

GLASS HOUSES: A Response to Critics of LDS History

Before you throw stones at our history, examine the foundation YOUR church is built on

I. POLYGAMY — "BUT THE LDS CHURCH..."

Critics love to point to 19th-century LDS polygamy. Fair enough. Let's talk about it.

Biblical Polygamy by Righteous Men

Abraham: 2 wives (Sarah, Hagar) + concubines (Gen 16:1-3, 25:6). Called "friend of God" (James 2:23).

Jacob: 4 wives (Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, Zilpah). Father of 12 tribes. God renamed him "Israel".

Moses: 2 wives (Zipporah, Cushite woman). Most humble man on earth (Num 12:3).

David: Multiple wives. "A man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14). God GAVE him his wives (2 Sam 12:8).

Solomon: 700 wives, 300 concubines. God appeared to him twice (1 Kings 3:5, 9:2). His sin was foreign wives turning him to idols—not polygamy itself.

The Point: Polygamy was practiced by patriarchs whom God blessed. It was regulated in Law of Moses (Deut 21:15-17), not condemned.

LDS Polygamy: The Biblical Pattern

- **Commanded by revelation** (D&C 132)
- **Specific time period** (1840s-1890)
- **Discontinued by revelation** (Official Declaration 1, 1890)

Biblical Pattern: God's commandments change according to His purposes—Abraham/Isaac sacrifice stopped, circumcision no longer required (Gal 5:2-6), dietary laws fulfilled (Mark 7:19). **God's commands adapt to His purposes.**

II. PRIESTHOOD BAN (1852-1978)

LDS Church denied Black men priesthood for 126 years. Critics call this racism. Let's talk about YOUR church's history with race.

1. Catholic Church & Slavery

Dum Diversas (1452) — Pope Nicholas V:

Authorized Portugal to "invade, capture, and reduce [pagans] persons to perpetual slavery."

Romanus Pontifex (1455) — Pope Nicholas V:

Granted Portugal right to enslave "Saracens, pagans, and enemies of Christ" in perpetuity.

These papal bulls provided the theological foundation for Atlantic slave trade.

Catholic Church Owned Slaves:

- Jesuits in Maryland owned slaves on plantations
- Georgetown University built on money from sale of **272 enslaved people** owned by Jesuits (1838)
- Catholic orders in Latin America/Caribbean held slaves for centuries

Sources: NPR "Jesuits Promise \$100M"; NYT "272 Slaves Sold to Save Georgetown"

2. Southern Baptist Convention

Founded in 1845 to defend slavery. Split from Northern Baptists who refused to appoint slaveholders as missionaries.

Biblical defenses: Richard Furman's 1822 "biblical defense" became guide for Baptist responses. Theologians argued slavery was "God-ordained institution."

4 founding faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1859) each owned slaves and publicly defended slavery as "righteous."

20th Century: SBC supported racial segregation, defended white supremacy, denounced interracial marriage as "abomination."

SBC didn't renounce slavery support until 1995—117 years AFTER LDS lifted priesthood ban.

3. Martin Luther's Anti-Semitism

"On the Jews and Their Lies" (1543): 65,000-word treatise calling for persecution of Jews.

Luther's recommendations:

- Set fire to synagogues and schools
- Destroy prayer books
- Burn Jewish homes
- Confiscate property and money
- Draft Jews into forced labor
- Expel Jews forever

"These poisonous envenomed worms should be drafted into forced labor or expelled forever."

Nazi Connection: Nazi Party used Luther's writings to justify Holocaust. Copies seen at rallies. Nuremberg presented first edition to Julius Streicher (1937). Lutheran churches didn't denounce Luther's anti-Semitism until 1980s—**400+ years later.**

4. John Calvin's Geneva

Calvin's "Reign of Terror" (1541-1564):

- 58 people executed for religious offenses
- 76 people exiled
- Executions included burning heretics at stake

Michael Servetus (1553): Denied Trinity. Calvin had him arrested, tried, and burned at stake. Calvin defended execution for religious disagreement.

The Comparison

LDS Church	Catholic/Protestant
Priesthood restriction: 126 years	Catholic slavery: 400+ years
No one enslaved, tortured, or killed	Millions enslaved, tortured, killed
Lifted by revelation 1978	SBC apologized 1995 (117 years later)
Never claimed racial inferiority as doctrine	Bible used to defend slavery & white supremacy

III. THE INQUISITION — TORTURE & EXECUTION

Catholic Inquisition: 12th-19th centuries. System of church courts to root out heresy.

Death Toll

Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834):

- Official executions: 3,000-10,000 burned at stake
- Prison deaths (torture/maltreatment): 100,000-125,000
- Total victims: 32,000-150,000+ over 350 years

Methods of Torture: Water torture (waterboarding), the rack (stretching limbs until dislocated), strappado (suspended by wrists with weights on feet), burning at stake (alive).

Did LDS Church ever torture or execute anyone for religious beliefs? NO.

IV. THE CRUSADES — RELIGIOUS WAR

Catholic Church military campaigns (1095-1291) to reclaim Holy Land. Pope promised indulgences to fighters.

Death toll: 1-3 million people

Massacre of Jerusalem (1099)

When Crusaders captured Jerusalem, they **slaughtered tens of thousands of Muslims and Jews**—men, women, children.

"The massacre has attained particular notoriety, as a juxtaposition of extreme violence and anguished faith." Crusaders waded through streets ankle-deep in blood.

Did LDS Church ever launch holy wars that killed millions? NO.

V. PROTESTANT VIOLENCE

Luther & Execution of Anabaptists

1536: Melancthon drafted memorandum demanding death for Anabaptists, Luther signed it.

Charges: Blasphemy (rejected Apostles' Creed), Sedition (refused military service).

Thousands executed by Lutherans/Zwinglians—beheading or drowning (cruel irony for those who baptized by immersion).

Diet of Speyer (1529)

Catholics and Lutherans agreed: Anabaptists should be executed. Persecution "surpassed in severity the persecution of early Christians by pagan Rome."

Thirty Years' War (1618-1648)

Catholics vs. Protestants. Death toll: 4.5-8 million people (some estimates 12 million). Parts of Germany lost over 50% of population.

Did LDS Church ever execute fellow Christians for doctrinal disagreements? NO.
Did LDS Church ever launch religious wars that killed millions? NO.

VI. SALE OF INDULGENCES — BUYING SALVATION

Catholic Church taught purchasing **indulgences** could reduce time in purgatory, absolve sins, even release dead relatives from purgatory. Massive money-making scheme.

Simony: Practice of buying/selling church offices and spiritual privileges. Corruption extended from lowest clergy to papacy.

Martin Luther's 95 Theses (1517) directly challenged sale of indulgences. By time Council of Trent addressed abuses (1545-1563), Reformation had already split Church.

Did LDS Church ever sell salvation? NO. LDS teaches salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not paying money.

VII. CHILD ABUSE COVER-UPS (MODERN)

One of most horrific scandals in modern church history.

Catholic Church Scope

- **Over 10,000 complaints against 4,000+ priests** (1950-2002, US alone)
- **2018 Pennsylvania grand jury: 300+ priests, 1,000+ children**, widespread systematic cover-up
- Allegations spread globally: Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Brazil, Ireland

Boston Scandal (2002)

Boston Globe Spotlight investigation exposed:

- Systematic cover-up of abuse of **nearly 1,000 children** over 5 decades
- Cardinal Bernard Law resigned after documents revealed he shifted predator priests parish to parish

Financial Cost

Between 2004-2023, Catholic Church in US spent more than \$5 BILLION on sexual abuse cases.

Did LDS Church have systemic, decades-long cover-up? NO.
Has LDS Church paid \$5 billion in settlements? NO.

LDS Statistics Tell Different Story

LDS-affiliated Boy Scout troops: abuse rates 75% LOWER than average.

"Another way to say this: LDS troops experienced 1/4th the abuse that would be expected statistically."

—Public Square Magazine

Comparison to Schools: "Physical sexual abuse of students in schools is likely **more than 100 times the abuse by priests.**" —Charol Shakeshaft, U.S. Dept of Education study

VIII. CATHOLIC CHURCH & THE NAZIS

The 1933 Concordat

Vatican signed treaty (Reichskonkordat) with Nazi Germany. Hitler treated it as international approval of Nazi regime.

Pope Pius XII's Silence

Throughout WWII, Pius XII never explicitly condemned Holocaust or Nazi atrocities against Jews. **Sept 1942:** Assistant (future Pope Paul VI) received report of "incredible butchery" of Jews in Warsaw. **No explicit papal reference to Jewish suffering throughout war years, nor clear condemnation of Nazism.**

The fact remains: Head of Catholic Church did not publicly condemn systematic murder of 6 million Jews.

Did LDS Church sign treaties with fascist regimes or stay silent during genocide? NO.

IX. MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE

Sept 7-11, 1857: ~120 members of Baker-Fancher wagon train killed by Mormon settlers and Paiute allies. Horrific tragedy. LDS Church expressed "profound regret" (2007).

Context: Decades of Violent Persecution

Prior to Sept 1857, Mormons had MORE OFTEN been VICTIMS of violence. Saints violently driven from Ohio, Missouri, Illinois. Many lost possessions/land. Some killed during persecutions. —PBS

Missouri Executive Order 44 (1838): Gov. Boggs: "Mormons must be treated as enemies and exterminated or driven from state." Order legalized killing Mormons. Not rescinded until **1976–138 years later.**

Haun's Mill Massacre (Oct 30, 1838): Missouri militia killed 17 people including children. 10-year-old shot while hiding.

Joseph & Hyrum Smith (June 27, 1844): Murdered by mob while in jail under governor's protection. Over 100 men stormed jail, shot them to death.

The Saints Were Expelled: After Joseph's murder, Brigham Young led Saints 1,300 miles across wilderness to Rocky Mountains to escape persecution.

Utah War (1857)

Spring 1857: President Buchanan declared Utah Territory in "rebellion," sent **20% of entire U.S. Army** westward. "For Mormons, this raised specter of past 'extermination orders'... Young's followers prepared for war." —Wikipedia
Saints believed they were about to be exterminated—again.

Parley P. Pratt Murder (May 1857): Apostle shot dead in Arkansas by estranged husband. Many Mormons held Arkansas people collectively responsible. Baker-Fancher train—**from Arkansas**—arrived just months later during height of war hysteria.

What Actually Happened

Local LDS leaders in Southern Utah—not Brigham Young—made decision to attack. Brigham Young sent letter telling leaders to "not meddle" and allow emigrants to pass in peace—but express rider arrived **2 days AFTER massacre.**

"Historical evidence shows Brigham Young did not know about massacre in advance and did not order it." —FAIR
Historians: "Consensus that Young played role in provoking massacre, at least unwittingly, and in concealing evidence. Historians debate whether Young knew ahead of time."

Justice Was Served

John D. Lee (local leader responsible) executed by firing squad March 23, 1877. LDS Church excommunicated those responsible and cooperated with legal authorities.

Church's Official Apology (2007)

"The gospel of Jesus Christ abhors cold-blooded killing. What was done here by members of our Church represents a terrible and inexcusable departure from Christian teaching. We express profound regret." —Apostle Henry B. Eyring

The Comparison

Mountain Meadows (1857)	Catholic/Protestant History
120 killed by local militia	Inquisition: thousands over 700+ years
NOT ordered by Church leadership	Ordered/operated by hierarchy
Context: decades of persecution, extermination orders	Offensive persecution of heretics
Perpetrators excommunicated/executed	Crusades: 1-3 million killed, ordered by Popes
Church formally apologized 2007	No formal apology for Inquisition/Crusades

X. SLAVERY — "BUT BRIGHAM YOUNG..."

Critics forget: Joseph Smith ran for President to ABOLISH slavery.

Joseph Smith's 1844 Presidential Campaign

Joseph Smith ran for President in 1844—17 years BEFORE Civil War—on platform to ABOLISH slavery.
His Plan: Compensated Emancipation — Abolition by 1850 through compensated emancipation funded by sale of public lands.
| "Break down slavery... remove shackles from poor black man."

Compare to Southern Baptists

LDS Church	Southern Baptists
Joseph Smith campaigned to END slavery (1844)	SBC founded to DEFEND slavery (1845)
Never owned slaves as institution	Used Bible to claim slavery "God-ordained"
Lifted priesthood restriction 1978	Supported segregation until 1995

Joseph Smith was an abolitionist. Southern Baptist Convention was founded by slaveholders.

CONCLUSION: GLASS HOUSES

If you're Catholic, your church:

- Operated Inquisition (torture/execution)
- Launched Crusades (1-3 million killed)
- Endorsed slavery for centuries (papal bulls)
- Sold indulgences (salvation for cash)
- Covered up child abuse (\$5+ billion settlements)
- Signed treaty with Nazi Germany, never condemned Holocaust

If you're Protestant, your church:

- Founded by men with no divine authority
- Executed thousands of Anabaptists
- Luther wrote violently anti-Semitic treatise used by Nazis
- Calvin burned heretics at stake
- Southern Baptists founded to defend slavery, supported segregation until 1995
- Religious wars killed 4.5-8 million (Thirty Years' War)

If you're LDS, your church:

- Practiced polygamy 50 years (1840s-1890) under divine command, following biblical pattern
- Restricted priesthood 126 years (1852-1978), lifted by revelation
- Joseph Smith ran to ABOLISH slavery (1844)
- Mountain Meadows (120 killed) in context of violent persecution—perpetrators excommunicated, Church apologized
- 75% LOWER abuse rates than average
- **Never enslaved, tortured, executed for beliefs, launched religious wars, sold salvation, or covered up systemic abuse**

The Question

When you criticize the LDS Church for polygamy or priesthood restriction, ask yourself:

IS THIS REALLY WHERE YOUR CHURCH CAME FROM?

Crusades? Inquisitions? Slavery? Holocaust silence? Child abuse cover-ups? Executing Anabaptists? Burning heretics?

And you want to talk about OUR history?

The LDS Perspective: Restoration, Not Reformation

LDS Church claims to be a **restoration**, not reformation. We don't descend from Catholic/Protestant traditions. We claim apostolic authority was lost after apostles' death, and Joseph Smith restored it through divine ordination by Peter, James, and John.

We don't carry baggage of Crusades, Inquisition, slave trade, or religious wars —because we're not part of that lineage.

We're a new dispensation, a restoration of Christ's original Church, with authority, doctrines, and ordinances lost during Great Apostasy.

Sources: Wikipedia (Inquisition, Crusades, Dum Diversas, Pope Pius XII, Mountain Meadows); History.com (Inquisition, Thirty Years' War); NPR (Jesuits/\$100M, SBC Slavery); NYT (272 Slaves/Georgetown); Britannica (Catholic abuse); PBS (Mountain Meadows); Public Square Magazine (LDS abuse statistics); Religious Studies Center BYU (Civil War); FAIR (Brigham Young/MM); Smithsonian (Pius XII); Jewish Virtual Library (Luther); SBTS Report (Slavery); Wikipedia (Joseph Smith 1844 campaign, SBC)