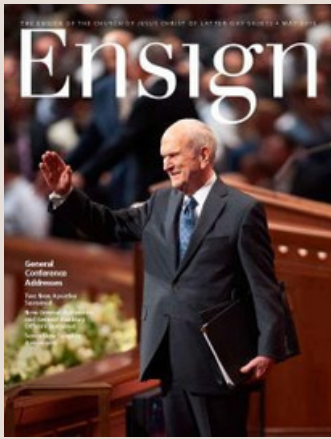# How to Recognize Logical Fallacies, Cognitive Distortions, and Philosophical Problems Presented as Truth in LDS General Conference Talks without a Ph.D.

Awareness is Power

The General Conference Talks given by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints twist the basic purpose of critical thinking in philosophy, perfect the use of logical fallacies, and prey on cognitive distortions.

Understanding these three tactics is crucial for critical thinking and constructing strong, rational reasonings with the LDS religion and religion in general.

Throughout human history, we've always pondered questions about our origin, purpose, and the existence of divine powers. Many of these questions remain unanswered, and some may never find a satisfactory resolution. Philosophers delve into this rich history of discussion and debate, observing how certain ideas were discarded while new ones emerged. Philosophy encourages individuals to contribute their own thoughts to this ongoing process.

In particular, the philosophy of religion explores how religions perceive Ultimate Reality. When a religion asserts itself as the sole truth, it contradicts the fundamental philosophical right to engage in open debate. The LDS church claims to welcome questions, but with the condition that you accept their predetermined answer.

Logical fallacies are errors in reasoning or flawed arguments that may seem persuasive but are not based on sound evidence, reasoning, or logic.

*An important point to be made about fallacies is that it does NOT automatically mean that someone is wrong. It means that the formulation of their argument is wrong and that we can dismiss that argument until they can present it in a way that has been argued properly.

Cognitive distortions are patterns of biased or irrational thinking that can contribute to negative emotions, behaviors, and attitudes. These distortions often involve inaccuracies in perception and interpretation of information, leading individuals to perceive reality in a distorted or dysfunctional way.

Enjoy!

Annelise

Common Logical Fallacies Employed in Religion

WHY DO RELIGIONS USE LOGICAL FALLACIES?

- Tradition and Dogma: Religions often have long-standing traditions and doctrines. Logical fallacies can be used to justify practices or beliefs based on their historical acceptance rather than their rationality.

- Faith-Based Reasoning: Many religious beliefs are based on faith, which is a personal conviction that doesn't necessarily rely on empirical evidence. In discussions, believers may use faith as a premise, which can be challenging to challenge or scrutinize using standard logical arguments.

- Emotional Appeals: Religion often involves strong emotional connections and experiences.

- Community and Identity: Belonging to a religious community can be a fundamental aspect of identity for many people. Adherents may use the bandwagon fallacy to argue that a belief is valid simply because a large number of people within the community share it.

- Inherent Complexity: Some religious concepts and doctrines may be complex or abstract. In discussions, individuals might use these complexities to obfuscate arguments or create a false sense of intellectual depth (the obscurantism fallacy).

- Fear and Pascal's Wager: Pascal's Wager is a philosophical argument that suggests it is rational to believe in God even if there is no evidence for God's existence because the potential rewards (eternal life) outweigh the risks.

- Confirmation Bias: People often seek information that confirms their existing beliefs and ignore or dismiss information that contradicts them.

The Composition Fallacy

- The Composition fallacy: The Composition fallacy involves assuming that parts or members of a whole will have the same properties as the whole.

  - Rigid Doctrine and Practices: Some religions may adhere strictly to certain doctrines and practices, refusing to adapt or change in response to new insights, changing cultural norms, or evolving ethical standards. This rigidity can lead to harm when adherence to outdated beliefs or practices goes against the well-being of the members.

  - Moral Inflexibility: If a religion maintains an inflexible moral code that does not adapt to evolving ethical understandings, it may cause harm by condemning actions or identities that are now widely accepted as morally neutral or even positive. This lack of adaptability can contribute to discrimination and stigmatization.

  - Suppressing Critical Thinking: Religions that discourage critical questioning and independent thought may contribute to harm by stifling intellectual growth and discouraging members from exploring alternative perspectives. This lack of intellectual freedom can impede personal development and hinder the pursuit of knowledge.

  - Excommunication: Some religious groups may use the consistency fallacy by enforcing strict adherence to beliefs and practices. Members who deviate or question may face social or psychological harm through measures like excommunication or shunning, leading to isolation, emotional distress, and loss of support systems.

  - Dismissing Mental Health Concerns: If a religion insists on attributing mental health issues solely to spiritual shortcomings or lack of faith, it can cause harm by discouraging members from seeking professional help. This approach neglects the importance of mental health care and may exacerbate psychological distress among believers.

  - Gender and Sexual Orientation Discrimination: Religions that adhere to rigid gender roles and discriminate against individuals based on their sexual orientation may cause harm by perpetuating inequality, fostering discrimination, and contributing to the marginalization of certain groups within the religious community.

  - Failure to Address Abuses: In cases where religious leaders or institutions are involved in harmful practices or abuses, the consistency fallacy may be employed to shield these individuals or practices from scrutiny. The insistence on maintaining the appearance of consistency can prevent the acknowledgment and resolution of harmful behaviors.

The Appeal to Emotion Fallacy

- The Appeal to Emotion fallacy: Appeal to emotions is a rhetorical strategy that manipulates emotions rather than presenting a logical argument. The LDS Church employs this fallacy in various ways to connect with individuals emotionally and foster belief.

  - Testimonials and Personal Stories: Sharing personal stories of individuals who have had transformative or emotional experiences within the LDS Church. These stories can evoke empathy and emotional connection.

  - Music and Rituals: Using music, hymns, and rituals during worship services or events to create a sense of emotional unity and transcendence. Emotional responses to music and rituals can influence belief.

  - Visual Imagery: Utilizing visual elements in religious ceremonies, artwork, or promotional materials to evoke specific emotions associated with divine connection, love, or spiritual fulfillment.

  - Appeal to Hope and Salvation: Focusing on the promise of hope, salvation, and eternal life, which can be deeply emotional and reassuring for believers, especially in the face of existential questions or life challenges.

  - Crisis Narratives:Presenting narratives that depict a world in crisis or moral decline and offering the LDS Church as a source of solace, community, and moral guidance. This taps into fear and the desire for security.

  - Family and Community Emphasis: Highlighting the importance of family and community within the LDS Church, appealing to the emotions associated with love, support, and a sense of belonging.

  - Elevation of Spiritual Experiences: Emphasizing extraordinary or transcendent spiritual experiences that evoke strong emotions, portraying them as evidence of divine presence and confirmation of the truthfulness of the LDS Church.

The Obscurantism Fallacy

- Obscurantism Fallacy: Religions may use the obscurantism fallacy as a rhetorical strategy to present their doctrines, beliefs, or practices in a way that seems profound or mysterious.

  - Complex Theology: Religions often involve complex theological concepts, and some religious authorities may use intricate language or abstract ideas to discuss these concepts. This complexity can make it challenging for followers to question or fully understand the teachings, creating an environment where the authority's interpretation is accepted without much scrutiny.

  - Sacred Language: The use of sacred or archaic language that is not commonly understood by the average follower can contribute to the obscurantism fallacy. This may involve using terminology that carries deep religious significance but lacks clarity for those not well-versed in the specific religious tradition.

  - Mystical Explanations: Religions sometimes explain fundamental aspects of existence or divine nature in mystical or mysterious terms. This can make it difficult for followers to challenge or critically evaluate these explanations, as they may be perceived as transcending ordinary human understanding.

  - Symbolism and Allegory: Religions often rely on symbolism and allegory to convey spiritual truths. While symbolism can be a powerful tool for conveying meaning, it can also be misused to obfuscate or deflect scrutiny by relying on interpretations that are not easily challenged.

  - Religious Authority: Some religious leaders or institutions may present themselves as the sole interpreters of divine truths. They can discourage followers from questioning or seeking alternative perspectives by claiming special access to hidden or esoteric knowledge.

The Appeal to Faith Fallacy

- Appeal to Faith Fallacy: Religions use this as an abandonment of reason in an argument and a call to faith, usually when reason clearly leads to disproving the conclusion of an argument. Even arguments that heavily rely on reason that ultimately require faith, abandon reason.

  - Doctrine and Sacred Texts: Many religions have sacred texts or doctrines that are considered authoritative. Followers are often encouraged to accept these teachings on faith, even when they lack empirical evidence. The belief in the divine origin of these texts or doctrines is based on faith rather than verifiable evidence.

  - Mysteries and Paradoxes: Some religious traditions introduce mysteries or paradoxes that are beyond human comprehension. Followers are then asked to accept these mysteries on faith, acknowledging that they may not fully understand them in their current state of existence.

  - Divine Revelation: Claims of direct communication with the divine or revelations from a higher power are often presented as matters of faith. Prophets or religious leaders may assert that their insights are divinely inspired, and followers are asked to accept these claims without concrete evidence.

  - Faith as a Virtue: Many religious traditions emphasize faith as a virtuous quality. Believers may be encouraged to see faith as a positive attribute and a fundamental aspect of their relationship with the divine. The idea is that accepting certain beliefs on faith is a sign of trust and devotion.

  - Afterlife and Supernatural Concepts: Beliefs in an afterlife, supernatural entities, or spiritual realms are often presented as matters of faith. These concepts may be central to religious doctrines, and followers are asked to accept them based on faith rather than empirical evidence.

The Circular Reasoning Fallacy
(Begging the Question)

- Circular Reasoning (Begging the Question): Assuming the conclusion in one of the premises.

  - Appealing to Sacred Texts: Many religions consider their sacred texts as authoritative sources of truth. Circular reasoning can occur when believers use these texts to prove the truth of the religion, assuming the texts are already divinely inspired without providing external evidence. For example, "The Book of Mormon is the word of God because it says so in the Book of Mormon."

  - Reliance on Faith: Some religious doctrines emphasize the importance of faith, defining faith as a virtue. Circular reasoning can occur when believers are told to have faith because faith itself is considered virtuous, without offering independent reasons for why faith is justified. For example, "You must believe in the teachings of the religion because having faith is virtuous."

  - Divine Revelation: Religions often claim that their beliefs are revealed by a higher power. Circular reasoning can occur when believers argue that the revelation is true because it comes from a divine source, without providing evidence for the divine source's existence or reliability. For example, "The prophecy is true because it was revealed by God, and we know it's from God because it fulfills the prophecy."

  - Citing Religious Authorities: Circular reasoning may occur when religious authorities are considered infallible or inspired, and their statements are used to validate the truth of the religion. For example, "The teachings of the prophet are true because he is divinely appointed, and we know he is divinely appointed because his teachings are true."

  - Appealing to Tradition: Some religions rely on long-standing traditions and rituals. Circular reasoning can occur when believers argue that these traditions are valid because they have been followed for generations, without providing external justifications. For example, "Our religious practices are right because they have been passed down through generations, and they have been passed down through generations because they are right."

The Appeal to Authority Fallacy

- Appeal to Authority: Relying on religious texts, leaders, or traditions as unquestionable sources of truth without providing additional evidence or reasoning.

  - Religious Leaders and Figures: Many religions have prominent leaders or figures considered authoritative in matters of faith and doctrine. The fallacy occurs when believers argue that a particular belief or practice is true or valid simply because an authoritative figure within the religion supports it. For example, "This teaching is true because the religious leader says so."

  - Sacred Texts: Religious texts are often considered authoritative sources of guidance and truth. The appeal to authority fallacy can happen when believers assert the truth of a claim based solely on its inclusion in a sacred text, without providing external evidence. For example, "This principle is true because it's written in the scriptures."

  - Tradition: Religions often emphasize the importance of tradition. The fallacy occurs when believers argue that a belief or practice is valid because it has been followed for a long time or is part of the tradition, without offering independent justifications. For example, "This ritual is correct because it has been practiced for centuries."

  - Divine Revelation: Some religions claim direct communication or revelation from a divine source. The appeal to authority fallacy can occur when believers argue that a particular belief is true because it was revealed by a higher power, without providing evidence for the existence or reliability of that higher power. For example, "This doctrine is true because it was revealed by God."

  - Miracles and Supernatural Events: Religions often attribute miracles or supernatural events to divine intervention. The fallacy occurs when believers argue that a particular event or claim is true because it is associated with a miraculous occurrence, without considering alternative explanations. For example, "This event is true because it involved a miraculous intervention."

The Ad Hominem Attack Fallacy (Implicit)

- Ad Hominem Attacks: Attacking the character of individuals who question or criticize religious beliefs instead of addressing their arguments.

  - Critics and Dissenters: When faced with criticism or dissent from individuals within or outside the religious community, some adherents or representatives may resort to attacking the character of the critic rather than addressing the criticisms directly. This can involve questioning the moral character, intentions, or personal history of the critic rather than engaging with the substance of their arguments.

  - Excommunication or Disciplinary Actions: In some religious traditions, individuals expressing dissenting views or questioning established doctrines may face severe consequences such as excommunication or disciplinary actions. This can be seen as a form of ad hominem, as it focuses on isolating or punishing the person rather than engaging with the intellectual or theological aspects of their dissent.

  - Labeling as Apostates: Religions may sometimes label individuals who express dissenting views as apostates. This can be a way to dismiss their arguments by associating them with negative labels rather than engaging in a substantive discussion.

  - Personal Attacks in Apologetics: In defending religious beliefs, some apologists may resort to personal attacks against critics or individuals from different faiths. This can involve questioning the moral character or motives of those who hold opposing views rather than presenting evidence or reasoned arguments.

The Appeal to Tradition Fallacy

- Appeal to Tradition: Arguing that a belief or practice is valid or true simply because it has been accepted for a long time within a particular religious tradition.

  - Doctrinal Justification: Some religious doctrines and practices are justified by appealing to their longstanding presence within the tradition. Adherents may argue that the beliefs or rituals have been passed down through generations, implying that their antiquity makes them inherently true or valid.

  - Resistance to Change: Religions often resist changes to established doctrines or practices by emphasizing their historical continuity. The argument may be framed as, "We've always done it this way, and it has served us well," implying that any deviation from tradition is unwarranted or even dangerous.

  - Cultural Identity: Appeals to tradition are sometimes used to reinforce the cultural identity of a religious community. The argument might suggest that maintaining traditional practices is essential for preserving the unique identity and heritage of the faith.

  - Scriptural Authority: Religious texts and scriptures are often considered authoritative, and adherents may use the appeal to tradition by asserting that certain beliefs or practices have a historical basis in these sacred texts. The mere fact that something is mentioned in ancient scriptures is presented as evidence of its validity.

  - Resistance to Critique: When faced with criticism or challenges, religious adherents may invoke the appeal to tradition as a way of dismissing alternative viewpoints. The argument may be framed as, "Our beliefs have stood the test of time; they don't need to be reevaluated or questioned."

The False Dichotomy Fallacy (false dilemma or black-and-white thinking)

- False Dichotomy: Presenting a situation as if there are only two possible outcomes when, in reality, there are more options. For instance, framing the choice as either believing in a specific doctrine or rejecting faith altogether

  - Salvation or Damnation: Some religious teachings frame the choices for individuals as binary—either accepting a specific set of beliefs and practices leading to salvation or rejecting them and facing damnation. This oversimplification ignores the diversity of beliefs and ethical stances that individuals might hold.

  - Believer or Non-Believer: Religious discourse may present the false dichotomy that individuals must either embrace the entire set of religious doctrines or reject them altogether. This oversimplification disregards the spectrum of beliefs and doubts that people may have, promoting an all-or-nothing perspective.

  - Heaven or Hell: The concept of an afterlife is often presented in binary terms, with individuals believed to either go to heaven or hell based on their adherence to specific religious tenets. This oversimplification dismisses the myriad ethical considerations and individual circumstances that could influence a person's fate and can limit individuals' exploration of diverse spiritual or philosophical paths..

  - Faith or Atheism: Some religious discussions create a false dichotomy between having faith in a specific religious tradition and complete atheism. This oversimplification ignores the diverse range of beliefs, including agnosticism and various spiritual perspectives that exist between the extremes.

  - Divine Command or Moral Relativism: Religions may present the false dichotomy that morality is either based on divine commandments or is entirely subjective and relativistic. This oversimplification overlooks the rich history of ethical philosophy and the exploration of moral principles beyond religious frameworks.

  - Believing in One True Faith: Some religious traditions claim to be the one true path to the divine, presenting a false dichotomy between their exclusivist beliefs and the rejection of those beliefs. This oversimplification dismisses the diversity of religious and spiritual traditions worldwide.

The Ethical Fallacy

- Ethical Fallacies: The most common ethical fallacies rely on twisted judgment, appealing fallacies, and juggled language. They can spin the most questionable behaviors into ethical ideals.

  - Appeal to Authority: Religions may assert that certain actions are ethical because they are sanctioned or suggested by religious authorities, such as clergy or sacred texts.

  - Appeal to Tradition: Religions often rely on traditions and longstanding practices as a basis for ethical behavior, arguing that if something has been accepted for a long time, it is morally acceptable.

  - Argument from Silence: Similar to the third point in your list, religions might argue that if an ethical concept, term, or act is not explicitly mentioned in their religious texts, it is not unethical.

  - Legalism: Religions may argue that actions are ethical as long as they don't violate any religious laws or commandments, regardless of whether they cause harm or are morally questionable.

  - Deflection and Denial: Religions, like individuals, may use strategies to deflect from unethical behavior, such as downplaying mistakes, using passive voice, or redirecting attention to other positive actions.

  - Relativism: Religions might argue that certain actions are ethical if other religious groups or individuals engage in similar behavior, justifying their actions based on perceived commonality.

  - Intent-Based Justification: Religions may emphasize the intention behind an action, asserting that if the intention is not to harm, the act is not unethical, regardless of the actual consequences.

  - Victim-Blaming: Religions might engage in victim-blaming by suggesting that individuals who are harmed by certain actions somehow deserved it or brought it upon themselves.

  - Appeal to Consequences: Religions may argue that certain actions are ethical because they lead to positive outcomes, such as increased income, more followers, or societal prestige.

The Appeal to Ignorance Fallacy

- Appeal to Ignorance: Arguing that a claim is true because it has not been proven false or vice versa. For example, asserting the existence of God because no one has proven otherwise.

  - Existence of God: Some religious arguments claim that because the existence of God cannot be disproven, it is reasonable to believe in God. This is an appeal to ignorance, as the lack of evidence against God's existence is presented as evidence for God's existence.

  - Miracles: Religions often point to events or occurrences as miraculous or divine interventions, arguing that since there is no other explanation, it must be the work of a higher power. This exploits the lack of alternative explanations as evidence for the truth of the religious narrative.

  - Afterlife: Claims about an afterlife or specific metaphysical realms are often supported by arguing that since no one has disproven their existence, they should be considered real. This disregards the lack of evidence in favor of the claim.

  - Unexplained Phenomena: Religions may attribute unexplained or mysterious phenomena to divine or supernatural causes, asserting that because there is no other explanation, it must be the result of divine intervention. This is an appeal to ignorance as it assumes the lack of a natural explanation proves a supernatural one.

  - Creationism: Some religious beliefs, such as young Earth creationism, rely on the argument that since certain aspects of evolution are not fully understood or explained, the biblical account of creation must be true. This ignores the vast body of evidence supporting evolutionary theory.

  - Prophecies: Religions often claim the fulfillment of prophecies as evidence of divine foresight, asserting that because the prophecies came true, the religious narrative must be true. This overlooks alternative explanations for the fulfillment of prophecies.

The Post Hoc Reasoning Fallacy

- Post Hoc Reasoning: Assuming that because one event follows another, the first event caused the second. This can be seen when believers attribute positive outcomes to prayers or rituals without considering alternative explanations.

  - Prayer and Outcome: Some believers might claim that after praying for a specific outcome, the desired result occurred. Therefore, they conclude that the prayer caused the outcome. This oversimplification ignores other possible factors contributing to the result.

  - Rituals and Blessings: If a positive event follows a religious ritual or blessing, believers may attribute the success to the ritual or blessing. For example, someone might claim that they received a job offer after being anointed with oil, implying a causal relationship without considering other job-seeking efforts.

  - Ceremonies and Rain: In certain religious ceremonies or rituals meant to invoke divine favor, followers might assume that rain or other favorable weather conditions following the ceremony are a direct result of the ritual. This overlooks meteorological factors and statistical randomness.

  - Religious Practices and Healing: If an individual engages in a religious practice or receives a religious blessing before experiencing improved health, they may believe that the religious act caused the healing. This ignores the potential influence of medical treatments or spontaneous recovery.

  - Following Commandments and Prosperity: Some religious teachings suggest that following certain moral or religious commandments leads to prosperity or success. If a person claims that adhering to these teachings preceded their success, it could be an example of the post hoc fallacy by attributing causation without considering other contributing factors.

  - Offerings and Favorable Events: The belief that making offerings or sacrifices precedes positive events may lead to the post hoc fallacy. For instance, if someone claims that financial success followed a substantial religious donation, they might assume a direct connection without considering other financial factors.

The Composition/Division Fallacy

- Composition/Division: Assuming that what is true for one part of a religious text or doctrine is true for the whole, or vice versa. This fallacy can arise when generalizing the morality or teachings of a particular religious figure to the entire belief system.

  - Individual Piety and Group Holiness: Assuming that because individuals within a religious group are pious or virtuous, the entire religious community is collectively holy. Conversely, asserting that if the group as a whole is considered sacred, every individual within it must be morally upright.

  - Sacred Texts and Literal Truth: Believing that if certain passages in a religious text are considered true, every statement in that text must be factually accurate. Conversely, if a religious text is believed to contain symbolic or metaphorical elements, assuming that every part of the text is symbolic.

  - Miracles and Divine Favor: Arguing that if an individual within a religious community experiences a miracle, it is a sign of divine favor for the entire group. Alternatively, assuming that if the group as a whole is blessed, every individual within it must experience miracles or divine intervention.

  - Individual Guilt and Collective Punishment: Believing that if an individual within a religious community is deemed guilty or sinful, the entire group shares in that guilt. Conversely, assuming that if the community as a whole is punished, every individual within it must be personally culpable.

  - Personal Testimonies and Doctrinal Truth: Assuming that because personal testimonies of believers express profound spiritual experiences, the entire doctrinal framework of the religion is necessarily true. Alternatively, if certain doctrines are deemed correct, assuming that every personal testimony aligns perfectly with those doctrines.

  - Individual Suffering and Divine Disfavor: Arguing that if an individual undergoes suffering or hardship, it reflects divine disfavor on the entire religious community. Conversely, assuming that if the group faces adversity, every individual within it must be personally at fault.

The No True Scotsman Fallacy

- No True Scotsman: Dismissing counterexamples or criticisms by asserting that those who disagree or behave differently are not "true" followers of the religion.

  - Defining True Believers: When confronted with negative behaviors or beliefs exhibited by members of a religious group, someone might claim that those individuals were never "true believers" in the first place. This allows them to dismiss any inconvenient examples without addressing the substance of the criticism. Example: "No true Christian would commit such acts of violence; those individuals were never genuinely following our faith."

  - Membership Criteria: Redefining the criteria for being considered a member of the religious community based on behavior or beliefs. This is often used to exclude individuals whose actions are perceived as contradictory to the desired image of the religious group.

  - Example: "Anyone who commits a sin like that isn't a true member of our church. Our true members always follow the teachings without fail."

  - Doctrinal Purity: Insisting that anyone who deviates from a specific interpretation of religious doctrine is not a true adherent. This allows individuals to maintain doctrinal purity by excluding those with differing views. Example: "Those who interpret the scriptures differently are not true followers of our faith. True believers accept the teachings without questioning."

  - Moral Integrity: Claiming that individuals who behave immorally or unethically within the religious community were never authentically committed to the faith, thus avoiding accountability for the negative actions of members. Example: "A true Muslim would never engage in dishonest practices. Those who do are not practicing the faith sincerely."

  - Worship Practices: Redefining the way worship is conducted within a religion to exclude those with alternative practices. This reinforces the idea that only a specific group adheres to the true religious practices. Example: "True believers worship in our traditional way. Those who deviate from our practices are not genuinely part of our faith."

The Special Pleading Fallacy

- Special Pleading: Applying principles or standards selectively to support one's position while exempting it from another. This could involve claiming that God's actions are morally justifiable even if a human committing the same actions would be considered immoral.

  - Divine Exception: Asserting that certain religious beliefs or doctrines are exempt from the need for evidence or justification because they are divinely inspired or beyond human comprehension. Example: "Our religious teachings are exempt from scrutiny because they are divinely revealed. We shouldn't question them like we question worldly matters."

  - Selective Morality: Applying different moral standards to religious figures or actions based on their perceived sacredness. This allows believers to excuse or overlook morally questionable behavior within their religious community. Example: "Even though it may seem immoral, the actions of our religious leader are justified because he is divinely chosen and beyond our understanding."

  - Inconsistent Rules: Having different sets of rules or expectations for different groups within the religion, often based on status or position. This allows for special treatment for certain individuals or circumstances. Example: "Ordinary members must follow strict ethical guidelines, but the clergy is exempt from some rules due to their elevated spiritual status."

  - Supernatural Claims: Invoking supernatural explanations for religious phenomena without providing evidence, while simultaneously demanding evidence for naturalistic claims. Example: "Miracles are beyond human comprehension, and we don't need evidence for them. However, scientific claims require rigorous proof."

  - Historical Exception: Making exceptions for certain historical or scriptural events without applying the same critical scrutiny used for other historical or literary texts. Example: "We accept the miraculous events described in our holy book as true history, but we approach other historical accounts with skepticism."

The Bandwagon Fallacy

- The Bandwagon Fallacy, also known as argumentum ad populum, occurs when someone argues that a claim or idea is true or acceptable because it is popular or widely accepted

  - Appeal to Tradition: Arguing that a belief or practice is true or valid simply because it has been accepted or followed by a large number of people for a long time. Example: "Our religious rituals have been practiced for centuries by millions, so they must be the right way to connect with the divine."

  - Appeal to Numbers: Asserting that the sheer number of believers or adherents to a particular religion or doctrine makes it true or more likely to be true. Example: "Billions of people follow this faith, so it must be the one true religion."

  - Peer Pressure in Conversion: Encouraging individuals to join a religious community by emphasizing the large number of people who have already converted. Example: "Join our faith; many people have found happiness and purpose in following our beliefs."

  - Fear of Exclusion: Suggesting that adherence to a particular belief is necessary to avoid being left out or ostracized by the majority within a religious community. Example: "Everyone in our community believes in this doctrine; if you don't, you might be seen as an outsider."

The Cherry Picking Fallacy

- The Cherry Picking Fallacy, also known as selective evidence or suppressed evidence, occurs when only specific pieces of evidence that support a particular claim are presented, while other relevant evidence that contradicts or weakens the claim is ignored or omitted.

  - Selective Scripture Quoting: Choosing specific verses or passages from religious texts that support a particular doctrine or belief while ignoring or downplaying contradictory or challenging verses. Example: Quoting verses about love and compassion while ignoring or minimizing passages that depict harsh punishments or ethical challenges.

  - Highlighting Positive Outcomes: Emphasizing positive or favorable outcomes attributed to faith or religious practices while ignoring instances where the same practices may have negative consequences. Example: Pointing to instances of healing or positive life changes attributed to prayer while overlooking cases where prayer seemingly had no effect.

  - Ignoring Historical Inconsistencies: Focusing on the positive aspects of the history of a religious tradition while ignoring or downplaying controversial or problematic events. Example: Glorifying the achievements of historical religious figures while glossing over their involvement in morally questionable actions.

  - Selectively Acknowledging Miracles: Highlighting reports of miracles or divine interventions that align with a particular belief while dismissing or explaining away contrary accounts. Example: Emphasizing stories of miraculous healings within a religious community while dismissing similar stories from other faith traditions.

  - Ignoring Contradictory Scientific Evidence: Dismissing scientific findings that contradict religious teachings while selectively embracing scientific discoveries that seem to align with those teachings. Example: Rejecting the theory of evolution but accepting medical advancements that align with religious beliefs.

The Loaded Language Fallacy

- The Loaded Language fallacy involves the use of emotionally charged words or language to evoke a strong emotional response from the audience, often to sway their opinions without addressing the actual merits of an argument.

    - Emotional manipulation: Religions may use emotionally charged language to elicit strong emotional reactions from their followers. Words and phrases loaded with positive connotations might be employed to describe adherents, practices, or beliefs, creating an emotional attachment and a sense of belonging.

    - Demonizing opposing views: Loaded language can be used to characterize dissenting views or beliefs as morally repugnant or spiritually dangerous. This tactic aims to create a negative emotional response to alternative perspectives without engaging in a rational discussion about the merits of those perspectives.

    - Polarizing terms: Religions may use polarizing language to create a sense of "us versus them." Loaded terms can be employed to describe those outside the faith negatively, fostering an emotional divide and reinforcing a sense of moral superiority among the followers.

    - Labeling non-believers: Loaded language can be used to label individuals who don't adhere to a particular religious doctrine. Terms loaded with negative connotations may be applied to describe non-believers, portraying them as misguided, lost, or morally deficient.

    - Fear-inducing language: Religions might use loaded language to instill fear by describing potential consequences for deviating from the faith. This fear-inducing rhetoric can manipulate emotions to discourage critical thinking or questioning of religious teachings.

    - Glorifying believers: Loaded language can also be employed to elevate the status of believers within a religious community. Terms loaded with positive connotations may be used to describe the faithful, reinforcing a sense of righteousness and moral superiority.

Common Cognitive Distortions Exploited by Religion

WHY DO RELIGIONS EXPLOIT COGNITIVE DISORTIONS?

- Maintaining Belief Consistency: Cognitive distortions can help maintain consistency within a belief system. When individuals encounter information that challenges their religious beliefs, cognitive distortions may be used to rationalize or dismiss the conflicting information, preserving the internal coherence of the faith.

- Emotional Comfort: Cognitive distortions can provide emotional comfort and a sense of security. Believers may use these distortions to minimize anxiety or fear related to existential questions, uncertainties, or potential contradictions within their faith.

- Preserving a Sense of Purpose: Religious beliefs often provide individuals with a sense of purpose, meaning, and identity. Cognitive distortions may be employed to reinforce these aspects by downplaying uncertainties, existential concerns, or competing worldviews that might challenge the perceived purpose of life.

- Group Cohesion: Cognitive distortions can be used to strengthen the cohesion of a religious community. Shared distorted beliefs may create a sense of unity among believers, fostering a collective identity and reinforcing social bonds within the group.

- Coping with Adversity: Facing challenges or adversity can be difficult, and cognitive distortions may be used as coping mechanisms. By framing difficulties within a religious context and employing distortions, individuals may find solace and resilience in the face of hardship.

- Preserving Moral Certainty: Many religions provide a moral framework, and cognitive distortions can help maintain a sense of moral certainty. This may involve painting individuals or actions outside the faith as inherently immoral, reinforcing a moral dichotomy that supports the religious worldview.

- Promoting Obedience: Certain religious teachings may encourage unquestioning obedience to specific doctrines or authorities. Cognitive distortions can be used to discourage critical thinking or questioning of religious beliefs, promoting adherence to prescribed dogmas.

The Catastrophizing Distortion

- Catastrophizing: This distortion involves predicting the worst possible outcome of a situation and dwelling on the belief that it would be unbearable. It often involves imagining the most negative consequences without considering more likely or positive outcomes.

  - Motivation for Moral Behavior: Some religious traditions incorporate apocalyptic scenarios or the concept of divine judgment to motivate adherence to moral and ethical principles.

  - Promoting a Sense of Purpose: Apocalyptic or catastrophic narratives within religions can provide followers with a sense of purpose and urgency. Believers may see themselves as playing a crucial role in preventing or navigating through catastrophic events, fostering a strong commitment to their faith.

  - Encouraging Devotion and Faithfulness: The prospect of impending catastrophe or divine intervention may encourage believers to deepen their commitment to religious practices and rituals. The idea of facing a significant event can lead to increased devotion and religious fervor.

  - Community Building: Catastrophic themes in religious teachings may strengthen the sense of community among believers. The shared belief in an impending event or divine plan can create a bond among followers, fostering mutual support and a sense of belonging.

  - Providing Comfort in Times of Crisis: Some religious narratives offer hope and comfort in the face of personal or collective crises. Followers may be encouraged to focus on the perceived negative aspects of the world and to anticipate an ultimate resolution or salvation.

Black and White Thinking Distortion

- Black and White Thinking: The black-and-white thinking distortion, also known as dichotomous thinking or all-or-nothing thinking, involves perceiving situations in extreme and polarized terms, without recognizing middle ground or shades of gray.

  - Moral Absolutism: Some religious traditions present a set of moral or ethical guidelines that are seen as absolute and non-negotiable. This can lead followers to view actions as inherently good or evil, without considering the complexities or context surrounding them.

  - Salvation and Damnation: Religions often have concepts of salvation and damnation, suggesting a clear distinction between those who are saved and those who are not. This can contribute to a black-and-white perspective regarding one's spiritual status.

  - In-group vs. Out-group Mentality: Religions may foster a strong sense of community among believers, leading to an "us versus them" mentality. This can result in black-and-white thinking where those within the faith are perceived as virtuous, while those outside are seen as morally inferior.

  - Rigid Interpretation of Scriptures: Some followers may adhere strictly to a literal interpretation of religious texts, leading to an all-or-nothing approach to doctrinal beliefs. This can limit openness to alternative perspectives or nuanced understandings of religious teachings.

  - Categorization of Beliefs and Practices: Religions may classify beliefs or practices as either orthodox or heretical, righteous or sinful. This binary classification reinforces black-and-white thinking and may discourage critical examination or questioning.

The Overgeneralization Distortion

- Overgeneralization: Overgeneralization occurs when a person makes broad, sweeping conclusions based on limited evidence. For example, if one negative event occurs, the individual might generalize it to their overall life, thinking that everything is always bad.

    - Moral Codes and Prescriptions: Religions often provide moral guidelines and commandments that are considered universal and applicable to all followers. This can lead to overgeneralization, assuming that a particular moral code is universally applicable without accounting for cultural or contextual differences.

    - Exclusivity of Truth Claims: Some religions assert exclusive truth claims, suggesting that their beliefs are the only correct ones. This can lead followers to overgeneralize that their religious doctrines represent the absolute truth, dismissing alternative perspectives.

    - Categorization of People: Religions may categorize individuals into believers and non-believers, or the righteous and the unrighteous. This binary classification can contribute to overgeneralization by simplifying complex human identities and experiences.

    - Stereotyping Outsiders: The tendency to view those outside a particular religious community as "others" can foster stereotypes and overgeneralizations about people with different beliefs or lifestyles.

    - Divine Favor and Punishment: Some religious traditions teach that certain actions will lead to divine favor, while others will result in punishment. This can contribute to overgeneralization by simplifying complex cause-and-effect relationships and attributing life events solely to divine judgment.

The Filtering Distortion

- Filtering (Selective Abstraction): This distortion involves focusing exclusively on the desired aspects of a situation while ignoring or downplaying any undesired elements.

  - Selective Interpretation of Scriptures: Religious texts are often complex and open to various interpretations. Followers may filter their understanding of these texts, emphasizing interpretations that align with their pre-existing beliefs or values while neglecting alternative viewpoints.

  - Attributing Positive Outcomes to Faith: Attributing positive outcomes exclusively to faith can be problematic for several reasons, including overlooking personal efforts, externalizing successes which can diminish the sense of personal responsibility and accountability for one's actions, experience a loss of self-efficacy, provide a framework for disillusionment, and stunt the understanding of causality.

  - Fear and Anxiety: If religious teachings emphasize apocalyptic or catastrophic scenarios, followers may engage in filtering by focusing excessively on negative outcomes. This can contribute to heightened fear and anxiety about the future, potentially impacting mental well-being.

  - Guilt and Shame: Some religious traditions emphasize sin and moral transgressions. Followers may filter their experiences by disproportionately focusing on their perceived moral failings, leading to excessive guilt and shame.

  - Exclusivity and Judgment: If religious teachings stress exclusivity or a sense of superiority, followers may filter their interactions with those outside their faith. This can lead to judgmental attitudes and the exclusion of individuals who don't conform to certain beliefs.

  - Suppression of Critical Thinking: If religious doctrines discourage critical examination of beliefs or alternative perspectives, followers may engage in filtering by avoiding information that challenges their worldview. This can hinder intellectual growth and openness to diverse ideas.

  - Strained Relationships: Certain religious teachings may emphasize adherence to specific moral codes or behavioral norms. Followers may filter their relationships by prioritizing interactions with those who share similar beliefs, potentially straining relationships with family or friends who hold different views.

The Mind Reading Distortion

- Mind Reading: This distortion involves assuming that one knows what others are thinking or feeling without concrete evidence. It often leads to misinterpretations of others' actions and can contribute to social anxiety.

  - Divine Communication: Some believers may claim to receive direct communication from a deity or spiritual entity. This can lead to mind-reading tendencies as followers interpret their experiences as messages from the divine, assuming they understand the intentions or will of the higher power.

  - Assigning Intentions to Non-believers: In some religious communities, non-believers or individuals from different faiths may be perceived negatively. Followers might engage in mind-reading by attributing specific negative intentions or attitudes to those who do not share their religious beliefs.

  - Divine Favor and Punishment: Certain religious teachings suggest that adherence to specific rules or behaviors will result in divine favor, while disobedience will lead to punishment. Followers might engage in mind-reading by assuming that positive or negative life events are direct reflections of their moral standing in the eyes of the divine.

  - Guilt and Self-Blame: If religious teachings emphasize a strict moral code, followers may engage in mind-reading by assuming they know the divine view of their actions. This can contribute to excessive guilt and self-blame, even in the absence of clear evidence of wrongdoing.

  - Perceived Lack of Support: Followers may engage in mind-reading by assuming that others within their religious community or leadership are aware of their inner struggles or doubts. This assumption may lead to feelings of isolation and a reluctance to seek support due to perceived judgment.

The Personalization Distortion

- Personalization: Personalization occurs when an individual takes responsibility for events that are beyond their control or assumes that they are the cause of external events, even when there is little or no evidence to support such a conclusion.

  - Guilt and Self-Blame: Religious teachings about sin or moral transgressions may lead followers to engage in personalization, attributing negative events or circumstances to their own perceived moral failings. This can result in excessive guilt and self-blame.

  - Sense of Unworthiness: If religious doctrines emphasize human unworthiness or inherent sinfulness, followers may personalize negative experiences, viewing them as evidence of their inherent inadequacy or lack of divine favor.

  - Attribution of Negative Life Events: Believers may personalize negative life events, interpreting them as divine punishments or tests. This can lead to a sense of being singled out or targeted by higher powers, contributing to feelings of hopelessness or despair.

  - Emotional Turmoil: Personalization can contribute to heightened emotional turmoil, as followers may internalize external events and interpret them as reflections of their own worthiness or unworthiness. This can impact mental and emotional well-being.

  - Judgment of Others: In some religious contexts, followers may engage in personalization by attributing negative events in the lives of others to perceived moral failings. This can lead to a judgmental attitude and a lack of empathy for the struggles of others.

The Should Statements Distortion

- Should Statements: This involves having rigid, unrealistic rules about how oneself and others should behave. When these expectations are not met, it can lead to frustration, guilt, or resentment.

  - Excessive Guilt and Shame: If religious teachings emphasize strict moral codes and guidelines, followers may internalize unrealistic "should statements" about their behavior. This can lead to feelings of guilt and shame when individuals perceive themselves as falling short of these ideals.

  - Judgment and Intolerance: Religious communities that strongly emphasize specific moral or behavioral standards might foster a culture of judgment and intolerance. Followers may project their "should statements" onto others, leading to a critical and judgmental attitude toward those who don't conform to the perceived ideals.

  - Suppression of Individuality: Rigorous religious doctrines may encourage followers to conform to specific roles or lifestyles based on prescribed "should statements." This can limit individual expression, autonomy, and personal growth, potentially causing frustration or a sense of stifled identity.

  - Failure to Meet Spiritual Expectations: If religions set unrealistic expectations for spiritual achievements or experiences, followers may internalize "should statements" about the idealized path to spiritual fulfillment. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and disappointment if individuals perceive themselves as failing to meet these expectations.

  - Conditional Love and Acceptance: Some religious teachings may convey the idea that individuals must meet certain conditions or standards to be loved or accepted by a higher power or the religious community. This can result in followers internalizing "should statements" about earning love or approval, leading to anxiety or feelings of unworthiness.

The Labeling and Mislabeling Distortion

- Labeling and Mislabeling: This distortion involves attaching negative labels to oneself or others based on specific behaviors, without considering the overall context. It often involves making global, derogatory judgments.

    - Sin and Repentance: Many religious traditions have concepts of sin and repentance. Followers may engage in labeling and mislabeling by categorizing themselves or others as "sinners" based on specific actions or behaviors.

    - Out-group Labeling: Some religious communities may view individuals outside their faith as "unbelievers" or "infidels." This form of labeling and mislabeling can contribute to an "us versus them" mentality, fostering a sense of superiority among believers and potentially leading to discrimination or intolerance.

    - Judgment and Condemnation: Certain religious teachings emphasize divine judgment and consequences for specific actions. Followers may engage in labeling and mislabeling by categorizing certain behaviors or individuals as inherently "evil" or "condemned," without considering the broader context or potential for repentance.

    - Stigmatizing Social Behaviors: Religious teachings often provide guidelines for moral conduct. Followers may engage in labeling and mislabeling by attaching stigmatizing labels to individuals who engage in behaviors deemed morally unacceptable, potentially contributing to a judgmental attitude.

    - Categorizing Mental Health Issues: Some religious perspectives may view mental health issues through a moral or spiritual lens. This can lead to labeling and mislabeling individuals with mental health challenges as "possessed" or "spiritually deficient," potentially hindering their access to appropriate support and understanding.

The Emotional Reasoning Distortion

- Emotional Reasoning: Emotional reasoning involves assuming that because one feels a certain way, the feeling must be a reflection of reality. For example, "I feel anxious, so something terrible must be about to happen."

  - Manipulation of Fear and Guilt: Some religious leaders may use emotional reasoning to manipulate followers by inducing fear or guilt. The constant emphasis on divine punishment, hell, or moral wrongdoing can lead to heightened anxiety, feelings of guilt, and a sense of unworthiness among followers.

  - Suppression of Critical Thinking: Overreliance on emotional reasoning without encouragement for critical thinking may lead to a suppression of rational inquiry. Followers may feel discouraged from questioning religious doctrines or exploring alternative perspectives, as it could evoke negative emotions associated with doubt or disbelief.

  - Emotional Dependence on the Religious Community: If emotional experiences within the religious community become the sole basis for followers' well-being, it may foster emotional dependence. This dependency can make it challenging for individuals to consider leaving the community, even if they have concerns or doubts about certain teachings.

  - Isolation from Differing Perspectives: Emotional reasoning can contribute to an "us versus them" mentality, where followers emotionally distance themselves from those who hold different beliefs. This can lead to isolation from diverse perspectives, hindering empathy and understanding.

  - Emotional Manipulation for Compliance: Some religious leaders might use emotional reasoning to manipulate followers into compliance with specific practices, rituals, or financial contributions. Emotional appeals can create a sense of urgency or obligation that may not be grounded in reasoned reflection.

The Discounting the Positive Distortion

- Discounting the Positive: This distortion involves dismissing positive experiences, qualities, or accomplishments, and attributing them to luck or external factors. It can contribute to low self-esteem and a negative self-perception.

  - Emphasis on Sin and Guilt: Some religious traditions place a significant emphasis on the concepts of sin and guilt. Followers may discount positive experiences or accomplishments, feeling unworthy or focusing excessively on perceived moral failings.

  - Strict Standards and Perfectionism: Religions that promote strict moral or behavioral standards may inadvertently foster a sense of perfectionism among followers. Individuals might discount positive aspects of their lives, feeling that they fall short of an idealized standard.

  - Fear of Divine Judgment: The fear of divine judgment or consequences for actions can lead to discounting positive experiences. Followers might downplay personal achievements or positive life events, feeling overshadowed by a constant sense of unworthiness.

  - Unrealistic Asceticism: Some religious traditions promote asceticism or self-denial as virtuous. Followers engaging in ascetic practices may discount positive aspects of their well-being, such as physical comfort or personal achievements, viewing them as distractions from spiritual pursuits.

  - Overemphasis on Afterlife Concerns: Religions with a strong focus on the afterlife may lead followers to discount positive experiences in the present moment, viewing them as fleeting and inconsequential compared to the eternal perspective.

Philosophical Problems Presented as Truth in the LDS Religion

WHY DOES THE LDS CHURCH PRESENT CERTAIN PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS AS TRUTH?

- Divine Revelation: The LDS Church believes in ongoing revelation and divine guidance through its leaders, particularly the President of the Church. Doctrines and teachings are often presented as revelations from God, making them central to the faith of Latter-day Saints.

- Theological Framework: The LDS Church has a unique theology that includes concepts such as the Plan of Salvation, eternal families, and the nature of God and humanity. These theological frameworks inform the philosophical ideas presented by the church and are considered fundamental truths by its members.

- Doctrinal Authority: Doctrines and teachings that are officially endorsed by the church leadership are viewed as authoritative and binding for members. The authority of the Prophet and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is a key factor in accepting certain philosophical ideas as truth.

- Faith-Based Perspective: The LDS Church places a strong emphasis on faith as a principle of action and power. Certain philosophical ideas are presented as truths to be accepted on faith, and adherence to these ideas is seen as a demonstration of faith in God's plan.

- Eternal Perspective: Many philosophical ideas presented by the LDS Church are framed within an eternal perspective, addressing questions about the purpose of life, the nature of existence, and the afterlife. This perspective provides a comprehensive framework for understanding philosophical concepts.

- Prophetic Guidance: The teachings of living prophets and apostles are considered by Latter-day Saints to be authoritative and inspired. Members often look to the leadership of the church for guidance on philosophical and moral questions.

- Scriptural Foundation: The LDS Church considers the Book of Mormon, the Bible, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price as its standard works. Philosophical ideas presented by the church are often grounded in or supported by these scriptures.

Objectivity versus Subjectivity in Philosophy

- Objectivity is the assertion that a thing IS that thing regardless of how it is perceived. Subjectivity specifically means relating to an object as it exists in the mind, as opposed to the thing as it exists in reality. Subjectivity is the lack of objectivity.

  - Doctrines Regarding Personal Revelation: While the LDS Church teaches that individuals can receive personal revelation through prayer and the Holy Ghost, the interpretation of such revelations can be subjective. Different members may receive different impressions or interpretations of what they believe to be personal revelation.

  - Understanding of Scriptural Passages: The interpretation of scripture can be subjective, and different members may have varying perspectives on the meaning of specific passages. The application of scriptural principles to contemporary issues can also be subject to individual interpretation.

  - Application of Church Policies: The implementation and application of certain church policies can be subjective and may vary depending on local leaders and cultural contexts. For example, how principles regarding modesty or Sabbath observance are applied can differ among congregations.

  - Individual Worthiness and Worthiness Interviews: The evaluation of an individual's worthiness for temple attendance or other privileges within the LDS Church involves subjective judgment by ecclesiastical leaders. Interpretations of what constitutes appropriate behavior or worthiness can vary.

  - Understanding of the Nature of God: While the LDS Church teaches specific doctrines about the nature of God, including the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Ghost, individuals may have varying perspectives on the nature of the divine based on personal insights and spiritual experiences.

  - Cultural Practices: Certain cultural practices within the LDS Church may be viewed as doctrines by some members but are not universally binding doctrines. Cultural practices, such as dress standards or styles of worship, can be subject to interpretation and individual preferences.

Realistic Epistemology Approach versus Religious Epistemology Approach to Knowledge

- The doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) often involve a unique blend of religious and philosophical perspectives. While some principles may seem to be presented in a rationalistic or logical manner, they are fundamentally rooted in the epistemology of religion.

  - Theological Anthropology and the Nature of God: The LDS Church presents detailed doctrines about the nature of God, the pre-existence, and the purpose of life as realistic approaches to knowledge, however, these doctrines ultimately rely on revealed truths and spiritual witnesses. Example: The knowledge of pre-existence or the nature of God is obtained through prayer, scripture study, and spiritual confirmation.

  - The Plan of Salvation: The LDS Church teaches a comprehensive plan that explains the purpose of mortal life, the Atonement, and the afterlife and leaves no room for doubt of its realism. Although the plan is logically articulated, its acceptance and understanding are closely tied to personal revelation. Members are encouraged to seek spiritual confirmation of these truths.

  - Faith and Reason: The LDS Church values both faith and reason, encouraging members to use their intellect and seek knowledge, but the foundational beliefs often transcend pure reason. Concepts like the nature of God or the reality of the Restoration are grounded in spiritual experiences and revelations.

  - Moral Agency and Accountability: The LDS Church teaches that the LDS church has the full understanding of moral agency and emphasizes the importance of making righteous choices. While the principles of moral agency are logically presented, the deeper understanding of right and wrong, as well as the eternal consequences of choices, is rooted in revealed truths exclusive to the LDS church and the spiritual confirmation of moral principles.

  - Restoration and Authority: The LDS Church presents a narrative of the Restoration of the gospel, including the visitation of God the Father and Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith. While the narrative is presented as a historical event, gaining a testimony of the Restoration involves spiritual confirmation through prayer and seeking personal revelation.

Exclusivism versus Universalism

- Exclusivism is the practice of being exclusive, a mentality characterized by the disregard for opinions and ideas that are different from one's own. Exclusivism is more than simply a conviction about the transformative power of the particular vision one has; it is a conviction about its finality and its absolute priority over competing views. Universalism is the philosophical and theological concept that some ideas have universal application or applicability.

  - The Exclusive Nature of Priesthood Authority: The LDS Church teaches that it possesses the restored priesthood authority necessary for performing ordinances, such as baptism and confirmation. This is viewed as exclusive by those who do not accept the LDS claim of a restoration of priesthood keys.

  - Exclusivity of Temple Ordinances: The LDS Church teaches that certain ordinances, such as temple sealings and endowments, are essential for exaltation and eternal families. These ordinances are exclusive to LDS temples, and access is restricted to members in good standing.

  - Unique Doctrines about the Afterlife: The LDS Church teaches specific doctrines about the afterlife, including the three degrees of glory and the concept of exaltation. These doctrines are seen as exclusive by those who hold different beliefs about the nature of the afterlife.

  - The LDS Concept of a "Chosen People": The LDS Church teaches that members are a "chosen people" with a unique mission and covenant relationship with God. This concept is perceived as exclusive by those who do not share the belief in a chosen people with unique privileges and responsibilities.

  - LDS Views on Apostasy and the "Restored" Church: The LDS Church teaches that a complete apostasy occurred after the death of the original apostles and that it represents a restoration of the true Church. The assertion of a complete apostasy and subsequent restoration is viewed as exclusive by other Christian denominations that see continuity in their own traditions.

  - The Requirement of Membership for Full Salvation: The LDS Church teaches that full salvation, including exaltation, is tied to LDS ordinances and membership in the Church; this is seen as exclusive by those who believe in salvation through different means or without a formal Church affiliation.

Causation versus Correlation

- Correlation means that two things are related in some way, while causation means that one thing directly causes the other.

  - Temporal Events and Policy Changes: The LDS Church sometimes attributes positive or negative outcomes to specific policy changes without establishing a direct causal link. Example: If a change in a church policy coincides with positive trends, the church might claim credit for the positive outcomes without demonstrating a clear cause-and-effect relationship.

  - Faithfulness and Material Prosperity: The LDS Church, through teachings and rhetoric, may imply a direct correlation between faithfulness to church teachings and material prosperity. Example: If a member experiences financial success after increased church participation, the church may be criticized for implicitly connecting financial success with religious devotion.

  - Mental Health and Church Teachings: The LDS Church, through teachings or policies, is incorrectly linked to mental health outcomes without recognizing the complexity of mental health issues. Example: If a member attributes improved mental health to adherence to church teachings, there might be a concern that the church oversimplifies the causes of mental health challenges.

  - Faithfulness and Personal Well-Being: The church correlates personal well-being with adherence to church teachings, overlooking various factors influencing an individual's overall life satisfaction. Example: If a member attributes happiness solely to religious fidelity, it may be contended that the church oversimplifies the determinants of personal well-being.

  - Missionary Success and Divine Favor: The LDS Church sometimes attributes the success of its missionary efforts to divine approval without considering external factors. Example: If missionary work flourishes in a particular region, the church might claim it as a result of divine favor, potentially overlooking sociocultural factors influencing the response to proselytization.

The Problem of Evil, Suffering, Sin and Morality

- The emphasis on free will/agency as a response to the problem of evil raises questions about the extent to which God intervenes in human suffering. Some may question why an all-powerful and benevolent God allows certain atrocities or natural disasters to occur if individuals have agency.

  - Limited Explanations: While providing explanations for the purpose of mortal life and the role of suffering, the LDS theological framework provides only partial answers to the broader philosophical problem of evil. The explanations are insufficient or lack universality.

  - Expectations of Miraculous Healing: Priesthood blessings and divine healing interventions may raise concerns about the expectations related to healing through faith and miracles. Attributing healing to faith alone could discourage individuals from seeking medical or professional help when facing health challenges.

  - Strict Moral Code: The LDS Church's emphasis on a strict and detailed moral code, outlined in the commandments and teachings of leaders, leads to feelings of guilt and shame.

  - Eternal Consequences: The concept of eternal consequences for sin, particularly the idea of outer darkness or permanent separation from God for certain sins, is an extreme punishment that raises ethical concerns.

  - Heteronormative Views: The LDS Church's teachings on sexual morality, including its stance on same-sex relationships, are heteronormative, meaning that only cisgender and heterosexual individuals are moral. The rigid views on sexuality lead to feelings of exclusion and harm among LGBTQ+ individuals.

  - Emphasis on Individual Worthiness: The focus on individual worthiness and the need to obtain forgiveness through repentance creates a culture of judgment and self-doubt among members who feel it is impossible to live by these standards.

  - Pressure for Perfection: The LDS emphasis on personal perfection and continuous improvement creates unrealistic expectations. The pressure to achieve perfection leads to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety.

  - Hierarchy of Sin: The hierarchical categorization of sins and the severity of consequences associated with different transgressions oversimplifies the complexities of human behavior and morality.

Deconstruction of Come, Join with Us.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf
LDS General Confernce October 2013

Come, Join With Us

Once there was a man who dreamed that he was in a great hall where all the religions of the world were gathered. He realized that each religion had much that seemed desirable and worthy. He met a nice couple who represented The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and asked, "What do you require of your members?" "We do not require anything," they replied. "But the Lord asks that we consecrate all." The couple went on to explain about Church callings, home and visiting teaching, full-time missions, weekly family home evenings, temple work, welfare and humanitarian service, and assignments to teach. "Do you pay your people for all the work they do?" the man asked. "Oh, no," the couple explained. "They offer their time freely."[1] "Also," the couple continued, "every six months our Church members spend a weekend attending or watching 10 hours of general conference." "Ten hours of people giving talks?" the man wondered. "What about your weekly church services? How long are they?" "Three hours, every Sunday!" "Oh, my," the man said. "Do members of your church actually do what you have said?" "That and more. We haven't even mentioned family history, youth camps, devotionals, scripture study, leadership training, youth activities, early-morning seminary, maintaining Church buildings, and of course there is the Lord's law of health, the monthly fast to help the poor, and tithing." The man said, "Now I'm confused. Why would anyone want to join such a church?" The couple smiled and said, "We thought you would never ask."[2]

Why Would Anyone Join Such a Church?
At a time when many churches throughout the world are experiencing significant decreases in numbers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—though small in comparison with many others—is one of the fastest growing churches in the world [3]. They enter the holy temple, they sense they are in His presence.

[1] Special Pleading Fallacy: Here the couple representing LDS Church describes the various commitments and activities required of their members, and they mention, "They offer their time freely." However, the text later acknowledges that there have been mistakes made by members or leaders in the Church. The special pleading here is that the members are expected to be perfect in their commitment and service, but mistakes are attributed to the imperfections of leaders or individuals, creating an inconsistency in applying standards.

[2] Ethical Fallacy: The text emphasizes the positive consequences of joining the Church, such as the blessings, joy, and salvation that members can experience. This appeal to consequences distracts from addressing the validity of the Church's teachings or practices. It ignores the documented experiences of individuals who have been harmed by the practices detailed in the text.

[3] Post Hoc: The implication here is that the specific practices and beliefs of the Church are causally linked to its growth, which is not supported by a direct cause-and-effect relationship.

As of September 2013, the Church has more than 15 million members around the world. [4] There are many reasons for this, but may I offer a few? The Savior's Church First, this Church was restored in our day by Jesus Christ Himself.[5] [6] [7] Here you will find the authority to act in His name—to baptize for the remission of sins, to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to seal on earth and in heaven.[8] Those who join this Church love the Savior Jesus Christ and they wish to follow Him.[9] They rejoice in the knowledge that God speaks to mankind again.[10]

When they read the holy scriptures and live the teachings of His prophets [11],

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[4] Bandwagon Fallacy: The implication here is that because many people are joining the church, it must be the right or desirable choice. The argument suggests that the church's popularity is a reason to join, without necessarily providing substantive evidence for the validity of the beliefs or practices of the church.

[5] Circular Reasoning: The argument assumes the conclusion (the Church's authority) in the premise (the Church was restored by Jesus Christ Himself). Without independent evidence or reasoning to support the claim of divine restoration, this reasoning is circular.

[6] Appeal to Authority: This statement relies on the authority of Jesus Christ, assuming that readers accept this claim without providing independent evidence or reasoning. It appeals to the authority of Jesus Christ as the basis for the Church's legitimacy.

[7] Appeal to Tradition: This is an appeal to tradition, implying that the Church's longevity lends credibility to its claims.

[8] Circular Reasoning: The statement assumes the truth of the religious claims made by asserting that "here you will find the authority." This is circular reasoning, where the conclusion (the authority) is embedded in the premise (the belief in the authority).

[9] Causation and Correlation: The statements imply a direct cause-and-effect relationship between joining the Church, loving Jesus Christ, and wanting to follow Him. While many individuals may indeed join a church out of love for their faith, if everyone who joins automatically possesses these qualities oversimplifies the diverse motivations people have for joining religious institutions.

[10] Appeal to Emotion: The statements use emotionally charged language like "love," "rejoice," and "knowledge that God speaks to mankind again." This appeal to emotion can be a persuasive technique, but it doesn't necessarily provide empirical evidence for the truth of the claims.

[11] Causation and Correlation: The statements imply a direct cause-and-effect relationship between joining the Church, loving Jesus Christ, and wanting to follow Him. While many individuals may indeed join a church out of love for their faith, if everyone who joins automatically possesses these qualities oversimplifies the diverse motivations people have for joining religious institutions.

they grow closer to the Savior they love so much.[12] [13] [14]

An Active Faith

Another reason is because the Church provides opportunities for doing good. Believing in God is commendable [15] [16], but most people want to do more than listen to inspirational sermons or dream of their mansions above. They want to put their faith into practice. They want to roll up their sleeves and become engaged in this great cause. And that is what happens when they join with us—they have many opportunities to transform their talents, compassion, and time into good works. Because we have no paid local clergy in our worldwide congregations, our members perform the work of ministry themselves. They are called by inspiration.[17] Sometimes we volunteer; sometimes we are "volunteered." We see assignments not as burdens but as opportunities to fulfill covenants we gladly make to serve God and His children.[18] [19]

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[12] Appeal to Emotion: The statements use emotionally charged language like "love," "rejoice," and "knowledge that God speaks to mankind again." This appeal to emotion can be a persuasive technique, but it doesn't necessarily provide empirical evidence for the truth of the claims.

[13] Appeal to Faith: The implication is that the desired outcome (growing closer to the Savior) is achieved through these actions, and believers are asked to have faith in the effectiveness of these religious practices, even if direct empirical evidence is not provided.

[14] Emotional Reasoning: The text implies that the positive emotions and feelings experienced by those who join the church are evidence of the truthfulness of their beliefs and the professed emotions are used as a primary guide for evaluating the validity of beliefs.

[15] Filtering: The text selectively filters out any mention of potential challenges or negative experiences associated with the decision to join.

[16] Realistic Epistemology Approach versus Religious Epistemology Approach to Knowledge: The passage describes how members of the Church can feel the presence of God in their lives through various activities such as entering the holy temple, reading holy scriptures, and living the teachings of prophets. These experiences are presented as ways to gain knowledge and proximity to the divine path.

[17] Overgeneralization Distortion: The statement assumes a particular perspective on what is commendable, which is not universally shared. It is as dismissive or judgmental of those who hold different religious or non-religious perspectives.

[18] Ethical Fallacy: Commendable behavior should be based on ethical principles and actions, rather than religious beliefs. People can lead morally upright lives without necessarily adhering to a specific religious doctrine.

[19] Ethical Fallacy: The idea that leaders are called by inspiration raises concerns about accountability. Members might question how decisions are made, and skepticism could arise if there is a perceived lack of transparency or checks and balances. Additionally, certain roles within a religious organization require specialized skills, training, or time commitment. Relying solely on unpaid volunteers can result in a lack of professionalism or expertise in certain areas.

Treasured Blessings

A third reason why people join the Church is because walking the path of discipleship leads to precious blessings.[20] We see baptism as the starting point in our journey of discipleship.[21] Our daily walk with Jesus Christ leads to peace and purpose in this life and profound joy and eternal salvation in the world to come.[22] Those who follow this path faithfully avoid many of the pitfalls, sorrows, and regrets of life.[23] The poor in spirit and honest of heart find great treasures of knowledge here. Those who suffer or grieve find healing here. Those burdened with sin find forgiveness, liberty, and rest. [24]

To Those Who Leave

The search for truth has led millions of people to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[25] However, there are some who leave the Church they once loved. One might ask, "If the gospel is so wonderful, why would anyone leave?" Sometimes we assume it is because they have been offended or lazy or sinful. Actually, it is not that simple. In fact, there is not just one reason that applies to the variety of situations. Some of our dear members struggle for years with the question whether they should separate themselves from the Church.[26] In this Church that honors personal agency so strongly, that was restored by a young man who asked questions and sought answers, we respect those who honestly search for truth. It may break our hearts [27]

[20] Objectivity vs Subjectivity: This includes assertions about avoiding pitfalls, sorrows, and regrets, which are subjective experiences versus objective experiences.

[21] Realistic Epistemology Approach versus Religious Epistemology Approach to Knowledge: The text asserts that walking the path of discipleship in the Church leads to blessings such as peace, purpose, joy, and eternal salvation. This reflects a religious epistemological belief that adhering to certain doctrines and principles will lead to specific positive outcomes in this life and the afterlife.

[22] Appeal to Emotions: This is an appeal to hope, framing membership as a source of fulfillment and happiness.

[23] Appeal to Emotions: This is an appeal to fear, as it implies that without joining, individuals are at risk of a less fulfilling or more regretful life.

[24] Objectivity vs Subjectivity: Personal experiences of individuals finding healing, joy, and salvation are presented as evidence for the Church's effectiveness whereas these experiences are subjective and vary from person to person.

[25] Post Hoc Fallacy: People's decisions to join a religious community are influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural, social, emotional, and personal considerations. Reducing this complex process to a single motivation oversimplifies the reality of religious conversion.

[26] Appeal to Emotion: The text acknowledges that some members "struggle for years" with questions about the Church, using an appeal to pity to evoke sympathy for those who may be experiencing doubt or uncertainty, with the assumption that the struggle would stop if they stopped questioning the church.

[27] Loaded Language Fallacy: The phrase "It may break our hearts" is emotionally charged and implies a sense of disappointment or sadness, conveying a subtle form of emotional manipulation.

when their journey takes them away from the Church we love and the truth we have found [28], but we honor their right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience, just as we claim that privilege for ourselves.

Unanswered Questions

Some struggle with unanswered questions about things that have been done or said in the past. We openly acknowledge that in nearly 200 years of Church history—along with an uninterrupted line of inspired, honorable, and divine events—there have been some things said and done that could cause people to question. Sometimes questions arise because we simply don't have all the information and we just need a bit more patience. [29] When the entire truth is eventually known, things that didn't make sense to us before will be resolved to our satisfaction.[30] Sometimes there is a difference of opinion as to what the "facts" really mean.[31] A question that creates doubt in some can, after careful investigation,[32] build faith in others.[33] [34]

Mistakes of Imperfect People

And, to be perfectly frank, there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine. [35] suppose the Church would be perfect only if it were run by perfect beings. God is perfect, and His doctrine is pure. But He works through us—His imperfect children—and imperfect people make mistakes. In the title page of the Book of Mormon [36]

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[28] The False Dichotomy Fallacy: The assumption that everyone has found "the truth" with the LDS faith means that those who have gone away from the church must not have any truth. This oversimplification promotes an all-or-nothing perspective.

[29] The Filtering Distortion: The statement downplays the significance of individuals' questions or concerns. Attributing questions to a lack of information or the need for patience does not acknowledge the validity of concerns that members or individuals may have.

[30] Appeal to Faith: Patience is generally considered a virtue, but it won't always lead to answers. In fact, it can be used as a way to defer or discourage questions. The pursuit of truth requires active inquiry, critical thinking, and exploration rather than passive waiting.

[31] Objectivity versus Subjectivity: Facts are intended to be universally true and are not influenced by individual perspectives. So, an objective analysis would rely on empirical data, scientific evidence, or universally accepted information.

[32] Appeal to Faith: "Careful investigation" doesn't emphasize the importance of relying on rigorous evidence, critical thinking, and scholarly methodologies to arrive at more objective conclusions.

[33] Appeal to Ignorance: This acknowledges that there may be unanswered questions but implies that faith can compensate for the lack of clear answers.

[34] Filtering Distortion: Doubt is a valid and constructive aspect of intellectual inquiry. Encouraging doubt selectively, based on its potential to strengthen faith, downplays its role as a natural and valuable part of the search for truth.

[35] The Composition Fallacy (Failure to address abuses): While acknowledging mistakes, the statement lacks specifics on Church or leader accountability and transparency in addressing errors. A more transparent acknowledgment of specific mistakes is needed for enhanced accountability, raising concerns about power dynamics and the responsibility of leaders with significant consequences.

[36] Appeal to Faith: Mainstream archaeological, historical, and scientific communities do not consider the Book of Mormon an ancient record of actual historical events; therefore, the validity is a matter of faith.

we read, "And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ." This is the way it has always been and will be until the perfect day when Christ Himself reigns personally upon the earth. It is unfortunate that some have stumbled because of mistakes made by men. [37]

But in spite of this, [38] the eternal truth of the restored gospel found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not tarnished, diminished, or destroyed.[39] [40] As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ and as one who has seen firsthand the councils and workings of this Church, I bear solemn witness that no decision of significance affecting this Church or its members is ever made without earnestly seeking the inspiration, guidance, and approbation of our Eternal Father.[41] [42] This is the Church of Jesus Christ. God will not allow His Church to drift from its appointed course or fail to fulfill its divine destiny.

There Is Room for You

To those who have separated themselves from the Church, I say, my dear friends, there is yet a place for you here. Come and add your talents, gifts, and energies to ours.[43] We will all become better as a result. Some might ask, "But what about my doubts?" It's natural to have questions—the acorn of honest inquiry has often sprouted and matured into a great oak of understanding. There are few members of the Church who, at one time or another, have not wrestled with serious or sensitive questions. One of the purposes of the Church is to nurture and cultivate the seed of faith—even in the sometimes sandy soil of doubt and uncertainty. [44]

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[37] Ethical Fallacy: By attributing faults solely to men and emphasizing eternal truth, the statement may inadvertently dismiss or downplay valid concerns or critiques raised by individuals within or outside the Church.

[38] Special Pleading: This posits a standard of perfection for the Church but then exempts it from that standard by attributing imperfections to the fallibility of human leaders.

[39] Realistic Epistemology Approach versus Religious Epistemology Approach to Knowledge: The text acknowledges the imperfections of individuals within the Church, stating that there have been times when mistakes were made. However, it maintains the distinction that the eternal truth of the restored gospel remains intact, emphasizing the divine nature of the Church despite human fallibility.

[40] Appeal to Tradition: The statement explicitly attributes faults and mistakes solely to men, which oversimplifies the complex dynamics within religious institutions. It does not acknowledge the potential systemic issues or organizational structures that contribute to errors.

[41] Circular Reasoning: The speaker's authority is used to vouch for the Church's decision-making process.

[42] Appeal to Authority: The authority of being an Apostle is invoked to lend credibility to the speaker's testimony about the Church. The speaker's position is used to support the Church's claims and is sanctioned by a higher power.

[43] False Dichotomy: Creates a false dichotomy by framing the choice as either joining the Church or not, without acknowledging other potential paths or beliefs.

[44] Loaded Language Fallacy: The metaphor used, "even in the sometimes sandy soil of doubt and uncertainty," implies that doubt is a difficult or unfavorable condition. This suggests that doubt is a challenging or negative aspect that needs special attention, rather than acknowledging it as a natural part of the human experience.

Faith is to hope for things which are not seen but which are true. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters—my dear friends [45]—please, first doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.[46] [47] [48] [49]

We must never allow doubt to hold us prisoner and keep us from the divine love, peace, and gifts that come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.[50] Some might say, "I just don't fit in with you people in the Church." If you could see into our hearts, you would probably find that you fit in better than you suppose. You might be surprised to find that we have yearnings and struggles and hopes similar to yours. Your background or upbringing might seem different from what you perceive in many Latter-day Saints, but that could be a blessing. Brothers and sisters, dear friends, we need your unique talents and perspectives. The diversity of persons and peoples all around the globe is a strength of this Church. Some might say, "I don't think I could live up to your standards." All the more reason to come! The Church is designed to nourish the imperfect, the struggling, and the exhausted. It is filled with people who desire with all their heart to keep the commandments, even if they haven't mastered them yet. Some might say, "I know a member of your Church who is a hypocrite. I could never join a church that had someone like him as a member." If you define hypocrite as someone who fails to live up perfectly to what he or she believes, then we are all hypocrites. None of us is quite as Christlike as we know we should be. But we earnestly desire to overcome our faults and the tendency to sin. With our heart and soul we yearn to become better with the help of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. If these are your desires, then regardless of your circumstances, your personal history, or the strength of your testimony, there is room for you in this Church. Come, join with us!

Come, Join with Us! In spite of our human imperfections [51], I am confident that you will find among the members of this Church many of the finest souls this world has to offer. The Church of Jesus Christ seems to attract the kind and the caring, the honest and the industrious[52].

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[45] Appeal to Emotion: This emotional appeal is intended to evoke a sense of closeness, affection, and personal connection with the church and the speaker.

[46] Black and White Thinking: The text advises individuals to "doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith," implying that any doubt should be minimized or rejected, rather than acknowledging that doubt can be a natural part of religious or spiritual exploration.

[47] Ad Hominem: This dismisses doubts without directly addressing the reasons behind those doubts, potentially implying that doubters are misguided or not considering their doubts carefully.

[48] False Dichotomy: This frames doubt as something to be dismissed or resolved internally rather than exploring the possibility that doubt can coexist with faith or lead to a nuanced understanding.

[49] Realistic Epistemology Approach versus Religious Epistemology Approach to Knowledge: The text encourages members to "doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith," suggesting that doubt should not be a barrier to faith but rather an opportunity for inquiry and understanding within the context of religious beliefs.

[50] Appeal to Faith: The fallacy lies in presenting faith as a virtue that should supersede doubt without addressing the reasons for doubt or engaging in critical inquiry. It suggests that doubting is something negative that needs to be overcome in favor of faith.

[51] Objectivity vs Subjectivity: The text acknowledges imperfections and mistakes within the Church but presents them in a positive light, emphasizing the Church's ability to overcome them.

[52] Black and White Thinking: The text describes members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as "the kind and the caring, the honest and the industrious," which may present a one-sided, overly positive view without acknowledging the diversity of individuals within the church or the potential for imperfections.

If you expect to find perfect people here, you will be disappointed. But if you seek the pure doctrine of Christ, the word of God "which healeth the wounded soul," and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, then here you will find them. In this age of waning faith [53]—in this age when so many feel distanced from heaven's embrace—here you will find a people who yearn to know and draw closer to their Savior by serving God and fellowmen, just like you.[54] Come, join with us!

Will Ye Also Go Away?

I am reminded of a time in the Savior's life when many abandoned Him. Jesus asked His twelve disciples: "Will ye also go away? "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." There are times when we have to answer the same question. Will we also go away? Or will we, like Peter, hold fast to the words of eternal life? If you seek truth, meaning, and a way to transform faith into action; if you are looking for a place of belonging: Come, join with us![55]

If you have left the faith you once embraced: Come back again. Join with us! If you are tempted to give up: Stay yet a little longer. There is room for you here. [56] I plead with all who hear or read these words: Come, join with us. Come heed the call of the gentle Christ. Take up your cross and follow Him. Come, join with us! [57] [58]
For here you will find what is precious beyond price. I testify that here you will find the words of eternal life, the promise of blessed redemption, and the pathway to peace and happiness. [59] I earnestly pray that your own search for truth will impress upon your heart the desire to come and join with us. [60] In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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[53] The Catastrophizing Distortion: The reference to "this age of waning faith" and people feeling "distanced from heaven's embrace" implies a comparison with negative external conditions, driving people to act towards rectifying the unbearable. It doesn't acknowledge that others have a different perspective on the state of faith in the world or that faith isn't something that needs to be worried about.

[54] Exclusivism versus Universalism: The statement conveys an exclusive attitude by suggesting that within the Church is the exclusive place to find what is described.

[55] Black and White Thinking: This can be seen as framing the Church as the only source of truth and belonging, leaving little room for alternative perspectives.

[56] The Overgeneralization Distortion: The statement simplifies the complexity of individuals' faith journeys by suggesting a return to a specific faith community as a solution to doubts or struggles

[57] Appeal to Emotion: The text repeatedly invites individuals to "come, join with us," creating a sense of belonging and community. This is an appeal to the human desire for social connection and acceptance.

[58] Appeal to Emotion: The use of phrases like "Come heed the call of the gentle Christ" and "Take up your cross and follow Him" invokes strong emotional imagery. While emotional appeals can be powerful, they can be be perceived as manipulative, especially when urging individuals to join a particular religious group.

[59] Objectivity vs Subjectivity: The invitation to join the Church and the concluding testimony are inherently subjective, appealing to personal beliefs and emotions.

[60] Exclusivism versus Universalism: The overall tone of the statement implies that joining the specified religious group is the desired outcome of the individual's search for truth. This is an implicit claim that the truth found within the specified faith tradition is superior to other perspectives.

These tools are designed to help us dissect ideas presented as unquestionably true, not to steer anyone toward a particular belief system. Discovering logical fallacies in arguments doesn't automatically label someone as wrong; it simply highlights flaws in their reasoning and demands a logically sound presentation. Cognitive distortions and biased thinking patterns complicate the pursuit of objective understanding by distorting reality.

As we navigate our interactions with the LDS religion, recognizing and addressing these tactics is crucial for fostering genuine critical thinking and constructing reasoned perspectives, especially when evaluating statements made over the pulpit in the context of divine representation.

Thank you

The LDS church took from you what was already yours, twisted it, and tried to sell it back to you.

Trust yourself.

You already know.

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