

Introduction

There has been a lot of confusion concerning Mormonism and main stream Christianity being similar in belief systems. Mormons consider themselves as the only true, sole, Christian religion on the earth today and that only their interpretation of the Bible is correct; however, there is a big difference with mainstream Evangelical Christians.

The purpose of this paper is to point out serious differences between their system of beliefs and those of true Christianity. These differences are so extreme in nature that this group has to be considered as a cult and a false religion. The very essence of being a “Christian” is to acknowledge the very deity and redemptive work of Jesus Christ in His death, burial and physical resurrection. As always, the central question always comes back to Jesus!

1 John 2:22-23

Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

A Little History

The founder of Mormonism, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, Joseph Smith, Jr., was born on December 23, 1805 in Sharon Vermont. Smith was the fourth of ten children of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith. Joseph senior was known as a money digger and sought after buried treasure, particularly that of Captain Kidd. His mother was highly superstitious. Most members of the Smith family soon joined the Presbyterian Church, but young Joseph remained undecided. His argument was that all the strife and tension among the various denominations made him question which one was right. It was this conflict that set the stage for Joseph's alleged first vision.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

The First Vision

In 1820 Joseph allegedly received a vision that became the basis for the founding of the Mormon Church. Joseph Smith Jr. stated that he was disturbed by all the different denominations of Christianity and wondered which was true. In 1820, when he was 14, he went into the woods to pray concerning this and allegedly God the Father and Jesus appeared to him and told him not to join any of the denominational churches.

“I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right- and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the personage who addressed, me said that all their creeds were an abomination in His sight” [Joseph Smith, The Pearl of Great Price, 2:18,19].

The Second Vision

Joseph then recounts a second vision he had on September 21, 1823 when he was 17 years old, an angel called Moroni, who was supposed to be the son of Mormon, the leader of the people called the Nephites who had lived in the Americas, appeared to him and told him that he had been chosen to translate the book of Mormon which was compiled by Moroni's father around the 4th century. The book was written on golden plates hidden near where Joseph was then living in Palmyra, New York. Joseph Smith said that on Sept. 22, 1827 he received the plates and the angel Moroni instructed him to begin the translation process. The translation was finally published in 1830 as the Book of Mormon. Joseph claimed that during this translation process, John the Baptist appeared to him and ordained him to accomplish the divine work of restoring the true church by preaching the true gospel which, allegedly, had been lost from the earth.

Brigham Young

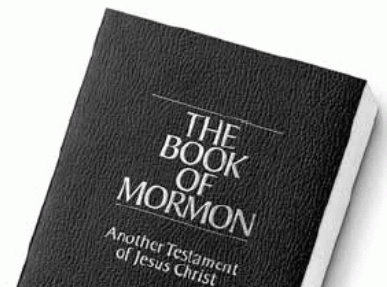
After the death of Joseph Smith the leadership went to Brigham Young, the President of the Twelve Apostles, who convinced the great majority of Mormons that he was their rightful successor. Young led the group westward in a journey which saw many hardships including Indian attacks, exposure and internal strife. On July 24, 1847, they arrived at Salt Lake Valley in Utah which became the headquarters of the Mormon Church. By the time of Young's death in 1877, the members numbered approximately 150,000.

The church is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, and has established congregations (called wards or branches) and built temples worldwide. According to the LDS (Latter-day Saints) church, it has approximately 75,000 missionaries worldwide and has a membership of over 14.7 million. It is ranked by the National Council of Churches as the fourth largest Christian denomination in the United States. Of course main stream Christianity contends that Mormonism is a cult, since they deny Jesus as being God.

The Bible

The Mormon articles of faith read, "We believe the Bible to be the Word of God in so far as it is translated correctly..." [Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, Article 8].

The Book of Mormon claims that a correct translation of the Bible is impossible since the Catholic Church has taken away from the word of God "... many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away. And all this have they taken away. And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord" [1 Nephi 13:26b, 27].



Orson Pratt, an early apostle of the Mormon Church, put it this way, "Who knows that even one verse of the Bible has escaped pollution, so as to convey the same sense now that it did in the original?" [Orson Pratt's Works, 1891, p. 218].

Thus the Mormons put more trust in the other three sacred books, which have escaped pollution, than they do in the Bible. This of course opens the door for the Mormons to add their new non-biblical teachings by claiming they were doctrines deliberately removed by the Catholic Church. This is a typical pretense that cults use to justify their deliberate and overt additions and deletions from the original canonized Scripture.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is supposed to be the account of people who came from the Middle-East to the Americas. It covers the period of about 600 B.C. to 400 A.D. It tells of the Jaredites, people from the Tower of Babel who came to central America but perished because of their own immorality. It also describes some Jews who fled persecution in Jerusalem and came to America led by a man called Nephi. The Jews divided into two groups known as the Nephites and Lamanites who fought each other. The Nephites were defeated in 428 A.D. The Lamanites continued and are known as the American Indians. The Book of Mormon is the account of the Nephite leader, Mormon, concerning their culture, civilization, and appearance of Jesus to the Americas- yes this is as bazar as it sounds! To Mormons, this book is also considered inspired: "We believe the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God" [Articles of Faith, Section 8].

After the publication of the Book of Mormon, Mormonism began to grow. Because their religion was so deviant from Christianity, like the plurality of gods, polygamy (Joseph is said to have had 27 wives), etc., persecution soon forced them to move from New York to Ohio, then to Missouri, and finally to Nauvoo, Illinois. After being accused of breaking some laws in Nauvoo (for destroying a printing press that was publishing harmful information on Mormonism), Joseph and his brother Hyrum ended up in jail. A mob later broke into the jail and killed Joseph and his brother. Joseph did not die without a fight. According to the church's own account he shot several of the mob members with a gun he had- considered a martyr.

After the shooting, the church divided into two groups: One led by his widow which went back to Independence Missouri. They are known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They claim to be the true Church and lay claim to the legal succession of the church presidency which was bestowed upon Joseph's son by Joseph Smith himself. The other group was led by Brigham Young and they went to Utah where, in 1847, they ended up in Salt Lake and founded Salt Lake City. Brigham had 25 wives and accumulated much wealth.

Doctrine and Covenants

Doctrine and Covenants is a record of 138 revelations revealing some of Mormonism's distinctive doctrines such as baptism for the dead and celestial marriage.

The Pearl of Great Price

The Pearl of Great Price contains the Book of Moses, which is roughly equivalent to the first six chapters of Genesis, and The Book of Abraham, a translation of an Egyptian Papyrus that later proved to be fraudulent. It also contains an extract from Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible; extracts from the History of Joseph Smith, which is his autobiography; and the Articles of Faith.

The Living Prophets

The living prophet also occupies an important part in present-day Mormonism. Ezra Taft Benson, who was the President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, said in a speech on February 26, 1980, at Brigham Young University, that the living prophet (head of the church) is "more vital to us than the standard works."

This echoed what was given to the ward teachers (similar to Christian Education adult teachers) in 1945.

“Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the prophets, seers, and revelations of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy, Lucifer wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to do their own thinking. When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan – it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give directions, it should mark the end of the controversy” [Improvement Era, June 1945, p. 354].

The Mormon Church has four accepted sacred works: the Bible (their unique interpretation), the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price. The present prophet's words are also a source of authority.

What the Bible Says

The Bible clearly contradicts the Mormon reliance on multiple contradictory revelations. While the Mormon scriptures contradict each other and the Bible, the Bible never contradicts itself and the God of the Bible never contradicts Himself.

Galatians 1:6-9

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Any message that supposed to be from God must agree with the message already brought by Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the Old Testament- Luke 24:27. Eternal life comes from the completed work of Jesus Christ, in His death, burial and resurrection and faith alone in Jesus as Lord and Savior- Romans 10:9-11. Not from Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or any other false Mormon prophet.



Acts 20:29-31

I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

2 Timothy 3:13-17

...while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Claims of Mormonism

The Mormons claim they are the restoration of the true church established by Jesus Christ. It is not Protestant or Catholic, but claims, rather to be the only true church. "If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" [Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 670].

"No salvation without accepting Joseph Smith. If Joseph Smith was verily a prophet, and if he told the truth then this knowledge is of most vital importance to the entire world. No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" [Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, pp. 189-190].

The claims of Joseph Smith and his followers are clear. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims it is God's true church on earth while all the others are wrong. Commenting on Joseph Smith's first vision, Dr. Walter Martin puts the matter into perspective:



"With one 'Special Revelation' the Mormon Church expects its intended converts to accept the totally unsupported testimony of a fifteen-year-old boy that nobody ever preached Jesus Christ's gospel from the close of the Apostolic age until the so-called "Restoration" through Joseph Smith, Jr., beginning in 1820! We are asked to believe that the Church Fathers for the first five centuries did not proclaim the true gospel- that Origen, Justin, Irenaeus, Jerome, Eusebius, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and then later Thomas Aquinas, Huss, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Tyndale, Wycliffe,

Whitefield, and a vast army of faithful servants of Jesus Christ all failed where Joseph Smith Jr., was to succeed! With one dogmatic assertion, Joseph pronounced everybody wrong, all Christian theology an abomination, and all professing Christians corrupt- all in the name of God! How strange for this to be presented as restored Christianity, when Jesus Christ specifically promised that 'the gates of Hell' would not prevail against the church in Matthew 16:18! In Mormonism we find God contradicting this statement in a vision to Joseph Jr., some 18 centuries later! [The Maze of Mormonism, 1978, p.31]."

The Mormon Doctrine of God

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" [Joseph Smith, The Pearl of Great Price, Articles of faith, p. 59]. The above statement leaves the impression that Mormons believe the biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity- namely, there is one God who manifests Himself in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three persons are the one God. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

The Mormon doctrine of God is contradictory to what the Bible teaches. The Mormons believe in many gods and teach that God himself was once a man. Moreover, Mormon males have the possibility of attaining godhood- this my friend is heresy.

Joseph Smith made this clear in The King Follett Discourse:

"I am going to inquire after God: for I want you all to know him and be familiar with him. I will go back to the beginning before the world was, to show you what kind of being God is. God was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. I say, if you were to seem him today, you would see him like a man in a form like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form of a man.

I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I refute that idea and take away the veil so that you may see. It is the first principle of the gospel to know for certainty the character of God and to know that we may converse with him as one man with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ did. Here then, is eternal life- to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you [Joseph Smith jt. King Follett Discourse, pp. 8-10]."

Other statements by Smith and Young reveal further the Mormon concept of God: "In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create and populate the world and people it [Joseph Smith, Journal of Discourse, 6:5]."

"The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as men [Joseph Smith, Doctrine and Covenants, 130:22]." That is not what the Bible teaches, God the Son (Jesus) is the only one from the Godhead to take on human form. God the Father is a spirit being, with no physical body to contain Him.

John 4:23-24

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Lorenzo Snow repeated Joseph Smith's words about the Mormon idea of God: "As Man is, God was, As God is, Man may become. [Joseph Smith, King Follett Discourse, p9, note by Lorenzo Smith]."

The Mormon writer Milton Hunter came to the obvious conclusion: "Mormon prophets have continuously taught the sublime truth that God the Eternal Father was once a mortal man who passed through a school earth similar to that through which we are passing. He became God- an exalted being (Milton R. Hunter, The Gospel through the Ages, p104)."

Again what does the Bible clearly teach, Psalms 90:2, "*Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*"

Smith's own teaching on the nature of God not only contradicts the Bible, it also contradicts the Book of Mormon! "And Zeezrom said unto him: 'Thou sayest that there is a true and living God?' And Amulek said : 'yea, there is a true and living God.' Now Zeezrom said: 'Is there more than one God?' And he answered, 'No!' [Alma 11:26-29].

The Bible is clear in Isaiah 43:10, "You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me." See also 1 Corinthians 8:4.

The Mormon Doctrine of Jesus Christ

The Mormon Church teaches that Jesus Christ was a preexistent spirit like the rest of us. They believe even though we are all literally brothers and sisters of Jesus, He is set apart from the rest of us by being the firstborn of God's spirit-children.

"And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn; and all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn. Ye were also in the beginning with the Father [Doctrine and Covenants 93:21-23]."

In Mormonism Jesus is not the unique Son of God: "His humanity is to be recognized as real and ordinary- whatever happened to Him may happen to any one of us. The Divinity of Jesus and the Divinity of all other noble and stately souls, in so far as they too, have been influenced by a spark of Deity- can be recognized as manifestations of the Divine (Elder B.H. Roberts citing Sir Oliver Lodge in Joseph Smith, King Follett Discourse, p.11 note)."

Man

According to Mormonism, man is a preexistent soul who takes his body at birth in this world:

"Man is a spirit clothed with a tabernacle. The intelligent part of which was never created or made, but existed eternally – man was also in the beginning with God [Joseph Fielding Smith, Progress of Man]. Speaking of man, John Widtsoe said, "He existed before he came to earth: He was with God 'in the beginning.' Man's destiny is divine. Man is an eternal being. He also is 'everlasting to everlasting'" [Varieties of American Religion, p.132]."

Contrary to Mormon theology, Jesus is the Second person of the God head as the unique and only Son of God- John 8:58, "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" Colossians 1:15-18

Matthew 1:22-23

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

To think that we can one day be God like Jesus Christ and the Father is blasphemous. There is an eternal chasm between the Creator and the created- period!

Salvation

Articles 2 and 3 of the Mormon Articles of Faith spell out their doctrine of salvation:

No.2: "We believe that men shall be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression."

No. 3: "We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinance of the Gospel."

Sounds kind of like the Bible, which is the allure Mormons try to project; an affiliation with mainstream Christianity when they seek to proselytize new converts. Knowing full well if they were to immediately bring forth a full disclosure of their bizarre beliefs and tenants that grossly contradicts the Bible, people would run away as they should. This cult totally undermines the essence of salvation, faith in Jesus alone!

James Talmage in his work *Articles of Faith* explains what Articles 2 and 3 means:

“The extent of the Atonement is universal, applying alike to all descendants of Adam. Even the unbeliever, the heathen and the child who dies before reaching the years of discretion all are redeemed by the Savior’s self-sacrifice from the individual consequences of the fall; of the saved not all will be exalted to the higher glories. No one can be admitted to any order of glory, in short, no soul can be saved until Justice has been satisfied for violated law. In the kingdom of God there are numerous levels of gradations provided for those who are worthy of them [James Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 85, 91].”

Thus in Mormonism there is a general salvation for all mankind and an individual salvation for each person. There is, to the Mormon, no such thing as hell or everlasting punishment. Everyone will eventually go to one of three levels of glory: the celestial kingdom which is reserved for the Melchizedek priesthood members who will become gods; the terrestrial kingdom, for those who failed the requirements of exaltation; and lastly, the telestial kingdom, for those who have no testimony of Christ. Notice what Brigham Young said:

“I want you to tell them and tell all the great men of the earth that Latter day Saints are to be their redeemer. Believe in God, believe in Jesus, and believe in Joseph his prophet, and Brigham his successor, and I add, if you will believe in your hearts and confess with your mouth Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph was a prophet, and that Brigham is his successor, you shall be saved in the kingdom of God. No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the Celestial Kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith; every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith, Junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansions where God and Christ are- I cannot go there without his consent. He reigns there as supreme, a being in his sphere, capacity, calling, as God does in heaven [Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 6:229, 7:289].”

That is sick, one can't enter into heaven without the permission of Joseph Smith in the form of a certificate or passport; and it gets better, apparently Joseph Smith reigns in heaven as a supreme being as Almighty God does. This is one among many reasons why Mormonism is definitively a cult!

The Bible is explicit that Salvation is in Jesus Christ alone, and He is our sole mediator with God the Father.

Acts 4:12

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

1 Timothy 2:5-7

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.

Eternal life is a free gift that cannot be earned or deserved; no certificate or passport required- just faith alone in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

Changes in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon according to Joseph Smith, Jr., is “the most correct of any book on earth” [Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church, 4:461]. However, this “most” correct book has, from the 1830 edition to the modern edition, undergone some 3,000 changes.

“And after having received the record of the Nephites, yea even my servant Joseph Smith, Jr. might have power to translate through the mercy of God, by the power of God, the Book of Mormon [Doctrine and Covenants, Section 1, vs. 29].” “And gave him (Joseph Smith, Jr.) power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon [Doctrine and Covenants, Section 20, verse 8].”

The two quotations from the Doctrine and Covenants, according to Mormon belief, are revelations given through Joseph Smith, Jr., from the Lord, and they confirm the authenticity and genuineness of the Book of Mormon. The first quotation is from a revelation dated November 1, 1831, well over a year after the Book of Mormon was published in early 1830.

The revelations claim the Book of Mormon was translated by the power of God, that Joseph Smith was a servant used of God to translate the Book of Mormon using means that God had prepared for translating and that well over a year after its publication, the Lord affirmed so-called affirmed the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Yet a comparison of the latest edition with the first edition, the 1830 edition that was supposed to be translated by the power of God) will show more than 3,000 changes.

Original (1830) Edition

Modern Version

... King Benjamin had a gift from god, whereby he could interpret such engravings... (p. 200).	... King Mosiah had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings (p.176, v.28).
...Behold the virgin which thou seest, is the Mother of God (p. 25).	...Behold the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God...(1 Nephi 11:18).
... that the Lamb of God is the eternal Father and the Saviour of the world... (p. 32).	... that the lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father...(1 Nephi 13:40).

The Book of Mormon and Archaeology

Mormon scholars can be frustrated and embarrassed understandably when they realize that after all the years of work by Mormon and other archaeologists:

1. No Book of Mormon cities have been located.
2. No Book of Mormon names have been found in the New World inscriptions.
3. No genuine inscriptions have been found in Hebrew in America.
4. No genuine inscriptions have been found in America in Egyptian or anything similar to Egyptian, which could correspond to Joseph Smith's “reformed Egyptian.”
5. No ancient copies of Book of Mormon scriptures have been found.
6. No ancient inscriptions of any kind in America, which indicate that the ancient inhabitants had Hebrew or Christian beliefs, have been found.
7. No mention of Book of Mormon persons, nations, or places have been found.
8. No artifact of any kind, which demonstrates the Book of Mormon is true, has been found.
9. Rather than finding supportive evidence, Mormon scholars have been forced to retreat from traditional interpretations of the Book of Mormon statements.

Dr. Gleason Archer has done an excellent job in listing a few of the anachronisms (something as happening in other than chronological, proper, or historical order) and historical inaccuracies in the Mormon scriptures (A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, pp. 501-504):

- 1) In 1 Nephi 2:5-8, it is stated that the river Laman emptied into the Red Sea. Yet neither in historic nor prehistoric times has there been any river in Arabia at all that emptied into the Red Sea.
- 2) According to Alma 7:10, Jesus was to be born at Jerusalem rather than in Bethlehem, as recorded in Luke 2:4 and predicted in Mic. 5:2.
- 3) Helaman 14:20, 27 states that darkness covered the whole earth for three days at the time of Christ's death (rather than 3 hours, as recorded in Mt. 27:45 and Mk. 15:33), or beyond Easter morning, which would have made it impossible for the woman at the tomb to tell whether the stone had been rolled away from its mouth.
- 4) Alma 46:15 indicates that believers were called "Christians" back in 73 BC rather than at Antioch, as Acts 11:26 informs us. It is difficult to imagine how anyone could have been labeled a Christian so many decades before Christ was even incarnated.
- 5) Even more remarkable is the abundance of parallels or word-for-word quotations from the New Testament which are found in the Book of Mormon, which was allegedly in the possession of the Nephites back in 600 B.C. Jerald and Sandra Tanner (The Case Against Mormonism, Vol 2, Salt Lake City, 1967, pp. 87-102) have listed no less than 400 clear examples out of a much larger number that could be used to confirm without question this premise that the author of the Book of Mormon was actually well acquainted with the New Testament, and specifically in the KJV of 1611; for example:
 - a. 1 Nephi 4:13 "That one man could perish than that a nation should perish in unbelief." Compare this with John 11:50: "That one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."
 - b. 1 Nephi 10:8 "Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." Compare this with John 1:27 "Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."
 - c. 1 Nephi 10:9 "In Bethabara beyond Jordan he should baptize." Compare this with John 1:28 "In Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."
 - d. 1 Nephi 11:27 "The Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove." Compare this with Luke 3:22 "The Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon him."

Most interesting is the exposed fraud of the so-called Book of Abraham, part of the Mormon scripture known as The Pearl of Great Price. This was assuredly translated from an ancient Egyptian papyrus found in the mummy wrappings of certain mummies which had been acquired by a certain Michael H. Chandler.

In 1835 Joseph Smith became very much interested in these papyrus leaves, which he first saw in Kirkland, Ohio, on July 3, and arranged for the purchase of both mummies and manuscripts. Believing he had divinely received the gift of interpreting ancient Egyptian, he was delighted to find that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham himself, whose signature he had personally inscribed in Egyptian.



In 1842, Smith published his translation under the title, "The Book of Abraham" in *Times and Seasons*. He even included three drawings of the pictures or vignettes appearing in the manuscript, and interpreted the meaning of these illustrations: Abraham sitting upon the throne of Pharaoh, the serpent with walking legs who tempted Eve in Eden. For many years this collection of papyri was lost, but somehow they (or else a duplicate set of them from

ancient times) were presented to the Mormon Church by the Metropolitan Art Museum of New York City on November 27, 1967. This made the translation skill of Joseph Smith susceptible of objective verification. The unhappy result was that earlier negative verdicts of scholars like Theodule Devaria of the Louvre, and Samuel A.B. Mercer of Western Theological Seminary, and James H. Breasted of the University of Chicago, and W.F. Flinders Petrie of London University (who had all been shown Smith's facsimiles) were clearly upheld by a multitude of present-day Egyptologists.

Their finding was that not a single word of Joseph Smith's alleged translation bore any resemblance to the contents of this document. It turned out to be a late, even Ptolemaic, copy in hieratic script of the *Sensen Papyrus*, which belongs to the same genre as the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.

As John A. Wilson, professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago, described it in a published letter written on March 16, 1966, it contains scenes familiar from the *Book of the Dead*. The first illustration shows the god of the embalming name Anubis preparing the body of the deceased for burial, with the soul hovering over his head in the form of a bird, and the canopic jars containing the dead man's internal organs set beneath his bier (a stand or bench on which a coffin is placed). The third picture shows the deceased led into the presence of Osiris, the infernal deity who judged the souls of the dead. This is what Smith had identified as Abraham sitting on Pharaoh's throne!

The accompanying text, as can be ascertained from other copies of this not uncommon document, deals with magical spells intended to open the mouth of the deceased and to prepare him for his audience before Osiris in the judgment hall of the dead. Needless to say, the completely mistaken concept of Joseph Smith as to his competence in ancient Egyptian is now clearly demonstrated to be beyond debate.

False Prophecies

The Mormon religion contains false prophecies. 2 Nephi 10:7, speaking of the Jews, predicts, "When the day cometh that they shall believe in me, that I am Christ, then have I covenanted with their fathers that they shall be restored in the flesh, upon the earth, unto the lands of their inheritance." The Jews are today back in their land, but do not believe that Jesus is the Christ. The prophecy is false.

Building the Temple in Zion

Joseph claimed that the Lord told him the Latter-day saints would build a temple in Zion (Jackson County, Missouri) during his generation. Zion would never be removed from its place. "This generation shall not all pass away until a house shall be built unto the Lord...upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed" [Doctrine and Covenants, 84:5, 31, September 1832]. "Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of place, for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there." [Doctrine and Covenants, 97:19, August 1833]

These two prophecies failed since a temple was never built at the "appointed" place. Moreover, two weeks before Joseph gave the prophecy that Zion would not be "moved out of her place" the Mormons were unceremoniously run out of Zion. Their printing presses were destroyed, and some of their leaders were tarred and feathered! Joseph was in Kirtland Ohio at that time and thus was ignorant of the situation in Jackson County, Missouri, when he uttered his prophecy. Later on that year Smith prophesied a return to Zion:

"Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered. They that remain and are pure in heart, shall return and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion – And all these things that the prophets might be fulfilled. And, behold, there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed for the work of the gathering of my saints- Until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them; and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion [Doctrine and Covenants 101:17-21, 1833]"

This is yet another false prophecy. It has been 180 years since this "revelation" was given and a temple still has not been built on that site. Joseph Smith said, "There is none other place appointed" and that it would be built during "his generation." He has failed all requirements of being a true prophet.

The God of the Bible never prophecies falsely; what He declares always comes to pass. Deuteronomy 13:1-4 and 18:18-22 gives us two best tests of a self-proclaimed prophet. Deuteronomy 13 warns that a prophet, even if his prophecies come true, must lead you to believe in the Lord God Almighty, the God of the Bible, or he is a false prophet. One who leads you to follow false gods is a false prophet and was to be stoned to death under the Old Testament theocracy.

Deuteronomy 18 warns that a prophet must be right about his prophecies every single time, or he is not a true prophet of God. The Mormon prophets fail the biblical tests of a prophet from God. Their prophecies are not from the Lord, and "the prophet has spoken presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him" (v.22).

Tips in Witnessing to Mormons

Mormons do their best to press the point that they are Christians like you and me; but at the end of the day, it should be said that Mormonism is very different in things that matter a lot. Instead of telling Mormons what they believe, or what they should believe, we should be asking them what they believe. This opens the door to show the key differences between Mormonism and Christianity. Being confrontational with Mormons, calling them a cult directly and Non-Christian will only drive them away and make them a martyr.

One thing that's important to understand about the Latter-day Saints is that there are levels of authoritative scripture. The scripture, including the Bible, Book of Mormon, etc. – every Mormon believes that. The second level is what leaders and officials of the Mormon Church have said in statements. The third level is printed curriculum, which depends on distribution, individual teaching and such. The fourth level is what can be called 'folk Mormonism;' some Mormons may believe it and some may not.

This is the level where beliefs about blacks, pre-existence, God's relationships when He dwelt on the earth, polygamy [come in]. We can't assume what any Mormon believes because of such a wide array of personal experiences. I can't know what a Mormon believes until I have a conversation with him or her.

Polygamy is something that has made Mormonism interesting to folks. But the mainstream LDS church disavows it. It is, however, deeply rooted in Mormon history – Joseph Smith introduced it. It's interesting to note that Warren Jeffs and people like him are more like Joseph Smith than the leaders of the mainstream church are.

Find common ground. Building a relationship takes time and effort. The first step is finding common ground. Active Mormons can be hard to get to know. Their relational needs are met through the ward (their local congregation). They may question your motives. There will be misunderstandings. Start slow. Don't begin by talking about religion, but take an interest in all of life. The family is a great place to build common ground. Share about your family and ask about theirs. Offer to do something together as a family, like snacks or a game night.

Ask questions and listen. Don't assume you know what "Mormons" believe or that your friend accepts every element of traditional Mormonism. You don't know what anyone believes or values until they tell you.

Serve your neighbor. Love is the soil in which seeds of truth grow. We demonstrate our love by acts of practical compassion. Offer to babysit or help with a yard project. This may lead to an invitation to come over for a cookout or to go to a movie or ballgame.

Learn to tell stories and speak of experiences. Mormonism is not mainly defined by theological statements of doctrine as much as it is by experiences and stories. Learn to frame your beliefs in story form rather than just a list of theological declarations. Tell your own story of how you have experienced the reality of Jesus in your life.

Be prepared to answer key LDS claims. At some point in a relationship, certain ideas will come up. Your LDS friend will assert certain central claims, including the idea that God guides the LDS church through revelation, that only the LDS church has authority to act in God's name; that Christianity fell away into a great apostasy after the first apostles died, and that the Book of Mormon is scripture. Learn at least some basic answers to these questions so you're ready when they come up.

Be sensitive about issues that offend Latter-day Saints. Avoid anything mocking or disrespectful. Mormons can be thin-skinned about criticism. They will get defensive if you mock Joseph Smith or the temple.

Be aware of terminology differences. Mormons use much of the same faith vocabulary that we do, but the same words often have different meanings for the two groups. We may assume that we are understanding each other or that we agree because we are not aware what the other party means when they use a certain word.

Major on Jesus and the good news of God's grace. We have a lot to offer Mormons. The point is not to tear down their faith or to get them to reject Mormonism. The point is to help them respond in faith to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Latter-day Saints need what we have to offer – the grace of Jesus Christ – so it's worth it to enter into a relationship with them to be able to share your faith with them. This takes perseverance, because it may take a long time to build trust. But when things go wrong, your Mormon friend has someone to turn to, and it opens the door for sharing your faith.

Keep in mind. It is imperative that you not get sucked into an emotionally charged discussion. Don't let yourself fall into anger. Remember, "*A gentle answer turns away wrath*" (Proverbs 15:1.) In contending for our faith, we must present the truth. Sometimes the truth can hurt, so it is imperative that we present the truth *with love*. Prayer is a power part of spiritual warfare- 2 Corinthians 4:3-5.

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

2 Timothy 2:24-26, "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."

Another important point to remember is that most Mormons lack a thorough knowledge of LDS doctrine. Many of the teachings that highlight the heretical nature of Mormonism, and call into question the authenticity of their prophets are not common knowledge among the faithful. There is an element of blind faith in Mormonism.

When challenged on matters of doctrine and theology, many Mormons do not have the doctrinal knowledge to make an intelligent argument or rebuttal. This is often the source of their anger and frustration. At this point, many Mormons will abandon any pretense of making a logical argument, and fall back on their testimony. Every Mormon has their "testimony" that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is true, and that the LDS Church is the only true church today. This testimony is often the result of the "burning of the bosom" that potential converts to Mormonism are told to await as a sign that the Book of Mormon is true. Every LDS ward (local church) conducts "Fast and Testimony" meetings on a regular basis to strengthen each person's reliance on his or her testimony. This is a purely subjective feeling upon which they can rely when rational thought fails.

Final Thoughts

When all the evidence is considered, the Mormon claim to be the restoration of Jesus Christ's church falls to the ground. We have taken up the challenge of Brigham Young who said, "Take up the Bible, compare the religion of the Latter-day Saints with it, and see if it will stand the test" [Journal of Discourses, Vol. 16, p. 46, 1873]. Orson Pratt echoed the same sentiment, "Convince us of our errors of Doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the Word of God and we will ever be grateful for the information and you will ever have the pleasing reflections that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings"[Seer, P15]. When Mormonism is weighed in the balances, it's found wanting.