Abraham Lincoln
and the
Early Mormon Church
Cardinal Francis George
Then president of the U.S. conference of Catholic Bishops

“[There are] threats to religious freedom in America that are new to our history and to our tradition.”
Deseret News February 5, 2011
Director of the EEOC:

Suggested that “sexual orientation liberty” … prevail over competing “religious-belief liberty.”

If that happens, we will have criminal prosecution of those whose religious doctrines or speech offend those of … an officially protected class.”

Dallin H. Oakes, Deseret News February 5, 2011
Boyhood Years

- Bible
- Tree stump sermons
- “The best boy…”
- Tireless student
- “Pa taught me…”
New Salem, Illinois, 1831-1837

- Store clerk
- Post Master
- Taught himself Law
The fact that a sect of fanatics, calling themselves Mormonites, have sprung up and extended themselves in the western part of New York and the eastern part of Ohio, is partially known to our readers. The origin, character and numbers of this sect have not yet been noticed in the Gazette, and, it seems proper now to notice them.

The ostensible founder of this fanaticism is a man of the name of Joseph Smith, an indolent, ignorant, careless shiftless fellow in the commencement of life. He prayed, preached, and made converts...and in consequence of a divine revelation, removed with his converts [from New York] to the neighborhood of Painesville, Ohio. Here his converts increased rapidly, and recently a company of about one hundred immigrated from that place to some promised land upon the Missouri, taking with [them?] their common means, their religious instructors, and their Mormon Bibles.
Zion’s Camp
Of their pretended revelations from Heaven -- their personal [communion] with God and his Angels -- the maladies they pretend to heal by the laying on of hands…

we do hereby most solemnly declare,

1. That no Mormon shall in future move and settle in this country.

2. That those now here…remove out of the county…

3. That the Mormon leaders …to use their influence in preventing any further emigration…
Lincoln’s Conflicting Religion

Infidel

- Joined no church
- Predestination
- Eternal damnation
- All saved
- Adam’s transgression
- Manuscript
Lincoln’s beliefs

- Revelation
- Kept God’s Commandments
- Sabbath Day
- Searched the scriptures
- Prayed
- Preached
- No vices

“I have had so many evidences of His direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above.”
Prayer

“I talk to God because my mind is relieved when I do. When I could not see any other resort, I would place my whole reliance in God, knowing that all would be well, and that He would decide for the right.” Daily Treasures, p.11
Joined no church

“Those days of trouble found me tossed amid a sea of questionings. They piled big upon me… Through all I groped my way until I found a stronger and higher grasp of thought, one that reached beyond this life with a clearness and satisfaction I had never known before. The Scriptures unfolded before me with a deeper and more logical appeal…than anything else I could find to turn to or even before had found in them.

“I doubt the possibility, or propriety, of settling the religion of Jesus Christ in the models of man-made creeds and dogmas… I cannot without mental reservations assent to their long and complicated creeds and catechisms.”
Young Joseph’s vision

“I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong…their creeds were an abomination in his sight… that those professors were all corrupt.”

Pearl of Great Price JS 2:19
Lincoln on a camp meeting preacher:

“...[he] yelled, shrieked, wrung his hands in sobs of hysterics, until a row of women were laid out to rest and recover in the shade of an oak tree, after they had moaned, shaken, danced up and down, worn themselves out with ‘the jerks’ and fainted.”
“I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and a work for me—and I think He has—I believe I am ready.

...with God’s help I shall not fail. I may not see the end; but it will come and I shall be vindicated; and these men will find that they have not read their Bibles aright.”

*The Soul of Lincoln*, William E. Barton
“It is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. **And when I can learn what it is, I will do it!**
The Almost Chosen People, p. 22

In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a **humble instrument in the hands of our heavenly Father**, as I am…to work out His great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to His will; and that it might be so, I have sought his aid…
“If justice requires that punishment be proportionate to the offense, then eternal damnation is intrinsically unjust and therefore unworthy of a just God. No finite offense (the only kind mortals are capable of committing) could fairly merit infinite punishment.

“But the Christian God is just”, Corinthians 15:22: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

He went on to write his belief that “Christ’s atoning death meant that punishment in the afterlife not only would fit the crime but also would be rehabilitative, designed to prepare the offender for eternal happiness.” *The Soul of Lincoln, Intro. xxiv*
In Lincoln’s law office in 1859: a discussion among friends and colleagues was held on the truth of the Christian religion. “Lincoln ended the discussion by a cogent argument based on the restitution of all things in Christ and the ultimate salvation of all men.” The Soul of Lincoln p 138

And surely every man must repent or suffer, for I God, am endless. Nevertheless it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written endless torment.

Again, it is written eternal damnation… that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name’s glory. D&C 19
“I planted myself upon the truth and the truth only, so far as I knew it or could be brought to know it.”

“I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent...to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their articles of belief...

When any church will inscribe over its alters, as its sole qualification for membership, the Savior’s condensed statement... ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself, that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.”

*The Soul of Lincoln* p 244
What did Lincoln think of the Mormon Religion?

1. We don’t know

2. Peter Cartwright: Lincoln an open scoffer at Christianity.
   - “That I am not a member of any Christian Church, is true; but I have never denied the truth of the Scriptures; and I have never spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general, or any denomination of Christians in particular.
   - The habit of arguing thus however, I have, entirely left off for more than five years.”
While friends, ministers, politicians, newspapers were openly critical of the Mormons, Lincoln was surprisingly neutral.

- On their doctrine
- On their politics
- On polygamy
  - “The twin relics of barbarism”
Whig and Republican Party Platform

- Lincoln’s runs for Congress
  - Elected on third attempt in 1846
- The twin relics of barbarism
  - Slavery and polygamy
- Lincoln on Blacks, Indians, Slave owners, alcoholics … and Mormons?
- John C. Bennett’s defamation of Joseph.
What if Lincoln had embraced the gospel?

The end of his political career

Hard to imagine that he did not know of their doctrine

Were obstacles placed in his way?

- Stephen A. Douglas
- James Adams
The Springfield Branch

Joseph Smith: At least three visits to Springfield

- James Adams
- Katherine Mulliner
- The Globe Tavern
- Missionaries

“For time and eternity…”
Springfield, Illinois, 1837-1861

Stephen A. Douglas
Friend to Joseph Smith
Life long rival to Lincoln

Mormon vote

Lincoln in Illinois
State Legislature
1834-1840
“Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if you ever turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of the Almighty upon you; and you will live to see and know that I have testified the truth to you; for the conversation of this day will stick to you through life”.
Mormons slight Lincoln

In 1840 Lincoln campaigned for Whig Party Delegate Seat

- William Henry Harrison and John Tyler, Whig Party
- On the ballot of four Democrats and six Whigs, Lincoln’s name was tenth on the list.
- The Mormons had announced their support for Harrison of the Whig Party
- But they unexpectedly changed
- Removed the last name: Lincoln’s, added a Democrat
- Resulting in Lincoln losing his bid.
Mormon Politics and Lincoln

Nauvoo Charter

Joseph Smith submits to the state legislature

John C. Bennett
Many members of this house, likewise, were warmly in favor, with only one or two dissenting voices…

and here I should not forget to mention that Lincoln, whose name we erased from the electoral ticket in November, (not, however, on account of any dislike to him as a man, but simply because his was the last name on the ticket, and we desired to show our friendship to the Democratic party by substituting…

had the magnanimity to vote for our act, and came forward, after the final vote, to the bar of the house, and cordially congratulated me on its passage.
Lincoln’s Law Office
Joseph Smith on trial
Court Room
“I stand before the Pope, in the presence of these angels, in the defense of a Prophet of the Lord.”

Justin Butterfield
President of the United States

John Wentworth, Editor of the *Chicago Democrat*:
Pro-Lincoln newspaper
Lincoln’s Campaign Committee

Charles Anthon
The Book of Mormon

President Lincoln checks out the Book of Mormon from the Library of Congress

“Instrument in the hand of God”
Morrill Land Grant Act, 1862

Washington DC, 1861
Wood bridge over the Potomac River
“Our new president is weak as water…”
Brigham Young, General Conference Address, April 1861
“What is your stand on the Mormons?”

“If he’ll leave me alone I’ll leave him alone.”

1857 Johnston’s Army: James Buchanan
Brigham Young removed as governor: James Buchanan

Lincoln appoints John Dawson: three weeks
Lincoln appoints Stephen Hardy: removed
Lincoln appoints James Doty
1. Verily thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls.

3. …the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States…

6. And thus …shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God.

7. That the cry of the saints, and the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth… to be avenged of their enemies.
Telegraph lines
Camp Stephen A. Douglas
To protect the overland mail route
Secessionist rumors
Lincoln’s Second Inauguration

March 4, 1865
The Lincoln Leadership Society

Dedicated to incorporating Abraham Lincoln's remarkable attributes in our own lives to benefit our families our careers and our communities.

Free membership
Four newsletters each year
Stories of Lincoln’s remarkable leadership

discoverlincoln@gmail.com
To commemorate the re-inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, as President of the United States—March 4, 1865.

To Pres. B. Young, with compliments of
Savage & Teusner,
GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

Property of
Mary D. Young.
“I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and a work for me—and I think He has—I believe I am ready.

…with God’s help I shall not fail. I may not see the end; but it will come and I shall be vindicated; and these men will find that they have not read their Bibles aright.”

*The Soul of Lincoln*, William E. Barton
God’s chastisement

“We are indeed going through a trial—a fiery trial. In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am... to work out His great purposes,

I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to His will; and that it might be so, I have sought his aid—but if after endeavoring to do my best in the light which He affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, He wills it otherwise.”
Thanksgiving Proclamation

They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens…to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.

And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience…
Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address

“Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each involves His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes.”
Some great good to follow

- Dred Scott Decision trashed
- Slaves freed
- Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed
- Constitution saved
- Church given time: 350 communities
- Saints spared the horror of the war
- Nation distracted
- Immigrant converts passed freely to Utah
- Tensions eased between the Saints and government
Eleven Proclamations

Nine days of fasting and prayer

“...we have forgotten God.”

“May we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins...”
“They must contritely confess their faults as a nation and as individuals.”

“...men would do well to recognize the hand of God in this terrible visitation.”