

Thesis for Joseph Smith's organization of the cult.

- The original church of Christ slipped into "the great apostasy" soon after the first generation of apostles died.
 - Mormon apostle: James Talmage, "*if the alleged apostasy of the primitive Church was not a reality, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not the divine institution its name proclaims.*"
 - Premise: 1820 God himself appears to Joseph Smith in Palmyra NY. "Hill Cumorah"
 - Jesus tells Smith that all of the creeds of the so-called Orthodox Church were an abomination.
- God used Smith to organize His true church again in 1830.
 - Smith, (1805-1844) is a modern prophet, seer, and revelator
 - Smith is ranked as 2nd only to Jesus as pertaining to the salvation of men in this world.
 - The witness of Joseph's calling is the Book of Mormon, "the most correct book of any in the world"
 - According to 10th LDS president, Joseph Fielding Smith, "*Mormonism as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground*"
- Mormon Doctrine is based upon 4 standard works.
 - KJV of the Bible
 - Book of Mormon
 - The Doctrine and Covenants: a collection of modern revelations, most of which were given to founder.
 - The Pearl of Great Price: a collection of smaller works.
- Extra Biblical Revelation: God continues to speak through his Mormon apostles

Smith's version of Christianity:

- God & Jesus have human bodies
- All humans are filled with the essence of divinity
- Humans may become gods themselves via a life of proper conduct regulated by the Mormon Church.

Cosmology

- All life is material, including “spirit matter”.
- “spirit matter” is made of extremely small particles that cannot be seen by human eyes
- All matter cannot be created nor destroyed it can just be re-arranged
- Like matter, “intelligence” was co-eternal with God
- Human spirit matter had been drawn from a pre-existent pool of eternal intelligence
- Spirits were incapable of experiencing “fullness of joy” unless joined to corporeal bodies
- Embodiment was therefore the purpose of earth life
- The work of God, the supreme intelligence was to create worlds across the cosmos where inferior intelligences could be embodied
- Smith’s view of God evolved from thinking that God was a spirit but evolved to view God as an advanced & glorified man embodied in time & space
- God’s presence and physical throne is on the planet *Kolob* where 1 day is equal to 1000 days on earth
- Man can evolve to become a god themselves. There is a vast hierarchy of gods each having his own planet to rule over a kingdom of “inferior intelligences”
- In the event that humans don’t receive the Mormon faith in this life, they can do so after death via the “baptism for the dead”

Person of Joseph Smith

- Family was well known for being treasured hunters. Father was an uneducated man who led many a hunt for Captain Kidd’s treasure. Mother was given to extreme religious views and held to many superstitions. The couple had 10 children in all and Joseph Jr. was the 4th. After Joseph’s death she authored a biography of her famous son’s life, (ghost written by Mrs. Coray was recorded what became known as “mother Smith’s history.” The book was vigorously attacked by the successor to Smith; B. Young who claimed it was filled with errors. His concerns were justified as many of Joe’s earlier oddities were recorded.
- Smith himself a mystic was given to use “peep, (or sometimes called peek), stones” which he sometimes kept under his hat, to enable him to find treasures of all kinds.
- First vision at the age of 14
- At 17 the angel “Moroni” who was the glorified son of “Mormon,” appeared to him with the message about the church having become apostate
- In 1827 the angel gave Joseph the “golden plates” which were supposedly written in reformed Egyptian. The book of Mormon is the translation of these plates which took 3 years to complete.
- Some special glasses were given to Smith to be able to read the script. The “Urim & Thummim” were unique gifts for the prophet to interpret god’s words.

- A school teacher named Oliver Cowdery joined Smith in the work of translation. Upon completion in 1829 heaven could no longer restrain its joy and so John the Baptist was dispatched by Peter, James & John to come to the men and bestow upon them the order of the “Aaronic Priesthood.”
- 1830 the first book of Mormon is published
- In the early days of the church, > 1830, most of the church leadership was Smith’s family. A charismatic personality, he influenced many biblically ignorant to become his followers. In 1831 he moved the church to Kirtland, Ohio to create a sort of kingdom of “god” on earth. Political and social pressures force Smith and his followers to join up with other converts in Missouri in 1837. By 1838 a local civil war essentially broke out between the followers of Smith and their “kingdom” and the “gentiles” who were from the local outsiders. Smith had formed a militia of sorts and was prepared to defend his group when the Governor of Missouri ordered them to leave the state. Rumors of many of the cults mystical practices and polygamy made them very unpopular to their neighbors.
- In 1839 Smith and the Missouri church went east again to a small town in Illinois. Nauvoo became an area where missionary work could prosper and the group soon grew to 35,000 by 1844. In that year, Smith announced that he was going to run for the presidency of the US. This of course shocked those who thought that they could live with these “strange” neighbors into action. When the local newspaper began to write a series of articles about the church including the practice of polygamy, Smith and his little army destroyed the paper. Smith was arrested for inciting a riot and he and his brother were jailed awaiting trial. A mob formed which was able to break into the jail and murdered Smith and his brother brutally. This of course sealed Smith as the church’s first major martyr and solidified the “us against the world” battle cry which fostered community and spurred further growth.
- Brigham Young was named to be the first succession and became church president. He then moved the people to settle in the state of Utah where they were left alone to practice their many unique rituals. Soon after Young was named the new leader there was a power struggle and a split resulted in the formation of the “re-organized church of the LDS.” The new group rejected the practice of polygamy and claimed to be the “true Mormon church.”

Mormonism today

- Over 15 million members world-wide growing @ approx. 200,000 per year
- Emphasis on education and accomplishment in all professional fields. Like Jewish culture, Mormons are strongly encouraged to excel at everything whether sports, business or whatever.
- Temples are meant to impress and from an architectural perspective they do
- Business ownership which includes hotels, newspapers and major companies have provided a legitimacy to LDS church
- Boys age 19 and girls 21 are to dedicate 2 years of their lives to the work of missions.
- Taboos include the use of tobacco, alcohol, tea, coffee or other caffeine drinks
- Church organization
 - Many layers of leadership under the president / “prophet” and his two “counselors”
 - Divided into “wards” and “stakes”
 - Each ward is presided over by a “bishop” and his two counselors
 - Wards are consolidated into stakes each of which has a stake president/two counselors and aided by 12 high priests, this is known as the “stake high counsel.”

Next class

The way of salvation

How to talk with a Mormon