

# The Mormon Faith

## A Study of Clergy Knowledge

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### Introduction and Rationale

Instead of allowing internet pundits to decide for themselves who are and who are not Christians, it seems reasonable, fair, and “Christian” to permit faith communities to define themselves according to their own understanding of the focal point of their faith experience. That Quakers, Unitarians, Universalists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists and, yes, Mormons are castigated for not being Christians as defined by those who have claimed to hold ownership over the term!

This data-base study was designed to merely and simply determine the “knowledge base” of Christian clergy with respect to the faith practiced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is neither an attempt to convert or to disparage but rather to determine the level of knowledge of clergy regarding this particular faith community. Too often, individuals (and clergy are not excluded from this generalization) feel that the information they hold about a particular faith community is correct by virtue simply of them holding it. When those opinions, however, are placed alongside the actual teachings of the faith community in question, too often the opinions (or shall we say prejudices) are found wanting in accuracy. To ask a Baptist if a Catholic is a Christian or if the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is biblical is quite different than asking a Catholic! To find out what Mormons themselves profess in their faith, one is better advised to ask a believing and practicing Mormon than someone outside the faith or, indeed, someone who has left that faith. I have asked a leading Mormon theologian to correct and approve 25 statements about the Mormon faith to assure accuracy. Then, I asked 819 Christian clergy outside of the Mormon faith to indicate, in their opinion, which statements are false and, by implication, which are true. What follows are the data gathered and my analysis of its value.

### Background

A word about the information source is in order here for we are attempting to compare what Christian clergy think they know about the faith of the Mormon Church against what the Mormons themselves say they believe. The survey was based upon 25 simple statements and the respondent was asked to identify which, if any, were in his or her opinion false statements. Statements made in this questionnaire are based on the book, *The Mormon Faith: A New Look at Christianity* (Salt Lake City, UT: Shadow Mountain, 2001), by Dr. Robert L. Millet of the Religious Studies Department of Brigham Young University. Furthermore, Dr. Millet edited and tweaked the statements to conform to correct Mormon teaching. By using this method, I am

confident that the Mormon faith has been honored owing to the fact that Dr. Millet is an internationally respected authority on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, being a theologian in that tradition himself while teaching at Brigham Young University.

## About the Survey

The following survey was taken of 819 randomly selected Christian clergy, 50% Roman Catholic priests and 50% Protestant ministers. The directions were to simply identify ONLY the FALSE statements in the list of 25 statements. The statements were based on the book by a senior Mormon theologian, Robert Millet, using his book, *The Mormon Faith: A New Look at Christianity* (Salt Lake City, UT: Shadow Mountain, 2001). Dr. Robert L. Millet teaches in the Religious Studies Department of Brigham Young University and is an internationally recognized spokesperson on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Each of these 25 statements was approved by him as correctly presenting the Mormon faith. The SIX statements which are NOT TRUE are highlighted in RED. All others are true according to the teachings of the Mormon Church.

Note: The FALSE statements are made TRUE in italics.

### 1) **Mormons do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of humankind.**

(The statement is false.)

54% of the respondents believed it to be false.

46% of the respondents believed it to be true.

*Mormons do believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of humankind.*

### 2) **Members of Joseph Smith's family were originally Presbyterian.**

(The statement is true.)

72% of the respondents believed it to be true.

28% of the respondents believed it to be false.

### 3) **Mormons believe that plural marriage was discontinued in 1890 for one reason – it was against the law.**

(The statement is true.)

65% of the respondents believed it to be true.

36% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**4) Joseph Smith held a traditional belief in the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible.**

(The statement is false.)

56% of the respondents believed it to be false.

44% of the respondents believed it to be true.

*Joseph Smith did not hold a traditional believe in the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible.*

**5) Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible includes the books of the Apocrypha.**

(The statement is true.)

44% of the respondents believed it to be true.

56% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**6) Mormons worship God the Father, in the name of Christ the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. These three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – constitute the Godhead.**

(The statement is true.)

60% of the respondents believed it to be true.

40% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**7) Mormons believe that the Jesus of history is the Christ of faith.**

(The statement is true.)

64% of the respondents believed it to be true.

36% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**8) Mormons do not believe that Adam and Eve were real people, our first parents, and that they lived in the Garden of Eden.**

(The statement is false.)

60% of the respondents believed it to be false.

40% of the respondents believed it to be true.

*Mormons do believe that Adam and Eve were real people, our first parents, and that they lived in the Garden of Eden.*

**9) Mormons believe that humankind will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's.**

(The statement is true.)

90% of the respondents believed it to be true.

10% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**10) Because Adam's transgression in Eden was forgiven by God, Mormons do not believe in "original sin."**

(The statement is true.)

78% of the respondents believed it to be true.

22% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**11) Mormons do not believe in adult baptism by immersion.**

(The statement is false.)

62% of the respondents believed it to be false.

38% of the respondents believed it to be true.

*Mormons do believe in adult baptism by immersion.*

**12) Mormons believe that the Christian sacraments have been administered by Christian prophets since the beginning of time.**

(The statement is true.)

56% of the respondents believed it to be true.

44% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**13) Mormons believe that Christ was with the Father from the beginning of time.**

(The statement is true.)

68% of the respondents believed it to be true.

32% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**14) Mormons believe that the resurrection of Jesus was the first occurrence of a resurrection and stands as a physical proof of the divine Sonship of Jesus.**

(The statement is true.)

72% of the respondents believed it to be true.

28% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**15) Mormons believe that man is the direct and lineal offspring of Deity.**

(The statement is true.)

82% of the respondents believed it to be true.

18% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**16) Mormons believe that in this life or the life to come everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel of salvation and be saved.**

(The statement is true.)

72% of the respondents believed it to be true.

28% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**17) Mormons believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is in essence the atoning sacrifice of Christ. That powers of the Atonement are accessed through faith in Jesus Christ, repentance of sin, baptism by immersion by one holding proper authority, the receipt of the Holy Spirit, and enduring faithfully to the end of life.**

(The statement is true.)

72% of the respondents believed it to be true.

28% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**18) Mormons do not believe that the first sacrament is baptism by immersion.**

(The statement is true.)

44% of the respondents believed it to be true.

56% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**19) Mormons believe the second sacrament of the Church to be confirmation.**

(The statement is true.)

58% of the respondents believed it to be true.

42% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**20) Mormons do not believe in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.**

(The statement is false.)

36% of the respondents believed it to be false.

64% of the respondents believed it to be true.

*Mormons do believe in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.*

**21) Mormons believe the priesthood is the power to act in the name of God.**

(The statement is true.)

78% of the respondents believed it to be true.

22% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**22) Mormons believe that the mission of the Church is to invite everyone to come to Christ.**

(The statement is true.)

78% of the respondents believed it to be true.

22% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**23) Mormons pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

(The statement is true.)

64% of the respondents believed it to be true.

36% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**24) Mormons believe that the most universal form of revelation is the “Light of Christ” that dwells within every person born into the world as stated in the Gospel of John.**

(The statement is true.)

74% of the respondents believed it to be true.

26% of the respondents believed it to be false.

**25) Mormons do not believe that one must be born again in order to be saved.**

(The statement is false.)

44% of the respondents believed it to be false.

56% of the respondents believed it to be true.

*Mormons do believe that one must be born again in order to be saved.*

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Note: If anyone wishes to know what Mormons believe, they should ask a Mormon. Is this not fair?