

Mormon Cult Debate Divides Christian Leaders

Is Mormonism a cult? Christian leaders are divided on the issue.

Indeed, there are dueling voices this week as Dallas Pastor Robert Jeffress takes one stance and Fuller Theological Seminary President Richard Mouw takes the other—and as Texas Gov. Rick Perry takes one side of the issue and Internet evangelist Bill Keller takes another. It's a debate that's likely to continue raging as the race for the Republican ticket continues.

"Mitt Romney's a good, moral person, but he's not a Christian. Mormonism is not Christianity. It has always been considered a cult by the mainstream of Christianity," said Jeffress, senior pastor at Dallas' First Baptist Church and a Perry backer.

The remarks caused Perry to distance himself from Jeffress. Perry has said he doesn't believe Mormonism is a cult. Mouw is siding with Perry.

"While I am not prepared to reclassify Mormonism as possessing undeniably Christian theology, I do accept many of my Mormon friends as genuine followers of the Jesus whom I worship as the divine Savior," Mouw wrote in an article on CNN Sunday. "We evangelicals and our Mormon counterparts disagree about some important theological questions. But we have also found that on some matters we are not as far apart as we thought we were."

Despite the weekend drama, Jeffress is standing by his comments. And Keller is standing with him. In fact, he applauds Jeffress.

Keller made national news in 2007 for his now infamous quote,

“a vote for Romney is a vote for Satan!” He has boldly called on Romney to quit lying about being a Christian.

“The fact is, the beliefs and teachings of the satanically inspired Mormon cult are totally inconsistent with biblical Christianity. Romney and Mormons use the words ‘God’ and ‘Jesus,’ yet the god and jesus of the Mormon cult are not the God and Jesus of the Bible!” Keller says. “They view the Bible as a flawed and incomplete book usurped by the writings of their cult’s founder, Joseph Smith, who history shows was a racist, pedophile, polygamist and murderer!”

Where do average Christian pastors stand on the issue? Sixty percent of Protestant pastors strongly disagree that Mormons are Christians, according to a 2010 LifeWay Research study, and 15 percent somewhat disagree. Yet the Mormon church has worked hard to find mainstream acceptance with advertising campaigns dubbed “I’m a Mormon” that span billboards, city buses and television.

Still, Keller is among the voices that are pointing out the cultish-like facets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Keller notes that Mormon doctrine teaches their ‘god’ used to be a human who rose to god-like status, and that the ‘jesus’ of the Mormon cult is the natural offspring of their ‘god’ Elohim who had sex with Mary. That, Keller explains, means the Mormon ‘jesus’ is a created being and not a deity as the Bible teaches, and that Jesus is the brother of Lucifer.

“I could care less what fantasies Romney and those in his cult choose to believe, but I do care that they lie to people saying they are a Christian, when a person who believes in the teachings of the Mormon cult are no more a Christian than a Muslim is,” Keller says. “Most appalling are prominent Christians who have sold out the faith to help Romney and other Mormons perpetuate their lie that they are Christians, aiding that cult to lead ignorant souls to hell for eternity.”

What do you think? Is Mormonism a cult?