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Cults (Part 2) - Mormonism



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg presents a case for why Mormonism should be considered a cult. He argues that Mormonism deviates significantly from Christian doctrine while claiming to be Christian, and relies on an authority above scripture for spiritual guidance. The history and authoritative sources of Mormon beliefs point to a different source of authority, and their theology directly contradicts Christianity. Gregg also highlights concerns over the integrity of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, and critiques the theological teachings and practices of the Mormon Church.

Transcript

Today we're going to talk about the Mormon Church and its beliefs. We talked last time about cults in general. I didn't have notes to give you on that occasion, though a tape was made of it, and I can duplicate those tapes for anyone who missed it and might want to get a hold of that information.

Last time I talked about what cults are, and how they are related to the Mormon Church. The Mormon Church is a cult. It constitutes a cult.

We will find that by the definitions of a cult that we talked about last time, the Mormon Church definitely qualifies for that label. The two things that mainly make up a cult are doctrines that deviate significantly from Christian doctrine, and yet claim to be Christian. In that, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Mormons, and the Christian science, and formerly the Worldwide Church of God, and some of the other American homegrown cults that have been very persuasive in the past century and a half in America, would qualify as cults because all of them deny basic Christian beliefs about something very important, usually the nature of God, or whether Christ is God, or some other important issue like that.

Almost always they have a different opinion of how people are saved than that which is taught in the Bible, and so cults can be identified by their doctrinal deviation from normal Christianity. But they also have another thing in common, and that is a sociological aspect of cults, and that is that people in cults look to an authority above

Scripture for their spiritual guidance. Usually an individual, a founder, or an organization.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, it's an organization more than an individual. The Mormons, it's now an organization, but of course the founder, Joseph Smith, is regarded to be an infallible prophet, and one of the ways that you become a Mormon in good standing is by acknowledging that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and that the Book of Mormon, which he wrote, is the Word of God. And although Mormons say they believe in the Bible, and they do to a certain extent honor the Bible, they have other books that they place at least on the same status as the Bible, and I would say they actually place above the Bible.

Because in discussions with Mormons, my experience has been, and I think most people have found it so, that you can show them all you want what the Bible teaches, contrary to their views, they'll still believe their views because they trust the Book of Mormon more than they trust the Bible. And that's where you find the sociological dynamic of a cult, when a group of people relate to each other on the basis of submission to some authority other than God, other than the Bible and the Word of God. I have in these notes I've given you three areas I'd like to discuss.

I want to talk about the history of the Mormon Church, I want to talk about the authoritative sources of Mormon beliefs, and I want to talk about their doctrines. Now, after we cover the history of the Mormon Church, the authoritative sources of Mormon beliefs will point out that the Mormon Church really does have a different source of authority than the Scripture, and in that respect qualifies as a cult rather than a true Christian Church. And then after that, the Mormon theology would show that their theology is contrary to Christianity.

So on both counts, theological and sociological, the Mormon Church truly is a cult. Now, of course, Mormons call their church the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And as such, they obviously claim to be not only a Christian denomination, but they claim to be the church, the only true church.

Now, most Mormons today, just like most Roman Catholics today, have backed away from the stronger claims of earlier generations. The Roman Catholic Church, its official position used to be that if you weren't under the Pope and if you weren't in the Roman Catholic Church, you were damned. You were anathematized.

You couldn't be saved. Since Vatican II Council, a relatively recent Catholic ecumenical council, the Catholic Church changed its tone about such things. And basically they say, well, Protestants are separated brethren and they can be saved if they are truly ignorant of the truths of the Roman Catholic Church.

In other words, if we reject Catholicism because of our ignorance of it being true, they're willing to extend some grace to us. Mormonism has gone through a similar change to that. When Mormonism first began, Joseph Smith said that God appeared to him and told

him that all the churches and all the denominations were an abomination to God.

And that all their teachings, all their doctrines were an abomination to God. Now, in so saying, obviously, if Joseph Smith and the Mormons are going to be true to that original statement, which was allegedly told to Joseph Smith by God, then all other churches are cults or worse. And only the Mormon Church, which professes to be the one that God established through Joseph Smith, that would be the only true church.

All other churches would be heretical abominations. However, modern Mormons don't usually take that tone toward other groups. The Mormon Church has in recent times really tried to present itself as a mainstream Christian denomination.

And they often wonder, say, why do you Christians treat us like we're a cult? Why don't you just accept us like you do other denominations? And yet, that is not historic Mormon viewpoint. The reason that Christians don't accept Mormonism is because unlike Methodism or Presbyterianism or Lutheranism or Pentecostalism or Baptist theology, all of which have the same gospel and the same God, Mormonism doesn't have the same gospel or the same God, nor the same source of authority. Joseph Smith, who I've already mentioned, was the originator of the Mormon Church, was born in 1805 in Sharon, Vermont.

And in his childhood, his family moved to Palmyra, New York, where he lived at the time that he started the church, about 20 years later. At age 15, he claimed to have seen the Father and the Son. He was in the woods praying about which church he should join.

Allegedly, this is how he tells his own story in the book *The Pearl of Great Price*. He was out in the woods praying and asking God to show him which church to join. And two personages, as he put it, appeared to him.

One motioned to the other and said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Thus, obviously, identifying one as the Father and one as the Son, Jesus Christ. And Joseph Smith says that he asked God at that time, which sect, that's the word he used, which sect, meaning which denomination, did God want him to join? And that's when the Father said to him, supposedly, don't join any of them.

They're all an abomination to me and all their doctrines are abomination. And he said, they have, as Joseph Smith quotes God on this, he said, these people draw near to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And therefore, they worship me in vain, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.

Obviously, quoting Isaiah, which Jesus also quoted about the Pharisees. But apparently, God allegedly quoted that same verse to Joseph Smith about all the churches. Now, Joseph Smith was then commissioned to be the founder of the one restored true gospel.

The gospel, of course, of the New Testament was regarded to be the true gospel, but

believed to be mistranslated and misinterpreted and lost, essentially, to the church for centuries. And Joseph was the one who was to restore the true gospel to the church. This is what he thought.

Now, of course, no one was present except Joseph Smith at this alleged meeting with God the Father and God the Son. This is something he merely claimed. And in this respect, Mormonism is like certain other religions in that the founders claim they had divine visitations or special revelation, but no one can confirm it.

Islam is a major world religion that has this, is based on a similar claim. Muhammad claims that the archangel Gabriel appeared to him and gave him the Koran, and therefore claims that Islam is a divinely ordained religion. But no one can confirm this.

No one else was there, if it happened at all. Now, you might say, well, Steve, you were even giving credence at all to the possibility that Joseph had a vision like that? Well, there's two possibilities. One is that he lied, and that is entirely possible.

Joseph Smith, you'll read his story of his life in his own words in the book *The Pearl of Great Price*, one of the holy books of the Mormon Church. But the known history of Joseph Smith from his childhood and his youth, from contemporary sources, from people who knew him when he was growing up, is very different than the story as he tells it. His family in Palmyra, New York, was not very well respected in the community.

They were poor, for one thing, which is not really a strike against them in God's book, but they were poor and unintelligent, really. Joseph Smith had a reputation of just being really unintelligent. In fact, the people of his town were really amazed once he started the Mormon Church that he had so much imagination, as they thought he was really a dull person.

But his father and he were in the business of helping people find lost objects. This is before he claimed that as revelation. When people had lost objects, they would sometimes come to his father or him, and they would find them by use of an occult form of divination.

They called them peep stones. They'd take these stones, I don't know if they were special kinds of stones or if any stone would do, but they'd put a stone in a hat, put the hat over their face, and be guided by this stone, and they'd find these lost objects. Now, insofar as they really found lost objects, I don't know how this would apparently be demonic.

If it was all a big fake, you know, and they somehow they faked it, then it was just a big hoax. And in any case, we know this, although Joseph Smith doesn't mention this in his autobiography, that he and his dad were involved in fortune telling and the occult in his youth before he ever dreamed of starting a religion. Now, when Joseph Smith did start a

religion, we don't know whether he did it as a charlatan, just faking that in claiming that he had seen God.

It's possible that he could lie, obviously, since he was not necessarily the man of the highest possible integrity. But it's also possible that he was deceived if he'd already had dealings with demons through the peep stones and so forth. He might well have been subject to demonic delusions.

Now, we know that Paul said something in Galatians 1, 8 that's relevant to this. When Paul is saying that other gospels were being preached by persons that Paul did not approve of, and that the Galatians were tending to go after false gospels, in this particular case, Jewish legalism, Paul said in Galatians 1, verses 8 and 9, But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than that which you have received, let him be accursed.

Paul even mentions the possibility of an angel from heaven. Now, of course, Paul did not intend to suggest that a real angel from heaven would ever preach a different gospel. But even if he did, just don't listen to him.

But he was intending to say that if a messenger who appears to you to be a messenger from heaven, preaches a different gospel, don't believe it because he really isn't one. In 2 Corinthians 11, verse 14, Paul said, And no wonder, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Now, we know that Satan himself is able to present himself to human eyes as if he were a divine messenger, an angel of light. And Paul anticipated that some might even claim that an angel from heaven had preached some other gospel to them than that which had historically been taught by Paul and the apostles. He said, don't believe it, let them be accursed if they teach that.

Furthermore, we do know that there are demons and that many cults have been started by people who were involved with demonism. Joseph Smith was involved with demonism in his earlier years and therefore he may well have seen a demonic apparition that truly deceived him. He may have been himself deceived and believed that he was starting the true church.

Or the alternative is he didn't see anything and he only claimed that he saw something because he wanted to start a cult. Why would he want to do that? But why would anyone want to start a cult? Usually it means power, prestige, access to women, money. All these things really appealed to Joseph Smith.

Apparently he had many wives at the same time. He taught that God had showed him

that polygamy was a good thing and he was one to practice what he preached. He was a powerful man during the years that he led the Mormon church.

For 14 years he was the infallible prophet. He ruled with an iron hand the Mormon communities. No one was allowed to disagree with him.

There are people who are attracted to power like that. There are people who are attracted to the perks of being the leader of a religious organization. It is said of L. Ron Hubbard who started the cult Scientology that he was once interviewed.

He was a science fiction writer. He wrote a lot of science fiction before he started his cult. Someone once asked him in an interview, if you wanted to make a quick multi-million dollar killing, what would you do? He said, I would start a religion.

Later on he did and he made his millions. There are many reasons why a person might lie. I don't know that Joseph Smith lied.

He might have been simply deluded by a vision that he thought was really a vision of God, but was really a demonic thing. Or he might have just made it all up. We don't know.

We may never know. But we do know that what he saw was not God. Because the gospel that was preached through him later on was not the gospel of the Bible.

That alleged vision in the woods occurred when he was 15 years old. Later, although I'm not sure of the exact year, a few years later, he claimed that he had gotten the Golden Bible, which was really some gold tablets with writing on them in a foreign language. The language, said Joseph Smith, was reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics.

And these were found in a box buried on a mountaintop or a hilltop in Palmyra, New York. It just happens that he was happily fortunate enough to be living in this town where these gold plates had allegedly been buried. He was directed to these gold plates by an angelic messenger that appeared in his bedroom named Moroni.

And Moroni led him out to this hilltop and showed him where to dig. And he found this box with the gold tablets in it. And it reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics.

In the box were also the Urim and the Thummim, by which Joseph Smith found himself miraculously able to translate the gold tablets. Now, there's several problems with this story. I should say, after he translated it, the angel Moroni took the gold tablets and took them away and hid them somewhere.

So, there's several problems with this story. One of the problems with the story is that there never has been known to scholars to have ever existed a language called reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics. There is no such language known to linguists.

Secondly, when he translated these, he did not translate them into contemporary English. He can translate them into King James English, which was not the English spoken in his day, any more than it was the English spoken in 1611 when the translation was made. The King James English was not the language of King James himself or of his generation.

It was the language of a century earlier. It was the literary English in those days. It was not the spoken English of 1611, but it certainly was not spoken in 1830 by anybody.

And what's remarkable is that when he did translate this, there were whole passages out of the King James Bible verbatim in the Book of Mormon. When he translated these gold tablets, what he came up with was the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is written in shoddy, cheap imitation King James English.

Anyone who reads the King James Bible and then reads the Book of Mormon will recognize that the Book of Mormon is written by someone who doesn't really know King James English very well, but he's read the King James Bible somewhat, and he's trying to imitate the style. But it's really a cheap imitation. The only time that it really equals it is where there are whole chapters in the King James Bible just transposed word for word in the Book of Mormon.

The whole Sermon on the Mount, for example, is taken right out of the King James Bible and put in there. In fact, there's quite a few verses from the King James Bible that Joseph Smith copied into the Book of Mormon, which he claimed was translated from Egyptian hieroglyphics, which certain verses he actually included from the King James are... There's some dispute now among scholars as to whether they are authentic verses or whether they come from manuscripts that are open to question. In any case, why a supernatural ability would be given to translate a document from one ancient language into another ancient language, from Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics into King James English, is a mystery, and it makes the story seem rather untrue.

The fact that no one ever saw these plates, and Moroni took them and hid them, one might wonder at the motives of Moroni in taking these away and hiding them when presenting them publicly might have been one of the more convincing ways to show that they really existed. Joseph Smith's motives for claiming they were taken away are not so hard to guess at, since he wouldn't have them to present. But the fact is the gold tablets disappeared after Joseph Smith translated them into the Book of Mormon.

Now, the story of the Book of Mormon, I'll talk about that later, what's in the Book of Mormon later on, but there's another problem, and that is there were several witnesses that originally signed a document swearing that they had seen the gold plates before Moroni took them away. Later, all of these same witnesses said under oath that they'd never seen them. So, there's certain problems associated with the origins of this religion and the revelation that came to Joseph Smith.

The Urim and the Thummim, which were in the box that helped him translate them, supposedly, I don't know if Joseph Smith knew what the Urim and the Thummim were. In the Old Testament, the priest had two stones called the Urim and the Thummim that were in a bag that he wore on his chest called the breastplate on his ephod. These were in some way used by the high priest for ascertaining the will of God.

Scholars do not know exactly how they were used. The words Urim and the Thummim mean something like lights and excellencies or something like that in the Hebrew. Some people believe that maybe one was black and one was white and they just kind of like drawing straws would draw one to get a yes answer or no answer and they determined it's like drawing lots.

That's how they knew God's will. Some feel there was something maybe even supernatural about the Urim and the Thummim. No one knows.

It's never explained in the Scripture. However, there's no occasion in the Scripture that gives any impression that the Urim and the Thummim were some kind of magical way to translate documents from one language into another. I don't think Joseph Smith knew what they were either.

But anyway, he did publish the Book of Mormon in 1830 and he claimed that Moroni had taken him out and found these gold plates and he had done the translation work and Moroni had taken the plates away. He founded the church on April 6th. Yesterday was the anniversary, 170th anniversary of the founding of the Mormon Church.

We should have had our meeting then. But it was April 6th, 1830 by Joseph Smith and five of his close friends. He led the church for 14 years as the unchallengeable prophet.

In the early years, the church was somewhat persecuted. Maybe partly because of their obnoxious opinions of all the other churches and their condemnation of them all. And maybe because Joseph Smith got a revelation from God that they were supposed to practice polygamy which was something that was not sanctioned in Christian countries.

I mean, Muslims practice it and some other tribal peoples practice it. But Christian nations have not allowed men to have multiple wives at any time in Christian history. But Joseph Smith and his followers began to practice polygamy.

That was probably the main reason they were persecuted. They were driven out of town, out of New York. Originally, they moved to Kirtland, Ohio.

Then they moved to Independence, Missouri. And then because of further persecution, they moved and established a Mormon colony or Mormon community in Nauvoo, Illinois. But even being in a separated community wasn't safe for them from persecution.

Joseph and his brother Hyrum were arrested and put in jail in Carthage, Illinois in 1844

after he had led the church for 14 years. As they were awaiting trial in jail, an angry mob of local townspeople broke into the jailhouse and shot Joseph and Hyrum and they were killed. Which of course only solidified their reputation as martyrs in the Mormon church.

And now they're respected even more by the Mormons because he was not only a prophet but now a martyred prophet. The church leadership was assumed after that by Brigham Young who was just a little bit older than Joseph Smith. He was born about four years earlier than Joseph Smith.

And he took over the church and succeeded Smith as the guiding prophet of the movement. In 1846, Brigham Young took all the Mormon community and they migrated west looking for the promised land. And as I understand it, Brigham Young was going to know by revelation when they had found the promised land.

And it's a good thing he had the powers of revelation because you would have never recognized it if you'd been there. This waste desert out in the Salt Lake Basin in what was then the Utah Territory was not yet a state. It was just this vast, dried desert.

It turned out to be the land flowing with milk and honey. Brigham Young discovered. And so they settled there.

And Brigham Young was a powerful and terrifying leader. During his lifetime, the colony in Salt Lake, Utah was governed with an iron hand by Brigham Young who himself had, I forget how many, twenty-something wives I believe. Many, many grandchildren and many children.

But there are some stories, true stories about Brigham Young that Mormons don't tell very often. One is the story of what's called the Mountain Meadow Massacre. And that was a situation where certain non-Mormon immigrants were passing through Utah on their way westward.

And they came near enough to the Mormon settlement to be under their scrutiny. And Brigham Young sent a group of armed Mormon men out to meet them. And they disarmed the settlers and promised to accompany them through the territory.

But at a certain signal, the Mormon men turned and shot and killed all of the men in the caravan. And I don't remember, as I recall, I think they took the women for themselves and brought them back to Salt Lake. I think they were running low on wives.

And so I think they kept the women for themselves, but they killed all the men in cold blood. That's called the Mountain Meadow Massacre. It's well-established history.

It's not a bit of anti-Mormon propaganda. It was under Brigham Young's orders. In Utah, they had a secret society called the Avenging Angels.

And this was under Brigham Young's leadership also. And if anybody was heard to even suggest any negative suspicions about Brigham Young or the leadership of the church, these people mysteriously tended to disappear from their homes and were never seen again because the Avenging Angels, some vigilante Mormon group, was terribly feared. Although it's a fictional account, it's quite realistic historic fiction.

If you ever read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's story, was it Study in Scarlet? One of the Sherlock Holmes books, it's got a story about Mormons coming to Salt Lake. It's got some characters in it who are fictional that are part of the story, but it's a very well-researched story. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle represented the terror of the reign of Brigham Young pretty accurately compared to known sources at the time.

When Brigham Young died in 1877, he left the church strong and prosperous and large. It had been just a ragtag group of poor farmers when they came to Salt Lake that there were now thousands of associated Mormons in the Salt Lake area. There is a story that is told by the Mormons that when they first came to Salt Lake, they were practically starving.

They cultivated land and they planted crops. Just as they were about ready to starve to death and their crops were coming right and they were about ready to harvest them, a plague of locusts came and was about to utterly destroy their entire crop. Of course, they would have all starved to death if the locusts had done so.

The Mormons, it is claimed, they prayed and asked God to deliver them and seemingly miraculously a huge, huge flock of seagulls appeared and came and ate all the grasshoppers, ate all the locusts and saved the crops. Of course, the Mormons love to tell that story because it confirms to them that they had reached the promised land and that God was on their side and so forth. Christians often don't know what to do about a story like that and probably some Christians would just doubt whether it really even happened since apparently there are no non-Mormon witnesses to it.

But even if it did happen, to me, God is a good God. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good and causes the rain to come on the just and the unjust. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

He may well have sent them relief. It would not necessarily be a confirmation of their doctrines, however. Their doctrines are well enough refuted by God's Word.

Joseph Smith received a revelation back in July 12, 1843 that it was desirable for a Mormon man to have more than one wife. The reason for this is that the Mormon theology was that we all existed before we came here. That there are eternally existent, what he called intelligences.

His theology is very complex. There are these intelligences that have always existed.

Each of us is one of them.

And then these intelligences are given spirit bodies through heavenly marriages of celestial beings in the heavens who get married. And they give bodies to these intelligences so they become spiritual bodies. And then these spiritual embodied intelligences become human beings through human couples.

So it's the destiny of them all to become human beings and to eventually advance through the progression to Godhood, actually. And therefore, the Mormons, Joseph Smith taught that it's good to have many, many, many children because you can help these intelligences to become human beings. And of course, if they're born into Mormon families, all the better for them because they can then progress toward Godhood.

And it's doing a great service to these intelligences to have many babies. So one of the better ways to have a lot of babies is to have a lot of wives since most wives can only have one or two at a time. And so Joseph Smith got this revelation that men ought to have multiple wives.

However, under the pressure from the U.S. government, in 1890, President of the Church Wilford Woodruff received a revelation that polygamy was not for this life, but was to be enjoyed in the life of the celestial kingdom, heaven. So Mormons' official doctrine today is that polygamy is wrong practice. However, they do believe that when they go to heaven, they'll have many wives.

And they do believe they'll have sexual activity in heaven and that they'll have multiple offspring and so forth. It was under political pressure from the government that Woodruff got this revelation. And many Mormons do not accept Woodruff's revelation, although Mormon doctrine requires that you accept the revelations of all successive presidents of the Church after Joseph Smith.

But there are Mormons. Mormons still practice polygamy, but secretly and illegally now. Not all Mormons do, of course.

Probably the Mormons you know probably don't. But there are Mormons who still practice polygamy and they say it's what Joseph Smith had revealed to them and they don't accept the second revelation from Woodruff on that. In 1978, the president of the Church, Spencer W. Kimball, received a revelation reversing the long-standing policy of Mormons' discrimination against black people.

The black people were never permitted to become temple Mormons from Joseph Smith's time until Kimball made this decision. He got a revelation about it. And so now black people can have all the privileges in the Mormon Church.

Today, the Mormon Church is a vast empire spanning the globe. With over four million members, the Mormon Church is one of the world's 50 wealthiest corporations. Today, its

political structure is rather complex.

It's ruled by what's called the General Authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And this umbrella term includes the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, the Patriarch to the Church, the Presidency of the First Quorum of Seventy, and the First Quorum of Seventy itself, and the Presiding Bishopric. So that's the various authority structures in the Church today of Latter-day Saints.

Temple Mormons are Mormons who reach a certain level in the Church so that they're permitted to go into one of the many Mormon temples. There are many Mormon temples around the world. Of course, principally one in Salt Lake City is the first one and probably the greatest one.

These temple Mormons have many secret rites that they're involved with. They're not supposed to tell about them. But those who have left the Mormon Church who have been temple Mormons and don't have any qualms about telling about them have told us that essentially the secret rites of the temple Mormons are essentially the same as the secret rites of the Masonic Lodge.

And not surprisingly because I believe Joseph Smith was a 32nd level Mason and he was very impressed with the Masons and he simply transposed a lot of the secret rites of the Masonic Lodge into the Mormon temple worship. Most non-Mormons have encountered Mormons through the Mormon missionaries who come door to door. They come in twos.

They're always dressed just alike. You can always tell them a mile away. They're on bicycles.

They have black pants, white shirts and ties, short hair, clean shaven and they have name tags that say Elder so and so even though they're not very old. In fact, Mormon missionaries are usually 19 or 20 years old because they do a two year mandatory mission between high school and college usually. So, they're going to be 18 or 19 or 20 and yet they're called elders which is rather strange because in the Bible the word elder literally means an older man.

And these men are not barely men at all. They're practically boys. But there's a real attraction to this in that the Mormon missionaries are really looked up to in the church.

And these young people get a sense of significance and importance by being Mormon missionaries. It tends to solidify them in that age when a lot of kids leave the churches, a lot of pagan kids who are raised in Christian homes stop going to church when they get out of high school. I guess to prevent that from happening to Mormon kids, they give them a label, give them a job, give them prestige and give them motivation to stay put in the church.

And so, most people have encountered Mormon missionaries because they do go door to

door all over the world. Now, so much for the history of the Mormon church. Let's talk a little bit about the authoritative sources for Mormon beliefs.

The authoritative source for Christian beliefs is the Bible and the Bible alone. Nothing else. The Word of God is in the Bible.

We don't have additional revelations beyond the Bible that are necessary for us to understand Christian teaching properly. The Mormons, however, have four books that are considered of equal inspiration. One is the Bible.

And it is the King James Version of the Bible. Joseph Smith said, insofar as it is correctly translated. In his lifetime, Joseph Smith started making his own translation of the Bible, but he was killed, I think, before he was able to finish.

It would be interesting to know how a man who didn't know any Greek or Hebrew would make his own translation of the Bible. But, he was a prophet. He could do whatever he wanted.

So, the King James Bible is one of the books that the Mormons carry as a holy book. There are three other books. One is called the Book of Mormon, which, as I said, was allegedly translated from gold plates by the assistants of the Urm and the Thummim.

Then there is another book called The Pearl of Great Price. And another book called Doctrine and Covenants. In addition to these books, the continuing revelations God gives to the current Mormon prophets and presidents is considered to be authoritative as well.

According to Joseph Smith, the Bible contains errors. He probably meant the King James Bible, but it is hard to say. However, he said the Book of Mormon is, quote, the most correct of any book on earth, unquote.

Ironically, this most correct book on earth has undergone 3,900 changes since the time of Joseph Smith. The current edition of the Book of Mormon is changed in 3,900 places from the original that Joseph Smith published. Even though, in his day, it was the most correct book on earth.

It apparently needed a little bit of revision here and there. And the reason was because it was full of contradictions. Now, people have often said the Bible is full of contradictions, but no one dares go and just make it, you know, totally change the Bible completely to avoid people saying that the Bible has contradictions.

But when Joseph Smith or the current Mormon leadership discovers contradictions in the Book of Mormon, they just change it. They just revise it, and it's gone through a lot of different changes. A lot of the criticisms of the Book of Mormon have been slightly remedied by the new editions, but it's still full of errors as we shall discuss in a moment.

The Book of Mormon purports to be the story of the American Indians who are of Israelite ancestry. During a great war in Old Testament times, the Book of Mormon teaches, some of the tribes of Israel fled by ship to South America. And they began a new life there.

A certain group of these were cursed by God. There were actually wars between different segments of these Jews who came over. And God's curse came upon some of them making their skin dark, which is one of the reasons Mormonism was prejudicial against blacks.

The darkness of the skin, however, accounts for the dark skin of the Indian races, who are, of course, the descendants of these Jews who migrated to South America, according to the Book of Mormon. By the way, this particular anthropology doesn't agree in any point with any accepted anthropology of scientists today. Most scientists believe that the Indians probably came across the Bering Strait to Alaska and got into this country that way, but Joseph Smith's book told otherwise.

Mormon, which was the name of a faithful Nephite prophet, one of these Jews who came to South America, recorded the history on these gold tablets, and they remained hidden in New York until discovered by Joseph Smith. Obviously, these South American tribes moved northward into North America. If you read the Book of Mormon, you'll find that it makes all kinds of outlandish claims about the American Indians before modern times.

They claim, for example, that the Indians had horses, which history says they didn't get them until the Europeans came over here, but we're talking about hundreds and hundreds of years ago, back in practically Old Testament times. The American Indians are said to have ridden on horseback. They're said to have had pigs and cows and elephants too, the Book of Mormon says.

And yet, none of these animals are known to have ever been in this country before the colonists came over from Europe. And by the way, Walter Martin, who wrote the book Kingdom of the Cults, actually has a letter he received from the Smithsonian Institute. He wrote to them asking whether archaeological findings in the USA could confirm that the Indians in pre-colonial times had these animals.

And the Smithsonian said there's never been any evidence found in any archaeological dig that these animals were found among the Indians in those times. Worse, for the Book of Mormon, it claims that the Indians fought wars with each other wearing armor and helmets and using swords and spears. In other words, the kind of warfare that Joseph Smith thought ancient people used.

But actually, there's no evidence from archaeology that there was any armor the Indians wore, or helmets or shields or these kinds of weapons like medieval knights or something. The Indians just didn't do that. They didn't have that stuff.

But the Book of Mormon says they did. And in the Book of Mormon, it actually says that the Indians built great cities that covered the whole face of the land. It actually says the whole face of the land was covered with their cities and their buildings.

Well, once again, you'd think maybe the archaeologists would find at least one of these buildings. But conventional history of the Indians indicates they didn't build cities. They didn't build buildings.

They were nomadic and they lived in tents and teepees and things. And, I mean, the Book of Mormon just doesn't have any historical truth to it. Unlike the Bible, where virtually every one of its major historical claims has been already verified by archaeology, the Book of Mormon was simply fiction.

And now, it is known where it originated. Because the real source of the story in the Book of Mormon has now been demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt to have been from an unpublished novel written by Reverend Samuel Spalding before 1816. I think the novel was called Manuscript Found.

Has anyone ever read about this? You've read about it? Is that the name of the manuscript? I think it was called... No, I don't believe so. No, I don't believe so. I don't know much about this fellow Spalding, but I've read for years different accounts that he had written a manuscript that never got published, which was a fictional account of the American Indians.

And it was apparently accessible to Joseph Smith. He apparently read it. And the manuscript disappeared.

But there were many people who had read it and could verify what was in it. A book came out a few years ago, probably about ten or so years ago, called Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? It was a documentation of how the Book of Mormon just copied from this book. I'm pretty sure the original book was called Manuscript Found, which was written as a fictional novel by Spalding.

But Joseph Smith got his story from that. Maybe the manuscript disappeared because Joseph Smith absconded with it. I don't know.

Now, that's the Book of Mormon. Another of their books, The Pearl of Great Price, is a collection of shorter works of Joseph Smith, including his autobiography, The Life of Joseph Smith, in which he is portrayed as a very pious individual in his youth, very godly, very otherworldly. And he tells in that about his meetings with God in the woods and things like that.

And the Mormons, of course, take that to be the inspired and authorized version of The Life of Joseph Smith. All the testimony of his neighbors and people who knew him, to the contrary, what Joseph Smith said about himself is what they accept. It differs significantly

from what is the known history of Smith from his contemporary sources.

In The Pearl of Great Price is another document called The Book of Abraham. Now, Joseph Smith allegedly translated this book from Egyptian originals on papyrus, which he found in a mummy case that he bought from a traveling salesman. And the book purports to be a message from Abraham, which I'm not sure why he wrote it in Egyptian.

Although we do know that Abraham did go to Egypt a few times, but he didn't live there most of his life. But for some reason, this mummy case that Joe bought from a traveling salesman happened to have a bonus inside this sacred book written by Abraham in Egyptian. And Joe Smith, by sheer stroke of luck, happened upon it and translated it into English.

Now, this time he didn't have the Urm and Thummah available, so I'm not sure how he translated the Egyptian this time. Anyway, shortly after he translated it, again, the papyrus was lost providentially. And this time by mistake, not by an angel of Moroni taking it out.

It just kind of disappeared. Well, interestingly, the Mormon Church in more recent times found the alleged papyrus. And the papyrus that they found has been officially authenticated as the papyrus that Joseph Smith translated the book of Abraham from.

But when actual Egyptian scholars translate it, it's not a message from Abraham at all. It's like funeral poems from ancient Egypt or something like that. It had nothing to do with the things that Joe Smith said it was.

So, it's kind of one of the embarrassments of the Mormon history that the book of Abraham turned out to be like a... might as well have been an Egyptian laundry list or something. Okay, then the book Doctrine and Covenants is the other important book to the Mormons. It's a collection of revelations given to Joseph Smith concerning Mormon doctrine and practice.

There have been more than 65,000 changes made to the text of Doctrine and Covenants since the original edition. Now, 65,000 changes. This is not just additions.

It's not like the book just grew as more things were given. They've actually had to change an awful lot of it from the original. It was here in the Doctrine and Covenants that polygamy was said to have been established by God as a Mormon practice, which was later reversed by President Woodruff.

Now, in contrast to these so-called holy books of Mormonism, the Bible, our Bible, has undergone no significant change in its thousands of years of history. Now, I mean, figure Joseph Smith wrote his books 170 years ago. And they've gone through, what? One of them has gone through 65,000 changes.

Another has gone through 3,900 changes. Some variations in different manuscripts from each other, but they don't materially change the meaning. They just happen to be variations in manuscripts.

But the Bible is thousands of years old, and it has remained essentially the same. The message has been the same. The details in it are the same.

For all these years, it has survived, and its truthfulness has been validated by virtually every related science, archaeology, historical scholarship, linguistic scholars, and, of course, most importantly, the Testament of Jesus Christ. Jesus testified that the Bible is the Word of God. In case you ever need to prove that to someone, I give you a few Scripture references there.

Jesus did so in more ways than just those few Scriptures I've given you, but just so you have a sampling of what Jesus said about the Bible. In Luke 24, verses 25-27, Then He said to them, O foolish ones and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory, and beginning at Moses and all the prophets? It's the whole Old Testament.

He expounded to them all in the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And later on in verse 44 of the same chapter, it says, These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning me. So, Jesus indicated that the Old Testament writings were inspired.

They were God's message about Himself, which He had to expound to His disciples. As far as the New Testament writings, they were essentially written by apostles. And Jesus spoke to His apostles in the upper room in John 15, verse 26.

He said, But when the Helper comes, the Holy Spirit, whom I shall send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of me, and you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. So, the Holy Spirit would come and testify through the apostles of Jesus. And that's, of course, what they wrote in the New Testament was the testimony of the Spirit through the apostles.

Also, in the same upper room discourse in John 16, 12-15, Jesus said, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak. And He will tell you of things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take up what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take up Mine and declare it to you.

So, Jesus told the apostles, when the Holy Spirit comes, He will guide them into all truth. He will testify. He will teach them the things that Jesus had not been able to teach them

because of their dullness at that particular time.

And so, when the apostles wrote, they wrote the things that the Holy Spirit inspired them to write, as Jesus promised. So, Jesus really, His authority and His testimony stands behind the written Scriptures and all the New Testament. Now, in addition to the holy books, the Mormons have a personal testimony, which really is important to them.

This is really the basis of individual Mormon conversion. And while Mormons, if they talk to you, will try to convince you from the Scriptures, especially if you're a Christian and you profess belief in the Scriptures, they'll try to show you from the Scriptures and from their books and from their history and so forth, that is their rewritten history of Joseph Smith. They'll try to show you that the Mormon Church is real and good.

But when you are resistant to this, if you do not accept their doctrine, they will always resort to their testimony. And they will say that that is how they themselves became converted. This is what they will testify.

They'll say, I prayed sincerely. They'll ask you, are you willing to pray sincerely? And ask God to show you whether Joseph Smith is a prophet and whether the Book of Mormon is the Word of God. And then you answer, yes or no.

Preferably no. But they will testify then. They say, well, I prayed that.

They say, I prayed sincerely that God would show me if Joseph Smith was a prophet and if the Book of Mormon is the Word of God and I received the witness. They call it the witness or they sometimes call it a burning in their bosom. It's an inward emotional experience that they had, or at least they say they had, when they prayed this prayer.

And to them, that is the most authoritative validation available that Mormonism is true. Because they asked God to show them if it was true and they had this inward experience. Now, before you become overly impressed with their experience, I would suggest to you that there are many religions whose doctrines are diametrically opposed to Mormonism.

Including Christianity, whose adherences have often had inward witnesses that they have testified to. The Mormon doctrine, although it is only one of thousands of religions out there, is not the only one where the people who follow it say, I got a feeling inside that this is right. And that's essentially what they're saying.

It is also very difficult to know the difference between a spiritual feeling inside and merely something that is psychologically whipped up. I mean, feelings like that are too subjective. You just don't know what their source is.

The devil himself could give people heartburn if that's what will convince them that Mormonism is true. And so, I mean, really, this is their testimony. They really base their

faith more on this testimony than they do on reasoning.

And for that reason, it's hard for Mormons to reasonably and rationally critique their own views or test them. Because their faith in them is not based on rational thinking. It's based on this experience that they testify to having had.

I have a testimony, too. But, I mean, God has been real in my life. And I've had many experiences, many feelings, and many answered prayers.

But God didn't ever confirm to me that Mormonism is true. And so, the fact that they have some kind of experience they can testify to doesn't really put them a lick ahead of me or most other sincere believers in Christianity or even other religions. Sometimes they feel that way.

Let's look at the theology of Mormonism. This is where we really recognize it to be false. I mean, when we read the story of Joseph Smith, we might suspect that Mormonism is false even before we have any clue of what Joseph Smith ever taught.

Just because the guy was such a questionable guy. And, likewise, when you look at the actual silliness of the holy books that they believe in and all the changes that have been made and the questionable origin of these books, you would also probably feel that there's reason enough to reject Mormonism. But the real reason to reject Mormonism is because it's heresy.

Because it teaches doctrines that are not true. It presents a different God, a different Jesus, and a different Gospel. If you look, if you have a Bible with you, at 2 Corinthians 11, verses 3 and 4, Paul said, "...but I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different Gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it." That's what Paul is complaining about. These people were gullible and they were tending to believe even false Gospels and false messengers that were coming to them. He says, I'm afraid you're likely to accept another Gospel or another Jesus that's not the same one that we've preached to you.

Well, the Mormons believe in Jesus and they believe in God or so they say. But what do they mean by those words? There are many Jesuses. There's actually many men today whose names are Jesus, especially in Mexico.

And Jesus was a very common name in Jesus' own time in Israel. It's just the Greek form of the name Joshua. And many Jewish parents named their children after the famous hero of their history, Joshua.

And Jesus of Nazareth was one of many, even many in the Bible. There are other people

in the New Testament named Jesus besides Jesus Christ. In other words, to say I believe in Jesus doesn't tell you anything unless you know which Jesus we're talking about.

And in addition to many human beings named Jesus, there are many imaginary constructs in the minds of cultists that they call Jesus. But the real Jesus is an actual person. And He's distinct from other persons.

And it's only the real Jesus that we must know if we would be saved. Jesus said in John 17, 3, this is life everlasting that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. So, eternal life consists in knowing the true God, not some other, and knowing Jesus Christ, the one that God sent, not some other.

And so, as we look at Mormon doctrine, we find that they have a different God, a different theology altogether, and a different Jesus. But before we get into the specifics of who their God and who their Jesus is, I should point out to you that the Mormons might, if they discover that you're a Christian, when they come to your door, they might say, do you believe that the Bible predicted that the Book of Mormon would be written? Do you believe that the Bible predicted that the Mormon church would be founded? And of course, you'll say no. And they'll say, well, let me show you something here.

And they'll turn you to Ezekiel 37. You see, since anyone can claim they're writing the Word of God and starting a new church and not have any particular credibility in saying so, it helps if they can try to show that the Bible itself, the last time God gave us a holy book, that He anticipated that there would be another, namely, the Book of Mormon that would come along. Well, in Ezekiel 37, beginning with verse 15, God spoke to Ezekiel and said, again, the Word of the Lord came to me saying, as for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it for Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.

Then take another stick and write on it for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions. Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick and they will become one in your hand. Now, do you see the prediction of the Book of Mormon there? It's clear as the nose on your face.

At least they think it is. Joseph Smith said it is. Here's how they argue.

Okay, there's two sticks here. Now, they say in Old Testament times, of course, books weren't bound like these books we have. They were on scrolls wrapped around sticks.

So, a stick refers to a book or a scroll. And Ezekiel is supposed to write for Judah on one of them and for Joseph, the house of Ephraim, on the other one and put them together and they become one. Now, he says the first book, the first stick, is the Bible, which is for Judah, the Jews.

It's the book for the Jews. The second stick, for Joseph or Ephraim, actually is for the Gentiles, they say. And that's the Book of Mormon, the Gospel as it came to the Gentiles.

And therefore, they say, you see right there, God Himself predicted through Ezekiel that there'd be another book, another revelation, this time for the Gentiles instead of the Bible, which was for the Jews. Now, can anyone see anything wrong with that argument? Can anyone see anything right about it? I can't think of one valid word in that argument. First of all, there's nothing to suggest that simply because scrolls were wrapped around sticks that when you find the word stick, it means a scroll.

Not all sticks have scrolls wrapped around them. It could have said take a scroll if it meant a scroll. That's a different word.

A stick is a stick. I mean, it could be a walking stick, it could be a club, it could be a shepherd's staff, it could be anything. It might be a book, but there's nothing to suggest that he's talking about a book.

Just said the stick. Furthermore, one stick was for Judah and one stick was for Joseph or Ephraim. This was for the two nations, the northern and southern kingdom, which have been divided when the Assyrians had taken the northern kingdom into captivity and the Babylonians had taken the southern kingdom.

And Ezekiel is given a prediction that these two will be made one again in restoration. When God restores Israel, He'll restore both these two kingdoms into one, like these two sticks become one stick in His hand. It is a prediction about what God was going to do with the Jews.

It had nothing to do with God giving another book. It's not even related to the subject. Of God giving another book.

It has to do with what God was going to do with these two portions of the family of Israel and put them back together as one, where they've been divided since the days of Rehoboam. Now, not one thing in there agrees with the Mormon interpretation of it. But let us suggest for a moment that part of their argument, their premises were true.

Suppose a stick did refer to a book. And one of these books was for Judah or the Jews and one was for the Gentiles. And it was predicted that these two books would become one.

How would you interpret that? If you could even start with that premise, which is invalid. But even if you could accept that premise, how would you interpret it? What would it be predicting? How about the Old New Testament? Wouldn't that be a more reasonable suggestion? I mean, you've got the Old Testament and then there came a New Testament, which was the gospels, mostly, especially in the book of Acts and in the epistles, to the Gentiles. But who's to say that Joseph or Ephraim was to be identified with the Gentiles? Joseph wasn't a Gentile.

Ephraim wasn't a Gentile. They were of the tribes of Israel. So, I mean, there's really

absolutely not one valid sentence in that whole argument.

And yet, they depend heavily upon it to convince Christians that the Book of Mormon was to come about and that Ezekiel predicted it. There's another verse they like to point to and that's in John chapter 10. Jesus, speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd and His disciples are His flock, His sheep, and they know His voice.

Jesus says in that passage in John chapter 10 and verse 16, "...and other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd." The Mormons believe that these other sheep that Jesus had to go to were the American Indians because the Book of Mormon records that Jesus, after He left Israel, went to America. I would too. While you're on the planet, why not visit America? It's going to be important someday.

But Jesus went to America and He preached to the Indians the Gospel. Preached the Sermon on the Mount to them in King James English or Egyptian hieroglyphics, one or the other. And then He went away again.

But they say, you see, Jesus Himself predicted to the disciples that He was going to have to go to some other people that they didn't know about. I have other sheep that are not of this fold. You don't know about them, but I have to go and bring them too.

And so the Mormons think that this is a prediction of the story of the Book of Mormon of Jesus going to the Indians. What would you think that passage means? What do you think He's talking about? Yeah, He's talking about the Gentiles. The disciples at this time were all Jewish.

They didn't know at this point that God was going to include the Gentiles. In fact, Peter didn't even know that until Acts chapter 10 when he was on the roof in Joppa and God gave him three visions to get that through his head. But at this early point, the disciples didn't have a clue that there would ever be Gentiles in the Kingdom of God, at least not as one flock with Israel.

And that's what Jesus is talking about. He's not talking about the American Indians, although some American Indians might be among those Gentiles. Jesus didn't have them in mind in particular.

He certainly wasn't predicting the story of the Book of Mormon. Now, so if the Mormons say, you know, did you know that the Book of Mormon was predicted in the Bible? Don't be too quick to accept that. It doesn't have any validity at all.

Now, how many gods are there? In the Mormon religion, God is not one God in three persons. But there are many gods and every good Mormon male has the potential of becoming one. The gods that exist used to be people.

But they went through the progression to godhood, which is what every Mormon male hopes to do. You might say, well, what about the Mormon females? What do they get? They get to be part of the celestial harems of the Mormon gods. There better always be more Mormon girls than boys because these gods have a voracious appetite for wives.

They have a lot of them. And then in heaven... You know, the Mormons actually believe that a Mormon male will, if he goes through temple Mormonism, he will become a god in the next life and he will have his own planet, just like this one, and he and his celestial wives will come down to the planet... That's why there are so many planets out there. One for each good Mormon.

And he'll be a god of that planet and he and his wives will populate the planet. In fact, Brigham Young taught that our human race came about when God, who he identified with Adam, had relations with one of his celestial wives, Eve, is the way he put it. And so, the God who is the God of this world was once a man.

An ordinary man just like any man in this room. But he did it right. He went through the Mormon thing the right way.

And he became the God of this planet. And then he got to come with one of his celestial wives down here and have babies. And we are them.

That's Mormon theology. Joseph Smith said this in the history of the church. And I give you the reference there in your notes.

He said, 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. Now notice, it sounds contradictory. You've got to become gods yourself and you have to be kings and priests to God.

With a capital G. This is what's called henotheism. It's a form of polytheism. Polytheism means a belief in many gods.

But henotheism was a very typical theology of the ancient world. It was the belief that there are many gods, but each person has only one god that they worship. In particular, henotheism taught, especially in Old Testament times, that every nation has its own god.

There are many gods, but every nation has one god that they worship. So, the Babylonians worship Baal. The Phoenicians worship Baal.

The Moabites worship Chemosh. The Canaanites worship Molech. The Hebrews worship Jehovah.

And really, the way that the ancient world thought about that was, Jehovah is a real god and Chemosh is a real god, and Molech is a real god, and Baal is a real god, and each nation has their own national god. That's called henotheism. It's not monotheism.

See, we believe in monotheism, one god all together. Only one and all. And then, of course, polytheism is a belief in many gods, but henotheism is a belief that there are many gods, but only one god per group of people or person to worship.

Each person has only one god to worship, though there are other gods. According to Mormonism, there is one god, who is the god of this world, that the Mormons worship. But they are going to be gods to equal with Him.

But He'll still be sort of their patron god that kind of gave them the lift and gave them their big chance and they got to become gods. So, He's the god that they will kind of serve, although they will be gods in their own rights too. Now, the Bible declares there's only one god.

In fact, if there was nothing else wrong with Mormonism than this, it would be enough to make every Christian turn his back on it and say this is absolutely absurd. Because Christianity, which Mormons claim to be Christians, they claim to believe the Bible, the Bible affirms in no uncertain terms there's only one god. There's not a lot of gods.

Joseph Smith has quoted one document saying, actually it's in the beginning of one of his writings, I think it might have been, where is it? In the Pearl of Great Price? I forget where it is now. I used to know. I can quote it though, because it's quite memorable.

He said that in the beginning, the head of the gods called a council of the gods. And together they concocted a plan to create a world and people it. That was a quote from Joseph Smith.

The head of the gods would be the head of the gods. He's the god of this world. Other gods, I guess, at least in relation to this world, were subordinate to him.

And they agreed together to make this world. In Isaiah 43.10, Jehovah, the God of Israel said, you are my witnesses, says Jehovah. And my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.

Before me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Savior. Now, Jehovah says, there were no gods formed before me, and there's not going to be any gods formed after me.

So, there's no other gods before or after him. He's the only one for all time. He's got a lifetime tenure as the sole occupant to that position.

In chapter 44 of Isaiah, and verses 6-8, God said, thus says Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, I am the Lord of hosts. I am the first. I am the last.

Beside me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it, and set an order for me, since I appointed ancient people and the things that are coming,

and shall come. Let them show these to them.

Do not fear, nor be afraid. Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? Indeed, there is no other rock.

I know not one. God says, are there any gods beside me? I don't know of any. It seems to me if there were some others, he would have met them, you know, run into them at the corner grocery store or somewhere.

It seems like in all of his long time in heaven, he would have had occasion to learn of the existence of other gods if they were around. But he doesn't know of any. God knows of no other gods but Himself.

And any doctrine that teaches that there are many gods is heathenism. It's pagan. It's a form of polytheism.

I quoted earlier John 17, 3 where Jesus said, this is life everlasting that they might know thee the only true God. There are other gods, but no other true gods. There's a lot of false gods.

The heathen have worshipped false gods forever. But there's only one true God, Jesus said. And the only one I would ever want to believe in is one that's true.

In 1 Timothy 2, verse 5, a well-known verse, Paul said, For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. You can go to a lot of other Scriptures to confirm that the Bible teaches uniformly that there's only one God. Of course, the Trinity Doctrine is something that has confused a lot of people.

And that's why a lot of cults have gotten started. They don't grasp the Trinity. They have trouble with it and therefore they come up with an alternative view.

And usually the alternative view is mere conjecture or plain heresy. I will admit that no one probably really understands the Trinity adequately because the Trinity is nothing less than God Himself. And God is infinite and our minds are finite.

We just can't grasp everything there is to know about God. But the Bible teaches that there's one God. It also teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all in their own right God.

But they're all individuals as well. And this, of course, is confusing. And it's not surprising that cultists and heretics have come up with attempts to make an easier doctrine of this.

C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity*, he said, as he was trying to talk about the Trinity Doctrine, he said, this isn't an easy concept. If we're making up our own doctrine, we'd make an easier doctrine of God than that. The very fact that no one, including people who teach the Trinity, can claim to understand the Trinity proves that no one's out there

making up something because we'd make up something easier to understand than that if we were making something up.

I would. But anyway, what does Mormonism teach about the Trinity? Well, there are three separate gods that have dealings with this world. The Father, this is a quote from Doctrine and Covenants, the Father has a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's.

The Son also, that the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of spirit, unquote. Now, there are these three gods that have to do with this world. The Holy Spirit is a God.

He doesn't have a body. The other two, the Father and Jesus, do. Joseph Smith, speaking about these three in the book History of the Church, said, these three constitute three distinct personages and three gods, unquote.

Now, see, Trinitarianism would say they do comprise three persons, but only one God. But he said, no, these are three gods. You see, Joseph Smith doesn't have any problem with there being three gods.

As far as he's concerned, there might be three million gods. You know, everyone's going to be a god someday if they're a good Mormon. So, there's three of them that have to do with this world.

Now, what does it teach about the Father? The Father is called, in Mormonism, the God of this world. And He's nothing but an exalted man. There's some change in Mormon doctrine over the years.

Brigham Young, who was an infallible prophet who succeeded Joseph Smith as the prophet of the church, he taught in no uncertain terms that God the Father was Adam. That Adam became an exalted man and became God, the God of this world. And that Eve was one of His celestial wives and that Adam and Eve were God and one of His wives from a previous lifetime.

And this was taught very plainly and without apology by Brigham Young. However, that doctrine has been an embarrassment to Mormons ever since. And the doctrine seems to have changed because a later Joseph Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, who was a Mormon prophet after Brigham Young's time, identified Elohim as the first god of the Trinity, our Father, and Adam as a different god who is also known as Michael the Archangel.

So we've got one infallible prophet saying that Adam is the god of this world and our Father. And then a later infallible prophet in the same organization says no. The god of our Father is Elohim.

Adam was a different god who helped him organize the world. Now, you know, some of the things... Like when Joseph Smith said, God show me we should practice polygamy.

And then President Woodruff says, God show me we shouldn't practice polygamy.

We might argue, well... I mean, a Mormon might reasonably argue, okay, at one time in history it was God's will for them to practice polygamy. After a while, it was no longer necessary, so he told them to stop doing it. Fine.

But when we're talking about who God is and one prophet says it's Adam and the other says, no, it's not Adam. It's someone else other than Adam. Then you've got infallible prophets dueling theologies over who God is.

And so the Mormons don't really have a very unconfused idea of who the Father is. And most Mormons, they will not agree that Adam is God. They're somewhat embarrassed of Brigham Young's teaching about that, although they cannot deny that acceptance of Brigham Young's teaching was mandatory for Mormons in Brigham Young's lifetime because he was the infallible prophet.

Just in case you wonder whether God does have a body of flesh and bones and whether he was a man one time and God exalted. I don't think you have any questions about that, hopefully. But there are some Scriptures to consider.

In John 4, 24, Jesus said God is a spirit. And those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. And over in Numbers, it says, in what reference did I give you? Numbers 23, 19, it says, God is not a man that He should repent.

And so God isn't a man. He never was a man. And He doesn't have a body.

He's a spirit. Jesus said when He was resurrected and appeared to the disciples in the 24th chapter of Luke, He said, Touch Me and feel and see. He says, A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see Me have.

God is a spirit. And Jesus said, A spirit doesn't have flesh and bones. But Mormonism teaches that God has a body of flesh and bones.

So, it must be a different God. And then we've got Jesus. In Mormon theology, Jesus is a spirit brother of Lucifer.

Remember, there are these intelligences that are given spiritual bodies and spiritual families in heaven before they get born into human bodies and human families. Apparently, Elohim or Adam or whoever it was who was the father had two spirit sons. One was Jesus and one was Lucifer in Mormon theology.

And the whole idea of redeeming fallen mankind was discussed in heaven. According to Mormonism, Lucifer offered to come be man's redeemer. But for reasons of his own, the father decided to send his other son, Jesus, instead.

And that made Lucifer jealous and angry and caused Lucifer to become a rival to Jesus

and an enemy. This is Mormon theology. Of course, there's not one point of it that agrees with Christianity.

In Christianity, Jesus said to be the only begotten Son of God. There's not two. Certainly, Lucifer is never presented in the Bible as anyone that would be related to God as a son or certainly to Jesus as a brother.

If it were true that Lucifer and Jesus were in fact brothers, spirit brothers, then they would be essentially equal in essence to each other. Equal in dignity. One might have been given more privilege than the other, but they were still both sons of God on the same footing.

And therefore, Jesus is not at all unique. In fact, he's not even any more unique than Lucifer himself. Of course, the Bible teaches that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin.

Mormonism teaches that Mary was not a virgin when she conceived. That God came down in a physical body, had sexual relations with Mary, so she was not a virgin. In other words, God essentially in their theology had an affair with another guy's betrothed wife.

Joseph's betrothed wife just came and cheated on Joseph essentially. I mean, this is really base stuff. Mormons say it without any shame.

And so Jesus came about through a regular sexual union with Mary and God. Brigham Young in the Journal of Discourses said, now remember from this time forth and forever that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. The reason I give you that quote is because in Matthew 1, verses 18-20 we're told that Jesus was begotten by the Holy Ghost.

In fact, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife because that which is in her is conceived by the Holy Ghost. But Brigham Young says it wasn't conceived by the Holy Ghost. So we simply have a flat-out contradiction between an infallible prophet of Mormonism and an infallible apostle of Jesus Christ, Matthew, who wrote that.

One other issue of theology, we only have about nine minutes left and I have to quit. And that is the doctrine of salvation. You see, they've got the wrong God.

So even if they had the right opinion about salvation, they wouldn't have real salvation because they got salvation through the wrong God. And only one God. There's no other Savior beside me, God said.

So if you've got the wrong God, you've got no Savior. But the doctrine of salvation in Mormonism is interesting. Essentially, everyone gets saved in Mormonism and glorified.

There's some question as to whether Mormons believe there is such a place as hell. Depends on who you talk to. Some believe there's no hell.

There's just three levels of heaven, including a lower, a middle, and a higher level of heaven. And the lowest level of heaven is the worst you can get if you're an unbeliever. There are apparently some Mormons who believe there's a hell for some of the most wretched, horrible, cruel, wicked people.

But very few people ever get there. Because you can be an unbeliever and a sinner and unrepentant and so forth and still get to the lowest level of heaven. According to the Mormons, there are three levels of heaven.

And all people will come into, or almost all people will come into one of these levels of glory. The lowest level is the telestial heaven or the telestial glory where unbelievers will go. That's people who are total pagans.

Not you. Even though you don't believe in Mormonism, you're not one of the unbelievers. Because there's terrestrial glory, which is a step up from telestial glory.

And the terrestrial glory is where good religious non-Mormons go. So, in their view, that's where you're going to go if you're a good Christian. But you're not a Mormon.

You'll go to terrestrial glory. Of course, if you're a good Mormon and go through the temple ceremony and so forth, then you get to go to celestial glory. That's where the obedient Mormons go who end up as gods.

So, I mean, if they want to argue and become a Mormon, you might say, well, why should I become a Mormon when in your view I'm already going to heaven as I am? And they'll say, well, because you can't become a god unless you're a Mormon. I've never cared to become a god, so no thanks. You know? But I mean, you really have nothing to lose by rejecting Mormonism.

They do definitely stand to lose something seriously by rejecting Christianity. Because in Christianity, people who aren't saved are lost. They go to hell.

They don't go to any level of heaven. There are eight main requirements for those who want to become... go to the celestial glory, celestial heaven, become gods. Faith, repentance, baptism, laying on of hands.

Now, so far, those are all good biblical things. I mean, Christians believe in all those things too, although most Christians would say we're saved by faith, not by a combination of these things. But the point is, I mean, the Bible calls all people to faith.

It calls all people to repentance. It calls all people to be baptized. Laying on of hands is a little more optional, it would seem, in the Bible.

But even that's normative in the Bible. Church membership. Now, of course, that means membership of the Mormon church.

Keeping the commandments. Now, that's a stiff order. I mean, when they say you have to keep the commandments to go to celestial heaven, I really wonder if they water those commandments down or choose sort of a hierarchy of commandments that you have to keep these ones and not necessarily those ones.

But one way or another, you have to keep the commandments. You have to accept Joseph Smith and his successors in the church as God's spokesmen, as infallible prophets. And you have to do temple worship, temple works, in one of the Mormon temples.

That's quite elaborate. And that's to get a salvation higher than ordinary folks like us are going to get. But by contrast, the Bible teaches that all people, all true believers in Christ, attain the same salvation.

There may be different rewards, but there's not different heavens. I know Paul said he knew someone caught up to the third heaven, but the term third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12 distinguishes the dwelling place of God from two other heavens. The air we breathe is called heaven in Scripture.

The vault of the stars is also called heaven. And then the place where God dwells is called heaven. That's the third heaven.

Only one heaven is the place where God is and where the saved will encounter God. But the same salvation is given to all who come to Christ. In Hebrews 7, and verse 25, for example, it says, Therefore He, Jesus, is able also to save to the uttermost... That means to the furthest extreme of salvation.

The greatest salvation available. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him since He ever lives to make intercession for them. So Jesus, because He makes intercession for us all the time, day and night, is able to save us to the uttermost extreme.

If there's a celestial heaven as opposed to others, we're all going to go there who are believers in Christ. Of course, the Bible nowhere teaches that there are different levels of heaven. Though certainly the Bible does indicate different rewards will accrue to different people depending on their faithfulness.

But there's an interesting parable Jesus taught. We can close with that because we're about out of time. In Matthew 20, Jesus said, For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

Now when he had agreed with his laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into the

vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace and said to them, you also go into the vineyard. And whatever is right, I'll give you.

And they went. Again, he went out about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did likewise. About the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing idle and said to them, why have you been standing here idle all day? They said to him, because no one hired us.

He said to them, you also go into the vineyard and whatever is right, you will receive. So when the evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, call the laborers and give them their wages beginning with the last to the first. And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more and they likewise each received a denarius. When they had received it, they murmured against the landowner saying, these last men have worked only one hour and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the heat of the day. But he answered one of them and said, friend, I am doing you no wrong.

Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good? So, the last will be first and the first will be last.

For many are called, but few are chosen. The parable indicates that all people who are saved, no matter how long they worked for God in their lifetime, like the people who worked only one hour, they maybe got saved late in life and didn't have much to commend them in terms of good works. Like the thief on the cross.

There's a guy who got saved at the eleventh hour. Or people who have served God all their lives. They all received the same coin, the same salvation.

And it was the mercy of the King to give any of them a job. All of them were unemployed when He found them. He didn't owe them a job at all.

It was His grace that brought them into His vineyard in the first place. And it was His to reward them accordingly. And He chose to reward them all the same with the same coin.

And the teaching of Scripture, I believe, is that all who come to Christ have the same salvation. There are not three levels of heaven. And some people are partly saved and go to the lowest level.

Some are a little more saved and go to the middle level. And the people who are really, really saved go to the third. Everything about Mormon theology is therefore pagan.

Not only their ideas of salvation, but more importantly, their ideas of God. And the history is suspect. The books that they believe are inspired are more than a little suspect.

There's nothing about Mormonism that's credible, really. What people are attracted to Mormonism for is the security, the image. They have an image of being good people and people think, oh, they've got good, clean families, honest folks.

Sometimes that image is a little less than accurate because there's a lot of divorce in Mormon churches that the Mormon church requires non-Mormons to be divorced by Mormons in many cases. A lot of people feel that they want to be part of the Mormon church because if they fall in hard times, the Mormon church will support them. Throughout their whole tenure in the Mormon church, they pay their tithes.

And then if they have troubles when they're old or whatever or sick, the Mormon church takes care of their own. And that's a security system that a lot of people like. But don't trade truth for security because on the Day of Judgment, the truth is going to matter more than whether you had your bills paid while you were here.

If you embrace the truth because of the truth, that is what saves. It is believing in the truth of God. And believing in a false God or a false Jesus is not a saving thing.

And earthly security is no good trade-off for eternal security or for eternal salvation.