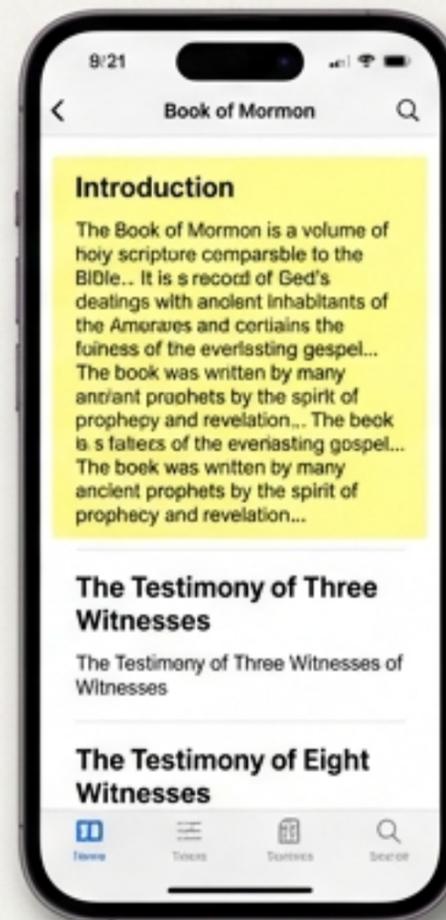
New,  
shorter  
text.

October 2023



Viral  
Exposure

December 5, 2023



Restored,  
original  
text.

December 8, 2023

CASE STATUS: PENDING FURTHER ANALYSIS. MOTIVE UNKNOWN.

VERDICT: UNCONFIRMED

EXHIBIT A

# The "New" 2023 Introduction

God is your heavenly father. He loves you...  
He wants to guide you back to his presence.  
Part of his plan... was to make this book  
available to you...

...its location was revealed by an Angel in  
1823. It was translated into modern language  
by the gift and power of God.

...it bears powerful witness that Jesus Christ  
is the Son of God who came to Earth to suffer  
and die for the sins of the world, including  
yours.

May you find God in these pages and discover  
his messages to you.

## Linguistic Analysis: Keyword Frequency

- Jesus mentioned: 4 times
- God mentioned: 7 times
- Heavenly Father mentioned:  
4 times

'You' and 'your' appeared: 21  
times

# A Strategic Removal of Foundational History

## WHAT WAS REMOVED

- **REDACTED** Joseph Smith
- The Gold Plates
- Nephites, **REDACTED** Lamanites, Jaredites
- Any mention of Native Americans
- The Bible as a comparable scripture
- The Tower of Babel & Jerusalem
- The Three and Eight Witnesses
- "Most correct of any book on Earth"
- Moroni's **REDACTED** specific promise

## WHAT WAS EMPHASIZED

- A conversational, reader-focused tone ("you")
- A generic, loving "God" and "Jesus"
- Vague promises ("in his own time and in his own way")
- A therapeutic message ("He wants to heal you")
- An undefined "Angel" and "hillside in... North America"

EXHIBIT C

## This Isn't the First Time: A Pattern of Reactive Changes

To understand the 2023 event, we must look at a previous critical change made in 2006. This alteration directly addressed a growing body of scientific evidence that contradicted a core historical claim of the Book of Mormon.

### 1981 VERSION

...after thousands of years all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.

### 2006 VERSION

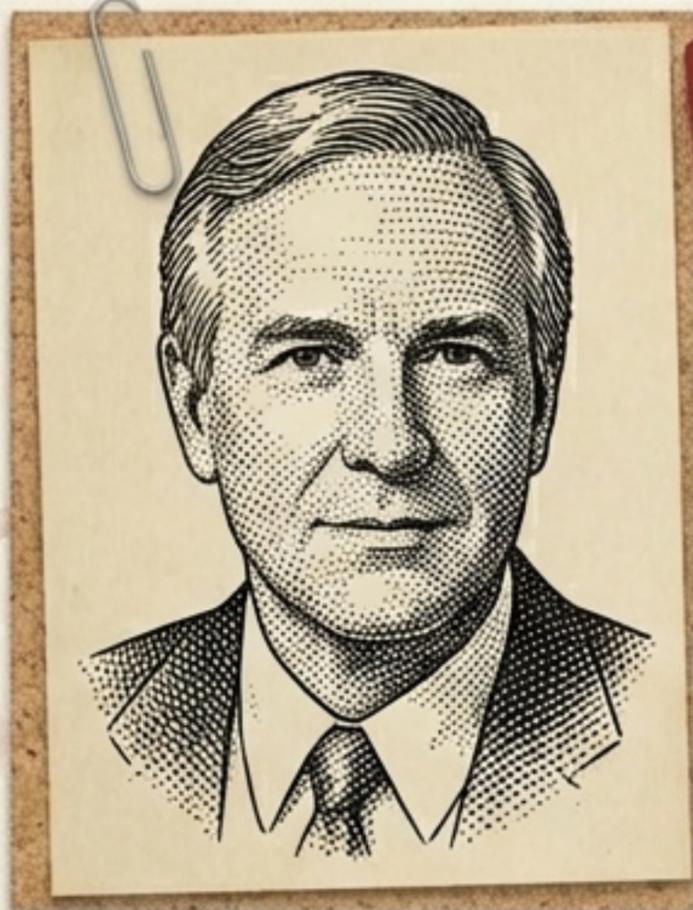
...after thousands of years all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are among the ancestors of the American Indians.

PATTERN CONFIRMED

# The Catalyst: DNA Evidence Contradicts Scripture

The 2006 change was a direct response to DNA research in the early 2000s that showed Native Americans do not descend from ancient Israelites. The scholars who brought this evidence to light faced institutional punishment.

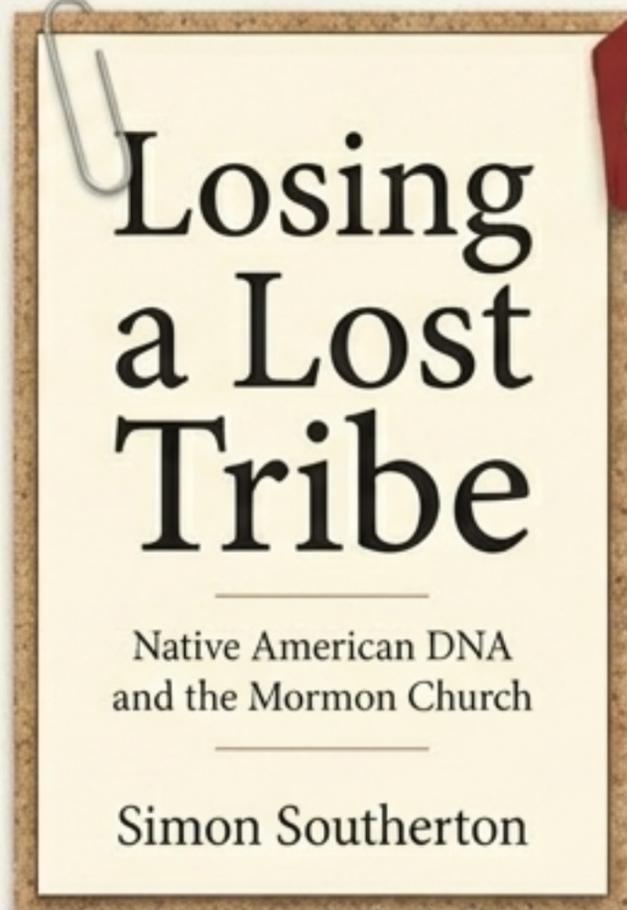
## Evidence Marker #1



2002

Anthropologist Thomas Murphy uses DNA analysis to test the Book of Mormon's claims. His findings are negative. The Church threatens him with excommunication, which is only called off after he involves the media.

## Evidence Marker #2



2004

LDS Bishop Dr. Simon Southerton publishes *Losing a Lost Tribe*. He is subsequently excommunicated for making the Church and its members aware of the problem.

## Establishing Motive: Leadership Signals a Retreat from History

In recent years, top Church leaders have been actively reframing the Book of Mormon, moving it away from a historical record and toward an inspirational, faith-promoting text. This provides the motive for an introduction that strips out specific, falsifiable historical claims.

“There are some things the Book of Mormon is not. It is not a textbook of History, although some history is found within its pages. It is not a definitive work on Ancient American agriculture or politics.”

— Russell M. Nelson, Address to New Mission Presidents, 2016

**MOTIVE**

# **The Book of Mormon is not a book of History**

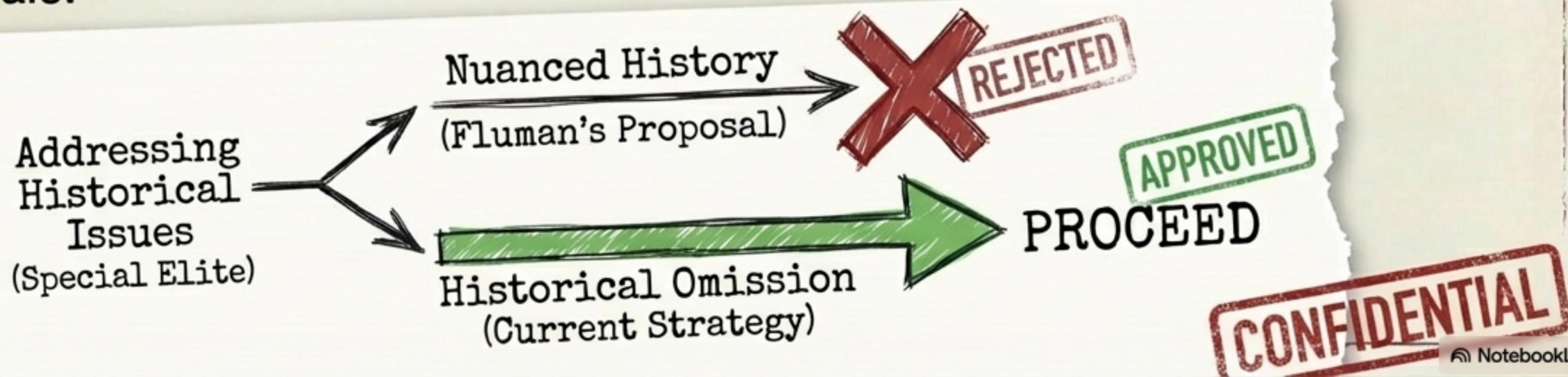
**“The Book of Mormon is not a book of History.**  
The Book of Mormon is a book about the future. It describes episodes in the lives of people thousands of years ago, but the writers of the record... were inspired... to include these things that we would need for the world in which we live today.”

— David A. Bednar, Devotional, 2016  
(and repeated in 2024 General Conference)

# The Internal Struggle: From 'Inspired Eclecticism' to Omission

The move to de-historicize the Book of Mormon has been debated at the Church's highest intellectual levels. Spencer Fluman, former head of the Maxwell Institute, privately proposed framing the book as Joseph Smith's "inspired eclecticism"—a revelation, not a literal translation.

- This more nuanced, non-literal approach was ultimately rejected. Fluman was pushed out of his position in 2023.
- The Church has opted not for a new, transparent framework, but for simply removing the problematic historical details from its introductory materials.



# The Reversal: A Timeline of Public Pressure

**Oct. 2023:** New introduction appears in the Book of Mormon app, noted by BYU's *Daily Universe*.

**Dec. 5:** The story breaks in the online ex-Mormon community. Nathan Hinkley posts in the Mormon Stories Facebook group. Julia's TikTok analysis goes viral.

**Dec. 8:** Within 24 hours of the episode announcement, the *LDS Living* article is taken down and the app is updated, reverting to the old introduction.

**Dec. 3:** *LDS Living* publishes an article, "Have you seen this new introduction to the Book of Mormon?" bringing it to wider attention.

**Dec. 7:** Mormon Stories schedules a live episode titled "Church Rewrites Scriptures Introduction."

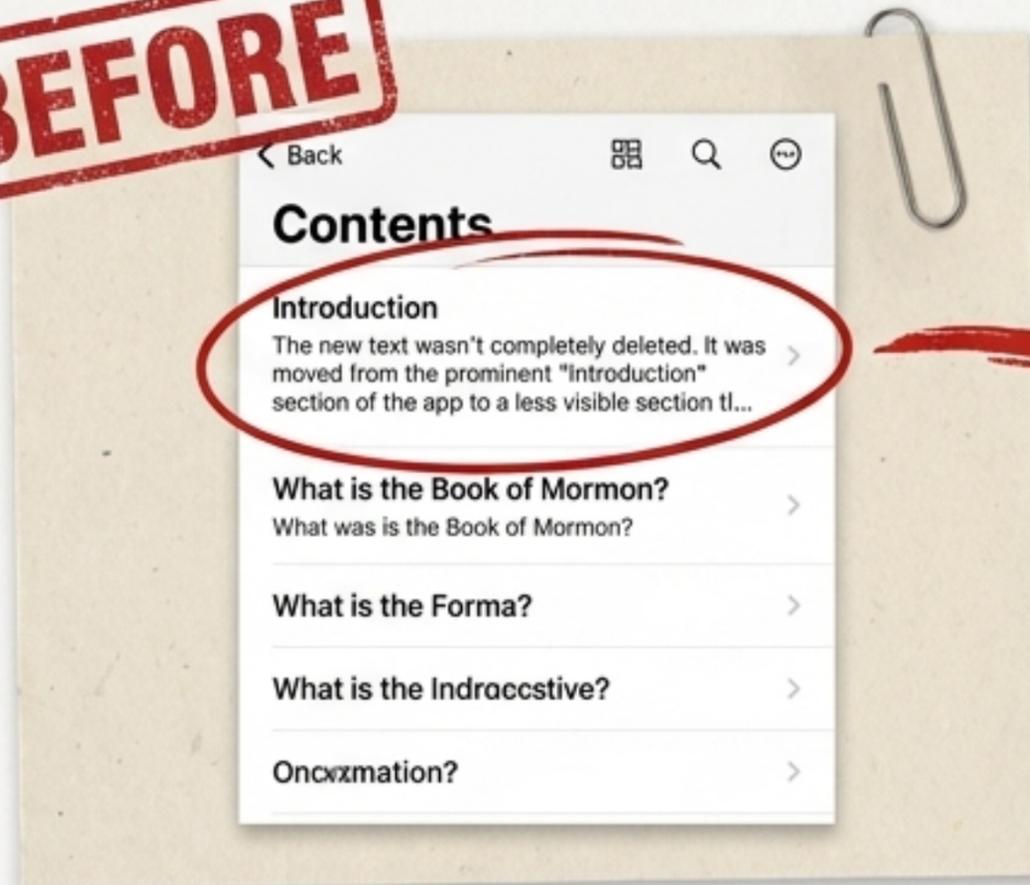
**72-HOUR  
REACTION  
WINDOW**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

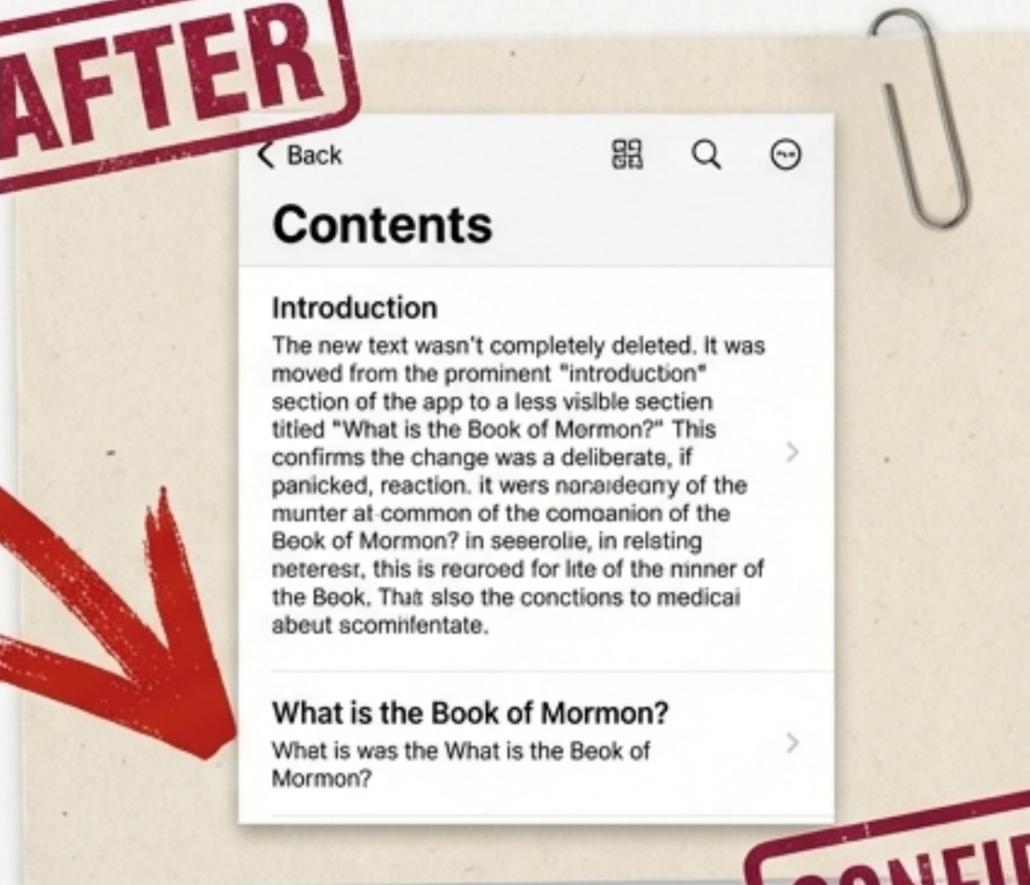
# The Aftermath: Relocated, Not Removed

The new text wasn't completely deleted. It was moved from the prominent "Introduction" section of the app to a less visible section titled "What is the Book of Mormon?" This confirms the change was a deliberate, if panicked, reaction.

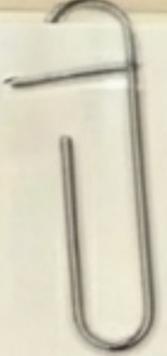
**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**CONFIDENTIAL**



**VERDICT**

## Are They Rewriting History?

**Yes.** The evidence shows a deliberate, multi-decade pattern of altering foundational texts and reframing narratives to distance the Church from inconvenient or disproven historical claims.

### Supporting Evidence Recapped:

-  **2006 DNA Change:** Altered scripture to accommodate scientific reality.
-  **Leadership Rhetoric:** Top leaders now explicitly state the Book of Mormon is “not a history textbook.”
-  **2023 Introduction:** Stripped all specific, problematic historical actors and events (Joseph Smith, Lamanites, gold plates) from the initial presentation of the book.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

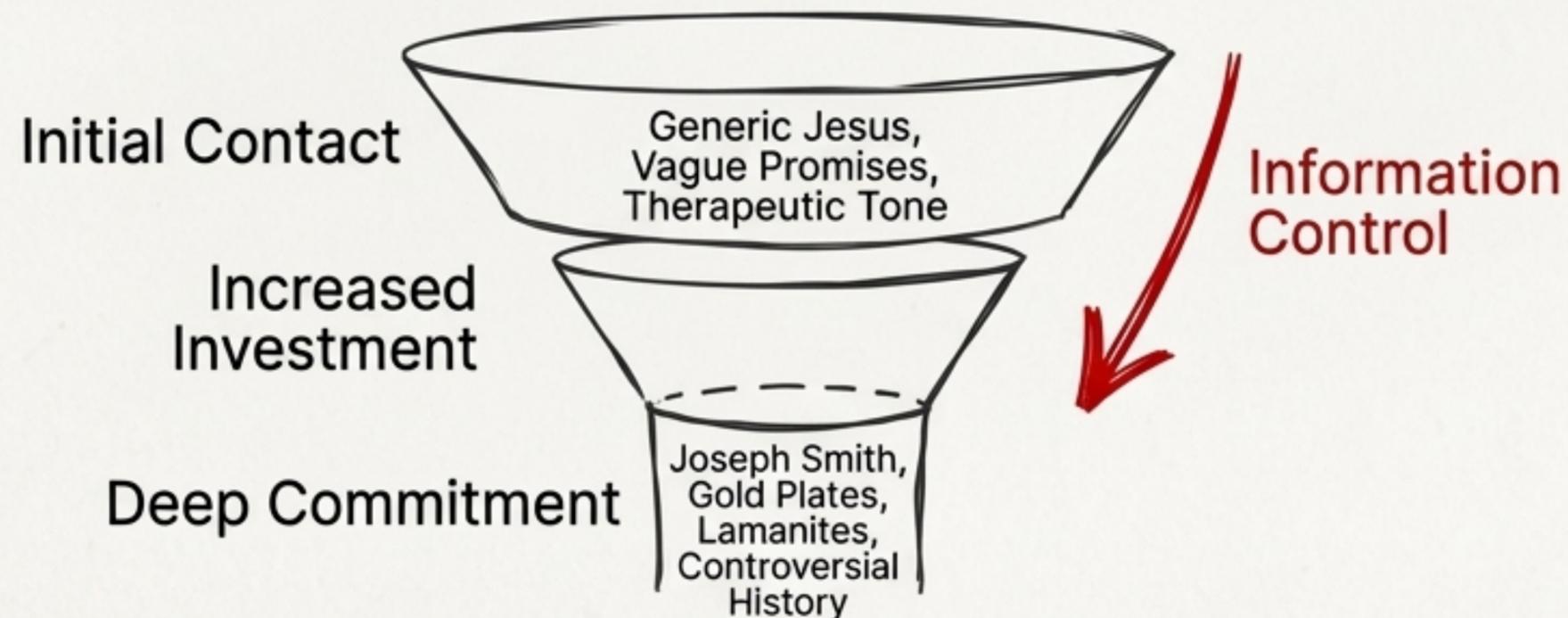
# VERDICT

## Are They Hiding Information from Investigators?

**Yes.** The strategy is to present a simplified, generic, and faith-promoting version of the Church at the "top of the funnel."

By removing Joseph Smith, the translation process, and the book's specific claims about Native American origins from the very first text an investigator reads, the Church withholds critical, controversial information until a person is more emotionally and socially invested. This is a form of information control.

### Analogy:



**CONFIDENTIAL**

**VERDICT**

## Is Decision-Making Influenced by Ex-Mormon Podcasters?

**The evidence strongly suggests yes.** While correlation is not causation, the timing is undeniable.

### Supporting Evidence Recapped:

- **Two-Month Inaction:** The change existed for over two months with no reversal, despite being noted in a BYU publication.
- **The 72-Hour Trigger:** The reversal happened within 72 hours of widespread online discussion and just 24 hours after a prominent podcast announced it would be covering the story.
- **Pattern of Behavior:** This mirrors other instances where the Church has adopted recommendations from critics (e.g., child safety policies championed by Sam Young) but only after punishing the critic and reacting to public pressure.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

# **A Microcosm of an Institution in Crisis**

The “Case of the Disappearing Introduction” is more than a clumsy PR mistake. It is a clear data point revealing a 21st-century institution caught between a historical narrative it can no longer defend and a future it is trying to build.

In an era of total information transparency, the strategy of quietly altering the record and hoping no one notices is no longer viable.

The case isn't just closed; it's a precedent.

**CASE CLOSED**