



MY  
LETTER  
EXCHANGES

WITH

JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

OF THE

QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

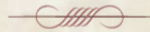


TOM PHILLIPS

MAY 2012

# C·O·N·T·E·N·T·S

MY LETTER TO ELDER HOLLAND



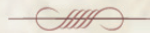
EVIDENCES THE  
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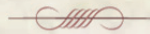
EVIDENCE THE  
BOOK OF MORMON IS TRUE



MY FINAL PLEA TO ELDER HOLLAND



NOTES REFERENCED  
IN THIS LETTER



MY RESPONSE TO  
ELDER HOLLAND'S  
REPLY



## MY LETTER TO ELDER HOLLAND

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
Quorum of the Twelve Apostles  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
50 East North Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150  
United States

2 May 2012

*RE: Truthfulness of the Book of Mormon*

Dear Elder Holland,

After you set me apart as stake president, you said, “Tom, now we are sealed.” I know you did not mean that literally, but I took it as a compliment and great honor to have a close association with you. Throughout the years my family and I have held you in great esteem.

Two letters you wrote to me are kept in a special file and in my ‘heart.’ One letter iterated your admiration and appreciation of my son, Alan, and his effect on your son, Duff. As a proud parent I have retained this letter. The other letter was complimenting me on the way in which, as stake president, I dealt with apostates within my stake.

I mention these two letters to remind you of our association and the mutual love and respect we have shared. I have been a defender of the faith and greatly inspired by you. In fact I have used your ‘sudden death’ argument regarding the Book of Mormon many times in the past (See Note 1).

A few years ago I studied a certain aspect of science so that I could better explain to any investigator who was a scientist an important, true doctrine of the Book of Mormon that seemed to conflict with established science. At the time I had no doubt whatsoever of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon (and the Church) so

my studies were to understand the flaws in the scientific methodology. Then, I would be in a position to help an investigator overcome this 'scientific hurdle' and know God's truth. The results of studying, pondering, fasting and praying were that the scientific methodology was sound and the fault was in that taught in the Book of Mormon (no death before the fall of Adam approximately 6,000 years ago). That led me to a study of other issues with the Book of Mormon and Church history which clearly showed a number of falsities.

Applying your 'sudden death' challenge therefore could only lead to one conclusion, it was a fraud (your words – it is either true or a fraud). I had meetings with Elder Harold G. Hillam and later with Elder Gerald N. Lund. They both gave opposite and conflicting answers that confirmed to me the Church was not true.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your help, as we are 'sealed,' in resolving a conflict of eternal consequence to my family who still believe the Church is true. You are possibly aware of Alan's position as a stake president. I accept your 'sudden death' option in that the Book of Mormon is either true, as Joseph Smith declared it, or it is a fraud. You are on public record ("Safety for the Soul" talk at General Conference, October 2009 and posted on YouTube) vigorously defending the claim of its truthfulness and, in fact, deriding those who think otherwise (including me). We cannot both be right on this issue. Either you are right or I am — there appears to be no middle ground or 'third way.' My family listens to you and others of the Brethren, holding you all in the highest of esteem. As taught and encouraged by the Church, they refuse to discuss the issues with me but only wish to bear their testimony. They have not sought to correct any misunderstandings I may have, thereby reclaiming a 'lost sheep,' but choose to ignore the 'elephant in the room.' I always believed the Church could bear any scrutiny as it was the one and only true church on the face of the earth.

If I am wrong on the facts, or have drawn incorrect conclusions, then I earnestly implore you to put me right.

Just as you suggest a "sudden death" position regarding The Book of Mormon, I see a "sudden death" either/or question for my situation. Either I am wrong, in which case please address my issues and demonstrate where I am wrong. I would love to be shown that I am wrong, having invested so much of my life in the Church. Or, I am right, in which case please acknowledge that fact to my family.

So, my request to you Elder Holland is to either:

1. Demonstrate to me that the Book of Mormon is true by answering and refuting the ‘evidences’ against its truthfulness mentioned later in this letter (you claim in your talk it has not been proven false in over 179 years) or
2. Admit, for the benefit of my family and hosts of others, it is (in your words) a fraud or
3. At least admit there were errors in your talk (you specify which ones) and apologize to genuine truth seekers regarding the offensive comments you made that they would have to ‘crawl over . . . etc.’

*“If anyone is foolish enough or misled enough to reject 531 pages of a heretofore unknown text teeming with literary and Semitic complexity without honestly attempting to account for the origin of those pages — especially without accounting for their powerful witness of Jesus Christ and the profound spiritual impact that witness has had on what is now tens of millions of readers — if that is the case, then such a person, elect or otherwise, has been deceived; and if he or she leaves this Church, it must be done by crawling over or under or around the Book of Mormon to make that exit.”*

— Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
“Safety for the Soul”  
General Conference, October 2009

Whichever of these 3 you choose to do, will help not only myself but countless others by confirming the truth of the Book of Mormon or admitting it is a work of fiction (however and by whom written). Please do not ignore this request, as it goes to the very heart of the matter of the Church’s veracity. A matter I would assume someone of your moral and academic stature would deem of vital importance. Why would you say something that is not true? I am not an angry ‘anti-Mormon,’ I am pro truth. I served diligently in the Church because I honestly believed (‘knew’) it to be true. Once I found out otherwise I could not, as encouraged by Church leaders, just continue in the faith so that I could keep my family. I could not live a lie.

This request is made to you because of our personal relationship and also because you have publicly defended the Book of Mormon in General Conference which has

been broadcast internationally by the Church and also been featured on YouTube and The Ensign.

First, permit me to outline the evidences I have discovered that point to the Book of Mormon not being true, or the Word of God. As stated previously, I would appreciate your comments on/refutation of these items, not as an “apologist” but as a truth seeker (whichever way that falls). These are only outline points for the purpose of brevity in this letter. I do not include all that would be included in a paper on such a topic because I assume you are already very familiar with the issues and the answers given by apologists.

Secondly, I list certain quotes from your talk which appear to me to be incorrect. Again I seek your comments/refutation.

## EVIDENCES THE BOOK OF MORMON IS NOT TRUE



### **NO DEATH BEFORE THE FALL OF ADAM**

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2 Nephi 2: 22 and Alma 12: 23-24 state there was no death of any kind (humans, all animals, birds, fish etc.) on this earth until the ‘Fall of Adam’ which, according to Doctrine and Covenants section 77: 6-7 occurred approximately 6,000 years ago. This is obviously false as it is scientifically established there has been life and death on this planet for billions of years. (See Note 2)



### **AMERICAN INDIAN ORIGINS**

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The Book of Mormon purports to tell the true origins of the American Indian, descendants of Lehi and his family who left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. Anthropologists have maintained for decades that the American Indians came to North America via the Bering Strait some 15,000 – 30, 000 years ago. Recent DNA studies have conclusively proven the American Indians are not descendants of Lehi and his family. Yes, I am aware of BYU professors who ‘play loose’ with DNA studies in order to defend the Book of Mormon. They also re-invent the Church’s

teachings regarding the American Indian (flying in the face of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor through to at least Spencer W. Kimball and the Lord Himself in D&C section 54: 8 and others) offering a limited geography theory etc. I understand the title page to the Book of Mormon has even been amended in this regard in recent years. (See Note 4)



### **ARCHAEOLOGY**

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There is absolutely no evidence of the Nephites and Lamanites who numbered in the millions according to the Book of Mormon. Contrast this with the Roman occupation of Britain (and other countries). Having lived in England, as well as your frequent visits and reading, you will be aware of abundant evidence the Romans were there during the first 400 years A.D. e.g. villas, mosaic floors, public baths, coins, armor, weapons, writings, art, pottery, etc. Even the major road system used today was originally built by the Romans (A1, A2, A4, etc. now with motorways added). Why are there no Nephite buildings, roads, coins, armor, pottery, art, etc.? Again, the Book of Mormon teaches a period of peace and prosperity lasting about 200 years after Jesus Christ visited the American Continent.

Where are the temples etc.? Where is the evidence of the 2 million + who died in battles at Hill Cumorah? No bones, chariots, swords, coins, armor, hair?

Surely, if it happened it would be easy for archaeologists to find evidence in Palmyra. But then apologists wish to say Cumorah was somewhere else, yet to be discovered. It seems Joseph Smith did not understand the two Cumorahs, neither has it been mentioned in decades of pageants put on by the Church at 'Hill Cumorah' in upstate New York.

There is ample evidence of the Mayan and Aztec civilizations as well as a civilization in current day Texas that dates back 15,000 years. Why no Nephite or Lamanite evidence? Indeed, not only is there no positive evidence for them there is evidence to confirm that certain things, mentioned in the Book of Mormon pertaining to them, were not even on the American continent at the time (e.g. horses, chariots, steel, etc.). (See Note 3)



### **BOOK OF ABRAHAM**

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I mention this as evidence against the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon as an example of the 'modus operandi' of Joseph Smith. The

arguments of your apologists (e.g. Hugh Nibley and Michael D. Rhodes) to defend the Book of Abraham are an insult to intelligence and certainly would not stand up to peer review by recognized Egyptologists. The Church has had parts of the papyri since, I think, 1967 and they have been translated by Egyptologists. They [the papyri] are no more than magical funerary texts, often buried with the dead, and [have] nothing to do with the purported translation by Joseph Smith. If he lied about the Book of Abraham is it not conceivable he lied about the Book of Mormon?

Also, pertinent to this point, is the fact that Joseph lied about (denied) his plural wives and the allegations made by the *Nauvoo Expositor* which turned out to be true. Other evidence of Joseph's modus operandi re[garding] translation projects are the 'Greek Psalter' and 'Kinderhook Plates' incidents. (See Note 5)



## CHANGING SKIN COLOR

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The Lamanites were cursed by the Lord with a skin of darkness (blackness) because of their sins and so that they would not be attractive to the Nephites. On some occasions, when Lamanites converted and became righteous their skin became whiter. This doctrine was commented on in recent times by President Spencer W. Kimball who noted the lightening of the skins of 'Lamanites' (American Indians and Polynesians) in one of his talks. Now I ask you, is this the 'word of God?' Did God use skin color as a differentiator?

Of course he did you may say, he did it with Cain and his descendants. So the racist teachings of Brigham Young etc. have their foundation in the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith's understanding of the Book of Genesis.

According to science, skin color is a product of genetics and climate on pigmentation of the skin. Any white person can become dark by sunbathing but the color change is not permanent. A black person does not become white by being righteous, how offensive, how insulting, how racist. If it is possible (and ethical) to change the color of a person's skin in an instant (and then change it back when they become righteous) then it would indicate the Book of Mormon is true in this regard.

However, I am of the opinion that any educated, ethical person would consider this doctrine untrue/false. Please explain to me how this doctrine can be true rather than misinformed 19<sup>th</sup> century thinking:



*"And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that 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."*

— 2 Nephi 5: 21



## **DOCTRINE vs SCIENCE**

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Other 'true doctrines' of the Church, taken from the Book of Mormon and/or the Doctrine and Covenants, that are proven false by science include the following:

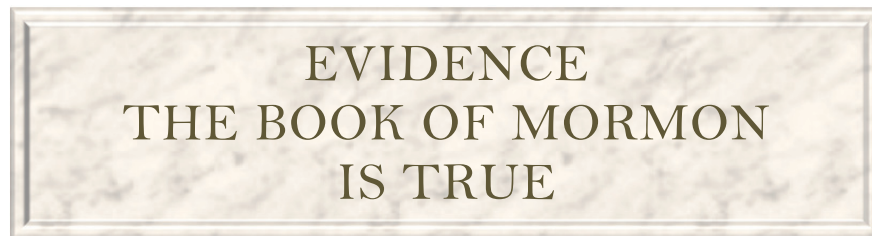
- (a) All humans alive today are not the descendants of just two people (Adam and Eve) who lived (came from the Garden of Eden) approximately 6,000 years ago neither are they the descendants of just one man (Noah) about 4,500 years ago.
- (b) There was no world-wide flood of the earth about 4,500 years ago.
- (c) Different languages did not arise in the manner described regarding the Tower of Babel (per Bible and Book of Mormon).
- (d) The human race did not start in what is now the state of Missouri (D&C 116: 1) then migrate to the Middle East in consequence of a universal flooding of the earth. From the Encyclopedia of Mormonism, "It wasn't until May 1838 that revelation (D&C 116) identified Adam-ondi-Ahman, a site near the Garden of Eden, to be in Daviess County, Missouri, some seventy miles from present-day Kansas City." (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 4 vols., New York City: Macmillan, 1992, 1: pp. 19-20*)

*"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."*

— **John Adams**

**"Argument in Defense of the Soldiers in the Boston Massacre Trials"**  
December 1770

The problem Mormonism encounters is that so many of its claims are well within the realm of scientific study, and as such, can be proven or disproven. To cling to faith in these areas, where the overwhelming evidence is against you, is wilful ignorance, not spiritual dedication.



Here are some specific quotes from your talk, which I take as your arguments for the Book of Mormon's truthfulness, with my comments/questions added *in italics*:

*Excerpts from the talk:*

**"Safety for the Soul"**

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles  
General Conference, October 2009

**"I want it absolutely clear when I stand before the judgment bar of God that I declared to the world . . . that the Book of Mormon is true."** *In what respects is it true? It is not true according to scientific laws, anthropology, zoology, metallurgy, chemistry, physics, biology, linguistics, history, archaeology etc. Why would you say something that is not true?*

**"The Savior warned that in the last days even those of the covenant, the very elect, could be deceived by the enemy of truth."** *The Book of Mormon itself is an enemy of truth if it declares things as true which are, in fact, false e.g. no death of any kind prior to 6,000 years ago (Book of Mormon actually states "fall of Adam" but Doctrine and Covenants section 77 places this at approximately 6,000 years ago); horses, steel etc. on American continent at time they were absent; origin of the American Indians etc. Please explain how I have been deceived and by whom.*

**"As one of a thousand elements of my own testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, I submit this as yet one more evidence of its truthfulness."** *You do not mention the other 999 elements, only the following which appears to be untrue:*

**“They were willing to die rather than deny the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.”** *Untrue, they did not die for their faith. They were killed in a gun battle. Joseph shot at men and, according to President John Taylor, two of the men Joseph shot died. They were incarcerated because of Joseph’s reprehensible behavior and alleged crimes such as having a printing press destroyed (treason? – free speech) which he claimed had published lies about him that were, in fact true; that he practiced and taught polygamy including with 14 year old girls and women already married (polyandry); was setting up a theocratic government etc. Why do you not defend the likes of William Law who, having tried to change Joseph’s reprehensible behavior, published the truth and was demonized by Joseph and the Church as a result. I believe the charges against Joseph were (1) inciting a riot and (2) treason against the State of Illinois. At no time, am I aware, were Joseph and Hyrum offered the choice of saving their lives if they denied “the divine origin and the eternal truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.” What is your source for this idea? Please give evidence to support your statement or admit it is false.*

*Did the State of Illinois or the jailers give Joseph Smith the opportunity to denounce his religious claims and be freed? No. So he was not a martyr. He did not die for his religious beliefs.*

*Bear in mind the fallacy of your assertion — The claim that no fraud would walk to their death making a claim like Joseph Smith to the very end: this ignores the countless cult leaders like David Koresh, Marshall Applewhite, Jim Jones etc.*

**“For 179 years this book has been examined and attacked, denied and deconstructed, targeted and torn apart like perhaps no other book in modern religious history — perhaps like no other book in any religious history. And still it stands.”** *Where does it stand? Is it used in American history classes or used by those studying American history? No. It has been extensively proven false by many. If it still stands it should be easy for you to satisfactorily explain the issues I raised above as evidences that it is not true.*

**“None of these frankly pathetic answers for this book has ever withstood examination because there is no other answer than the one Joseph gave as its young unlearned translator.”** *Completely untrue. The one answer Joseph gave is the most absurd and the only one lacking in any real evidence except the “burning in the bosom” which is the same evidence for the truthfulness of the Quran, Hinduism, Scientology and thousands of other beliefs/traditions/fortune telling*

*which totally oppose the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon has been shown to be a work of fiction by many credible authors and is viewed as such by the Smithsonian Institute. Otherwise scholars of American history would readily use the book for their work. Again, answer my issues if I am incorrect.*

*Your use of the word 'pathetic' is rather disturbing. In what way are other suggestions as to the origin of the Book of Mormon and, by inference, my questions, pathetic? Ethan Smith's "A View of the Hebrews" could be a source, as agreed by Elder B.H. Roberts. The King James translation of the Bible has certainly been used/copied verbatim (including errors in that translation) as well as common 19<sup>th</sup> century themes prevalent in upstate New York. Please explain why you used the derogatory word 'pathetic.'*

**"No wicked man could write such a book as this; and no good man would write it, unless it were true and he were commanded of God to do so."** *This argument could be used to prove The Quran true. Also Ethan Smith's, "A View of the Hebrews," Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy and Rowling's Harry Potter books.*

**"If anyone is foolish enough or misled enough to reject 531 pages of a heretofore unknown text teeming with literary and Semitic complexity without honestly attempting to account for the origin of those pages—especially without accounting for their powerful witness of Jesus Christ and the profound spiritual impact that witness has had on what is now tens of millions of readers—if that is the case, then such a person, elect or otherwise, has been deceived; and if he or she leaves this Church, it must be done by crawling over or under or around the Book of Mormon to make that exit."**

*How offensive a statement! Without giving any evidence in your talk that the book is true, other than a misleading statement and innuendo that Joseph and Hyrum gave their lives for it, you say I (yes me, Thomas William Phillips) have been deceived and if I leave this Church I must do so by crawling over or under or around the Book of Mormon. If this is so, please answer my issues so that I may know in what facts I have been deceived and the identity of my deceiver(s).*

*After meeting with two General Authorities of the Church, who each gave me opposite answers, I have concluded that they and you are deceived and to believe in the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon you all have to crawl over or under or around the facts and evidences of physics, chemistry, biology, genetics, geology, anthropology, linguistics, zoology, paleontology, archaeology, metallurgy, history*

*etc. If my conclusion is wrong please correct me by explaining the fallacy of my logic and by whom I have, in your words, been deceived.*

*Did Elder Hillam deceive me in stating, “Of course there has been death on this planet for billions of years” or Elder Lund by stating, “The scientists are wrong, there has been no death prior to approximately 6,000 years ago. Carbon dating is incorrect.”?*

*Which of these two General Authorities has tried to deceive me?*

*Did the academics in the fields mentioned above deceive me?*

*Have they been deceived by Satan into teaching that which is not true in spite of the fact they can demonstrate/prove the conclusions of their research?*

*You also state that the likes of me are “foolish” and “misled” — please explain in what way(s) I am foolish and misled. Why do you use such offensive and unsubstantiated language? If I am foolish and misled you should easily be able to demonstrate that in which I am foolish and misled and by whom I have been misled.*



MY FINAL PLEA  
TO ELDER HOLLAND

Elder Holland, I am writing to you in this way as a ‘sudden death’ (your words) type of plea. I have been through the appropriate Church channels to resolve my concerns but each of those Priesthood Leaders have merely confirmed to me that the Book of Mormon (and hence, following on from your specific challenge, the Church) is not true.

My final plea is to you as an Apostle and public defender of the Book of Mormon. The apologists I have been referred to actually admit the truth of my concerns but try to re-define church doctrine and scripture, contrary to that clearly taught by the Brethren. An example of the answers I have been given by Priesthood Leaders are in Note 6.

As your declarations on the Book of Mormon and derision of those, such as myself, have been made so public (General Conference broadcast throughout the world, Ensign Magazine and YouTube) I will be publishing this letter on two or more bulletin boards. I will also publish your reply to this letter so that all sides of the issues may be fairly represented.

**So, my request to you Elder Holland is to either:**

1. Demonstrate to me that the Book of Mormon is true by answering and refuting the 'evidences' against its truthfulness mentioned above (you claim in your talk it has not been proven false in over 179 years) or
2. Admit, for the benefit of my family and hosts of others, it is (in your words) a fraud or
3. At least admit there were errors in your talk (you specify which ones) and apologize to genuine truth seekers regarding the offensive comments you made that they would have to 'crawl over . . . etc.'

If you are able to do (1) please explain to me how and by whom I have been misled.

Thank you for reading this letter and taking the time to respond. As mentioned at the beginning, I and my family have long admired and respected you. Copies of this letter are being sent to my immediate family who are all currently active members of the Church.

Sincerely,

Tom Phillips

## NOTES REFERENCED IN THIS LETTER

### NOTE 1

#### “SUDDEN DEATH” PROPOSITION RE BOOK OF MORMON

In 1994, Elder Holland declared:

“Let me quote a very powerful comment from President Ezra Taft Benson, who said, “The Book of Mormon is the keystone of [our] testimony. Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. The enemies of the Church understand this clearly. This is why they go to such great lengths to try to disprove the Book of Mormon, for if it can be discredited, the Prophet Joseph Smith goes with it. So does our claim to priesthood keys, and revelation, and the restored Church . . .”

“To hear someone so remarkable say something so tremendously bold, so overwhelming in its implications, that everything in the Church — everything — rises or falls on the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and, by implication, the Prophet Joseph Smith’s account of how it came forth, can be a little breathtaking. It sounds like a “sudden death” proposition to me. Either the Book of Mormon is what the Prophet Joseph said it is or this Church and its founder are false, fraudulent, a deception from the first instance onward.

“. . . Either Joseph Smith was the prophet he said he was, who, [1] after seeing the Father and the Son, [2] later beheld the angel Moroni, [3] repeatedly heard counsel from his lips, eventually [4] receiving at his hands a set of ancient gold plates which [5] he then translated according to the gift and power of God — or else he did not. And if he did not, in the spirit of President Benson’s comment, he is not entitled to retain even the reputation of New England folk hero or well-meaning young man or writer of remarkable fiction. No, and he is not entitled to be considered a great teacher or a quintessential American prophet or the creator of great wisdom literature. If he lied about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, he is certainly none of those.

“I am suggesting that we make exactly that same kind of do-or-die, bold assertion about the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the divine origins of the Book of Mormon. We have to. Reason and rightness require it. Accept Joseph Smith as a prophet

and the book as the miraculously revealed and revered word of the Lord it is or else consign both man and book to Hades for the devastating deception of it all, but let's not have any bizarre middle ground about the wonderful contours of a young boy's imagination or his remarkable facility for turning a literary phrase. That is an unacceptable position to take — morally, literarily, historically, or theologically."

— Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"True or False," New Era, June 1995, p. 64

*(Excerpted from a CES Symposium address given at Brigham Young University on August 9, 1994)*

## NOTE 2

### NO DEATH BEFORE 6,000 YEARS AGO IS A DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

#### BIBLE DICTIONARY - DEATH

Latter-day revelation teaches that there was no death on this earth for any forms of life before the fall of Adam. Indeed, death entered the world as a direct result of the fall (2 Ne. 2: 22; Moses 6: 48). *The Official Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* © 2006 Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

*"And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end." (2 Ne 2: 22)*

*"And now behold, I say unto you that if it had been possible for Adam to have partaken of the fruit of the tree of life at that time, there would have been no death . . . And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea, the death spoken of by Amulek, which is the temporal death . . ." (Alma 12: 23-24)*

This means to me that there was no death on this earth prior to the fall of Adam approximately 6,000 years ago (D&C 77: 6-7). To confirm that I have understood this doctrine correctly I quote the following from a priesthood lesson manual for 1972-73:

"In that condition the earth and all upon it were not subject to death until Adam fell. When Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the same judgment was placed on the earth and all things upon it. Therefore every living thing, including the earth itself, is entitled to death and the resurrection."



The above quote is from page 54 of *“Selections from Answers to Gospel Questions — A Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums, 1972-73, Selections from the Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith” Tenth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* published by the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I mention this source lest any excuse the teaching as Joseph Fielding Smith’s own personal view and not that of the Church as has been done with some of the teachings of Brigham Young, Bruce R. McConkie, etc. This was (in 1972) official church doctrine and accepted as such very emphatically by my stake president in 2004.

Also from the writings of Joseph Fielding Smith:

**“NO DEATH ON EARTH BEFORE FALL** — The Lord pronounced the earth good when it was finished. Everything upon its face was called good. There was no death in the earth before the fall of Adam. I do not care what the scientists say in regard to dinosaurs and other creatures upon the earth millions of years ago, that lived and died and fought and struggled for existence. . . . All life in the sea, the air, on the earth, was without death. Animals were not dying. Things were not changing as we find them changing in this mortal existence, for mortality had not come . . .

**“BOOK OF MORMON TEACHES TRUTH ABOUT FALL** — We Latter-day Saints accept the Book of Mormon as the word of God. We have the assurance that the Lord placed the stamp of approval upon it at the time of the translation . . . The truth is the thing which will last. All the theory, Philosophy and wisdom of the wise that is not in harmony with revealed truth from God will perish. In regard to the pre-mortal condition of Adam and the entire earth, Lehi has stated the following:

*“And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.” (2Ne. 2: 19-26)*

“Is not this statement plain enough? Whom are you going to believe, the Lord, or men?” (pp. 108-9, *Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1* by Joseph Fielding Smith published by Bookcraft 1954.) The preface by Bruce R. McConkie states, “Joseph Fielding Smith is the leading gospel scholar and the greatest doctrinal teacher of his generation. Few men in this dispensation have approached him in gospel knowledge or surpassed him in spiritual insight.”

The clear message from the above is that church doctrine, based on Book of Mormon, Book of Moses, Genesis and statements by latter-day prophets is — **there was no death on this earth prior to approximately 6,000 years ago and scientists are wrong because they are contradicting the word of the Lord.**

### NOTE 3

### ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

“The detailed history and civilization described in the Book of Mormon does not correspond to anything found by archaeologists anywhere in the Americas. The Book of Mormon describes a civilization lasting for a thousand years, covering both North and South America, which was familiar with horses, elephants, cattle, sheep, wheat, barley, steel, wheeled vehicles, shipbuilding, sails, coins, and other elements of Old World culture. But no trace of any of these supposedly very common things has ever been found in the Americas of that period. Nor does the Book of Mormon mention many of the features of the civilizations which really did exist at that time in the Americas.

“The LDS church has spent millions of dollars over many years trying to prove through archaeological research that the Book of Mormon is an accurate historical record, but they have failed to produce any convincing pre-Columbian archaeological evidence supporting the Book of Mormon story. In addition, whereas the Book of Mormon presents the picture of a relatively homogeneous people, with a single language and communication between distant parts of the Americas, the pre-Columbian history of the Americas shows the opposite: widely disparate racial types (almost entirely east Asian - definitely not Semitic, as proven by recent DNA studies), and many unrelated native languages, none of which are even remotely related to Hebrew or Egyptian.”

— Richard Packham

### NOTE 4

### AMERICAN INDIANS ARE ‘LAMANITES’

“And Lehi and his family became the ancestors of all of the Indian and Mestizo tribes in North and South and Central America and in the islands of the sea, for in the middle of their history there were those who left America in ships of their making and went to the islands of the sea.”

— Spencer W. Kimball  
Ensign, July 1971

“The term Lamanite includes all Indians and Indian mixtures, such as the Polynesians, the Guatemalans, the Peruvians, as well as the Sioux, the Apache, the Mohawk, the Navajo, and others. It is a large group of great people.”

— Spencer W. Kimball  
Ensign, July 1971

## NOTE 5

### THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM – A TRANSLATION OF SOME POPYRI

“THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM translated from the papyrus, by Joseph Smith, A translation of some ancient records that have fallen into our hands from the catacombs of Egypt. The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus.” (See *History of the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 235, 236, 348-351, 1974 edition of triple combination, published by LDS Church.)

I quote this because apologists, accepting Joseph’s translation as completely different to those of Egyptologists, try to re-define the word ‘translate’ and maintain Joseph did not actually translate but used the papyri as a catalyst to receive direct revelation. This is contrary to official statements by the Church and what has been taught all my church life.

## NOTE 6

### ANSWERS FROM MY PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

As an example of the answers I have been given by my Priesthood Leaders I will give a brief summation of their answers regarding the teaching in the Book of Mormon that there was no death (of any kind, human, animal, fowl etc.) on this earth prior to the Fall of Adam which occurred (according to Doctrine & Covenants section 77) approximately 6,000 years ago. Established science (many different disciplines confirming the same) says there has been death on this planet for billions of years. So, either the Book of Mormon is true on this topic or science (in its many disciplines) is. They can’t both be true, it is one or the other. If science is true, the Book of Mormon is false (and a fraud by your own words). If the Book of Mormon is true then science is mistaken on this topic. How is that for a ‘sudden death’ proposition?

Here is a brief summation of the answers I have been given to this one question:

**President Tony Arnold** (Stake President) – the Book of Mormon is true and science is wrong, no death occurred prior to 6,000 years ago. The scientists are wrong.

**Elder Harold G. Hillam** (Member of the 1st Quorum of the Seventy and Area President, Europe West Area) stated words to the effect, “Obviously there has been death on this planet for millions of years otherwise we would not have oil and gas. Also, as part of my training as a dentist and orthodontist I have held skulls in my hand that are more than 6,000 years old. The way I reconcile it in my mind is Adam was the first man made in the

image of God.” When I asked him the obvious follow up question, what happened to the other hominids that were alive at the time of and prior to Adam, he said “I don’t know.” Clearly he had not thought through the ramifications of his reconciliation of these conflicting “truths.”

**Bishop David Cook** — first answer he gave me was that he did not read the scripture to mean that, but failed to tell me how he interpreted it. This was a great surprise as David, you know, spent his whole career in CES (Church Educational System) and had, in fact, been an Area Director for CES overseeing full time CES instructors. It was surprising to me that he chose to be unaware of something that was very clearly taught in both seminary and institute manuals. To me it was a sign of incompetence or trying to bend the truth.

Later, in the company of the then Area President, Elder Gerald N. Lund, he agreed with Elder Lund that the doctrine of the Church is that there was no death of any kind on this earth prior to 6,000 years ago and science is wrong to say otherwise. He did, therefore, read the scripture “that way” contrary to what he said on his first (unaccompanied) visit to me.

**Elder Gerald N. Lund** (Area President, successor to President Hillam) — in his first meeting with me tried to side step this and other issues by posing the question, “What is Church doctrine?” He also proudly admitted to being a ‘wordsmith.’ On his second visit to my home he clearly confirmed that the doctrine of the Church, based on the Book of Mormon and statements by the prophets, was that there was no death of any kind, human or other, on this planet prior to 6,000 years ago and science had it wrong.

So, all four of these priesthood leaders admitted it was the official doctrine of the Church that there was no death of any kind (human, animal, fowl, fish etc.) on this planet prior to 6,000 years ago. Three of them also stated science was wrong to say otherwise. Elder Hillam confirmed science was not wrong, there had been death on this planet for millions of years but he “reconciled” the disparity in his mind by offering an illogical and deeply flawed viewpoint.

I agree with all of them that this is the official doctrine as it is taught in the standard works as well as by prophets from Joseph Smith to Joseph Fielding Smith (see the 1972 Priesthood lesson manual) also in seminary, institute, Sunday School, etc. and First presidency statements.

I also agree with established science on the matter, that this planet is over 4 billion years old and death has occurred for most of that time.

Therefore, I conclude that the Book of Mormon is wrong regarding this doctrine, as are the prophets who also advocated it (including Joseph Fielding Smith), and recent General

Authorities, namely Elders Hiram and Lund not to mention Elder Russell M. Nelson in a conference talk.

This is but one example of statements made in the Book of Mormon that are untrue. The book cannot, therefore, be true and your 'sudden death' proposition must mean it is a fraud. It is a work compiled by Joseph Smith and possibly other 19<sup>th</sup> century authors containing the erroneous views of 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans.



<http://www.mormonthink.com/tomphillips.htm>

# MY RESPONSE TO ELDER HOLLAND'S REPLY

## PREFACE

Elder Holland sent me an email in response to my letter but, being the bully and coward that he is, the following prohibition notice was appended to the email:

**NOTICE:** This email message is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply email and destroy all copies of the original message.

This may, however, be a “corporate” notice and not intended by Elder Holland. If so, my apologies for calling him a coward and a bully. It is only his church that is a coward and bully.

I shall, however, publish my response to him and permit him and his church to copy and forward it as often as they like provided it is copied in its entirety and is in no way misrepresented nor used to misrepresent me. In my response I will have to, necessarily, quote from his email but I will do my utmost to protect private information such as the references he makes to my wife and his wife (including stating her whereabouts at a certain time – shame on you Jeff).



## Jeffrey R. Holland's response and my reply:



Dear Jeff,

You absolutely amazed me with your email. You are a highly educated, articulate and well-read person with a PhD from Yale. Yet, you do not address one issue in my letter. Instead, you sent me a mindless rant. I was caught off guard. No way could I have imagined such a response. I expected you to justify your claims (such as Joseph Smith gave his life because he was not willing to deny the Book of Mormon) and refute the facts I put to you as evidence the Book of Mormon was not true.

I assumed you would honor your “sudden death” challenge that you have so often used. That it, the Book of Mormon, is either true or it is a fraud, there is no middle way. I would put it another way, it is either the word of God, as claimed by you, or it is a work of fiction put together by an author or authors in the nineteenth century. I believe my letter explains why I consider it to be the latter. Where is your refutation of such an opinion and justification for public statements you have made concerning its truthfulness? If you could not do this I expected a kindly brush off type of reply, not a rant full of logical fallacies, ad hominem attacks and insinuations.

I tried to defend your reputation when people were calling you a “dodo” and a liar. No, he’s not like that, the Elder Holland I knew, loved and respected. Well, it seems you have proven me wrong in that respect. I recently watched your interview with Mr. Sweeney for a BBC program entitled, “The Mormon Candidate” and I could not believe your attempts at lying. Jeff, you are supposed to be an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why lie to a reporter? Oh, I forgot, that is perfectly acceptable since Gordon B. Hinckley did it with Larry King, Mike Wallace, etc.

Why not just answer my specific questions? I am sure, with your vast knowledge and experience, it would have taken less time than your mindless rant against me. You could have even handed it over to a BYU professor or another of your minions to draft a reply. You need only have taken the time to sign (even that could have been done by a signature machine or, in fact an email response could have been sent under your name without you even seeing it). That would have saved you time and the so called pain I have inflicted upon you. Get over it, If I have caused

you pain by reminding you the church is not true, that is not my fault. The cause of your pain lies with you and the Church.

As an apostle where is your 'Christlike' love? You have [an] opportunity of going after the 'lost sheep' yet you choose to criticize and say "I don't care what you do." How Christian of you. In your BBC interview you offered to sit down with a group of ex-Mormons to discuss their issues. Yet, when someone wrote to you and offered for a group to come and meet with you at any time and venue convenient for yourself, you did not reply. If you had replied appropriately to my letter thousands of ex-Mormons may have been reclaimed by the church. Instead, you have proven to them most conclusively that the Church is not true and you must be aware of that or you would not be feeling the pain. Some have observed you as having a 'meltdown.' I now understand why they should come to such an observation.

Of course, another explanation could be you are not in 'meltdown' but this is a very clever ploy by you to get the truth out without actually saying it. It's like a 'hidden parable' that only those with ears to hear can hear. Perhaps your response to me could be translated, "Tom, you are absolutely right, the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction. However, I cannot say that because of sworn allegiance to my 'Brethren' and all that I will lose. I have never seen Christ yet I always thought an apostle would. My ranting, crying, pounding the podium, prevarication with journalists etc. is my way of getting the message out subliminally. Of course, it's false but I cannot state that."



## NOW – TO RESPOND TO YOUR EMAIL

You asked me three specific questions and, although I have no obligation to reply because none of those questions have anything to do with claims I have made in public, I will respond. Unlike you, of whom I have asked specific questions pertaining to your published statements which you refuse to answer. **Quotes from your email are in blue to my reply or comments thereon.**



*Elder Holland:*

“Tom, I love you but you absolutely break my heart. I have seldom met anyone during my years in England – unless it was your son Alan – in whom I saw greater potential.

. . . You have a remarkable family. And that, of course, only adds to the immense pain I feel.”

Why do you feel pain and how have I caused that pain? I wrote respectfully to you and asked questions based on factual information. Why should that cause you pain?



*Elder Holland:*

“Oh, my! Tom, I weep over you and where you now find yourself. Don’t you realize that I have been reading stuff like you sent since I was 25 years old? But, I am sad to say, never in all those years with such disappointment.”

Firstly some of the “stuff” I sent you was not available when you were 25 years old e.g. DNA studies confirming origins of American Indians, Book of Abraham papyri (1967 I believe) etc. Also, if you figured out the answers when you were 25 (you are now 70+) it should be easy for you to answer my questions, if there were any credible answers. So, why weep over me? If I am wrong in my facts or conclusions, show me in a loving way. Don’t refuse to address the issues and scold me for causing you pain. I suggest your pain comes from a lifetime of trying to be a valiant defender of that which indefensible.



*Elder Holland:*

“Tom, the Book of Mormon is true. It was delivered by and translated through the gift and power of God.”

All I asked was how such a book, being the word of God, could contain so many falsities which you refuse to answer.

*Elder Holland:*

“Alongside this statement you can post on the bulletin board my General Conference talk on the subject. Now, may I ask you just a few questions?”

Yes, I will reply even though you refuse to reply to my questions.



*Elder Holland:*

“(1) Have you ever had a spiritual experience in your entire life?”

You know perfectly well I have had thousands of so called spiritual experiences. In my opinion they are equal to any of those that Joseph Smith had.



*Elder Holland:*

“Are you having any in recent days, or weeks, or months?”

Every day of my life (perhaps even every waking hour) I experience joy in the wonders and beauty of this planet and those people I love. By the way, weeping during a public address is not a “spiritual experience” it is an emotional experience.



*Elder Holland:*

“No discussion of the Book of Mormon or the Church or the Gospel of Jesus Christ has any ultimate meaning at all without that experience.”

Logical fallacy Dr. Holland? As well as being untrue.

*Elder Holland:*

“(2) How does your family feel about your views?”

What views? I have merely stated factual information from either church or school sources. They are not my views but those of so called prophets, seers and revelators and academic experts in specific disciplines. My family’s response is exactly the same as yours. They refuse to answer or discuss the issues and hurl personal insults against me. My ‘sweet angel’ of a wife, as you call her, has repeatedly said it would have been better for her if I had died while a faithful member of the church rather than live to ‘lose my faith.’ My son Alan is the only one who eventually made known his ‘views’ regarding some of my statements. He agreed there were errors in the Book of Mormon such as the doctrine that there was no death on this planet prior to 6,000 years ago; that Joseph Smith was wrong (i.e. not commanded by God) to have more than one wife; that the church is wrong to campaign against same sex marriage (this was during the California proposition 8 fiasco); however, he still believes Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ in a grove of trees! Alan, as you know, is a stake president and has views (the first three of the four I mentioned) that are in direct opposition to the church. Of course, from the pulpit he will toe the party line.



*Elder Holland:*

“Are those views helping them?”

My views, if I were permitted to explain them, would help my family considerably and stop [my] grandchildren [from] being brainwashed into believing something which “you know ain’t so,” in the words of Samuel Clemens / Mark Twain with whom you are familiar through your post graduate work. My views would help them be more compassionate of others, less judgmental and use their time to genuinely help others instead of promoting the aims of a church based on a fictional book. By contrast, by following and adopting the views of your church they ought to be (but fortunately are not) racist, homophobic, misogynistic, hate the Catholic Church (whore of the Earth per Book of Mormon), hate Protestant Churches ((the Lord told Joseph Smith their creeds were an abomination to Him per JS History), anti- Semitic (Mormons teach that the inhabitants of this earth and

particularly the Jews are the only people who would have killed the Son of God). I could specify many other groups the Church is intolerant toward despite your protestations to the contrary. Even in my own case your views are nasty and intolerant. According to Church literature if someone like me who, as you know, has received the Second Anointing (made my exaltation basically unconditional), denies the Holy Ghost (interpreted as denying the Church is true) they will be sons of perdition, cast out into outer darkness with Satan and his followers. Whereas, a man such as Adolf Hitler can inherit the Telestial Kingdom, still a kingdom of glory. So a man who kills 6 million Jews and countless others gets a better reward in the next life than I do according to Mormon theology (if there is such a thing). Does that sound like a just, loving God to you? No wonder there is shunning in the Mormon Church.



*Elder Holland:*

“Are people happier, prospering more, doing better following your lead?”

Yes, those that do are much happier and grateful to me for whatever small measure of help I have been to them. If you are referring to my family, however, well I have already told you that they have refused to take my lead in trying to establish what is true. Truth obviously means nothing to a true, devout Mormon!



*Elder Holland:*

“(3) Who are you trying to convince? Surely not me. Is it yourself or others?”

I am not trying to convince anyone. I merely wrote to you outlining specific information which appeared to contradict your claim/declaration that the Book of Mormon is true. You have chosen not to answer any of those evidences and resort to a personal attack on me. Who are you trying to convince? It would be easy to convince me if you had credible answers, but you don't. Are you content with convincing gullible church members who dote on your every word? Or, are you trying to convince yourself Jeff? Methinks this may be the case and would certainly explain your outbursts.

*Elder Holland:*

“You can do what you want about the Church, so do it. Stay. Leave. Hide. Run. Burn the Book of Mormon. Bury your temple covenants. Do anything you want. As the very book you reject says – truthfully – “you are free to act, and not be acted upon.”

Tom, my heart is broken as I write this. I wish I hadn’t begun.”

Why is your heart broken? If it is out of concern for me why not lovingly and kindly correct my misconceptions if there are any? If it is because I have challenged your beliefs, you need to examine them. If they are based on truth you will be able to explain that to me as I am not a “dodo.” Why do you wish you hadn’t begun? Do I not deserve a reply? Of course, you haven’t even replied to the issues in my letter merely attacked me and ranted.



*Elder Holland:*

“I was raised without the Gospel in my youth and now I have it, so I am manifestly the wrong man to talk to about whether to go or whether to stay, whether the Book of Mormon is true or whether it isn’t.”

But you are wrong. You are exactly the right man for this task. You are the one who has spoken on television, written books and articles and declared solemnly to the world that you KNOW the Book of Mormon is true. Also, from an academic point of view did you not gain a master’s degree for a dissertation on changes to the Book of Mormon? Weren’t your Yale master’s and doctorate degrees on American Studies? Are you not, as an Apostle, a special witness of Jesus Christ? You are the very man to give me credible answers. You must know the truth so why don’t you share it instead of resorting to emotion filled drivel?

I say to you, Jeff, put up or shut up. Answer the considerable and overwhelming evidence that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction or, if you can’t, stop trying to convince people it is true.

"The Book of Mormon changed my life more dramatically that any book could

change any young man of whom I know — before or since — this does not make it true."

Millions of young men have had their lives dramatically changed by reading the Qur'an, the writings of Confucius, of Marcus Aurelius, of Plato, Aristotle, "Harry Potter," the writings of Karl Marx, the writings of Mao Zedong, also translated as Mao Tse-tung and thousands of other books.

I know a couple of Christian evangelists who were both alcoholics and had their lives transformed by the Bible. They now spend all their time spreading their Christian beliefs. They have been told by the Holy Ghost the Book of Mormon is not from God and Mormons are not Christian. They could claim the truthfulness of their beliefs by your same argument. A book changed their lives that no other book can (including the Book of Mormon).

"It was first and foremost the Book of Mormon that taught me that Jesus is the Christ and filled my soul with lightning." Again, I ask you how can a book so full of falsities teach you that? You should have addressed my issues but, obviously, you cannot. I am also aware of very many people who claim their "soul has been filled with lightning" or similar experiences and they have never read the Book of Mormon or have discarded it as false.

Consider this, by your own assertions if the Book of Mormon is not true then the Church is not true. However, if the Book of Mormon is true, it does not follow that your church is true. There is the Community of Christ and 50 or more "Mormon" churches who claim the divinity of the Book of Mormon and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. In fact, those others appear to follow more closely the teachings of the Book of Mormon and those of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and John Taylor. So which would be the true Mormon Church if the Book of Mormon were shown to be true? Those who say Joseph Smith went astray in his polygamy (The Community of Christ) or those who maintain Wilford Woodruff went astray in trying to stop polygamy (the FLDS etc.)? Indeed, it would appear that Warren Jeffs is more of a prophet like Joseph Smith than Thomas S. Monson is.

*Elder Holland:*

“So do what you want, Tom, but don’t embarrass yourself by asking about metallurgy or archeology or horses. The discussion about the power and promise of the Book of Mormon went light years beyond that a long time ago.”

Again you amaze me with such a statement. When and how precisely did this go “light years beyond science and history?” Jeff, you are either deliberately holding back information vital for mankind to understand the true nature of this planet and the universe or you are blowing smoke in the air. Which is it? Do you have knowledge our scientists would die for or are you mad?



*Elder Holland:*

“I love you and pray God you will be open to some spiritual indication of what is at stake here.”

I see no evidence in your email or in your works that you love me. You have refused to help and tried to blame me for some mysterious pain you feel, and you deride me. Which god will you pray to? The one depicted in a facsimile in the Book of Abraham who Joseph Smith said was God sitting on His throne. The figure has an erect penis which is rather a disturbing image of someone you pray to. It is, of course, quite normal if you understand the truth about the image, that it is a fictitious Egyptian fertility god. Don’t bother Jeff, I desire no supplication to such a being.



*Elder Holland:*

“I do love you and I will pray through this very night for you, more so than I will for the man who has cancer whom I now leave to bless. Yours is the more serious circumstance.”

How offensive! You are saying I am in a worse condition than a man dying of cancer. Have you gone completely mad? How can you say, let alone think, such a

thing? I am so sorry for that man, for anyone suffering a terminal illness, particularly a painful one. I have witnessed many friends and family going through such agony. How cruel and offensive of you to say such a thing! I am in remarkably good health and associate with friends who love me. I consider myself very blessed or fortunate and would hate to have any illness let alone a terminal one which, I understand, could happen to any of us. How awful of you, I cannot believe you capable of such a thought. You certainly are not the man I considered you to be and, in no way, do you demonstrate the compassion you profess that Jesus Christ taught.



*Elder Holland:*

**“With immense sorrow but unfailing love, Jeff”**

Your sorrow is self-inflicted. I have done nothing except tell the truth. That should not cause you sorrow. The truth should not be your enemy. As for your unfailing love — where is it? You have failed to give me a response, to justify your extraordinary claims and have tried to belittle me with your ravings. How is that ‘unfailing love?’

Jeff, please do not reply to this email unless you have anything of true substance to say. You will be wasting time for both of us. As I said earlier, either put up or shut up. I would like you to be man enough to substantiate that which you claim to be true or stop being a part of the brainwashing of innocent children such as my grandchildren.

Sorry, but unless you are man enough to do this I have lost all respect for you. If I can ever help you to seek truth and understanding I am willing to take whatever time you require. I mean this in all sincerity,

Tom



<http://www.mormonthink.com/tomphillips.htm>

NOTE: Spelling changes were made to the words: amour, apologise, colour, criticise, honour, judgemental, programme, recognised