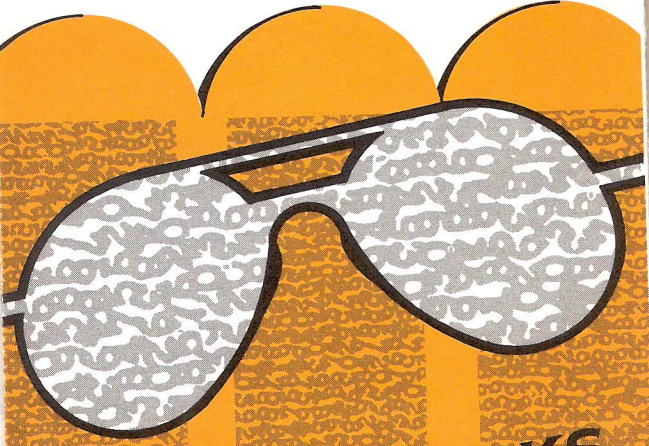


**THE
MORMON
CREED
EXAMINED**



KEITH L. BROOKS

The Mormon Creed Examined

"The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints"—this was the title of a little card given to me by a Christian woman who had been convinced by two Mormon elders that the Mormon Church was the true church, loyal in every way to the Bible.

The brief statements on the card appeared to include the basic Christian doctrines for which all evangelical churches are supposed to stand. My friend, however, was not aware that these statements were subject to interpretation by writings other than the Bible which Mormons regard as sacred. Neither did she know that the distinctive Mormon teachings (which every Bible-loving Christian knows to be contrary to God's Word) were not mentioned in the creed. The little card, which is freely distributed among members of evangelical churches, has cleverly misled hundreds.

Mormonism As Now Taught

The Bible declares, "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

For a number of years the author's folder, *The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error*, has been widely circulated. The basic teachings of several modern cults and the clear statements of the Scriptures are arranged in contrasting columns. The cult teachings were taken from the

original writings for which the founders claimed divine inspiration, for one would assume that such "revelations" could not be later edited by others.

In some instances divisions have actually occurred within the cults themselves (as in Christian Science and Mormonism), so that certain groups reject part of the original teachings. Succeeding editions of their official books simply omit views originally propagated but which have been unacceptable to many people. But since the founders claimed divine inspiration for their teachings, we are justified in examining the original teachings.

It is difficult, however, to study Mormon beliefs because they insist that they do not hold the views listed and that they hold strictly to the Scriptures. It is a well-known fact that to observe the original tenets of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young would be illegal in many countries. Using the 1948 edition of the official handbook of Mormon doctrine as a reference, we will consider the doctrine of salvation. If the Mormons are unscriptural here, obviously we need not proceed to their other doctrines.

Mormon authorities insist that "the church which we represent is the one church and kingdom of God, and we possess the only faith by which the children of men can be brought back into the presence of the Father" (Young—JD 12:205). In the entire book of 418 pages, however, we find but one reference from the Bible, and this in no way supports the statement after which it is used.

According to this book, all human beings are bound by Mormon teaching, since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints "is the only one existing in the world that can and does legitimately bear the name of Christ and His divine authority" (Smith—IE 21:639).

Joseph Smith "was ordained before he came into this world and received every key and ordinance and law ever given to any man on earth from Adam down" (Woodruff—JE 21:317). "It was agreed in the counsels of eternity before the foundation of the earth was laid that Joseph Smith should be the man to bring forth the Word of God to the people and to receive the fullness of the keys and power of the priesthood of the Son of God" (Young—JD, pp. 289,290). "The same Mormon priesthood exists on the other side of the veil" (Woodruff—JD 22:333).

Our New Testament makes it very clear that no other priesthood exists over the souls of men since Christ became our exalted High Priest.

Basic to the Mormon doctrine of salvation is the teaching that, like our Lord—who was preexistent with the Father from all eternity—human beings were also preexistent and perfect in the celestial state. Instead of our being finite beings (as the Scriptures clearly teach)—creatures of time—we are all visitors from the celestial world who are put on temporary trial in the flesh and given the possibility of "evolving" into "Gods." (They capitalize the word "Gods" as used of human beings.)

"Man as a spirit was born of heavenly parents and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions prior to coming to earth in a temporal body to undergo an experience in mortality" (Grant—IE 28:1090). We don't need to look for any scriptural authority for this, for this knowledge as to man's origin has been specially given to the Mormon Church (Smith—CR, p. 33). "Not only was the Saviour in the beginning with the Father but also you and I were there. We dwelt there by reason of faithfulness, having kept our first estate, and have been permitted

to come into this world and receive a tabernacle of flesh" (CR, pp. 47,48). We read: "We possess the same faculties and powers the Father possesses, being required to pass through an ordeal by which we will be improved according to the heed we give the principles we have received" (JD 14:300-302). "The labors we performed in the celestial sphere have had an effect on our lives here and to a certain extent govern the lives we now lead" (Grant—IE 46:75).

It is at once obvious that this doctrine of human preexistence must call for an entirely new construction of the biblical plan of salvation. How will such teaching be reconciled to clear New Testament statements? The doctrine of preexistence makes us eternal beings on mortal probation. We are next told that the object of our being placed on this earth is that we may "work out an exaltation that we may prepare ourselves to go back" (Grant—IE 48:123) or that "we may become sons or daughters of God in a fuller sense" (Smith—JD 19:259).

"We are here to prove whether we are worthy to go into the celestial, the terrestrial, or the telestial worlds or hell or some other place" (Young—JD 4:269). "We are here that we might have a body and present it in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body and herein is his punishment" (Smith—TDJ 8:181). "We are also here to cooperate with God in the redemption of the dead and in the blessings of our ancestors and for the purpose of redeeming and regenerating the earth on which we live" (Taylor—JD 21:94).

Then, according to Mormon teaching, those of us who make good are on the way to becoming gods! "The Lord created us for the purpose of our becoming Gods like Himself when we have been proved in our present capacity—

growing up from the low estate of manhood to become Gods until we can create worlds on worlds" (Young—JD 3:93). Thus we become rival gods to Him who, in the consummation of this age, is to become all in all.

"Man is endowed with divine attributes and has the capacity in due time of evolving into a God" (IE 13:31). Young adds that "we can become Kings of kings and Lords of lords" (JD 3:265,266). "We have to learn how to be Gods ourselves" (Smith—TS), and Young adds that when we get to be gods and creators we can "propagate the species in the spiritual" (JD 6:274,275).

Against this background, how can we now hope to make sense of the New Testament teachings concerning salvation by grace through faith without works? (John 6:28,29; Rom. 3:27,28; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5).

Turning to the subject of the gospel, we find that the Mormons propose entirely new definitions, all of which are contradictions in terms. "The gospel is a system or plan of laws and ordinances by strict obedience to which people are assured they may return again into the presence of the Father" (Young—13:233). "The gospel is a portion of the law that pertains to the kingdom where God resides" (JD 8:159). With so many clear definitions of the gospel in the New Testament, one wonders why some of them are not cited—but not one salvation verse is quoted.

"The gospel," Smith tells us, "is a code of laws and ordinances given men to enable them to assimilate themselves to those who are in heaven" (MS 54:641). The New Testament puts the Law and the gospel in full contrast, declaring that any mixture of law or works with grace makes grace of no effect (Rom. 11:6). Hence, it

is not strange that Mormonism has to come up with some new, fantastic definitions.

"There is a very foolish idea," says Young, "that there was no such thing as the gospel of Jesus Christ until Jesus came. It (this idea) is the greatest folly in creation" (JD 20:23). However, the opening verses of Mark's Gospel tell us precisely of "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (v. 1) with the proclamation of John the Baptist of Christ's coming as the Lamb of God (vv. 2-8).

According to Mormon teaching, water baptism is the vehicle of conferring the Holy Spirit, and this baptism is invalid unless administered by a properly constituted Mormon official. Says Herber Grant: "We declare to all the world that John's baptism restored the Aaronic priesthood and bestowed it upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery."

We have left untouched some of the more characteristic Mormon teachings, but we have cited a sufficient number to show even the most superficial student of the New Testament that the claims of Mormon representatives are false. That they seek only to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord is so obviously deceptive that only one course is open to the sincere seeker for God's truth: "Mark them which cause . . . offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

Origin of Mormonism

In 1820, Joseph Smith, of Palmyra, New York, claimed to have received divine revelations to the effect that all Christian churches were to be repudiated, that the true gospel had been lost since the third century, and that he should find a long-lost book containing the

truth. Smith claimed he was appointed to organize the only true church, of which he was to be the head, with full authority to appoint apostles. He got a following by teaching that judgments were about to be poured out on the earth.

From its beginning, Mormonism has been under the rule of an autocratic self-appointed "priesthood." In reality, it is a great secret society, binding its converts to solemn oaths for life and, through fear of curses, making it very improbable that very many of the converts will get away from the system.

Where did Smith get all the material for the *Book of Mormon*? He claimed to have found golden plates in a hole in a hillside, and he said that the plates bore a revelation written in "reformed Egyptian." He claimed that the Lord had given him some special eyeglasses through which he looked at the writing. Immediately the English translation appeared and was written down by an assistant. When all was written, Smith claimed that he gave the plates to an angel, who disappeared with them. Later, ten people said that the contents of the *Book of Mormon* were based on material written by a man named Solomon Spaulding and a deposed Baptist minister, Sidney Rigdon, who had been devising a new religion.

Even the origin of Mormonism's sacred book makes the religion suspect, and the wise seeker for truth will steer clear of it.

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