

SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOK OF MOSES

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Moses | VOLUME: Pearl Of Great Price | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

The 'Book of Moses' is a foundational text in the Latter-day Saint canon, presented as a restoration of the writings of Moses that were allegedly lost or corrupted in the biblical record. Dictated by Joseph Smith beginning in June 1830 as part of his 'New Translation' of the Bible, this text dramatically alters the theological landscape of the Genesis narrative. It opens with a theophany where Moses sees God face-to-face and learns that he is a 'son of God' in the similitude of the Only Begotten. The text reframes the Creation not merely as the ordering of the cosmos, but as a mechanism for 'immortality and eternal life' (Moses 1:39). Most significantly, it radically reinterprets the Fall of Adam and Eve as a necessary, positive step toward human progression—a 'fortunate fall'—rather than a catastrophic introduction of sin and death. Furthermore, the text asserts that Adam, Eve, and Noah were fully aware of Jesus Christ, preached the Gospel, and practiced Christian baptism, thereby flattening the biblical timeline of progressive revelation.

KEY FIGURES

God (The Father), Moses, The Only Begotten (Jesus Christ), Satan, Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Noah

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE FORTUNATE FALL (FELIX CULPA)

Assertion: The Fall was a necessary, positive event that allowed Adam and Eve to have children and know good from evil, without which they would have remained in static innocence.

"Eve... said... were it not for our transgression we should never have had seed, and should never have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption (Moses 5:11)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the Fall is the tragedy that broke the cosmos, introducing spiritual death and necessitating a Savior to rescue man from total depravity. The Book of Moses redefines this event as a strategic victory. Eve claims that without the transgression, they would have had no 'seed' (children) and no 'joy.' This suggests that sin was a prerequisite for obedience to the command to 'multiply and replenish,' creating a theological paradox where God commands something (reproduction) that requires disobeying another command (do not eat). This negates the biblical concept of sin as purely destructive and frames it as an instrumental good.

2. ANTHROPOCENTRIC THEISM

Assertion: God's primary work and glory is defined by the exaltation of humanity.

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. (Moses 1:39)"

Evangelical Comparison: The Westminster Shorter Catechism states man's chief end is 'to glorify God.' Moses 1:39 inverts this dynamic, suggesting God's chief end is to glorify man ('bring to pass... eternal life of man'). While Evangelicals believe God saves men for His glory (Ephesians 1:6), this text defines God's glory as the process of saving men, potentially implying that God needs humanity to fulfill His own attribute of glory.

3. RETROJECTED CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES

Assertion: The specific Gospel of Jesus Christ, including baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, was revealed to and practiced by Adam and Noah.

"Believe and repent of your sins, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ... even as our fathers did (Moses 8:24)"

Evangelical Comparison: Biblical theology teaches 'progressive revelation'—that the mystery of Christ was 'kept secret for long ages' (Romans 16:25) and revealed in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). The Book of Moses claims Adam and Noah were fully Christian, using the name 'Jesus Christ' and performing water baptisms. This removes the pedagogical function of the Law and the Prophets and renders the 'newness' of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31) redundant.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The theological gap is foundational. First, the 'Fortunate Fall' doctrine fundamentally alters the problem of evil and the nature of sin, suggesting that disobedience was the only path to righteousness (procreation). Second, the 'Christianization' of the Old Testament removes the historical framework of redemption history. In Evangelicalism, the Law was a tutor to lead to Christ (Galatians 3:24); in the Book of Moses, the tutor is unnecessary because Adam already had the fullness of the Gospel. This renders the Incarnation and the Cross as the *execution* of a plan already fully active, rather than the *inauguration* of the New Covenant.

Shared Values:

Creation by God; Existence of a literal Adam and Eve; Reality of Satan and the Fall; Necessity of repentance; Centrality of Jesus (The Only Begotten) for salvation

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds a new book that claims to correct and supersede the biblical text of Genesis.
2. [Critical] Theology Proper (Nature of God/Sin) – Suggests God gave conflicting commandments (multiply vs. don't eat) necessitating sin to fulfill God's plan.
3. [Major] Anthropology – Views man as having a pre-mortal existence and being necessary for God's glory.
4. [Major] Christology – While honoring Christ, it claims His specific name and ordinances were fully revealed to Adam, denying the 'mystery' of the gospel revealed in the NT.

Semantic Warnings:

"The Fall"

In Text: A downward step that was actually a forward step; a necessary transition for humanity to progress.

Evangelical: A catastrophic rebellion resulting in spiritual death and separation from God (Genesis 3, Romans 5).

Example: *Eve's statement: 'Were it not for our transgression we should never have... known... the joy of our redemption.'*

"Salvation"

In Text: Often synonymous with 'Eternal Life' (exaltation), distinct from mere 'Immortality' (resurrection).

Evangelical: Deliverance from sin and its consequences, granted by grace through faith.

Example: *Moses 1:39 distinguishes 'immortality' AND 'eternal life' as separate goals.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Immortality (living forever) and Eternal Life (living like God/with God).

How Attained: Through the Atonement of the Only Begotten, accessed via faith, repentance, and specific ordinances (baptism) initiated by Adam.

Basis of Assurance: Personal revelation and obedience to commandments.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Explicitly rejects Sola Fide by requiring baptism and obedience to commandments as early as Adam's time for salvation. (Contrast with Romans 4:1-5 where Abraham was justified by faith *before* circumcision).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Worship God only (Moses 1:15)
2. Call upon God in the name of the Son (Moses 5:8)
3. Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Moses 8:24)
4. Offer firstlings of the flock as a similitude (Moses 5:5-7)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible as superior to the traditional canon

2. View the Fall as a necessary step in spiritual progression
3. Reject the 'sectarian' notion that the Gospel began with the New Testament

Ritual Requirements:

1. Animal sacrifice (in the Adamic era)
2. Baptism by immersion (retrojected to Adam/Noah)
3. Reception of the Holy Ghost

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In Moses 5:11, Eve seems to say that sinning was the only way to have children and joy. How does that fit with God being holy and not the author of sin?
2. If Adam and Noah already knew the fullness of the Gospel and practiced baptism (Moses 8:24), why does the New Testament speak of the mystery of Christ being 'hidden for ages' until the apostles?
3. Moses 1:39 says God's work is to bring to pass man's eternal life. Does God need us to be saved in order to be fully God, or is He glorious all by Himself?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The God Who Speaks – Just as Moses longed to hear God, the Bible confirms God is not silent but has spoken definitively through His Son (Hebrews 1:2). [Hebrews 1:1-2]
2. Similitude of the Only Begotten – The text correctly identifies that sacrifices point to Christ. This shared ground allows a transition to the sufficiency of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. [Hebrews 10:1-14]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance/Cosmic Pressure [Moderate] – By teaching that God's glory is tied to man's exaltation, the believer feels the weight of not just their own salvation, but the fulfillment of God's work resting on their progression.
2. Uncertainty of Truth [Severe] – By undermining the completeness of the Bible ('taken many of them from the book'), the believer is left dependent on a modern prophet to know what is true, removing the stability of a fixed canon.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Direct mystical experience (Theophany) and prophetic revelation.

Verification Method: Personal spiritual witness and acceptance of the prophet's authority to restore lost text.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the objective, historical, closed canon of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). The Book of Moses relies on subjective modern revelation that alters the objective historical text.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Dictated June 1830 - February 1831.

Authorship: Joseph Smith (claimed as revelation of Moses' words).

Textual Issues: The text contains 19th-century Protestant phraseology (e.g., 'original guilt,' 'born again') and New Testament Greek concepts (Alpha and Omega) anachronistically placed in the mouth of Moses/Adam.