

The Maze of Mormonism

Joseph Smith and the Origins of the LDS Church

- How many of you have had Mormon Missionaries come to your home?
 - Have you listened to their presentations?
- How many of you have relatives in the Mormon Church?
- Do any of you know the fastest growing “Cult of Christianity” is?
- Mormonism is constantly evolving, doctrinally
 - They believe in “latter day revelation,” although no new scriptures have been revealed since JS.
 - When I attended Brigham Young University (named for JS’s successor), I was told that the LDS Church was not another denomination of Christianity. But in recent years, that’s changed, and they are now happy to be perceived that way.
 - When I attended BYU, there were very few blacks on campus – because until 1978, blacks were denied the all-important Priesthood.
- Missionaries are typically young men – between the ages of 18 – 24. They are strongly encouraged by their church to sign up for a two-year commitment. They prepare for several months in the language and culture of the country they will be serving in (unless they are being sent to an English-speaking country).
- The remainder of the first year, they serve with a companion who has already served a year, then in the second year, they are assigned a newly minted recruit.
 - The family usually supports this Mormon Mission.
- Here’s a brief summary of their 6 presentations:
- Mormonism began in 1820 when a teen-aged boy in western New York named Joseph Smith was spurred by a Christian revival where he lived to pray to God for guidance as to which church was true. In answer to his prayers he was visited by God the Father and God the Son, two separate beings, who told him to join no church because all the churches at that time were false, and that he, Joseph, would bring forth the true church. This event is called "The First Vision."
- In 1823 Joseph had another heavenly visitation, in which an angel named Moroni told him of a sacred history written by ancient Hebrews in America, engraved in an Egyptian dialect on tablets of gold and buried in a nearby hill. Joseph was told it was the history of the ancient peoples of America, and that Joseph would be the instrument for bringing this record to the knowledge of the world. Joseph obtained these gold plates from the angel in 1827, and translated them into English by the spirit of God and the use of a sacred instrument accompanying the plates called the "Urim and Thummim." The translation was published in 1830 as *The Book of Mormon*, now revered by Mormons as scripture, along with the Bible.

- *The Book of Mormon* is a religious and secular history of the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere from about 2200 BC to about 421 AD. It tells the reader that three groups of immigrants settled the uninhabited Americas. They were led by God from their original homes in the Near East to America.
 - The first group came from the Tower of Babel, about 2200 BC, and two other groups came from Jerusalem just before the Babylonian Captivity, about 600 BC.
 - They had prophets of God who had been inspired with the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is thus preserved in their history, the *Book of Mormon*. Many of the descendants of these immigrants were Christians, even before Christ was born in Palestine, but many were unbelievers. Believers and unbelievers fought many wars, the last of which left only degenerate unbelievers as survivors, who are the ancestors of the American Indians. The most important event during this long history was the visit of Jesus Christ to America, after his crucifixion, when he ministered to (and converted) all the inhabitants.
- Joseph Smith was directed by revelation from God to reestablish ("restore") the true church, which he did in 1830. He was visited several times by heavenly messengers, who ordained him to the true priesthood. He continued to have revelations from God to guide the church and to give more knowledge of the Gospel. Many of these revelations are published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, accepted by Mormons as scripture, along with the Bible and the *Book of Mormon*. They also add as Scripture the *Pearl of Great Price*, which Smith translated from Egyptian papyri.
- Joseph Smith and his followers were continually persecuted for their religious beliefs, and driven from New York State to Ohio, then to Missouri, then to Illinois, where Joseph Smith was murdered in 1844 by a mob, a martyr to his beliefs. The church was then led by Brigham Young, Joseph's successor, to Utah, where the Mormons settled successfully.
- The LDS church is led today by the successors of Joseph Smith. The present president of the church is a "prophet, seer and revelator" just as Joseph Smith was, and guides the members of the church through revelations and guidance from God.
- The modern LDS church is the only true church, as restored by God through Joseph Smith. Other churches, derived from the early Christian church, are in apostasy because their leaders corrupted the scriptures, changed the ordinances of the original church, and often led corrupt lives, thus losing their authority.
- The most reliable way to determine whether the *Book of Mormon* is true, and whether the Mormon church is "the only true church" is by sincerely asking God in prayer.

- By accepting baptism into the LDS church you take the first step necessary toward your salvation and your ultimate entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven (the "Celestial Kingdom").
- It's amazing how hard they work, trying to prove themselves worthy to reach the highest level of Heaven. And they are working so hard for a lie!
- They almost always introduce themselves as "Elder XYZ."
 - If you only have a few minutes to spend with them, you can review the Biblical qualifications for being an elder (1 Tim 3:2-6; Titus 1:5-9).
 - Ask, "What do you think Paul meant by "a husband of one wife?" (He meant that an elder must not be a polygamist, at least). Was Brigham Young an elder? Did he meet this standard?

What the Missionaries will not tell you!

- Here is a summary of important facts about the Mormon church, its doctrine, and its history that the missionaries will probably not tell you. I'm not suggesting that they are intentionally deceiving you -- most of the young Mormons serving missions for the church are not well educated in the history of the church or in modern critical studies of the church. They probably do not know the all the facts themselves.
- They have been trained, however, to give questioners "milk before meat," that is, to postpone revealing anything at all that might make a questioner hesitant, *even if it is true*.
- Each of the following facts has been substantiated by thorough historical scholarship. And this list is by no means exhaustive!
- The "First Vision" story in the form presented to you was unknown until 1838, *eighteen years* after its alleged occurrence and almost ten years after Smith had begun his missionary efforts. The oldest (but quite different) version of the vision is in Smith's own handwriting, dating from about 1832 (still at least *eleven years* afterwards), and says that only *one* personage, Jesus Christ, appeared to him. It also mentions nothing about a revival. It also contradicts the later account as to whether Smith had already decided that no church was true. Still a third version of this event is recorded as a recollection in Smith's diary, fifteen years after the alleged vision, where one unidentified "personage" appeared, then another, with a message implying that neither was the Son. They were accompanied by many "angels," which are not mentioned in the official version you have been told

about. Which version is correct, if any? Why was this event, now said by the church to be so important, unknown for so long?

- Careful study of the religious history of the locale where Smith lived in 1820 casts doubt on whether there actually was such an extensive revival that year as Smith and his family later described as associated with the "First Vision." The revivals in 1817 and 1824 better fit what Smith described later.
- In 1828, eight years after he supposedly had been told by God himself to join no church, Smith applied for membership in a local Methodist church. Other members of his family had joined the Presbyterians.
- Contemporaries of Smith consistently described him as something of a confidence man, whose chief source of income was hiring out to local farmers to help them find buried treasure by the use of folk magic and "seer stones." Smith was actually tried in 1826 on a charge of moneydigging.
 - It is interesting that none of his critics seemed to be aware of his claim to have been visited by God in 1820, even though in his 1838 account he claimed that he had suffered "great persecution" for telling people of his vision.
- The only persons who claimed to have actually seen the gold plates were eleven close friends of Smith (many of them related to each other). Their testimonies are printed in the front of every copy of the *Book of Mormon*. No disinterested third party was ever allowed to examine them. They were retrieved by the angel at some unrecorded point. Most of the witnesses later abandoned Smith and left his movement. Smith then called them "liars."
 - Though witnesses signed affidavits saying they had seen the plates from which Smith translated the BOM, most later left the LDS church and several stated they had only seen a cart with a tarp draped over the "tablets" or had been encouraged by Smith until they had a 'vision' of the plates and the angel Moroni
 - If the tablets were gold, as Smith claimed, they would weighed over 1 ton
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- Smith produced most of the "translation" not by reading the plates through the Urim and Thummim (described as a pair of sacred spectacles), but by gazing at the same "seer stone" he had used for treasure hunting. He would place the stone into his hat, and then cover his face with it. For much of the time he was dictating, the gold plates were not even present, but in a hiding place.
- The detailed history and civilization described in the *Book of Mormon* does not correspond to anything found by archaeologists anywhere in the Americas. The *Book of Mormon* describes a civilization lasting for a thousand years, covering both North and South America, which was familiar with horses, elephants, cattle,

sheep, wheat, barley, steel, wheeled vehicles, shipbuilding, sails, coins, and other elements of Old World culture.

- But no trace of any of these supposedly very common things has ever been found in the Americas of that period. Nor does the *Book of Mormon* mention many of the features of the civilizations which really did exist at that time in the Americas.
- The LDS church has spent millions of dollars over many years trying to prove through archaeological research that the *Book of Mormon* is an accurate historical record, but they have failed to produce any convincing pre-columbian archeological evidence supporting the *Book of Mormon* story.
 - LDS scholars cannot locate the precise location of a single city mentioned in the BOM
- In addition, whereas the *Book of Mormon* presents the picture of a relatively homogeneous people, with a single language and communication between distant parts of the Americas, the pre-columbian history of the Americas shows the opposite: widely disparate racial types (almost entirely east Asian - definitely not Semitic, as proven by recent DNA studies), and many unrelated native languages, none of which are even remotely related to Hebrew or Egyptian.
- As much as 1/3 of the BOM is directly taken from the KJV
- An early draft of the first portion of the BOM was burned. Smith never “re-translated” the burned portion, but substituted other “books.” Did he have a problem recalling exactly what the lost portion contained?
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- The people of the *Book of Mormon* were supposedly devout Jews observing the Law of Moses, but in the *Book of Mormon* there is almost no trace of their observance of Mosaic law or even an accurate knowledge of it.
- Although Joseph Smith said that God had pronounced the completed translation of the plates as published in 1830 “correct,” many changes have been made in later editions.
 - Besides thousands of corrections of poor grammar and awkward wording in the 1830 edition, other changes have been made to reflect subsequent changes in some of the fundamental doctrine of the church.
 - For example, an early change in wording modified the 1830 edition's acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity, thus allowing Smith to introduce his later doctrine of multiple gods. A more recent change (1981) replaced “white” with “pure,” apparently to reflect the change in the church's stance on the “curse” of the black race.

- Joseph Smith said that the *Book of Mormon* contained the "fulness of the gospel." However, its teaching on many doctrinal subjects has been ignored or contradicted by the present LDS church, and many doctrines now said by the church to be essential are not even mentioned there.
 - Examples are the church's position on the nature of God, the Virgin Birth, the Trinity, polygamy, Hell, priesthood, secret organizations, the nature of Heaven and salvation, temples, proxy ordinances for the dead, and many other matters.
- Many of the basic historical notions found in the Book of Mormon had appeared in print already in 1825, just two years before Smith began producing the *Book of Mormon*, in a book called *View of the Hebrews*, by Ethan Smith (no relation) and published just a few miles from where Joseph Smith lived.
 - A careful study of this obscure book led one LDS church official (the historian B. H. Roberts, 1857-1933) to confess that the evidence tended to show that the *Book of Mormon* was not an ancient record, but concocted by Joseph Smith himself, based on ideas he had read in the earlier book.
 - The source documents may also have included an unpublished text by Solomon Spaulding called "A Manuscript Found," written in a pseudo-Biblical style.
- Although Mormons claim that God is guiding the LDS church through its president (who has the title "prophet, seer and revelator"), the successive "prophets" have repeatedly either led the church into undertakings that were dismal failures or failed to see approaching disaster. To mention only a few: the Kirtland Bank, the United Order, the gathering of Zion to Missouri, the Zion's Camp expedition, polygamy, the Deseret Alphabet
 - A recent example is the successful hoax perpetrated on the church by manuscript dealer Mark Hofmann in the 1980s. He succeeded in selling the church thousands of dollars worth of manuscripts which he had forged. The church and its "prophet, seer and revelator" accepted them as genuine historical documents.
 - The church tried to suppress the documents, as they revealed JS to be a charlatan, who was interested – obsessed – with obtaining wealth.
 - The church leaders learned the truth not from God, through revelation, but from non-Mormon experts and the police, after Hofmann was arrested for two murders he committed to cover up his hoax. This scandal was reported nationwide.
- The secret temple ritual (the "endowment") was introduced by Smith in May, 1842, just two months after he had been initiated into Freemasonry. The LDS temple ritual closely resembles the Masonic ritual of that day.

- Smith explained that the Masons had corrupted the ancient (God-given) ritual by changing it and removing parts of it, and that he was restoring it to its "pure" and "original" (and complete) form, as revealed to him by God. In the years since, the LDS church has made many fundamental changes in the "pure and original" ritual as "restored" by Smith, mostly by removing major parts of it.
- Many doctrines which were once taught by the LDS church, and held to be fundamental, essential and "eternal", have been abandoned. Whether we feel that the church was correct in abandoning them is not the point; rather, the point is that a church claiming to be the church of God takes one "everlasting" position at one time and the opposite position at another, all the time claiming to be proclaiming the word of God. Some examples are:
 - The Adam-God doctrine (Adam is God the Father);
 - the United Order (all property of church members is to be held in common, with title in the church);
 - Plural Marriage (polygamy; a man must have more than one wife to attain the highest degree of heaven);
 - the Curse of Cain (the black race is not entitled to hold God's priesthood because it is cursed; this doctrine was not abandoned until 1978);
 - Blood Atonement (some sins - apostasy, adultery, murder, interracial marriage - must be atoned for by the shedding of the sinner's blood, preferably by someone appointed to do so by church authorities);

All of these doctrines were proclaimed by the reigning prophet to be the Word of God, "eternal," "everlasting," to govern the church "forevermore." All have been abandoned by the present church.

- Joseph Smith's early revelations were collected and first published in 1833 in the *Book of Commandments*. God (as recorded in the *Doctrine and Covenants* Sections 1 and 67) supposedly testified by revelation that the revelations as published were true and correct.
 - Because the *Book of Commandments* did not receive wide distribution (most copies were destroyed by angry opponents of the Mormons in Missouri, where it was published), they were republished - with additional revelations - as the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1835 in Kirtland, Ohio. However, many of the revelations as published in Kirtland differed fundamentally from their versions as originally given.
 - The changes generally gave more power and authority to Smith, and justified changes he was making in church organization and theology.
 - The question naturally arises as to why revelations which God had pronounced correct needed to be revised.

- Joseph Smith claimed to have received the priesthood (the only valid priesthood recognized by God) directly from resurrected beings (angels): the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist and the Melchizedek (higher) Priesthood from Peter, James and John. However, the accounts of these visitations are contradictory and questionable.

- Biblically, who is the only member of the Melchizedek Priesthood?

- See Ps 110:4, quoted in Hebrews no less than 4 times!

- Joseph Smith claimed to be a "translator" by the power of God. In addition to the *Book of Mormon*, he made several other "translations":

- The *Book of Abraham*, from Egyptian papyrus scrolls which came into his possession in 1835. He stated that the scrolls were written by the biblical Abraham "by his own hand." Smith's translation is now accepted as scripture by the LDS church, as part of its *Pearl of Great Price*. Smith also produced an "Egyptian Grammar" based on his translation.

- Smith didn't think the Egyptian Hieroglyphics would ever be deciphered – but he didn't know about the Rosetta Stone, a translation of which was first published in 1858. Who knows what the Rosetta Stone is?

- Hieroglyphics, Demotic, Classical Greek

- Modern scholars of ancient Egyptian agree that the scrolls are common Egyptian funeral scrolls, entirely pagan in nature, having nothing to do with Abraham, and from a period 2000 years later than Abraham. The "Grammar" has been said by Egyptologists to prove that Smith had no notion of the Egyptian language. It is *pure fantasy*: he made it up.

- The "Inspired Revision" of the King James Bible. Smith was commanded by God to retranslate the Bible because the existing translations contained errors. He completed his translation in 1833, but the church still uses the King James Version.

- The "Kinderhook Plates," a group of six metal plates with strange engraved characters, unearthed in 1843 near Kinderhook, Illinois, and examined by Smith, who began a "translation" of them. He never completed the translation, but he identified the plates as an "ancient record," and translated enough to identify the author as a descendant of Pharaoh. Local farmers later confessed that they had manufactured, engraved and buried the plates themselves as a hoax. They had apparently copied the characters from a Chinese tea box.

- Joseph Smith claimed to be a "prophet." He frequently prophesied future events "by the power of God." Many of these prophecies are recorded in the LDS

scripture *Doctrine and Covenants*. Almost none have been fulfilled, and many cannot now be fulfilled because the deeds to be done by the persons named were never done and those persons are now dead. Many prophecies included dates for their fulfillment, and those dates are now long past, the events never having occurred.

- Joseph Smith died not as a martyr, but in a gun battle in which he fired a number of shots. He was in jail at the time, under arrest for having ordered the destruction of a Nauvoo newspaper which dared to print an exposure (which was true) of his secret sexual liaisons.
- Since the founding of the church down to the present day the church leaders have not hesitated to lie, to falsify documents, to rewrite or suppress history, or to do whatever is necessary to protect the image of the church.
 - Many Mormon historians have been excommunicated from the church for publishing their findings on the truth of Mormon history.
- Trying to determine the truth by relying entirely on the feelings one gets after praying is not a reliable way to learn the truth. One can easily deceive oneself into "feeling" something that is really not true at all. The only reliable way to get to the truth is to examine verifiable facts.
- Mormonism includes many other unusual teachings which you will probably not be told about (at least, not until you have been in the church for a long time). These teachings are not revealed to investigators or new converts because those people are not yet considered ready to have more than "milk" as doctrine. The Mormons also probably realize that if investigators knew of these unusual teachings they would not join the church. In addition to those mentioned elsewhere in this presentation, the following are noteworthy:
 - Mormons are actually polytheistic – they believe there are more gods in the universe than all the grains of sand on all the beaches on earth.
 - The only three Gods with whom we should concern ourselves with are the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
 - These are three Gods, three “separate personages” that appeared to Smith in the official version of the First Vision.
 - Thus, they deny the Trinity.
 - They believe there are 3 levels of Heaven:
 - Celestial Kingdom, Terrestrial Kingdom, and Telestial Kingdom
 - Hell is reserved for the very few Sons of Perdition (those who do truly heinous things).
 - Angels are dead humans, eg. Moroni, who was a character in the BOM, the last member of his race.
 - God was once a man like us, living a righteous, though sinful, life on a planet like ours.

- He experienced “eternal progression” and eventually rose to become our God.
- God has a tangible body of flesh and bone.
- We all must obtain flesh and bone bodies in order to reach the highest heaven
 - This begs the question: What about the Holy Ghost? How did He obtain a body, since He is now a Spirit?
- God lives on a planet near the star Kolob.
- God ("Heavenly Father") has at least one wife, our "Mother in Heaven," but she is so holy that we are not to discuss her nor pray to her.
- We can become like God and rule over our own universe.
 - Godhood is reserved for those righteous Mormons who achieve the highest heaven.
- Jesus and Satan ("Lucifer") are spirit brothers, and they are **our** brothers - we are all spirit children of Heavenly Father
- Jesus Christ was conceived by God the Father by having intercourse with Mary, who was temporarily his wife.
 - He is, thus, the literal Father of Jesus.
- We should not pray to Jesus, nor try to feel a personal relationship with him.
- The "Lord" ("Jehovah") in the Old Testament is the being named Jesus in the New Testament, but different from "God the Father" ("Elohim").
 - But see Deut. 6:4!
- In the highest degree of the celestial kingdom some men will have more than one wife.
 - But see Matt. 22:30!
- Before coming to this earth we lived as spirits in a "pre-existence", during which we were tested; our position in this life (whether born to Mormons or savages, or in America or Africa) is our reward or punishment for our obedience in that life.
- The Garden of Eden was in Missouri. All humanity before the Great Flood lived in the western hemisphere. The Ark transported Noah and the other survivors to the eastern hemisphere.
- Mormons should avoid traveling on water, since Satan rules the waters.
- A righteous Mormon will actually see the face of God in the Mormon temple.
- They practice “baptism for the dead” in which departed relatives and friends “receive” baptism by proxy.
 - This is why they think genealogy is so important.
 - I’ve heard that even Hitler has been proxy-baptised!
- They have a works-based plan of salvation
 - If you aren’t a Mormon, the best you can hope for is the terrestrial kingdom
 - But even a devout Mormon can’t ever be sure he’s done enough to achieve the highest heaven.

- They must be baptized by an Elder who has the Melchizedek Priesthood.
- They must marry a good Mormon spouse and must be “sealed for time and eternity” in a Mormon temple.
 - Marriage is forever!
- They must receive a Temple endowment
- They must live a sin-free life, or repent for each and every sin they commit. Better have a good memory!
- Follow the Articles of Faith (see Appendix)
- In short, one must do all one can PLUS believe! ([2 Nephi 25:23](#))

LDS Scriptures

- Timeline for the LDS Scriptures
 - 1830 – First Edition of Book of Mormon published
 - 1830 – Smith begins his translation of Genesis
 - 1833 – First Edition of the Doctrine & Covenants published
 - 1835 – Second Edition of D&C published (many changes)
 - 1835 – Smith purchases the “Anthon Papyri”, purported to be the last book of Abraham
 - 1842 - First Edition of the Pearl of Great Price published
 - 1921 – Edition of D&C published minus “Lectures on the Faith”
 - If the LDS Scriptures are God’s Word, we would expect them to originate from the hand of an Apostle
 - LDS claim Joseph was a prophet and apostle
 - If the LDS Scriptures are God’s Word, we would expect them to be consistent with the Bible
 - LDS interpret the Bible in such a way as to conclude it does contain LDS theology
 - If the LDS Scriptures are God’s Word, we would expect them to be consistent with themselves
 - Test Case – Are the LDS Scriptures consistent with themselves?
 - Class exercise
 1. Read the last few pages of your notes.
 2. List the inconsistencies you see between the earlier Scriptures and the later ones
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The Mormon Doctrine of God

- Evolving view of God
 - One God (Monotheism)
 - “Trinitarian” in some sense, with a strong influence of modalism
 - “Modalism” = One God in three distinct roles
 - E.;g., I am a son, a father, and a brother.
 - Plurality of Gods (polytheism)
- God is limited by natural law
 - What does this imply?
 - That God is not transcendent; there is something more powerful than God.
- God is neither all-powerful nor all-knowing
 - “God cannot create a rock He cannot lift – this illustrates a very important concept – namely, that God is not All-Powerful” – Related to me by a Mormon in casual conversation.
 - This “illustrates” that God cannot do anything absurd – for example, He can’t make a square circle. It’s not a matter of power, it’s a matter of logic.
- God created the universe from eternal, pre-existing matter
 - Again, God is not transcendent - there is something in the universe older than Him

Some Questions to Ask Mormon Missionaries

Mormons will often ask people if they have read the Book of Mormon and prayed about it. They assume that if someone believed it he would accept the rest of Mormonism. Here are a few questions to ask:

- Since the Introduction to the Book of Mormon states that it contains "the fulness of the everlasting gospel" can you give me verses that teach the doctrines of pre-earth existence, plural gods with wives, temple marriage, chance to repent after you die, temple rituals for the dead, three levels of heaven, etc.?
- Where do I find your concept of eternal marriage in the Book of Mormon?

- If you truly believe the Book of Mormon, doctrinally, how do you accept the Doctrine and Covenants or Pearl of Great Price since these books teach different concepts?
- Why do Mormons approach people with the Book of Mormon if it doesn't contain their most important doctrines? Why don't they give out copies of their other scriptures instead of the Book of Mormon?
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- This gives us a chance to talk about the value of the *Book of Mormon*, as opposed to the Bible. Ask them:
 - What specific doctrine of Mormonism is in the Book of Mormon that isn't in the Bible?

The *Book of Mormon* declares that the Bible has been deliberately altered (see [1 Nephi 13:26-28](#)). Mormons will often point to all the different translations of the Bible as proof that it has been changed. You can ask them something like:

- Does translation always lessen scripture's value or change its teaching?
- What about the Book of Mormon? How many translations have been made of it? Is it less reliable in French or German?
- Does the church put a disclaimer on the Book of Mormon in other languages as they do with the Bible? If not, why not?
- If professional LDS translators can reliably take the English Book of Mormon into French, why can't professional translators take the Greek New Testament into English?
- If the Bible is in such bad shape, which verses are wrong, so I won't use them?

Mormons will often claim the Bible is incomplete, that various books have been left out of our current Bible.

- Why doesn't your prophet restore the lost books or correct the translation?
- If your prophet has not felt the need to restore these missing books of the Bible how important can they be?
- Which books were left out? Which ones should be added?
- Joseph Smith did a revised version of the Bible, why doesn't the LDS Church print it? They print extracts from it at the back of their Bible—why not use the whole thing? Smith did not add any lost books to his revision. In fact, he left out the book Song of Solomon.

Remind them that even though we don't have all of the words of Jesus, John assured us that we have all that we need to know about gaining eternal life (see [John 20:30-31](#)). Also, Jesus promised "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35)

If Mormonism is a restoration of original Christianity they would need to demonstrate that LDS doctrines were originally in the Bible but later deleted. However, there is no manuscript evidence of revisions of the New Testament that eliminated cardinal doctrines. Also, the scripture quotes in the writings of the early church fathers show that there were no doctrinal changes.

- A good book on the reliability of the Bible is [The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?](#), by F.F. Bruce.
- We have over 5,000 ancient versions of the GNT! If a key doctrine had been removed, we would certainly have evidence!

When discussing grace with them you could also ask about [2 Nephi 25:23](#), "by grace we are saved, after all we can do."

- If grace only applies after all you can do, how do you know when you have done enough? Have you truly done ALL you could do? If not, then it would seem that grace would not apply. That is why a Christian rejoices in grace (unmerited favor) as presented in the Bible.

We need to explain that good works are a result of grace, not a way to achieve it ([Gal. 5:22-23](#) and [Eph. 2](#)). One doesn't earn or pay for a gift. You will need to explain that grace is not a license to sin, that those who truly love God will want to please Him.

- Since Mormonism teaches that almost everyone will be saved (resurrected) to some level in heaven, how do they reconcile that with [Matt. 7:13-14](#)? Jesus taught that only a few would gain heaven. They seem to have reversed the broad way and the narrow way.

Some Biblical "Proof Texts" Considered

- Article #8 of the Articles of Faith reads:
 - We believe the ^a[Bible](#) to be the ^b[word](#) of God as far as it is translated ^c[correctly](#).
 - This allows them an out, if the Bible contradicts the BOM or other "essentials" of the LDS faith.
 - "The Bible has been translated so many times, it's not funny!" – A Mormon friend in casual conversation.
 - How many times has the Bible been translated?

- BOM in the Bible?
- "And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.' "Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. (Ezekiel 37:16-17)
- Mormons say these verses refer to the Bible and the BOM. They says the two sticks are books.
 - In context, these verses are prophetic of the reuniting of Israel and Ephraim; the sticks have the names of tribes written on them:
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 - "Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. (Ezekiel 37:21-22)
- Baptism for the Dead
 - Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? (1 Corinthians 15:29)
 - This verse is, in all likelihood, describing a practice in the Corinthian church that certain individuals were performing that was never meant to be normative for Christians.
 - Paul refers to these people in the third person – if it were meant to be normative, he would probably have written “we.”
 - He would have mentioned it elsewhere in Scripture.
 - It is always dangerous to take an obscure passage and build a doctrine on it.
 - BTW, baptism for the dead do not appear anywhere in the BOM.
- Salvation by faith AND works
 - But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your (31) faith without the works, and I will (32) show you my faith (33) by my works." (James 2:18)
 - James means only that faith with no fruit is not a genuine faith.
 - And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (Revelation 20:12)
 - The context is that this is all **unsaved** people, and it is true that they will be judged on the basis of works.
 - The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed

and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:5-6).

- This is in complete harmony with what Paul writes to the Ephesians:
 - For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Conclusion

- LDS apologists have offered sophisticated arguments attempting to prove the BOM's authenticity as an ancient text. Some are very powerful – yet a simple review of the issues we've discussed (and dozens of other we could have) demonstrates a number of problems with the LDS Scriptures, particularly the BOM
- Studying the Bible will prepare us to evaluate the BOM and other LDS Scriptures from the standpoint of inerrancy, consistency, historical accuracy, and hermeneutics. If we apply the 'Berean test' (Acts 17:11), the LDS scriptures fail!

APPENDIX

THE BOOK OF MOSIAH

CHAPTER 15

How Christ is both the Father and the Son—He shall make intercession and bear the transgressions of his people—They and all the holy prophets are his seed—He bringeth to pass the resurrection—Little children have eternal life. About 148 B.C.

1 AND now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that ^aGod himself shall ^bcome down among the children of men, and shall ^credeem his people.

2 And because he ^adwelleth in ^bflesh he shall be called the ^cSon of God, and having subjected the flesh to the ^dwill of the ^eFather, being the Father and the Son—

3 The Father, ^abecause he was ^bconceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—

4 And they are ^aone God, yea, the very ^bEternal ^cFather of heaven and of earth.

THE BOOK OF ALMA

THE SON OF ALMA

CHAPTER 11

Nephite coinage set forth—Amulek contends with Zeezrom—Christ will not save people in their sins—Only those who inherit the kingdom of heaven are saved—All men shall rise in immortality—There is no death after the resurrection. About 82 B.C.

38 Now Zeezrom saith again unto him: Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father?

39 And Amulek said unto him: Yea, he is the very ^aEternal Father of heaven and of earth, and ^ball things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last;

40 And he shall come into the ^aworld to ^bredeem his people; and he shall ^ctake upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else.

SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOK OF MOSES

CHAPTER 2

(June—October 1830)

God creates the heavens and the earth—All forms of life created—God makes man and gives him dominion over all else.

1 AND it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I ^areveal unto you concerning this ^bheaven, and this ^cearth; ^dwrite the words which I speak. I am the Beginning and the End, the ^eAlmighty God; by mine ^fOnly Begotten I ^gcreated these things; yea, in the beginning I ^hcreated the ⁱheaven, and the earth upon which thou standest.

2 And the earth was without ^aform, and void; and I caused ^bdarkness to come up upon the face of the deep; and my ^cSpirit ^dmoved upon the face of the water; for I am God.

3 And I, God, said: Let there be ^alight; and there was light.

4 And I, God, saw the light; and that light was ^agood. And I, God, divided the ^blight from the darkness.

THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

TRANSLATED FROM THE PAPYRUS, BY JOSEPH SMITH

CHAPTER 4

The Gods plan the creation of the earth and all life thereon—Their plans for the six days of creation are set forth.

1 AND then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the ^aGods, ^borganized and formed the ^cheavens and the earth.

2 And the earth, after it was formed, was empty and desolate, because they had not formed anything but the earth; and ^adarkness reigned upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of the Gods ^bwas brooding upon the face of the waters.

3 And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light.

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

History of the Church, Vol. 4, pp. 535—541

1 We ^abelieve in ^bGod, the Eternal Father, and in His ^cSon, Jesus Christ, and in the ^dHoly Ghost.

2 We believe that men will be ^apunished for their ^bown sins, and not for Adam's ^ctransgression.

3 We believe that through the ^aAtonement of Christ, all ^bmankind may be ^csaved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

4 We believe that the first principles and ^aordinances of the Gospel are: first, ^bFaith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, ^cRepentance; third, ^dBaptism by ^eimmersion for the ^fremission of sins; fourth, Laying on of ^ghands for the ^hgift of the Holy Ghost.

5 We believe that a man must be ^acalled of God, by ^bprophecy, and by the laying on of ^chands by those who are in ^dauthority, to ^epreach the Gospel and administer in the ^fordinances thereof.

6 We believe in the same ^aorganization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, ^bprophets, ^cpastors, ^dteachers, ^eevangelists, and so forth.

7 We believe in the ^agift of ^btongues, ^cprophecy, ^drevelation, ^evisions, ^fhealing, ^ginterpretation of tongues, and so forth.

8 We believe the ^aBible to be the ^bword of God as far as it is translated ^ccorrectly; we also believe the ^dBook of Mormon to be the word of God.

9 We believe all that God has ^arevealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet ^breveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10 We believe in the literal ^agathering of Israel and in the restoration of the ^bTen Tribes; that ^cZion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will ^dreign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be ^erenewed and receive its ^fparadisiacal ^gglory.

11 We claim the ^aprivilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the ^bdictates of our own ^cconscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them ^dworship how, where, or what they may.

12 We believe in being ^asubject to ^bkings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in ^cobeying, honoring, and sustaining the ^dlaw.

13 ^aWe believe in being ^bhonest, true, ^cchaste, ^dbenevolent, virtuous, and in doing ^egood to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we ^fhope all things,

we have endured many things, and hope to be able to ^g[endure](#) all things. If there is anything ^h[virtuous](#),
[lovely](#), or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

JOSEPH SMITH