

THE CULT OF MORMONISM

The beliefs, practices and history of Mormonism are confused, bizarre and often contradictory. Because of current efforts being made to win converts, it is a matter of concern that the truth is known.

1. Introduction

Mormonism is a religion. Its organisation is cultic and it is **not** a denomination of the Christian Church. It misleadingly calls itself 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints'. **Its teachings and practices conflict with and are antagonistic to the Christian Church.** Mormonism is in fact **incompatible** with the Christian faith and with Biblical teaching. They actively endeavour to lead people away from the Christian Church **and one of their prime objectives is its destruction.** These notes are a factual warning. Emanating from America, this very wealthy movement, based at Salt Lake City, to which their second leader originally led his followers, has opened a multi-million pound temple in Lancashire and is currently targeting the United Kingdom for new members.

2. What Mormons believe

Mormons have a confused belief in a **plurality of gods.** They believe there is a creator god who possesses a physical body and who was once human. They believe that human beings can become gods. They believe Jesus to be **the brother of Lucifer.** They believe that when we die we go to one of four destinations – the celestial which is the highest, limited to good Mormons, the terrestrial for those who have lived righteous lives and the testial for the unrighteous and hell for the hopelessly unrepentant. They practice **baptism on behalf of the dead in special temples**, where 'celestial marriages' are also carried out which claim to seal marriages for eternity. Much **secrecy** surrounds their temple ceremonies, to which the public and even many members of their own organisation are not admitted.. Originally they practised **polygamy** and also **precluded black people.** Under public pressure both of these practices were abandoned. Mormonism is essentially **male-orientated** and its male members are expected to be initiated into two so-called priesthoods – Aaron and Melchizedek. The founder and one of his followers, Oliver Cowdery, claimed that John the Baptist had appeared to them on the banks of the Susquehanna River and ordained them priests, and that they had also been visited by Jesus' disciples, Peter, James and John.

Although their beliefs bear little resemblance to Bible teaching or the practices of the Early Church, they have the audacity to claim to be a restoration of the Early Church and to proclaim a new dispensation. The early days of Mormonism were renowned for **controversy, conflict and often violence**, and various groupings divided from the main body. The largest of these is the so-called 'Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints'. The founder's widow refused to go with Brigham Young to Utah and settled in Missouri where the breakaway group, with its own doctrines, is now based.

Mormons today follow a strong health code, abstaining from tea, coffee, alcohol and tobacco. They are governed by a **hierarchical** structure of 'Prophets', 'Apostles' and others who wield great power.

3. The Mormon Founder

Like most of the new sects Mormonism was founded and led by a dominant individual – Joseph Smith, born in America in 1805. He exerted very considerable control over his followers. Many regarded

him as a man of **dubious morality**, and dishonest. His father-in-law described him as a liar and a cheat.

He had a vivid imagination and as a youth concocted tales of ancient civilisations. A proud man, he stated "**I have more to boast of than ever any man had.** I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam.... Neither Paul, John, Peter nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did a work as I". (History of the Church, Joseph Smith Vol.6. 408-9). When Smith endeavoured to join a local church he met with enormous opposition because he was deemed to be 'a practising Necromancer'.

Smith had **repeated sexual relationships** with women other than his wife, who did not approve of his behaviour.

Coming from an impoverished background, Smith had a **dubious record of handling money** and was in fact taken to court and fined for operating a bank and issuing currency illegally, which led to many people losing money.

Smith was aggressive towards his opponents and when a newspaper, the Nauvoo Expositor, claimed to expose gross immorality within the cult, he ordered his followers to smash the press, which led to his arrest and ultimate murder.

4. A Strange Story – A Developing Myth

Searching for buried treasure was a strange and widespread feature of folk culture in parts of North America. It was believed that certain people often using a 'peepstone' could be led to treasure. Both Smith and his father were involved in this searching. Smith developed a reputation for having special gifts in this direction, but in 1826 he was brought to trial for misrepresenting his ability to locate buried treasure on the charge of being '**a disorderly person and an impostor**'.

As a 14 year old boy Smith claimed to have met two spirits, supposedly God the Father and Jesus Christ. He said he was told that he must not join any of the churches because "**they are all wrong**" and all their creeds were an abomination in God the Father's sight. Three years later he met another spirit – Moroni – who led him to golden plates which were engraved with an account of people, who formerly lived on the American continent and which contained "**the fullness of the everlasting Gospel**". In due course he was allowed to remove the plates and two 'peepstones' provided by God and with them proceeded to translate what he saw. He said there were "two stones in silver bows" and these stones fastened to a breastplate constituted what he claimed to be the 'Urim' and 'Thummin'. Apparently God had prepared these stones for the purpose of helping Smith to translate the book.

The book propounded the myth that after his ascension **Christ went to North America**, and also that **tribes of Israel migrated to North America** centuries before Christ. Smith said he handed the plates back to Moroni and they vanished. There is absolutely no proof that they ever existed. The 'translation' was entitled The Book of Mormon, apparently after a General Mormon said to have lived in America about AD400 where he kept the records of his ancestors and then entrusted them to his son Moroni who buried them in the ground.

5. A Strange Book

Today the Mormons regard this book, first published in 1830, as the **word of God, given directly and without any error in it**. They place the Book of Mormon above the Bible. Surprisingly, however, they have themselves made hundreds of alterations to it since it was published. Although it is claimed that the Book of Mormon was buried in AD428, it **contains thousands of words verbatim from the AD1611 King James version of the Bible!** The words of Jesus, John, Paul, Peter and others are put into the mouths of people who lived centuries before Christ. Mormons state the original text was in Reformed Egyptian. **There is no evidence anywhere in the world that a language such as “reformed Egyptian” was ever actually spoken or written.**

Many of the ‘records’ in the book are preposterous. Alma 7.10 claims that Jesus was to be born in Jerusalem rather than in Bethlehem. Alma 46.15 claims that the title ‘Christian’ was used in 73BC i.e. before Christ was even born.

The Book of Mormon tells of two ancient races, both former inhabitants of America. The first of these supposedly left the Tower of Babel at 2250 BC trekking across Europe and entering America by the eastern coast. The second allegedly left Jerusalem around 600 BC crossing the Pacific Ocean and entering on the west coast of America. The first group Jaredites were destroyed through corruption and their civilisation collapsed. The second group comprising two tribes, the Nephites and the Lamanites died away through internecine warfare at about AD 241. At that time the documents, largely written by Nephi, a Jew who lived in Jerusalem at about 600 BC, were supposed to have been deposited in America. **There are no records of the places and people referred to in the Book of Mormon in existence.** The book has all the characteristics of a fictional document.

No historical or archaeological evidence whatsoever of these journeys made by these two groups exists anywhere in the world.

6. Further ‘Revelations’

Smith claimed to have received many revelations. These were spelt out in two books which are now regarded by Mormons as sacred and which form the basis of their doctrines.

The first – The Book of Commandments – now known as ‘Doctrine and Covenants’ was the first public collection of revelations Smith claimed to have received during and after the translation of the Book of Mormon and was published in 1833. These included **new beliefs with no biblical foundation** such as ‘Baptism for the Dead’ and ‘Celestial Marriage’. The second book – ‘The Pearl of Great Price’ contains the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham, parts of Smith’s translation of the Bible and other documents including ‘Articles of Faith’ and the History of Joseph Smith.

The Book of Abraham was Smith’s ‘translation’ of Egyptian papyri which he bought in 1835. Smith claimed that some of this was written by Abraham while he was in Egypt and another by Joseph the son of Jacob. **The translations are now seen to be fraudulent.**

7. Mormon Documents Challenged

After Smith’s death his family sold the papyri which he had originally bought and these were ultimately lodged in a Chicago museum. In 1967 these manuscripts, believed to have been lost or destroyed, were given to the Mormons by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These included the original document which Smith claimed to have translated. An intensive assessment of these was carried out by Professor D. Nelson, an internationally known Egyptologist.

In 1975 Professor Nelson, himself a Mormon, wrote to the Mormon leader renouncing his faith and stating that his own translation of the texts **“amply prove the fraudulent nature of the Book of Abraham**, in which lies the unjust assertion that Negroes are unworthy of participation in the highest privileges of the LDS church”. On behalf of his family he said “we do not wish to be associated with a religious organisation which teaches lies and adheres to policies so blatantly opposed to the civil and religious rights of some citizens of the United States”. In view of the fact that this is the only work from Smith which can be studied on the basis of the original document, this is a damning indictment.

The early Mormons claimed that Professor Charles Anthony of Columbia University had validated the Smith translation of the Book of Mormon, but in February 1834 Professor Anthony wrote **“the whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be ‘reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics’ is perfectly false”**. Referring to the paper copies handed to him he concluded **“it was all a trick, perhaps a hoax”** and he referred to the Mormons as ‘wretched fanatics’.

Duncan Strong of the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University in New York City said in 1957 of the Book of Mormon – **“The book is untrue biblically, historically and scientifically”**.

In 1979 the respected Smithsonian Institution in Washington stated of the Book of Mormon, “Smithsonian archaeologists see no direct connection between the archaeology of the new world and the subject matter of the book.....**no reputable Egyptologist or other specialist in Old World archaeology and no expert on New World pre-history has discovered or confirmed any relationship between archaeological remains in Mexico and archaeological remains in Egypt.**

8. Mormonism, God and Polytheism

In countless ways Mormonism is in direct conflict with Biblical teaching. The Bible and the Church equally proclaim that there is only one God. However Smith stated “I wish to declare...when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the **plurality of gods**” (History of the Church 6.474). He also said “there are Lords many and Gods many” and “our God is just as subject to still higher intelligencies as we should be to him” (The Words of Joseph Smith p299).

The Mormons reject the concept of the all-powerful changeless God of the Bible and **claim “God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man,...”** (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith pg. 345).

The Mormons clearly replace the Monotheism of the Bible with their own brand of Polytheism – “in the beginning the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people in it” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith pg. 349).

There is much confusion in Mormon thinking about God the Creator. They believe – “Our Father Adam...helped to make and organise the world” (Journal of Discourses 1.50).

The Bible is clear “The Lord our God, the Lord is One” (Deut. 6.4). Mormons put forward the contrary view – “Gods exist, and we had better strive to be prepared to be one with them”. (Brigham Young ‘Journal of Discourses Vol.7, p.238).

The leading Mormon Orson Pratt stated– “in the Heaven, where our spirits were born, **there are many gods**, each one of whom has his own wife or wives which were given to him previous to his redemption, while yet in his mortal state”. (The Seer p. 37).

Where as Jesus clearly stated “God is Spirit” (John 4.24) the Mormons go so far as to suggest that God the Father “has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s” (Doctrine and Covenants 130.22). Their Apostle Bruce McConkie wrote “The greatest heresy found in Christendom is that God is a spirit” (The Millennial Messiah p.77).

Christians accept the Biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit is a **living person**, but Mormons state there is a **“divine substance**, fluid or essence, called Spirit, widely diffused among these eternal elements... This divine element, or Spirit, is immediate, active or controlling agent in all holy miraculous powers....”. (Parley P. Pratt, ‘Key to the Science of Theology’)

The Bible tells of a God who is eternal and unchanging but, Joseph Smith said “We have imagined and supposed that God was god from all eternity. I will refute that idea.” **“You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves...”** King Follett Discourse pg 8-10. This is in contrast to Malachi 3.6 “for I am the Lord, I change not.”

The Mormons have a strange understanding of the nature of the particular God to whom they relate. Lorenzo Snow, 5th President of the Mormon Church said “As man is, God was once; as God is, man may become”. (Millennial Star, 54.405).

9. Mormons vilify Christians

Brigham Young who took over the leadership of the Mormons after Smith's death, maintained the antagonism to Christianity. He said "every spirit that does not confess that God has sent Joseph Smith, and revealed the everlasting Gospel to and through him is of Antichrist". He also said, "when the light came to me I saw that all the so-called Christian world was grovelling in darkness" (Journal of Discourses 5.73). **"The Christian world, so-called, are heathens as to the knowledge of the salvation of God"**. (Journal of Discourses 8.171).

The third president of the Mormon church, John Taylor, declared "what does the Christian world know about God? Nothing, why, so far as the things of God are concerned they are the veriest of fools; they know neither God nor the things of God." (Journal of Discourses 13.225).

10. Mormons denounce the Church

Mormonism rejects the totality of Christian witness in all the centuries and is strongly antagonistic to Christian churches today. Their "apostle", Orson Pratt said "all other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God; and any person who receives Baptism or the Lord's Supper from their hands highly offends God, for **He looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people. Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the 'whore of Babylon' whom the Lord denounces"**. (The Seer. p255).

11. Mormons claim to be the 'real church'

Incorporated in their publication 'Doctrine and Covenants' is the statement that Mormonism is **"the only true and living church on the face of the whole earth**, with which I, the Lord am well pleased....". They claim that the Gospel of Christ was not preached from the end of the Apostolic Age until Joseph Smith arrived. Joseph Smith was once asked, "will everybody be damned but Mormons?" His answer was "yes".

12. Mormons refute Christian teaching

The teaching of the Bible and the Church is clearly that we are saved by grace – "it is by grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2.5). In spite of this Spencer Kimbell, the twelfth President of the Mormon Church wrote **"one of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation....."**. (The teachings of Spencer Kimbell, P70).

Mormons put great emphasis on works and Elder Parry went so far as to say "the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a **system of rules** by complying with which salvation may be obtained". (Scrapbook)

The status and place of the individual in eternity is, they believe, the outcome of our personal effort and not Christ's sacrifice. (See 'Why I am a Mormon p.191)

In the Acts of the Apostles it is clearly stated of Jesus "salvation is found in **no one else**, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4.12). Mormons, however, declare there is "no salvation **without accepting Joseph Smith**" (Doctrines of Salvation 109).

13. Mormons brand Christ a polygamist

There is no evidence in the Bible or elsewhere that Jesus was anything other than a single man. Mormons teach, **without any Biblical or historical evidence**, that not only was Jesus married, but he was in fact a polygamist. One of their past 'apostles' Jedediah M Grant said, "the grand reason why the gentiles and philosophers of his school persecuted Jesus Christ, was because he had so many wives". (Journal of Discourses 1.345). Another past 'apostle' Orson Pratt said "from a passage in the forty-fifth Psalm, it will be seen that the great Messiah who was the founder of the Christian religion, was a polygamist..." (The Seer P172).

14. Mormon Leaders Claim Infallibility

Brigham Young made the amazing statement "no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the Celestial Kingdom of God **without the consent of Joseph Smith**". (Journal of Discourses 7.289)

All the inspired utterances of leaders of Mormonism are considered as the word of God, to be believed without question.

George Miller the presiding Bishop of the 'Church' attended a governing council in 1844 and said **"in this council we ordained Joseph Smith as king on earth"**. (Joseph Smith – Hill pg 368).

Mormons have been told "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan it is God's plan".

15. Temple Secrecy

Much **secrecy** surrounds the ceremonies and rituals in Mormon temples. This is derived from the fact that Smith, together with many other early Mormons, was a Freemason and there is an oath-bound secrecy at their ceremonies. Alphonse Cerza, a Masonic historian, reported that by 1843 there were five Mormon Masonic Lodges at Nauvoo, all of which were ultimately suspended for irregularities in conduct.

Masonic symbols are displayed in the Temple and undergarments bearing special signs and 'sacred markings' are given in the Temple, to be worn by those who have been initiated. There are also secret handshakes, and names are given which must never be divulged.

Mormons are very reluctant to disclose what happens in their Temple activities. This inevitably raises fundamental questions about the cult.

Mormonism contrasts markedly with the openness of Christian services and church life. Jesus said "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known" (Luke 12.2). We are also warned – "He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness...." (1 Corinthians 4.5).

16. Polygamy

The founder of Mormonism overturned the traditional Christian approach to family, marriage and children, by introducing polygamy into his religion. This inevitably caused outrage, particularly as he stated that this was God's will revealed to him. He used a threat to coerce his wife to accept this. Smith claimed to have received a special word for his wife to say that she must readily receive the additional wives that have been given to her husband and that if she didn't she would suffer everlasting destruction". (Doctrine & Covenants Section 132 v 52-54)

Smith claimed to have received a revelation sanctioning polygamy in 1843. This brought him and his followers into disrepute and also into conflict with the Federal Government and in 1890 after direct government intervention, the President of the Mormons advised his followers to conform to the law. **It is significant that although the real reason for this radical change in Mormon behaviour was political, Mormons were told that this change was a further revelation from God**.

17. Racial Discrimination

For most of its existence Mormonism has practised racial discrimination. In recent years Mormons have been forced to modify their doctrines. Their founder was very clear. He said "There is a reason why one man is born black and **with other disadvantages**, while another is born white with great advantages. The reason is that we once had an estate before we here, and were obedient, more or less, to the laws that were given us there. Those who were faithful in all things there received greater blessings here, and those who were not faithful received less". (Joseph Fielding Smith – Doctrines of Salvation' p.61).

Mormons were adamant that black people could not receive God's blessing – "From the days of the Prophet Joseph even until now, it has been the doctrine of the Church, never questioned by any of the Church leaders, that Negroes are not entitled to the full blessing of the Gospel". (Written by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church 17.7.47).

Black people were clearly barred from roles in their organisation – "Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood: under no circumstances can they hold the delegation of authority from the Almighty...Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned." (Bruce R. McConkie, of the Mormon Council of the Seventy).

Bible teaching contrasts starkly with this. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3.28) "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him". (Romans 10.12)

Mormons shamefully practised racial discrimination until comparatively recently. **As in the case of polygamy, they were forced to bow down to public pressure, but similarly attributed their change of direction to a revelation from God.**

18. Mormons and the Bible

Smith said "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts than by any other book" (Teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith).

Joseph Smith, asserted that there were fundamental inaccuracies in the translations of the King James Bible and took it upon himself to alter the text of Scripture, producing his own 'Inspired Version'. In Article 8 of the Articles of Faith Mormons say, "we believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.....". However, an important Mormon author maintains "if we had no Bible, we would still have all the needed direction and information through the revelation of the Lord to his servants, the prophets in these latter days" (A Marvellous Work and A Wonder, Legrande Richards p1).

19. Mormons and False Prophecy

Many Smith prophecies proved to be false. For example he pronounced that God told him that the Mormons would build a temple in Zion (Jackson County, Missouri) during his generation. (Doctrine & Covenants 84.5, 31 – 1832). **This never happened.**

20. The Promise and Warnings of Jesus

Jesus promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church (Matt. 16.18). This promise has been fulfilled mightily in all the centuries in the life of the Church. This is in spite of persecution, division and the activities of breakaway cults.

Mormons would have us believe that for 1400 years there was neither true church nor sacraments on earth.

Jesus clearly stated "watch out that no-one deceives you. For many will come in my name claiming 'I am the Christ' and will deceive many" (Matt. 24.4). He forewarned "many will turn away from the faith" (Matt. 24.10) and "many false prophets will appear" (Matt. 24.11). He warned against 'false Christs' who would deceive even Christians.

21. New Testament Warnings

From the beginning the Church has been subject to attack and corruption of truth – "the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4.3). "They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4.4). "Some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Tim. 4.1). We are strongly urged – "stand firm and hold to the teachings..." (2 Thess. 2.15).

22. The Dangers of Division

Jesus prayed to the Father that His followers should be **ONE** (John 17). Most of the new religions such as Mormonism, use Christian language but, in fact seek to divide and ultimately destroy the Christian Church.

Christians are called to be **ONE** Body, **ONE** Flock, **ONE** Family, **ONE** Army, branches of the **ONE** Vine. There have always been destructive forces at work actively seeking to divide and destroy the Church of Christ. In Ephesians 4.3 we are urged "be eager to preserve that unity which the Spirit can give, a unity in which you are bound together in a perfect relationship with one another".

In the Early Church – "all the believers were one in heart and mind" (Acts 4.32)..

23. A Warning

Large numbers of people are today turning towards the new cults and religions

It is particularly surprising that so many have been drawn into Mormonism, in the light of its insecure foundations. Outwardly it appears to be socially acceptable and it undoubtedly fosters close community relationships and good moral standards..

We must, however remember the warning of Jesus "watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matt. 71.5)

A high proportion of all Mormons were originally members of Christian churches and there is a need to recognise that many of them were unfulfilled in their faith. Clearly Christian teaching in the Churches has to some extent failed. There is a need today to teach and proclaim the basic irreducible truth of the Gospel. There is an equal need to express the Gospel in loving communities which are totally devoted to the way of Jesus. The Mormons clearly present themselves as honest, clean living and hardworking people.

Mormons must at all times be respected and loved, but it must be recognised that the organisation of which they are a part, is today mounting a very serious assault upon the Christian faith and Church.

24. Two Testimonies

I was a Mormon for over 20 years, but now I am a Christian. I was attracted to the life within Mormonism because it appeared to be genuine and healthy and I really believed it to be a Christian movement. By God's grace I was led to the Lord after joining a Christian Bible Study group and the truth about Mormonism unfolded. I was appalled at the deception of this 'counterfeit' church. I learned that Jesus Christ alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. Contrary to Mormon teaching I discovered that I did not have to work my way to heaven. I discovered that the acceptance of Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour was a free gift from God, the Father.

Although those Mormons who go to the temple wear the so-called Temple Robe, I discovered that the Lord has given me a robe of righteousness. Contrary to the Mormon teachings I discovered that my name is written in the book of life and I am now filled with the continuing peace of Jesus in my life.

My doubts about Mormonism – the so-called 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' – started when I saw the rejection of a black man from holding position in the 'church'. I suddenly realised that something was not right. I thank God that after much searching, I found faith through the ministry of a black evangelist. I now have the blessing of sharing with Christians of many different traditions in the one Family of God – the Church of Christ. (Veronica Holroyd)

I was a Mormon for 18 years, but now my Christian faith is the most important part of my life. Some of the intentions of the Mormons originally appear to be good but human influences distorted them. The Mormons told me that God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit were separate entities. The Mormons taught me that if there was anything that I could not believe or explain, I should just trust their leaders. (Roy Jenkins)

25. Conclusion

During the past 200 years we have seen the emergence of countless new religions and cults, many of them originating in North America. Teachers, gurus and people claiming to be prophets have abounded. Most of them claim, that they alone, possess the truth. MOST of them deny the basic teachings of Jesus and the Bible. Most of them strongly oppose the Christian Church.

It is important that Christians respect those of other religions who are sincere and well-meaning. It is equally important that they are shown the love and truth, manifest in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World.