

Mormonism

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Entertainment

Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

(Note: transcript consists of episode outline)

Like our Scientology episode, this is going to be a deep-dive. When it comes to religions, even if they're on the border between religion and cult, which debatably is all religions, but still, I feel a responsibility that comes from knowing people are invested in their faith, and I want to provide a comprehensive exploration of these organizations rather than reducing them to stereotypes. I'm not saying I'm always going to be respectful and reverential, but I'm certainly going to try to provide some nuance and in-depth historical context for everything we discuss, rather than just surface-level hot takes. And since I brought up Scientology, I think there are in fact a lot of legit comparisons that can be made between Scientology and Mormonism, which btw is officially known as the LDS or the Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints. there are some notable similarities: they're both incredibly secretive religions, and

before this is over we're going to delve into and expose some of the arcane rituals and mysticism that Mormons are forbidden to talk about. Other similarities between Scientology and Mormonism, they're both extremely young religions, they're both uniquely American, and there's a science-fictionish aspect to both. Which is understandable, if you think about it, because Scientology and Mormonism are the only two major religions that have been established since humanity learned about our physical place in the universe. Buddhism and Hinduism and of course the religions that spawned from the Old Testament like Christianity and Judaism and Islam, they are all from a time before it was commonly accepted that the sun is a star and just one of billions. The founders of Mormonism and Scientology had to contend with this new knowledge of our place in the universe and somehow incorporate and account for the presence of other solar systems and possible intelligent life on other planets. Like Scientology, The lore of Mormonism includes other planets, and utilizes scientific language. Marriages are called "celestial marriages" and the Book of Mormon explains that god resided physically in space near a celestial body (sometimes referred to as a star) called Kolob. So there are some clear similarities, but I should give a caveat here: while both Scientology and Mormonism are absolutely bonkers in my opinion, I have less vitriol in my heart for Mormons. And that's 100%

the result of my own personal exposure to Mormons and the LDS church. There are undeniably horrible aspects of this church, there have been terrible abuses of power and misogyny and racism associated with latter-day Saints, and I can also tell you that I have personally never met a Mormon I found objectionable. Every Mormon I've met has been among the nicest people I've ever met. Maybe I'm just super lucky, I don't know. I dated a Mormon for many years, she was a jack Mormon which means she was the Mormon that other Mormons warn each other about, she flouted Church rules by having sex and drinking caffeine and alcohol, but she was genuinely one of the sweetest people I've ever met and her mother who was a practicing Mormon was quite possibly the nicest person I've ever met. Like, disarmingly nice. To the point that it was suspicious. I find a lot to be admired in Mormonism. And of course in my opinion it is absolutely a cult, and there's still a dark side, and we're going to explore all of that today, and I'm not going to hold back from criticism, but I also have no personal animosity against individual Mormons whatsoever. I think they're generally delightful people. As cults go, the modern version of Mormonism is one of the least objectionable. Its history, less so, and we'll cover all of that.

Unlike Scientology, Mormonism is genuinely a sizable church with over 12 million practicing Mormons and growing. That may seem small

considering the 2 1/2 billion Christians and almost 2 billion Muslims but remember, again, this is a religion that is less than 200 years old. A religion that is younger than America and the revolutionary war, younger than the steam engine and electrical battery. We've had vaccines and refrigeration longer than we've had Latter Day Saints. I know I'm belaboring this point but I just can't wrap my head around the fact that sewing machines and long-distance telegraph communication and wristwatches are older than a major American religion. Barely 50 years after Joseph Smith founded Mormonism, baseball would be invented. As we saw in the Scientology episode, many people find it difficult to put any stock in a religion that doesn't have a rich history with dusty old tomes and shadowy figures from the past who have faded onto a historical fog of obscurity so dense that it has become mythology; we associate religion with a blurring of the lines between legend and history to the point that no one can say for sure what's real and what's not. But there's none of that mysticism and gravitas when it comes to Mormonism. There were newspaper articles about its founder. I mean for Christ sakes your prophet's name is Joe Smith. The most generic name I can imagine. In the tradition of holy men such as Jesus and Mohammed and Moses may I present to you the revered prophet Joe, and his apostles Fred and Kevin.

Joseph Smith was born on the East

Coast of America, in Vermont in 1805, but he was raised mostly in upstate New York. His parents were not religious zealots, so you can't blame his upbringing. He had eight siblings, none of whom believed that they were personally visited by Angels, so Joseph was special, in all the various ways you might interpret that word. When he was 14 (btw he says in his journal that he was in his 15th year, which is technically true but he hadn't reached his 15th birthday, people used words differently back then—anyway, when he 14 he was given his first vision, or alternately you might say that's when the mental illness kicked in. He claimed he was visited by Jesus and God the Father. Not even like a representative or some low level minions, Joe was a VIP, he cut through all the red tape. To the front of the line, random 14-year-old. Jesus and God had nothing better to do in the early 1800s than hang out with 14 year old boys. I understand priests much better now. All of this personalized attention is a little strange because three years later Smith would be visited by an *emissary* of God, apparently the divine itinerary had tightened between 1820 and 1823, Jesus's social calendar had popped off and God was too busy answering the prayers of boxers and Horse racers. I love that boxers pray to God, like Lord, please grant me the divine strength to beat the crap out of this guy. And God is like heck yeah, kick that heathen ass. And sometimes not even a heathen, just a guy God likes

less. Because there had to be times where both of the boxers we were Christians. That's a real conundrum, it's tough to be the Lord.

Joseph Smith would later explain that even though he was awestruck and blinded by the heavenly glory of God and Jesus, he had the presence of mind to ask them which of all the religions and religious denominations was the true one, and they told him "none." And then bailed. Apparently he didn't bother with a follow-up question, he was just like, k.

Joseph told his family what happened, and they did not immediately mock him and send him to bed without supper, so apparently they were a very gullible family and now I kind of do blame them a little bit. Smith would soon write an account of his encounter in the grove, and I have to say, amazing handwriting. The man obviously had many compelling qualities if he was able to found an entire religion but I'm going out on a limb and saying the one I respect the most is his impeccable penmanship. Subsequent versions that Joseph wrote of the encounter would become more elaborate and the details would change, and by the 1830s his role in the story and his conversation with the deities would emphasize his own importance as a prophet and his starring role in the encounter. The final version featured God and Jesus imploring him to publicly denounce the false religions, so I guess he just remembered more of what had

happened over time? Funny how that works.

Joseph's opinion of himself and his abilities grew dramatically after the Jesus encounter. He began to fancy himself a kind of a sorcerer. He obtained a special hat and a magic stone; he would put the so-called peep-stone or seer stone inside the hat and draw the hat over his head and peep into the stone and he claimed that it allowed him to determine the location of buried treasure. People paid him to do this, which was illegal, BTW. Because even back then the authorities weren't complete fucking idiots and they realized that charging people to watch you stick your face in a hat and stare at a rock is not magic, it's a scam. Joseph was convicted of being a con artist. This is why it was such a better idea to found a religion before people kept accurate court records. Who knows what shady shenanigans Jesus pulled in his teenage years, all of that stuff is lost to history, we know about the water into wine and carpentry stuff but we don't know about Jesus's brief career as a petty thief, stealing coins out of robes or whatever. He stole shat. Callback. Anyway, I'm getting major L Ron Hubbard vibes from Joseph Smith. Why am I not surprised that the founders of religions tend have a lot in common, like being narcissistic con artists?

So the beginning of the LDS church (and I will be using the two terms—Mormon and LDS—interchangeably)

has a very specific Genesis point, so to speak. When Joseph Smith was 17, he found himself straying from the righteous path. As he ashamedly admit "...I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company...not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was ecalled of God as I had been." Scandalous. So he occasionally chuckled, and might have once or twice let out a sinful guffaw. One night he was in his upstairs bedroom, when a shaft of light pierced the darkness and a figure wearing nothing but a robe descended into his room. Don't ask me how Joseph knew that the figure wasn't wearing skivvies, but his account is very clear on that point. Was he looking for like a panty line or something? "He had on a loose robe of most exquisite awhiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white...His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare." Seems like his defining characteristic was... nakedness. "I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom." His robe must have been very open if Joseph was so sure he was nude.

The figure identified himself as the angel Moroni. Which is spelled like

Moroney, and I feel like that's what it was initially but then people made fun of the name because it sounds too much like macaroni, and after a few years or they were like fuck you it's Moroni. The angel disclosed to Joseph the location of golden plates hidden in the woods, under a rock, on a hill. God's sacred plates were stuffed under a dirty rock. In the Bible, receiving divine scripture is a bit more dramatic. If you remember, God summoned a pillar of fire and cloud on Mount Sinai and it took Moses 40 days and 40 nights of fasting on the mountaintop to receive the tablets with the Ten Commandments. Joseph Smith mucked over a rock and was like oh cool. Thanks god. So for the first few years Joseph wasn't able to remove the plates from their location, he just had to visit them every now and then for studying. A few years later, he and his new wife were finally able to collect the plates and take them home for translating, no real explanation given for this loosening of God's security policy, but translation was necessary because the plates were carved in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Joseph Smith had a fascination with Egyptian hieroglyphs and he attempted to reproduce some at various points; one of my favorite things that research minion llama trauma sent me was one of Smith's drawings purporting to be his version of Egyptian hieroglyphs. They are amazing. chickenscratch stick figures of tiny people with big circles for mouths and then there are cows or

bulls or something with spindly hash-marks for legs, it looks like a picture you drew in kindergarten and your parents put on the refrigerator and now every time you bring a date to meet your family you try to avoid the kitchen out of sheer humiliation. it's unintentionally hilarious. of course Joseph couldn't actually read Egyptian, his hieroglyphs have been declared meaningless by Egyptologist, but he swears that the hieroglyphs on the golden tablets were legit, and luckily Moroni had provided a decoder ring in the form of a breastplate with a pair of magical spectacles attached, the magical spectacles consisted of two rocks called Urim and Thummim, which Joseph would peer into and the hieroglyphs would resolve into English words. Ok Guess it's not any weirder than a rock-filled magic hat. I see the appeal of the religion, this is some Harry Potter shit. Of course, you're probably wondering why Joseph never produced the golden plates to prove the legitimacy of his vision, but obviously The rest of humanity wasn't worthy, we're all a bunch of scrubs, and eventually Joseph had to return the plates to the angel macaroni.

"Again, he told me, that ...I should not show them to any person; neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be [adestroyed](#)."

Convenient. Because God doesn't want you to believe in him based on proof he wants you to believe in him based on faith, except for Joseph

Smith who was having a crisis of faith before Jesus and God both appeared to him to prove that they existed so he apparently gets that courtesy but we don't. That's fair. My favorite part of Joseph's account of his vision, is that after Moroni ascends back to heaven, he then pops back into the bedroom twice to add some additional info.

During his first appearance he quotes a bunch of biblical passages and tells Joseph about the plates, and then disappears...and then reappears, and says the exact same speech, but with a bunch of extra details added about the horrific judgment that is coming to humanity and the horrors that will be visited on the earth. He then ascends back to heaven...and then boom, encore.

"But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before; and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to btempt me...to get the plates for the purpose of getting crich. This he forbade me..." I love that the angel keeps making a dramatic exit and then sticking his head back in to be like, wait, did I mention that the world is going to burn in fiery torment? My bad, yeah, fiery torment, that's on the agenda. Ok. Peace out. Oh heyyyyy... sorry to bug you again, this is embarrassing, I was supposed to also mention, don't be a greedy bitch. Ok, I'm out. For real this time.

So the translation of these golden tablets would run to 600 pages and become the book of Mormon. Those must've been some pretty dense tablets. The most common description I've seen by way of explanation is that they were two stacks of thin gold sheaths that weighed around 60 pounds, and were bound together with metal rings. But still.

I watched a great documentary by PBS and Frontline simply called "the Mormons." And at one point English professor Terryll Givens explains how scandalous Joseph Smith's supposed vision was to the modern religious leaders of the day., "on the face of it, that's an affront to sophisticated notions of how the universe works. God doesn't deliver gold plates to farm boys." And they're right: when you say it like that it sounds stupid. But I love how they're like, "God doesn't deliver gold plates to farm boys. He delivers holy infants to poor, homeless virgins and shepherds. He turns people into salt and speaks from burning shrubbery. God is not silly."

Speaking of silliness, let's talk about the

Story of the Book of Mormon

So what was on the plates?

First, the full title of the book is

The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi. Did I mention Mormon plates?

So I'm going to give you a brief

overview of the story contained on the divine golden plates discovered in the holy land of Wayne county New York and dictated to various scribes by a 17-year-old conman staring at two rocks on a breast plate. I just got reading glasses btw which I so far haven't needed to use I don't know why I got them, but I'm really looking forward to needing glasses so that I can refer to them as my Urim and Thummim. " i'm in the mood to commune with the angels, someone bring me my Urim and Thummim."

The book of Mormon is composed of a series of shorter books, each named for the main character of that particular volume. Boiled down to the simplest terms, the book of Mormon is a family drama. Here's the basic plot: 600 years before the birth of Christ, almost 3000 years ago, right before the fall of Babylon, God leads a family of chosen Israelites out of Jerusalem and all the way to America. The patriarch of the family is named Lehi, and he has two sons, Nephi (knee-fī) and Laman. The boys do not get along, and as often happens among siblings, you know how it goes, they eventually split into rival tribes that waged brutal war for centuries. These tribes became known as the Nephites and Lamanites. The Nephites are the good guys, which you can deduce from the lightness of their skin, while the wicked Lamanites were cursed by god with dark complexions and eventually would become the Native Americans, so of course they are the villains of the tale. "And he had caused

the cursing to come upon [the Lamanites]...because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, and they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them." There have been plenty of attempts to spin this story and whitewash the racism, so to speak, and it would be fair to say that Mormons of today are very sensitive to the blatant bigotry in the text and will give you all kinds of explanations as to why we should all stop mentioning it or accept their conclusion that the words mean totally different things than how we we would normally interpret them based on, you know, the definitions of those words. But it's a pretty tough sell. Latter Day Saints are described in the book of Mormon as, "a white and delightsome people." That's pretty stark. But Mormon defenders will point to other passages in the Book of Mormon, like the fact that God "denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile." But it's important to note that the point being made by that passage is that God accepts everyone, even if they are inferior. That does not strike me as a statement of equality, that is a statement of God's good natured acceptance, as evidenced by the fact that he lets even non-whites into the

kingdom of heaven. If you are a Mormon or sympathetic to the Mormon interpretation here, that's fine, but I don't think you can make a serious argument against the racism in this book. You might try with this line, "a commandment I give unto you, which is the word of God, that ye revile no more against them because of the darkness of their skins; neither shall ye revile against them because of their filthiness." It's good to not revile people, but it sure sounds to me like god is saying you shouldn't judge brown people even though they're filthy.

Obviously blatant racism is not a good look, so the book of Mormon has over time been quietly altered in various subtle ways, such as a notable revision in 2010. "Formerly, it included the phrase that "the Lamanites shall be a dark, filthy, and loathsome people." The new version deleted the phrase "dark, loathsome, and filthy" and now reads "the Lamanites will be scattered, and the Spirit will cease to strive with them." Just a minor edit. I'm fine with revising a book that needs some rewrites, but I'm not OK with rewriting history. Mormons didn't allow Black people to become priests until 1978. Max Perry Mueller author of *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* points out that "Black men were allowed to become priests only starting in the 1970s, and black men and women could not participate in sacred Mormon temple rites until that point. The Mormon Church didn't repudiate its past teachings on race

until 2013." So let's just put this particular issue to rest and say that the Mormon church of today may or may not still be influenced and poisoned by its racist past, but its past is undeniably racist.

So back to the plot of the book. Much time has passed, and in the Middle East Jesus has been Crucified. Soon after being resurrected, he traveled to America and essentially told the Nephites and Lamanites to chill, bringing about an era of peace that lasted a brief time before they started squabbling again, Jesus was pretty much like an overworked mom who swoops in and tells you to stop fighting with your brother and then just gives up. Your main characters in this book are Lehi, the father of Nephi and Laman, Nephi, his virtuous white-skinned son who created the original golden plates and authored the first two chapters of the story, and then of course Mormon himself, a prophet of the Nephites, who as you might guess by the title, wrote the bulk of the text. The son of Mormon is also an important figure and is a character we've already met, this was Moroni, who would add his own chapters to the book and after his death would eventually return to earth as an angel to disclose the location of the plates to Joseph Smith.

So now you know the basics. Brother vs brother, black versus white, good versus evil, don't trust the Indians—or people of any non-white complexion, really—the end.

And of course, yes, my tone is going to be somewhat mocking and we're going to make fun of the sheer ridiculousness of this religion, obviously it probably goes without saying but there is no archaeological evidence supporting the Great civilizations of the Nephites and Lamanites and their epic wars in the Americas, you'd think there might be, you know, a couple spearheads or pottery something, but I guess they were heavy into recycling. I do think it's important to point out that every religion is Batshit crazy if you approach it from a rational standpoint. And there's plenty of racist sexist shit in the Bible. We didn't talk about this much during the Scientology episode and we should have, we were too busy mocking Xenu, and we sort of forgot to point out that every religion is no more bonkers than every other religion. If you're laughing at Mormonism, you can't turn around and pretend that Christianity is any more rational. The Bible is just as silly as the book of Mormon, which is just as silly as the Koran and Vedas of Hinduism pyramid texts of Egypt.

There is one difference, or at least one thing that I find very specific to the Book of Mormon: in some ways it's a little slapdash. Like, Joseph Smith wasn't a big stickler for detail, he would often get a little hasty. One of my favorite lines, sent to me again by my research minion llama trauma, provides a good example of Joseph Smith's somewhat erratic approach to storytelling. From the book of Nephi:

"And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account." He's like "blah blah blah my dad has stories, moving on." That's such lazy writing. This was Joseph Smith being like I'm getting tired of staring into these rocks on my breastplate, let's skip to the good part.

If you're wondering how this unlikely religion took hold, one thing to remember is that Joseph Smith grew up in an era of prophets. Every street corner hosted some chucklehead spouting about how he was the new Messiah, but what Smith had—and they didn't—was a 600 page book. Most wannabe prophets weren't sinking that much effort into their side hustle. Joseph Smith had the advantage of fervent dedication. Which does lead me to believe that he had bought into his own hype at this point. Many of the scholars I'll be quoting and referencing believe that Smith started out as a huckster and scammer but like so many narcissistic prophets, like LRH, eventually converted himself. In 1830 Smith finally published the book of Mormon, putting to shame all of his prophet-competition with their one page pamphlet that read like fortune cookies. Here was an expensive, 600 page leather bound tome, and it was a uniquely American take on the Bible. It

was more accessible than the Bible, and it felt familiar because it talked about locations that Americans knew. Suddenly Americans had their OWN Bible, they weren't limited to the arcane old stories of their ancestors from overseas. This was American mythology. It made even destitute American farmers feel important. "We aren't in the far reaches of the so-called civilized world; we're at the center of divinity."

I had always wondered what would inspire an American in the 1800s to toss out their beloved holy Bible in favor of this crazy new book with a bunch of revisionist religious history, and now I get it. It was empowering. Did you want to believe in some dubious-complexioned Jesus from the Middle East, or pasty-white cowboy Prairie Jesus Who had made an appearance right down the street? The other explanation for the spread of Mormonism was its aggressive evangelism and use of missionaries. Joseph Smith's younger brother Samuel Harrison Smith is generally regarded as the first Mormon missionary, and he would travel from city to city spreading the word. His missionary work would become ingrained in the fabric of the church, and as we'll see, evangelism is the true cornerstones of the LDS and responsible for so much of its growth. Today there are over 400 missionary organizations currently active worldwide, with approximately 67,000 full-time missionaries who are joined each year by 50,000+ 19-year-

old men and women known as God's Army on their temporary 18 month to two-year mission. or at least there were pre-Covid and I'm sure it's returning to those levels now. In 2016 alone the missions resulted in over 240,000 converts to the Mormon church. There is literally a "missionary Boot Camp" called the missionary training center in Provo Utah where young Mormons spend three intense months learning to communicate the basic phrases they'll need in 30 languages, and more importantly they learn how to sell their religion. They are videotaped and scrutinized, they engage in evangelistic role-play and their smiles and demeanors and interactions are analyzed with the goal of creating the perfect religious salesperson. They learn how to deal with hecklers, how to keep their cool under pressure, how to handle the feelings of rejection that they will all grapple with as a result of hundreds and hundreds of doors slammed in their faces. Still, even with all of this preparation Missionary work is an emotionally taxing endeavor. Many missionaries go their entire two years without a single convert. Even the most successful ones Have to get used to frequent failure, they have to become immune to it. Because most people simply aren't receptive to being converted. Which is why missionaries often target disadvantaged areas and populations. Religious messages tend to resonate with people who are looking for meaning or a supportive community.

My absolute favorite part of the PBS documentary that I watched called simply "the Mormons" was this amazing woman, a convert to the church. I normally don't use clips of media in our standard feed, but this is just too good. Single mother and former drug addict Betty Stevenson tells a story of how when two missionaries in suits knocked on her door she assumed it was the police. I will let her explain more in her own words.

Obviously it's funny but it's also very heartwarming, this is a woman who was massively struggling and now has found a community that is supportive and she has turned her life around.

Of course none of that missionary training existed back when Joseph Smith first began evangelizing, and the Book of Mormon wasn't a massive hit right away. Obviously A new religion that was recruiting aggressively represented a huge threat to established churches of the day. Mormonism was founded in 1830 at Joseph Smith's farmhouse in New York State, and by the beginning of the summer the religion had a total of 40 converts and an army of vitriolic critics and haters. Within a year Smith was chased from town—not the last time I'll say those words—but some 75 followers accompanied him to the new home base in Ohio, where he merged with another religious leader who brought along his flock of 100,

including a 30 year old carpenter named Brigham Young. Young was a serial joiner of churches, he had been jumping from faith to faith trying to find a philosophy and leader which with he resonated, and he found both in Mormonism and The confident and charismatic (read narcissistic) Joseph Smith. Within another year Smith had rechristened his followers latter-day Saints, because he believed they were living in the end times. Thus, latter day. Its sleaze a red flag when apocalyptic language starts getting tossed around. Smith led his small flock to Ohio and established the first Mormon temple in Kirtland, Ohio. Business was soon booming, both financially and with new followers; Smith founded a bank and invested in real estate, but a market crash and allegations of sexual impropriety had taken a heavy toll by 1837. Fleeing a revolt from his followers and mountains of debt, smith a few of his most dedicated followers snuck away to Missouri in late 1837. Missouri is the site of the first real ugliness in Mormon history. Say what you will about the Mormons, in the early years they were persecuted and vilified and subjected to violence.

If you're wondering why the Mormons ended up in Missouri, it was because Joseph Smith had experienced a revelation informing him that Jackson county Missouri had been the original location of the Garden of Eden and would be the future site of Zion and the kingdom of heaven on earth. Christians and Muslims have

Jerusalem and Mecca, hinduism reveres the city of Varanasi on the banks of the Ganges river. The Mormons have Jackson county Missouri. Missouri, the "show me" state, most famous for the landmark that is 1/2 of the McDonald's logo. Weirdly Utah was never mentioned until the Mormons randomly ended up there. Go figure. It's almost like he was just winging it.

So after experiencing his revelation, Smith had sent missionaries to Missouri and they'd been very successful in recruiting converts, so he already had followers primed and ready when he showed up. Also waiting for him when he showed up: a large population of pissed off Missourians who were armed and annoyed. The increasingly heated conflict would grow into a minor religious war culminating in the massacre of 1838 in which a mob cornered a group of Mormons in a mill and murdered 17 of them, including one old man who was hacked to death.

This is crazy but true: as a result of the escalating conflict the state of Missouri issued an extermination order against Mormons decreeing that they must turn over their land and property and leave the state or be killed.

Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs wrote: "The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace—their outrages are beyond all description." he continued "and let's be honest, their

obsession with our state is a little creepy. Like I'm the governor of Missouri and even I don't get all that hot and bothered over Jackson County. Let's be real, this is a nice place to raise a family but it's no Garden of Eden. Have you been to the Bahamas? You need to travel a little more." You'd think a few Mormons might've started having doubts about Joseph Smith's revelations at this point; Zion had ended up being a little bit of a disappointment. Turns out Missouri wasn't the Paradise they expected, it was pretty shorty. But if you think about it, members of every new religion have been persecuted and vilified initially, and all of that animosity can be a unifying force... faced with enemies from outward, the group turns inward and becomes more tightknit. This happened to Christians when they were persecuted by the Romans, this happened to Jews when they were persecuted by the Christians. New York and Ohio and Missouri gave the Mormons an exodus story. So the Mormons packed up again and head to Illinois. The true promised land. This is the place, forget that whole Missouri thing, nothing bad could possibly happen here. This is our final destination. It was their final destination in the "final destination movie" sense of the word. At first everything went swimmingly. The community that Joseph Smith founded in Weetern Illinois, dubbed Nauvoo, grew into a city of 12,000 people by 1844.

Nauvoo is where Joseph Smith had a couple more key revelations, and we know how well those have worked out in the past. These two would be a dual doozy. One of them was his idea of baptism of the dead. Smith decided that ex people could be baptized post Mortem so that they would enjoy all the benefits of the Mormon afterlife even if they didn't get to enjoy all the benefits of being Mormon while they were breathing. Benefits like sobriety and sexual frustration. No caffeine. Uncomfortable undergarments. We'll get to those.

Can you guess the second and most notorious of Joseph Smith's Illinois revelations? If you think about Mormonism, this one might come to you. Polygamy didn't apply to everyone, of course, just a few select prophets and good friends of Joseph Smith. Joseph's wife was unthrilled with this particular divine revelation, but Joseph patiently explained that while he had no desire to bring nubile young women into their household, God had demanded that he sacrifice his own monogamy for the greater good. Not his wife's monogamy, of course. This is a personal sacrifice, you understand. I'm taking the hit on this one. We've talked about this in other episodes, but it's amazingly convenient that God always commands cult leaders to do the kinky ass shit they've always wanted to do. "I don't want a harem, babe, but what choice do I have? The Lord is my wingman. Don't be a cock block." Joseph would have more than thirty

wives during his life, but initially the bigamy revelation was kept a secret. Joseph Smith knew that it would be controversial, and so he recruited some of his most influential followers, secretly command them to marry multiple women. His biggest Stan, Brigham Young, would marry over 50 women, and sire 57 children. Plural marriage was typically reserved for the higher-ups and the wealthy, for obvious reasons. In a patriarchal society the man had to provide for his family and it wasn't easy to support one spouse let alone a squad. Obviously the Mormon church has worked hard to distance itself from the practice of polygamy, but there's no pretending that it wasn't a central tenet of the early church, and extreme Mormon sects today still practice the tradition. And even among the more conventional modern Mormon communities, families are still openly patriarchal with the man as the head of the household. As we'll learn, during the marriage ceremony wives pledge total obedience to their husbands.

So The polygamy revelation coincided with Smith becoming more and more dictatorial, he elected himself mayor of Nauvoo and granted himself increasingly arbitrary powers and beefed up the Mormon military. Which began to once again alarm the neighbors. His decision to run for President of the United States also didn't endear him to his haters. He wasn't exactly keeping a low profile.

Ironically, though, the actual destruction of the Nauvoo community would be the result of religious infighting. There was a schism among his followers when word leaked out about Smith's practice of plural marriage, and one of his former supporters—who happened to run a newspaper called the *Expositor*—broke with the church and published a scathing takedown of Smith, describing alleged abuses of power and his hedonistic lifestyle. Smith reacted violently. The *Expositor* headquarters was ransacked and its printing press destroyed. Smith was arrested, and during his incarceration a mob attacked the jail and murdered Joseph Smith.

The death of Smith led to a schism in the church. Joseph Smith's widow took control of a small segment, while the larger group followed Brigham Young. Young had decided that Mormons would never be welcome in America and he resolved to head west to the Salt Lake area, which at the time was part of Mexico. The journey of Young and his 3000 followers would represent one of the largest American migrations in history. It was a brutal voyage. The 1,000-mile exodus has achieved legendary status in Mormon mythology. They were hit by blizzards in Wyoming, constant delays and setbacks, deaths were common. However In July 1847, the first group of Mormons made it the shores of the Salt Lake in the Great Basin. They traveled from New York to Ohio to the

Paradise in Missouri, to Illinois, and finally found their home in A desert next to a lake of salt. Young's followers gazed at their new home and said, um, what? Why?? But Brigham Young wasn't looking for a Paradise. Because you're always going to have to compete for Paradise. Paradise is very attractive. After being ejected from every populated location, he wanted a land that they weren't going to have to fight for. And he wanted to face and overcome challenges because it would test his people and forge them into a strong group; adversity brings a group together.

The Mormons also, remember, were a doomsday cult, we haven't talked much about that but they did believe that the end was nigh. So not only did they figure this spot was temporary, the desolate landscape seemed appropriate. It was an echo and reflection and reminder of the apocalypse to come.

The next truly notable milestone in Mormon history is also undoubtedly one of the most disturbing and shameful. A decade after settling by the Salt Lake, In 1857, Tensions between Mormons and the American federal government were off the charts, and the recent highly publicized murder of a Mormon preacher in Arkansas named Parley Pratt caused Brigham Young to lash out and forbid any trade between Mormons and non-Mormons. This was a dramatic proclamation, because the Mormon settlement had become a popular trading post for wagon trains

traveling west. It was at exactly this time that the unfortunate Baker-Fancher wagon train, a group of wealthy migrants from Arkansas arrived. They found the Mormons either inhospitable or outright hostile, and gave up any hope of trade. Mere days later A group of Mormons disguised themselves as Native Americans and attacked the wagon train in what would become known as the mountain meadows massacre. One of history's least fun examples of alliteration. Initially the attack turned into a siege as members of the wagon train hunkered down and mounted a successful defense. They lost many heads of cattle but otherwise held off the attackers. That is until a white man approached and claimed to be a Mormon who had negotiated a cease-fire with the Indians. Believing the siege to have ended, members of the wagon train left the safety of their defensive position and were promptly slaughtered by the Mormons. Around 140 men women and children were murdered, though the Mormons did spare 17 children under the age of eight, because in Mormon tradition children under eight are considered innocent as their souls are unformed. Sorry nine year olds, with your wicked little demon souls. We have to go full Anakin on your asses.

From AMERICAN MASSACRE
The Tragedy at Mountain
Meadows, September 1857.
By Sally Denton.

"The only eyewitness accounts of Mountain Meadows come from some of the murderers and from survivors -- all of whom were under the age of 7 at the time, deliberately spared by the assailants as having "innocent blood." "My father was killed by Indians," the son of the wagonmaster, Alexander Fancher, would say two years later. "When they washed their faces they were white men." Joining Lee in the ambush and slaughter were at least 100 Mormon men -- civilians, military men and local religious leaders."

The killers of Mountain Meadows swore an oath of secrecy, and the Mormon church sent out propaganda blaming the Indians. The truth came out eventually, though only one Mormon was ever convicted and executed, John D Lee, the white man who had shown up to deceive the wagon train. There is no evidence Brigham Young ordered the massacre or was involved in any way, but he certainly didn't demand accountability, and he did attempt to protect and hide Lee, who was his adopted son. That kind of seems like incriminating evidence to me but OK.

Outside of Utah, Americans already held an unfavorable view of the Mormons, and the popularity of the LDS church had taken a nosedive in 1852 when Mormons publicly acknowledged the practice of polygamy. America collectively recoiled. Southerners in particular were scandalized at the idea that multiple women would live together in servitude under a single man. I wonder

if those Christian southerners voiced outrage within earshot of their own literal slaves, African women and men and children who suffered in captivity. I'm not defending polygamy, I'm just saying.

Hypocrites.

Polygamy would of course be used as an excuse to deny Utah admission to the union. But much of the reluctance to admit Utah as a state probably had more to do with theocracy than polygamy; to this day there is no separation of church and state in Utah. It's one of the strangest exceptions to the founding principles of America and we all just pretend like it isn't happening. We have a state in this country that is run by an organized religion. The separation of church and state is not honored on any level in Utah. And we all just ignore this because, I don't know, I guess no one really cares about Utah? It's like we all looked at this lake full of salt and said hey, if they want it they can have it. Knock yourselves out, Mormons.

Regardless, polygamy became the excuse to lock Mormons out of the government, and eventually to lock up Mormons in general. Polygamists began to be rounded up and arrest en masse.

According to B Carmen Hardy, a Historian of polygamy (nice job if you can get it. Does that come with benefits? Do you have to apprentice to a polygamist historian?), "they were being convicted by the hundreds. And so men had to often hide out." And of

course now you ended up with all of these families in hiding, once again feeling persecuted, which as we learned earlier only strengthens their resolve. Finally the government went after the church directly with 1887's Edmunds-Tucker act, which essentially outlawed Mormonism and authorized the seizure of church property. This resulted in the 1890 manifesto in which The leader of the Mormon church at the time said the equivalent of can't we all just get along? The manifesto denounced polygamy, but it wasn't a decree, it wasn't an edict, it was more like a suggestion. Hey guys, it would probably be best if we all quieted down about the whole polygamy thing. Ixnay on the arams-hay. I would like to avoid the hoosegow.

This was obviously a strategy for placating the government. Six years later, the plan worked: Utah was admitted as the 45th state in 1896. While the edict opposing polygamy was initially just lip service, the church would eventually become more aggressive when it came to trying to root out polygamists in an attempt to battle negative perceptions. In the 1900s the church employed spies—marital narcs—to expose polygamist sects and prosecute them.

In 1953 Utah police broke up the polygamous sect in Shortcreek, and the publicity as a result of the raid became a firestorm.

Some 30,000 to 60,000 Mormons still practice polygamy today and believe that they represent the purest version

of the church, that they've inherited the mantle of Joseph Smith. Most of these little mini cults maintain a discreet profile, they're polygamists on the down low who are basically ignored and tolerated by the Mormon church. The television show Big Love spotlighted a fictional but not entirely unrealistic modern polygamist family. But there are also extremist cults that occasionally make the news, like that of **Warren Jeffs**, who was married to a 12-year-old girl among many others, I'm sure we will eventually cover him in depth eventually. And you have to understand that polygamy presents a conundrum for modern Mormons. Plural marriage was a revelation to Joseph Smith; no one can deny it, and According to Smith that revelation came directly from God. the decision to renounce polygamy, on the other hand, did NOT come from God, it wasn't even claimed to be a revelation, it was a response to political pressure. It was a public relations move. So did God get it wrong, or did he suddenly change his mind ? Hey guys, sorry for that whole you-can-bone multiple-ladies-and-also-some-children thing. If you are a Mormon and you revere Joseph Smith and you accept the book of Mormon scripture, how do you reconcile the fact that polygamy was one of the foundational elements of the church, and is now forbidden and vilified?

So the Mormons spent the next century integrating into the United States, they became politically active

in the conservative movement, positioning themselves as defenders of family values, and their influence and power became more entrenched as a result of fundraising. One thing we're learning from these episodes on Scientology and Mormonism, if you want your cult to be accepted as an actual religion, accumulate wealth. That's all it takes. A religion is just a cult that has gone mainstream, and is rich enough to sue anyone who calls it a cult. And the Mormon church is particularly suited to wealth accumulation. This is a religion that preaches industriousness and the importance of financial security... unlike some religions that equate money with excess and sin, Mormonism overtly condemns greed while quietly placing a premium on financial security. The church benefits from "sacred taxation" or tithing; to remain in good standing a Mormon must contribute a full 10% minimum of his/her income to the church every year. And of course there is the connection between the church and multilevel marketing. We've talked previously on this podcast about the fact that Mormonism is an evangelical religion, Young Mormon men are expected to spend two years spreading the gospel as interpreted by Joseph Smith. This is a religion that teaches its youth to be salesmen of a religion, to overcome any aversion to knocking on the doors of strangers and the technique of using charm and friendliness and the powers of persuasion to convince them to switch

religious faith. If you can convince a stranger that the Garden of Eden was located in Missouri, you can sell them a dietary supplement, and there are a huge number of multilevel marketing companies based in Utah. It's no coincidence that generations of men who were taught how to sell a religion and recruit followers might also be good at recruiting customers to join a pyramid scheme. The Mormon church is considered to be the wealthiest church in America per capita, though if Scientology were honest about its small number of members, it would certainly take that prize.

So Mormons tend to be good at business, and that extends to branding. I've mentioned that Mormons don't like to be called Mormon. They will tell you they are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and even

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, a world-famous religious choir formed in 1847 and always a tool of outreach to pop culture, is now known as the tabernacle choir at Temple Square. The church is constantly modifying its brand to become more mainstream and acceptable. In the 1980s the church released a new version of the book of Mormon which was subtitled "another testament of Jesus Christ. They also changed their logo; they are still called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints but the words Jesus Christ are always twice as big as all of the other words. It is a calculated

effort to appeal to mainstream Americans by emphasizing The religion's connection to Christianity and belief in Jesus.

Let's finish by talking about some Controversial Mormon beliefs, and some of the secrets of the LDS church.

There have been plenty of conspiracy theories regarding the Mormons, probably attributable to the fact that Mormon temples are not open to the public and their rituals are subject to a vow of secrecy. After a short "open house" period, every temple is locked down and in order to enter a temple you must be vetted. There is a purity test, essentially, you must have what's called a "temple recommend" which means that every two years you have to submit to a couple of interviews and prove that you're paying your yearly tithes and not cheating on your spouse or whatever. You can't just show up at a new temple and start praying, you have to bust out that résumé and some receipts. "We'll need a Letter of recommendation from your previous temple and positive references from each of your wives." Only Mormons who have obtained their temple recommends can be married in the temple or attend services or rituals. Mormons are not allowed to disclose what goes on in those rituals, which is admittedly a little shady. Conspiracy theorists also point to the fact that Joseph Smith

was a Freemason. That is true, and as we know from our secret societies episode, means absolutely nothing. My ex's dad was a Freemason and he was not controlling any shadowy government organizations, he did not even control his own television remote. Mostly he drank beer and played golf, when his wife would let him. But the Freemasons did create a number of arcane rituals for their members, and Joseph Smith incorporated some of these elements into Mormonism via what is known as the "endowment ceremony" which is the ceremony by which Mormons achieve the ability to become kings and queens in the afterlife. If a Mormon has been married in a sacred temple or become a full-time missionary, he or she has gone through the endowment ceremony. If you happen to believe that secret rituals should remain secret and that it's blasphemy to reveal the inner workings of a church, this is the time to bail on the episode. But I personally am uncomfortable with any religion that doesn't want me to know what it's up to. You can be as wacky as you want to be, you can handle snakes and flop on the ground and speak in tongues, we don't kink shame, just don't pretend you aren't doing that shit. Embrace the weird. So, apologies to Mormons, but we're going to reveal what happens in the sacred endowment ceremony. So first participants are washed, anointed, and clothed in the garments of the holy priesthood. That's a good policy. I'm

going to make that a requirement for entering my house. Some people make you take off your shoes, I'm going to be like, "have you washed and anointed? You're not bringing your unwashed, unanointed ass in here." That's what the axe body spray on the porch is for. I anoint myself regularly. Then after washing and anointing and holy garmenting, participants enter what is basically a conference room where they are shown an informational film, and this film explains the Mormon version of the creation of the earth as well as the LDS spin on the story of Adam and Eve. There are occasional pauses in the film during which the audience learns all of the secret gestures and passwords that they will need in order to pass through to the afterlife. I am not making any of this up.

And This film, wow. I watched the whole thing. And we have to talk about this movie. You can see secret tapings of it online. It reminds me of one of those corporate safety videos you have to watch to learn not to grab asses in the officeplace or whatever. It all begins with this cheesy narrator welcoming people to the temple, it sounds like that voice you hear at every theme park, "The ride is about to begin. Please keep your arms and legs inside at all times. Enjoy your experience in the afterlife." The acting, The production values, it's deliciously horrific. I'm going to play you some of it. It mostly concerns Adam and Eve and it really goes hard on Eve. Like I know that the Bible is pretty

misogynistic, but this is just so overt and it says all the quiet parts out loud. Eve you ignorant slut. Every bad thing in the world is her fault, literally. She led Adam astray and because of Eve's unforgivable femaleness, the first two humans ate of the tree of knowledge and brought shame upon themselves, they became ashamed of their nakedness, they were cast out of Eden, and stripped of immortality. As atonement, God made Eve promise that she would obey Adam for all time. She is forced to swear her allegiance to man as man swears his allegiance to God. So you hear that, ladies? Eve done fucked up and now you gotta stay at home with the babies and do what I say. Just remember that even the existence of death is your fault. There was no death before a woman ate the apple. Remember when grandma died? That was your fault. Everyone's grandma is on your conscience.

So at various times they stop the movie and reenact little scenes. At one point they invite a couple to come up to the front to represent Adam and Eve and they each have to take the same vows, "Harken to the counsel of your husband as he harkens to the counsel of the father." Other times they stop the movie to demonstrate those secret symbols and hand gestures. These are often referred to as tokens and many of them are Aaronic tokens—referring to the Aaronic order of priesthood within Mormonism—but with the crappy sound production I couldn't stop hearing erotic tokens and it just

made the whole thing seem even more ridiculous. They take a vow of chastity which is just promising you won't cheat on your spouse. And at the end they are given their secret temple names. Those function as yet another password for you and only you to know. You being a man, because women don't get to keep their name secret. Men are supposed to keep this name secret throughout their lives, while women have to divulge the name to their husband but the husband does not divulge his name to the wife.

According to the Internet, everyone of the same gender receives the same name on their particular day, it just changes based on the date of the endowment. Names given include biblical names like Nimrod, and Boaz, and Ruth, and if you're a lucky woman you might get Hagar. I found an online forum with a bunch of dudes complaining that they received the name Frederick. Can you imagine waiting your whole life for your sacred name, you learn all of the handshakes, you never drink alcohol or caffeine, you're a good Mormon boy and finally the day comes and a shadowy figure leans forward from behind a curtain and whispers in your ear "Frederick."

Another less than popular option: jethro. Lots of bitching online about that one. Also a guy who received the name Alma. He was salty. In particular I found a ton of complaining on the "ex Mormon" subReddit where I saw these secret names referred to as "non-consensual nicknames." There's also a website called fullerconsideration.com

where you can look up the date of your endowment and it will tell you your so-called "secret name" which is also the secret name of everyone else of the same gender who went through endowment on that date.

Standardized, date-based mass naming. So meaningful.

There are various other covenants and promises that must be made. It's pretty silly, sorry. At one point everyone stands up in a circle and all the women put a white veil over their faces and then everyone joins hands, it's like some type of weird teambuilding icebreaker event. It's eyes wide shut without any fun sex stuff. The wording of the vows and covenants have been softened significantly over the years. For instance, they no longer include explicit references to the blood oaths and penalties; while participants still vow to keep the rituals secret, the ceremony no longer includes a graphic description of what will happen to those who don't. As recently as 1990 Mormon children were still expected to mime the actions of slitting their own throats and being disemboweled as a reminder of what they could expect as punishment for being naughty little snitches.

This all goes back to Joseph Smith's endowment ritual which was adapted from freemasonry. "The participants promised that – rather than reveal the content of the ceremony – they would suffer the following:

Stage 1 : "my throat ... be cut from ear to ear, and my tongue torn out by its roots;"

Stage 2 : "our breasts ... be torn open, our hearts and vitals torn out and given to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field;"

Stage 3 : "our body ... be cut asunder and all your bowels gush out."

each of the penalties accompanied by gestures known as the "**execution of the penalty**" which simulated the actions described in the oath (Kearns 1906, p. 8).

Stage 1: The participant placed his or her right hand palm-down with the thumb extended and the tip of the thumb just under the left ear. The gesture was made by drawing the tip of the thumb swiftly across the throat until the thumb was just under the right ear then dropping the hand and arm quickly to the side of the participant's body.

Stage 2: The participant placed his or her hand in a cup form over the left breast. The gesture was made by pulling the hand swiftly across the breast then quickly dropping the hand and arm to the side of the participant's body.

Stage 3: The participant placed his or her right hand palm-down with the thumb extended and the tip of the thumb on the left of the torso just above the left hip. The gesture was made by drawing the thumb swiftly across the stomach until the thumb was just above the right hip and the

hand and arm were quickly dropped to the side of the participant's body. the

It is during this ceremony that the Mormon receives the sacred temple garments, which we will discuss, and those garments often incorporate images of the square and compass, adopted from freemasonry. There is much mocking of the "magical garments," and it's easy to see why. The form has changed over time, they are now a two piece white garment and the men's version includes almost what appears to be a padded codpiece, it's unappealing. Although it kind of makes your junk look huge, but in a very unflattering way if that's possible. It looks like if Hanes tighty Whiteys were stretched into a full undergarment that ended at the knees and shoulders. These are often referred to as "gods armor," and serve as a protection against temptation. But not through any magic, the idea is that wearing these garments will remind you not to engage in any funny business. I think the magic is the boner-killing ugliness of this underwear. Wearing the magic underwear is very similar to wearing a cross under your shirt as a Christian, it's a symbol of your religion and a private reminder of your faith.

At the end of the ceremony, all of the participants approach a veil, which is just a curtain, and there's a hidden figure on the other side of the curtain ,

this is true, and they enact the series of secret handshakes that they've learned and also exchange a predetermined series of statements while holding hands. these are known as tokens seals and secrets, it's all extremely ridiculous. Then all the the new celestial kings and Queens get their secret names and that's the end. Congratulations Jethro and Hagar, you're officially endowed. That's what she said. So yes, it's all very secretive and weird but it can also be viewed as just a bunch of bureaucracy and red tape that you have to go through at some point in your Mormon life.

Other controversial LDS practices...

We discussed this before, but Mormons believe that they can baptize the dead, granting the deceased postmortem entry into the LDS church. This is problems, to say the least, imagine finding out that the Mormon church had retroactively baptized your grandmother and now as far as they're concerned she's an honorary Mormon, whether you like it or not. The Mormons have in fact undertaken a massive project to collect the names of the dead, all of the non-Mormon dead, they have collected 2 billion names so far, and they are working their way through them, baptizing everyone they can. You can see videos of these baptisms online, secret tapings in which a Mormon priest dunks a child and explicitly states, "I baptize you in the

name of so-and-so, who is dead." Over 100 million ex humans have been retroactively baptized. It's...weird. But in my opinion it's also kind of harmless, and I think they mean well. This is the Mormons just trying to be bros, I actually like this idea better than the Christian belief that anyone who hasn't accepted Jesus is going to hell. The Mormons are like, we will accept Jesus for you on your behalf, you're welcome. I kind of want the Mormons to baptize me. What do I have to lose? It's low risk high reward. Maybe I'll get my own planet.

Speaking of which, we have to talk about Private worlds and individual gods: the church believes that each Mormon in good standing has the ability after death to become a god on his or her own private world. The church has recently tried to downplay this aspect of their religion. In the wake of the mocking they received from the comedic Broadway play book of Mormon, the church outright denied that getting your own planet is explicitly part of Mormon doctrine. Which is just flat out bullshit. The belief is tied to the Mormon philosophy of exaltation. "

Exaltation is a [belief](#) among members of [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) (LDS Church) that mankind can reach the highest level of salvation, to eternally live in God's presence, continue as families, [become gods](#), create worlds,

and have spirit children over which they will govern."

What is not accurate about the Broadway play is the assertion that Mormons believe that God lives on a planet called Kolob. You might recognize that name from earlier.

Mormon cosmology is dense and almost as eye-roll-inducing as Scientology. Remember Xenu and TeeGeeAck? Well if you're a Mormon you're going to learn all about the star (or possibly planet) called Kolob, though it is never actually referred to as the home of God. From LDSliving.com, "As the first creation and the star nearest to the source of all light, God, it makes sense that Kolob gives its light in a similar way... the planet Enish-go-on-dosh "borrows its light from Kolob through the medium of Kae-e-vanrash, which is the . . . governing power. .. two other stars, Kli-flos-is-es and Hah-ko-kau-beam, also receive "light from the revolutions of Kolob." Sigh.

The oath of vengeance is another controversial aspect of Mormon tradition. This one gets a lot of attention in anti-Mormon circles but has been disavowed by the church since like 1930. Basically it was a vow to avenge the murder of Joseph Smith.

Again sort of creepy, but not particularly controversial, feel free to vow revenge on the ghosts of dead Illinoisans.

Some final notes about Mormonism. The Mormon focus on family is above and beyond most other religions. The family persists into eternity; marriages aren't just till death do us part, they are binding through the infinity of time. Mormon marriages are known as eternal marriages, or celestial marriages. Practicing Mormons observe Mondays as a family night, called family home evening or FHE. Families play games and pray and eat snacks and hang out together. It's wholesome as fuck.

And at the same time, this focus on family and reproduction can be weaponized against Mormons who identify as gay or simply choose not to marry or for whatever reason end up getting divorced. And while the official rhetoric has softened, the LDS church is a nightmare when it comes to LGBTQ plus issues. The Mormon church was involved in financially backing the notorious proposition eight, which briefly banned same-sex marriage in California. So Mormonism can be this amazing powerful positive force in your life as long as you embody all of the ideals of the Mormon church. If you stray from that, you risk being shunned or

excommunicated or just judged and isolated.

So in conclusion, I guess the church of Latter Day Saints is...a religion. It has its own mythology and eccentricities just like every other religion, it has its share of baggage and bigotry just like every other religion, and honestly I don't find the Mormon church to be particularly more objectionable than any other major religion. Which doesn't mean there aren't aspects that are intensely objectionable, it just means that those issues aren't unique to the LDS church.

Mormons freaking dominate dancing competitions.

NEW PATRON: Rowdy Rain, a midnight maniac. The highest tier. I like that name. Sounds like an old-school wrestler.

A quick review this week:



Funny and
informative

Thanks for the info and the
laughs.

March 27, 2022 by Aio1972 on Apple Podcasts

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[Joseph Smith—History 1](#)
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