

The Mormons

or Latter-Day Saints

By Rev. Dr. L. Rumble, M.S.C.
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I am writing this pamphlet from a sense of duty towards the Latter-Day Saints themselves, even more than towards others who might be interested in the study of a religion so remarkable both in its nature and achievements. For I am convinced that many good and sincere believers in the Book of Mormon, professing as they do to be Christians, are really unaware of the real implications of teachings they have taken for granted until now. Nor do I think for a moment that they would wish to regard as an explanation of the religion of Christ what is in reality a contradiction of that religion - if indeed it be such.

I, of course, hold that Mormon beliefs, differing as they do from the beliefs of Christians during two thousand years, and depending as they do on interpretations of the Bible opposed to those of all great Christian scholars, ancient and modern, are irreconcilable with the Christian Faith.

But whilst that will account for any apparent lack of sympathy on my part with the religious system I discuss, it does not mean that I have at any time consciously ignored the demands of accuracy; and still less does it imply that I am wanting in charity towards the persons of Mormons themselves. Were I wanting in that, this particular pamphlet would never have been written at all.

[Fr Rumble considerably refined and expanded his analysis of Mormonism the A.C.T.S pamphlet No. 1495. A further insight into Mormonism can be obtained from the 1982 pamphlet Who are the Mormons? by Brian Harrison, (A.C.T.S No. 1764). Both of these can be viewed on this site.]

MISSIONARIES FROM UTAH

Quite recently, two young Americans came to the door, asking to see me. They were shown into the reception room, and when I entered a few moments later rose to introduce themselves in a most gentlemanly and courteous manner. They told me that they were missionaries from Utah, representing the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, and that they had been advised by a Catholic man to seek information from me that they had been unable to obtain from him.

"Then you are Mormons," I said.

"We are popularly described in that way," the elder of the two replied, "but we prefer the title 'Latter-Day Saints.' Although we accept the Book of Mormon, the official description of our Church is that which we have given you."

When we were seated, they told me their story. In going from door to door, asking people to consider their explanation of a new religious dispensation for Christians, they could not but be struck by their inability to make any impression at all on Catholic people. With others, often there was interest, always uncertainty. But Catholics just did not want to hear about other religions. And it

was when they had asked one Catholic man how he could possibly reconcile the certainty he had of his own faith with the clear teachings of the Catholic Bible itself that they had been referred to me.

The younger of the two thereupon produced a copy of the Douay Version of the Bible, in which what they considered the important verses telling against orthodox Christian Churches and in favour of Mormonism had been underlined in variously coloured inks. I had to tell them that I had no intention whatever of entering a discussion about the meaning of a multitude of texts in the brief time at our disposal. But I agreed to give them the explanation for which they said they had come, making clear to them the attitude the vast majority of Catholics at once adopt towards efforts to win them to any other religion. And I put before them briefly the scriptural, historical and rational foundations for the Catholic conviction that if the Catholic Church is not the one true Church of Jesus Christ, no true Church in accordance with biblical requirements exists at all.

They listened patiently, even intently. They did not resent my suggesting that their own qualifications could scarcely be expected to carry weight against the teaching authority of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of all the centuries. They candidly admitted their own lack of biblical scholarship, and their ignorance of the history of the Christian Church since apostolic times. They merely said that they believed in the particular historical episodes narrated in the Book of Mormon, and in the divine revelations claimed by their prophet, Joseph Smith, and continued amongst the Latter-Day Saints. They had been taught these; had never seen any reason to doubt them; and had been sent out from Utah to explain their doctrines to all men of goodwill.

They left, apologizing for having taken up my time, and saying that they realized the need of going more deeply into the matter. In turn, I myself determined to have a closer look at their Mormonism, and am setting out the results of my study for the use of others interested in the subject and not least, as I have said, for the benefit of Mormons themselves.

THE PROPHET, JOSEPH SMITH

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints is so named because it claims to offer the fullness of the revelation God has given to mankind through Jesus Christ -a fullness which has been reserved for these latter days, and for the "saints" or those willing to become disciples of the new teachings as explained by Joseph Smith.

Obviously we must begin by asking who is this Joseph Smith. And we run into difficulties at once, for we have to make up our minds whether his life story reveals a man who seems the kind of person God would have chosen for such a mission.

Joseph Smith, the son of a farmer, was born at Sharon, Vermont, U.S.A., on December 23rd, 1805. The family moved to Palmyra, N.Y., in 1815, and four years later to the little town of Manchester, Ontario County, N.Y. All biographers agree that Joseph received little or no education in the scholastic sense of the word. Mormons themselves, as we shall see, are most insistent on this.

Nervous, he was highly strung and subject to epileptic fits which he later called trances, and during which he claimed that heavenly visions came to him. But he proved himself so shrewd a schemer and so little endowed with any sense of veracity that it is impossible to take his word for the reality of his experiences. Dr. Edward Fairfield, one-time President of Michigan College, said that three witnesses who had personally known Joseph Smith from ten years of age onwards told him that "he was simply a notorious liar." But why should he have turned his attention to the religious field at all?

To understand that, we must remember that during the first half of the nineteenth century a wave of evangelical enthusiasm was sweeping through America. Methodists, Campbellites, Congregationalists, Millerites, Shakers and others followed one upon another with revival meetings, setting whole districts in a religious ferment and awakening the most violent controversies. Frenzy and hysteria became the order of the day. New religions -freak cults with crazy beliefs - sprang up like mushrooms during that emotional period. And the excitable Joseph Smith was not unaffected by the prevailing atmosphere of superstition and credulity.

In this setting, there came to Manchester an ex-Baptist revivalist preacher named Sydney Rigdon, who had joined the Campbellites. Rigdon was a well-educated man, intelligent, and endowed with a great facility in quoting the Scriptures. But the thought came to him that, instead of preaching Alexander Campbell's doctrines, he might just as well set up as a master in Israel and preach his own system. So he decided to give the world a totally new revelation. In Joseph Smith, whom he met at this time, he found a willing co-operator, though in the end it was he who was reduced to co-operation with Joseph Smith. For Joseph Smith had the necessary psychopathic qualities for a "visionary" which Rigdon lacked.

MYSTIC EXPERIENCES

Joseph tells us that, about the year 1820, being but fourteen years of age at the time, he had his first vision. He declares that, amidst all the conflicting claims of the different Protestant sects, he was concerned as to what Church he should join. He gave himself to earnest prayer, during which God the Father and Jesus Christ simultaneously appeared to him and told him "none," since all existent Churches were wrong.

Three years later, according to his own account, he was visited by an angel named Moroni. This angel told him that there was a book of golden plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of America and containing the fullness of the everlasting gospel as revealed to them. These plates were buried in the earth. Joseph Smith was the one appointed to unearth them, and with them he would find two magic transparent stones in silver frames which God had prepared to enable him to translate the writing on the plates. However, he was not to attempt to recover the plates until four years later. Then the angel gave him a vision of the place so that he would be able to recognize it later on when there.

Needless to say, Joseph Smith was quite excited by the thought that he had been chosen to re-establish the real Church of Jesus Christ on earth. But he possessed his soul in patience until, the four years having elapsed, he went at the angel's command and found the plates on the west side of the hill Cumorah, four miles from Palmyra, near the road to Manchester. The "spectacles" were with them. They enabled him miraculously to read the foreign-looking language engraved on the plates, understanding it in English. So he went off with the plates and spectacles, dictated a translation to scribes, and when he had finished found himself ordered to hand back the plates and the spectacles to the angel Moroni, who took them away forever from this world!

These claims are so extravagant that there scarcely seems need to refute them; yet all who become Mormons, even to this day, are expected to accept them. So we must go a little more deeply into the matter.

THE GOLDEN PLATES

According to Joseph Smith, the plates he found were engraved in an unknown language; but with the help of the "spectacles," which he called "Urim" and "Thummim," he was able to decipher and translate the inscriptions into English.

The "unknown language" has never been identified. Mormons have since said that it was "Reformed Egyptian," but it has been proved that there never was a "Reformed Egyptian" style of hieroglyphics. Joseph Smith declares that he showed a copy of the characters which he had drawn from the plates - not the plates themselves -to a Professor Charles Anthon, in New York; and that Professor Anthon assured him that the characters were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyrian and Arabic. According to Smith, Professor Anthon even gave him a certificate to that effect, but took it back and tore it up when told that an angel had revealed the location of the plates. Only for that, the certificate would be available to this day! Unfortunately, Professor Anthon issued a statement later, admitting that Smith had brought him a copy of strange characters which he claimed to be an ancient language, but declaring "a very brief investigation convinced me that it was a mere hoax, and a very clumsy one too." And Martin Harris, one of Smith's official witnesses, gave evidence that such was indeed the verdict expressed by Professor Anthon at the time!

To the challenge that no one ever saw the golden plates at all, and that there was only his word for it that he himself did, Joseph Smith produced the sworn testimony of witnesses who declared that they had been shown the actual golden plates and had seen "the engraving thereon." But it is a striking fact that all three of his main witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, forsook the original Mormon Church. Had they really believed in its divine origin they would not have done that. But Mormons today, admitting their apostasy, claim that at least they never retracted their testimony. They may persuade themselves to that effect, but Professor Fraser, of Chicago University, after examining the question, wrote, "This testimony all three, on renouncing Mormonism, denounced as false; but meanwhile it helped Smith to impose on the credulous, particularly in the absence of the gold plates themselves, which suddenly and mysteriously disappeared." Martin Harris, who returned to Mormonism later, reaffirmed his testimony; but when pressed under cross-examination said that the plates were never exposed before his very eyes. They were covered with a cloth, but he was given a supernatural vision of them beneath the cloth!

So much for the legend of the golden plates which Mormons still accept, but which critical historians declare to be utterly incredible and unsupported by anything that could pass muster as genuine evidence.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

It is now time to turn to the message, so vital to humanity, which Joseph Smith claims to have derived from the plates.

He commenced dictating his translation from them to scribes at Manchester in 1827, according to his own account, and finished the work at Fayette, N.Y., in 1829. No mention is made of any part in the work by Sidney Rigdon, the revivalist preacher who had such a facility in the quoting of Scripture. The completed work was published as the "Book of Mormon" in 1830.

In it we are given the astonishing information to be found in no other historical records, that the American Indians are really the descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel; that Jesus Christ personally visited and preached His gospel in America; and that the Indians at one time had a full Christian civilization, but completely lost it!

The story begins with the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, about 2,200 B.C. Some of the people then dispersed found their way to North America and were known as Jaredites. However, the Jaredites were supplanted by an invasion of Israelites some 1500 years later. Here is how it happened.

About the seventh century B.C. there was a Hebrew man named Lehi who, with his wife and children, lived in Jerusalem. This man was commanded by God to flee into a far country. With his wife and children and a band of followers he crossed the ocean in a boat and landed in America. There the new colonists multiplied and prospered. When Lehi died, however, God appointed his youngest son, Nephi, to be head of the tribe. Another son, Laman, who was older, resented this; and the descendants of the two sons, the Nephites and the Lamanites were constantly at war.

To the Nephites, as God's chosen people, Christ came after His resurrection, to establish His Church with their help in America, as He had founded it in Palestine. From amongst the Nephites He chose another twelve apostles, and appointed as well prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists, leaving an organized Church which flourished for nearly 200 years. But, alas, the Nephites did not remain faithful. They forfeited their inheritance by their transgressions and were destroyed by the Lamanites, who in turn degenerated into the wild Indian tribes of North America.

However, for the sake of the "latter days," the last of the Nephi prophets, Mormon, had been commanded by God to engrave on golden plates a record of God's dealings with His people and of His revelations, a record to be hidden in the earth until it should come forth and be united with the Bible as another sacred book for the accomplishment of God's purposes. Mormon's son, Moroni, after adding some personal recollections, buried the golden plates in A.D. 420.

Fourteen centuries later, Moroni, now an angel, revealed to a poor, uneducated boy, Joseph Smith, the secret place where the plates had been hidden. The time was ripe for the Latter-Day Saints to inherit the fullness of the true religion, and Joseph Smith was divinely called for the purpose of ushering in the New Dispensation. Obediently, with the help of the magic "spectacles," he translated the undecipherable "Reformed Egyptian" inscriptions from the golden plates, and gave to mankind the Book of Mormon as an equally inspired and necessary supplement to the Bible.

CRITICAL DIFFICULTIES

Since hundreds of thousands of Mormons do believe in its authenticity, it is inopportune to say that the Book of Mormon is beyond all doubt fraudulent. But the falsity of the book remains at least beyond all doubt save for the victims of blind credulity.

The one argument urged by Mormons which at first sight might seem to have weight is the fact that Joseph Smith was quite uneducated, and could not have concocted and written an elaborate book filled with so many historical references and in a consistently foreign style. Such a task would require an able scholar, which Joseph Smith obviously was not. The book, therefore, they say, was clearly divinely inspired.

But that difficulty which Mormons propose to others is as nothing compared with the difficulties confronting Mormons themselves. Passing over the ethnological absurdity of attributing a Jewish ancestry to the American Indians, let us consider a few points derived from a critical examination of the book itself.

On page 14, Nephi declares that the Israelites, on arriving in America in 600 B.C. found amongst the beasts of the forest (I Nephi 18: 25) "the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse." But it is

certain that these animals are not native to America, having been introduced to that country by Europeans only after its discovery by Columbus in the 15th century A.D. If the book were divinely inspired, that elementary mistake would not have been made.

Again, Mormon is supposed to have engraven his record on the golden plates at least before 420 A.D. when they were entombed. How, then, did Mormon manage to incorporate in II Nephi, I: 14, an expression clearly borrowed from Shakespeare's "undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns"? Mormon was writing over a thousand years before Shakespeare was born!

A similar difficulty occurs from the fact that the Book of Mormon contains hundreds of quotations from both the Old and New Testaments, exact verbal transcriptions of the King James' Authorized Version, which was first published in A.D. 1611. Are we to say that, over a thousand years before the King James' Version existed, Mormon carefully translated it into "Reformed Egyptian"? Or will we say more reasonably that whoever wrote the book lived after the King James' Version had been published?

We might also ask how Mormon managed, in the 4th century A.D. to engrave on his golden plates quotations word for word from the "Westminster Confession of Faith," which was drawn up in the 17th century A.D. Or, again, how the peculiar tenets of an obscure Presbyterian sect which flourished at Geneva, N.Y., in Joseph Smith's own day became known to Mormon so many centuries earlier; and why, in his "Reformed Egyptian," he found it necessary, or even possible, to imitate passages from the "Methodist Book of Discipline," which revivalists had made so much the object of popular discussion in the early years of the 19th century.

These are but a few of the insuperable obstacles to the acceptance of the Book of Mormon as genuine.

But what are we to say to the Mormons' argument that it was impossible for the uneducated Joseph Smith, by any natural powers of his own, to invent such a book?

We can only reply that, not Joseph Smith, but the ex-Baptist, ex-Campbellite revivalist preacher, Sidney Rigdon, who did not lack the necessary knowledge of history, literature and Scripture, was the real author of this fraudulent book in which Campbellite doctrines and phraseology abound. The pathological Joseph Smith had the personality necessary to carry through a brazen imposture for which the scholarly Rigdon lacked the necessary effrontery; and it was essential to the success of the fantastic story of the golden plates that Rigdon should keep in the background.

OTHER SACRED WRITINGS

After publishing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith later published what he claimed to be a book written by Abraham, but not included amongst the books of the Old Testament. The sayings he attributed to Abraham were again fictitious. In 1833 he had bought some rolls of papyri from a pedlar of ancient curios named Chandler. These rolls contained some really Egyptian hieroglyphics and drawings. In 1912, long after Smith's death, these hieroglyphics were submitted to eight outstanding Egyptian scholars, who all declared the figures to represent ordinary Egyptian funeral rites, and that they had nothing whatever to do with Abraham! But Joseph Smith was absolutely ignorant of Egyptian writing and customs.

Later still, he published a book called "The Book of Doctrines and Covenants," to give the revelations he himself claimed to have received as the appointed prophet for the building up of the

Kingdom of God in the last days. This book explains doctrines and duties, predicts the Second Advent, and American Zion, and a coming Millennium with Christ ruling the world.

Equipped with the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, and his "Doctrines and Covenants," Joseph Smith, with the co-operation of his friend, Sidney Rigdon, felt ready to launch his new religion upon its career; and to a brief account of its remarkable history we must now turn.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

Joseph Smith began to organize his followers into a Church at Palmyra, N.Y., in 1830; but it was at Fayette, N.Y., on April 6th of that year, that the new sect was formally constituted under the title of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints.

The strange doctrines of the Mormons, however, awakened much hostility, and opposition forced them to migrate to Kirtland, Ohio, whither they went in January, 1831. Smith decided that Kirtland was to be Zion, or the New Jerusalem, whence Christ would reign after His return to this world. But trouble over a Bank he had established and from which he issued worthless notes made a further revelation expedient indicating that Zion was to be established in Jackson County, Missouri, and not in Ohio. Smith and Rigdon, therefore, led their followers on to Missouri. But the Missourians declared war upon them and the Latter-Day Saints moved off to Illinois, where they founded the city of Nauvoo - a name Smith declared to be Hebrew for "Beautiful Place" - on the banks of the Mississippi, in 1838.

At Nauvoo, in 1843, Smith claimed to have received a revelation commanding plural marriages and acted on it by taking additional wives, disposing of the objections of his lawful wife, Emma, by bidding her submit to the Will of God. But he was not long to enjoy his patriarchal mode of life. The people rose in revolt against Mormon practices. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were arrested and thrown into Cairo gaol to await their trial. The infuriated mob, however, wanted no trial. They broke into the gaol on June 27, 1844, and shot the two brothers dead.

Sidney Rigdon now claimed succession to the Presidency, urging that he had been Smith's counsellor from the beginning; but Brigham Young, who had joined the Church in 1832, was elected. Brigham Young excommunicated Rigdon and then, to escape further clashes with the law of the land, commenced the migration to far-off Utah in 1847, there to found Salt Lake City on the shores of the Great Salt Lake.

How successful he was is evident from the fact that he died some thirty years later, leaving over a million dollars to seventeen wives and fifty-six children.

For some years the Mormon Church, with the help of migrant converts from overseas, grew phenomenally and built up a self-reliant community in things temporal as well as spiritual, quite isolated from, and independent of the "gentiles." In 1893, the Temple in Salt Lake City was completed at a cost of three million dollars, and by a system of tithing over four million dollars yearly were gathered in for Church purposes. But the increasing invasion of Utah by the "gentiles," and business-relationships with them, are resulting in great social changes; whilst the more critical spirit of the modern age has steadily reduced the number of converts to the fantastic religious doctrines of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. What those religious doctrines are we shall see in due course.

CONFLICTING SECTS

It must be noted here that the Mormons do not form one united body, for they are divided into several independent and conflicting sects.

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, with headquarters at Salt Lake City, Utah, is the largest body, acknowledged by over 2000 congregations, mainly in Utah and Idaho, with a total membership of over 900,000.

The next in size is the "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints," with headquarters at Independence, Missouri. - This Church originated soon after the death of Joseph Smith. For when Brigham Young was elected Leader, a minority protested against his appointment, declaring that Joseph Smith's son, also named Joseph, was the rightful successor. This minority, under the leadership of Joseph Smith, Jr., set up in 1853 as an independent Church. The members, often known as "Josephites", repudiate polygamy, deny that Joseph Smith ever taught it, and assert that Brigham Young was responsible for introducing the disgusting doctrine of plural wives. But there is not the slightest doubt historically that Joseph Smith himself proclaimed the right and duty of polygamy. The "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints" claims to be the true successor of the original body, and in a dispute over property in 1894 secured a court verdict to that effect. The "Reorganized Church" has some 200 congregations, with 116,888 members in all.

Another minority group which refused to submit to Brigham Young's leadership has persisted as "The Church of Christ (Temple Lot)." This group has its headquarters at Bloomington, Illinois; and has 2179 members with 50 churches. The strange title they have assumed comes from their claim to a revelation from God that they are to build a Temple for the New Jerusalem at Independence, Missouri. They bought the ground in 1867, but the "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints" won legal possession of the property. The "Church of Jesus Christ (Temple Lot)" still claims it and says it has the duty to build the Temple.

A still smaller group, calling itself simply "The Church of Jesus Christ," is known as the "Strangites." This group was founded by James J. Strang at Burlington, Wisconsin, soon after the death of Joseph Smith. Refusing to acknowledge Brigham Young, Strang declared that he had been designated as Smith's successor by divine revelations both to himself and to Smith. He claimed that his was the only true Mormon Church, but its membership today has dwindled to 123 adherents only!

Smaller still is the "Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerites)," founded in 1853 by Alpheus Cutler, one of Smith's original Elders, as a result of what he declared to be a direct commission from God. There are but 24 members today who still believe in that direct commission.

Finally, there is the "Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites)," founded by William Bickerton at Greenock, Pennsylvania. Bickerton remained a follower of Brigham Young for but a year or two and then, disgusted by Brigham Young's polygamy, left the Utah foundation and went to Pennsylvania to set up for himself. His variety of Mormonism has about 1550 members, not a very pronounced growth from its origin in 1862! They live in some thirty small communities, each with its own church-building.

Not one of these disputing sects has a better - or a worse - claim than any of the others to represent genuine Mormonism. And all equally fail if the Book of Mormon itself is a fraud. But since nothing succeeds like success, we shall base our study of Mormon doctrines mainly on those of the Utah Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints.

NEW DISPENSATION

Joseph Smith, as we have seen, grew up in an atmosphere of Protestant revivalism, and declared that he was left bewildered by the claims and counter-claims of the conflicting .sects. As so many before him, he sought a solution by abandoning all others and setting up a Church of his own - thus adding one more outcrop of Protestantism to increase the confusion that had distressed him in the first place! But at least we can see that Mormonism is entirely the result of Protestant principles of private judgement operating in a purely Protestant environment. Joseph Smith cannot be said to have rejected Catholicism for the simple reason that he knew nothing whatever about it. His movement was a re-action against the confusion of Protestantism, and it was to a fundamentalist type of Protestantism - the only religion he knew - that he added the Book of Mormon and some further revelations which he imagined had been granted to himself.

In his article on "Mormonism" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, (1947), Reed Smoot, ex-Senator of Utah, tells us that Mormonism "does not claim to be a new religion but regards itself as a new dispensation." He says that there have been many dispensations granted by God from time to time, but that the last dispensation "of the fullness of times" has now been proclaimed through Joseph Smith.

The sources of true doctrine for Mormons are now:

(1) The Jewish and Christian Scriptures; i.e., the Old and New Testaments. (2) The Book of Mormon. (3) The Doctrine and Covenants. (Revelations to Joseph Smith). (4) The Pearl of Great Price. (A collection of writings of Moses and of Abraham not contained in the Bible and further writings by Joseph Smith.)

The doctrine contained in these documents, however, is continually being supplemented by new revelations to Mormons, which have binding force only if officially adopted by a General Conference of the Church.

ALL OTHER APOSTATES!

The consequences of the Mormon claim for all other Churches are rather drastic. For Mormons hold that, from the death of the last of the Apostles, St. John, there has been no divine authority for the administration of the gospel ordinances. No apostolic succession was maintained. All other Churches departed from the original gospel, and all their baptisms and other sacramental rites have been null and void. It is only now, after 1800 years, that the apostolate has been restored in Joseph Smith. He has been given the keys of the Kingdom in the New Dispensation by direct revelation from God. And he has been commanded to gather and build the New Jerusalem in America, to be ready for Christ's second coming and the Millennium.

We must pause here to notice the inconsistency of professing continued belief in the New Testament and then proceeding to assert the failure of the Church established by Christ personally, the necessity of adding further "inspired" books to the Bible, and the advent of a "new dispensation" ordained by God and given to the world through Joseph Smith!

It is impossible that the Church established by Christ personally could have failed. For He said, "I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16: 18.) If we believe in Christ at all, we have to believe that no forces of evil have succeeded in prevailing against the Church He established. But the gates of hell would have prevailed against it if the whole Church through all the ages until the arrival of Joseph Smith had apostatized! If it be said that the promise

of Christ did not exclude failure for a time, provided the Church was eventually restored, what becomes of Christ's promise to the Apostles, "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world?" (Matt. 28: 20.)

Again, all talk of an additional revelation and of a "New Dispensation" is utterly opposed to the clear teaching of the New Testament. For there we are told that the fullness of revelation and the absolutely final dispensation for mankind were given in and through Christ Himself.

Thus we read that God, Who spoke in times past by the prophets, "last of all in these days has spoken to us by His Son." (Heb. 1: 1-2.) "Last of all" does not leave room for "later on through Joseph Smith."

Dealing with this matter in the parable of the wicked husbandmen, Christ Himself describes the position by saying of the owner of the vineyard who had sent a series of lesser messengers in vain, "Having yet one son, most dear to him, he also sent him unto them last of all saying: They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen said one to another: This is the heir; come let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours." (Mark 12: 6-7.) There was no room in the mind of Christ for any further dispensation to be granted in later ages.

We are told also that the whole body of revealed truth was given to the Apostles, to be guarded and handed on by them and by their successors, that it might be preached to the uttermost ends of the earth. "All things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you." (John 15: 15.) Christ did not say, "I have kept back a good deal which will be published later on in the Book of Mormon!" His was not a partial revelation such as was given through the prophets of old, but unique and complete. And He bade His Apostles, "Go teach all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." He did not add, "Except in America, where I am going to appear to the Nephites after My resurrection, choosing another set of Apostles from among them to establish a Church there for Me!"

As for the Mormon claim that the "fullness of times" came only with Joseph Smith, St. Paul told the Galatians that the "fullness of times" had already come with the birth of Christ. "When the fullness of time was come," he wrote, "God sent His Son, made of a woman." (Gal. 4: 4.)

Our duty as Christians is "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." (Jude: 3.) That is, to maintain intact, without alterations or additions, the doctrines taught to the first Christians by the Apostles. The Mormon idea that Christ gave only a partial teaching, to be completed by Joseph Smith, is impossible for one who believes in the New Testament and wants to deserve the name of Christian.

But if Mormonism fails in its claim to be the revelation of a new dispensation, things become still worse when we turn to its exposition of the individual Christian teachings it professes to accept.

ARTICLES OF BELIEF

One of the last things Joseph Smith did before he was murdered in 1844 was to write an article for a "History of the Religious Denominations in the United States," explaining the faith of the Mormon Church. His declaration is as follows:

WE BELIEVE in God the Eternal Father, and in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

WE BELIEVE that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

WE BELIEVE that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

WE BELIEVE that these ordinances are (1) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) Repentance. (3) Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. (4) Laying on of hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

WE BELIEVE that a man must be called of God by "prophecy and laying on of hands" by those who are in authority, to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances thereof.

WE BELIEVE in the same organization that existed in the primitive Church, viz., apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.

WE BELIEVE in the gifts of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healings, interpretations of tongues, etc.

WE BELIEVE the Bible to be the Word of God, as far as it is translated correctly.

WE ALSO BELIEVE the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God.

WE BELIEVE all that God has revealed, all that He does not reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

WE BELIEVE in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the ten tribes; that Zion will be built upon this Continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and will reach its paradisaic glory.

In the main, the above articles of faith are but a summary of the ordinary evangelical Protestantism with which Joseph Smith was already familiar, save for his exclusion of the effects of original sin and his insistence on the acceptance of the Book of Mormon as the Word of God equally with the Bible, on divine revelations yet to be given, and on the establishing of Zion in America. Of the polygamy he had already proclaimed necessary he makes no mention for the purpose of publicity in the History of the Religious Denominations in the United States.

What needs to be stressed above all, however, is that, whilst Joseph Smith in his statement speaks the language of evangelical Protestantism, Mormons by no means intend the words even in an orthodox Protestant sense.

GOD, MAN, AND CHRIST

For example, Smith's first article looks like a profession of faith in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. But it is really nothing of the kind. For Mormonism, according to its official teachings, is not a Christian but a polytheistic sect, teaching a doctrine of many gods of unequal rank. Joseph Smith taught that "God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man." According to Brigham Young, in order to create man, which could only be done by physical generation, God came into this world as Adam "with a celestial body, bringing one of his wives, Eve." Adam, he therefore says, "is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do." (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 6. p. 50.) Adam is the "only" God with whom we have to do because above Adam there is Jehovah, and above Jehovah, Elohim the greatest of all Gods! Christ, as the Eternal Son of God (of which God it is difficult to say) is not of the same substance as the Father, whilst the Holy Ghost is described at times, not as a Person but as an "influence," a "divine fluid", the purest and most refined of all electric or magnetic substances! It is true that Mormons

today generally reject Brigham Young's "Adam-God" theory, but they forget that, according to their own principles, as we shall see, Brigham Young, as duly elected President, was endowed with infallibility and could not fall into doctrinal error!

And what of man? Apparently it was sinful for "Adam" to generate children, for according to the Mormon Catechism, "he had to sin by eating the forbidden fruit", otherwise "he would not have known good and evil here, nor could he have mortal posterity." However, human beings who have been generated, if they are good Mormons, will eventually become "Gods, creating and governing worlds and peopling them with their own offspring." (Manual, Part I, p. 52) The Mormon heaven is evidently very different from the one in which, according to Christ, "they shall neither marry nor be married." (Matt. 22: 30.) Meantime, according to Mormon teaching, God is continually creating souls which are longing for human bodies. And those on earth who provide the greatest number of bodies for these anxious spirits will be the most glorious in eternity. Polygamy is obviously indicated!

Mormons say that, provided they obey the precepts of their religion, their salvation is made possible through the Atonement wrought by Christ. But who is Christ? Joseph Smith's Articles declare Him to be the "Son of God." But Mormon writers tell us that, in the incarnation, "He was not begotten of the Holy Ghost." They argue that conception is impossible without physical marital intercourse. Was Joseph, then, the father of Jesus? No. For then Christ would not be the Son of God. So they say that God the Father came to earth in human form, took Mary as His lawful wife, and of their marital relations in the flesh Christ was born! Worse still, Orson Hyde, in his Journal, says that Christ Himself practised polygamy, marrying "the Marys and Martha, so that He could see His children before He was crucified!" To anyone with the slightest understanding of it such teachings are but a blasphemous travesty of Christian doctrine.

THE MORMON CHURCH

The Mormon doctrine of the Church is equally astonishing. We are told that Christ founded His Church in Palestine, choosing twelve apostles there, but that Church failed. Apparently anticipating the failure, Christ went to America after His resurrection and chose another twelve apostles from amongst the Nephites, setting up His Church on American soil. But that Church failed. The only thing to do was to wait for Joseph Smith's arrival on the scene in the latter days, and get him to set up another Church for Him. So the last of the Nephite prophets, Mormon, left full instructions for the benefit of the said Joseph Smith. In 1830, acting under the divine commands, Joseph Smith reconstructed the Christian Church, giving it the same organization - so he claimed - as that possessed by the primitive Church. And the Church he established, the Mormon Church, is the only true Church in the world today!

Constitutionally, the new Church has "apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists." There were two priesthoods, that of Melchisedech for spiritual things, and that of Aaron for temporal things. All members were to inherit the miraculous gifts of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, etc., which appeared occasionally in the early Church.

But over the whole Church the highest authority is vested in a President and two Counsellors. When the President dies, the "First Presidency" is dissolved and authority rests with the twelve apostles who are to elect a successor.

For their President Mormons claim an infallibility far in excess of that ever claimed by any Pope in the Catholic Church. Writing in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1947) on "Mormonism," Reed Smoot, ex-Senator for Utah, says:

"There is but one man on earth at a time... who may receive revelation for the guidance of the Church, and he is the President of the Church, God's Prophet, Seer and Revelator and mouthpiece. His official word, when speaking in the name of the Lord, the Church is to receive as from God's own mouth."

Compared with this, how much more moderate is the Catholic claim that the Pope has to rely, not on any divine revelation, nor even on divine inspiration, but only on the divine assistance to safeguard him from error when he does define Christian doctrine for the protection of the apostolic faith from heretical interpretations !

Such, then, is the Church which Mormons hold to be the sole Church of the Living God, all others being accursed abominations.

As regards Sacraments, Mormons follow the usual Protestant tradition of two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. From the Baptists they borrowed the doctrine that Baptism must be by immersion (for which there is no warrant in Scripture) and teach that the rite is absolutely necessary for salvation. Since they also teach that all Baptisms administered from the death of the last of the Apostles until the advent of their own Church were null and void, they felt that they had to find some means of avoiding such a wholesale damnation of all previous generations of Christians. So they have introduced proxy-baptisms for the dead. Charitable Mormons may take the names of dead people on their lips and be baptized on their behalf ! If all Mormons, taking this seriously, were utterly unselfish people and spent their whole lives from infancy to extreme old age, doing nothing but receive proxy-baptism for the dead, they would scarcely make an appreciable impression on the vast numbers of previous Christians who have lived and died during the past two thousand years! But all the proxy-baptisms in the world cannot avail for those who have already undergone their judgement by God. The doctrine is utterly unscriptural, apart from its absurdity.

Adopting the Seventh Day Adventist condemnation of alcohol in all its forms, Mormons celebrate even the Lord's Supper with water instead of wine. And besides the private use of alcohol, the use of tea, coffee and tobacco is also strongly opposed.

POLYGAMY

Strangely opposed to this ascetic attitude was the Mormon theory and practice of polygamy.

Joseph Smith claimed that the necessity of polygamy was first revealed to him in 1831, almost a year after he had founded the Church. Apparently it was revealed to him as a kind of after-thought, which had been overlooked in the first excitement of getting the new Church under way.

At any rate, it was in 1831 that he first began to speak of additional unions as celestial marriages, and quoted the example of the patriarchs of old in justification of them. When his wife Emma objected to his bringing other women home to share him with her, Joseph promptly had a revelation to calm her scruples. In "Doctrine and Covenants," n. 52, sect. 132 he makes God say, "And let Mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto My servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before Me."

We have already noticed the Mormon doctrine of created souls anxiously awaiting human bodies through which alone they can attain to eternal bliss as gods. The more wives men have, therefore, and the more their children, the greater will be their glory. In fact, plural marriages are necessary for one's own salvation !

That Mormons believe, theoretically at least, that polygamy is necessary for salvation is not an exaggeration. When the Government of the United States began to take steps to prohibit polygamy, the First Presidency of the Mormon Church issued a proclamation in 1885 saying, "Upwards of forty years ago the Lord revealed to his Church the principle of celestial marriages . . . Who would suppose that any man in this land of religious liberty would presume to say to his fellow-man that he had no right to take such steps as he thought necessary to escape damnation?"

Joseph Smith publicly proclaimed the law of polygamy at Nauvoo in 1841; and the same Mormon law was again publicly proclaimed under Brigham Young by a Church Council in 1852. When, however, the United States Government, on September 24, 1890, absolutely prohibited polygamy even amongst the Mormons, they agreed to abstain from it in practice. But they have never repudiated it in principle. They say that God dispenses from the necessity of it those who can't practise it for the time being.

It is only fair to say here that the "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints" repudiates the charge that Joseph Smith taught and practised polygamy, saying that Brigham Young introduced it, thus departing from the true faith as taught by Joseph Smith. But the Utah Mormons insist that Joseph Smith did get a revelation in favour of polygamy, and that he both taught and practised it. And the evidence is undoubtedly on their side.

So the Mormon Church believes it its duty to go on during these "latter days of the fullness of times," in preparation for the imminent Second Coming of Christ (a doctrine borrowed from the Millerites) and the establishment of the millennial Reign of Christ over the whole world, with His headquarters in America.

MISSIONARY ZEAL

The missionary zeal, with which the Mormons have sought to propagate their doctrines is almost incredible. As early as 1837, long before the trek from Nauvoo to Great Salt Lake, missionaries had been sent to England. There they distributed thousands of tracts and made so many converts that they had to establish a shipping agency to help in the work of "gathering Israel to the Land of Zion." The first migrant group sailed for Nauvoo in June, 1840. By 1851 the Mormons had over 50,000 converts in England, of whom 17,000 emigrated to the by then established Salt Lake City.

In more recent years a further impetus was given to the missionary movement by the greatly increasing numbers of other Americans who had invaded the State of Utah. New converts were necessary to balance the vote; and between the two world wars all kinds of inducements were held out to migrants who were willing to become "Latter Day Saints" and transfer themselves to Utah and a share in Mormon prosperity.

Though results are no longer spectacular, missionary zeal has not abated; or, rather, the system of sending missionaries to all parts of the world is still maintained. The majority of young Mormons are expected to serve a missionary apprenticeship of two or three years abroad before taking their place in the business world. So, at about the age of twenty-one or twenty-two, they go in pairs to whatever country is assigned to them.

The Utah Mormons have over 2000 such missionaries in the field; the "Reorganized Church" about 200. But most of these missionaries have their eye on their own future business prospects rather than on souls. Young, professionally untrained, and ignorant of conditions in other lands, not to speak of foreign languages, they cannot hope to make many converts. And it is a more sophisticated world today than it was in Joseph Smith's era.

Still, it's all experience; and Mormons, admitting the inefficiency, say that the very duty of arguing with all and sundry on behalf of their Church sends the young men back confirmed in their loyalty to it. If that be true, one can only conclude that blind partisanship supplies for the lack of knowledge of Christianity and often indeed of their own Mormonism in the youthful missionaries.

Much contained in this little book about their own religion would be a revelation to many of them; for they know neither their own history as it really is, nor how chaotic are their own religious teachings

ONLY POSSIBLE VERDICT

What, then, is the truth about Mormonism? Can one arrive at any other conclusion than that it is a man-made substitute religion quite irreconcilable with genuine Christianity? Joseph Smith was certainly an impostor, and anything but the type of man God would choose for the prophetic mission he pretended to be his.

The Legend of the Golden Plates is an obvious invention. Mormons themselves are shamefaced and apologetic about it.

The Book of Mormon teems with wrong facts, wrong history, wrong morals, and wrong views of religion and of life.

The teachings of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other authoritative writers on Mormon doctrine, whilst using Christian terms, utterly pervert their meaning, and offer a teaching as far removed as possible from Christian truth. Brigham Young did not hesitate to write, "Every spirit that confesseth that Joseph is a prophet, and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God; and every spirit that does not is of Antichrist." In truly Christian ears such a misuse and distortion of Scripture is nothing short of blasphemy.

And ever there remains the immoral teaching justifying polygamy. If Mormons have abandoned it in practice, it is only because compelled to do so by civil law. If pressed, they will say that they believe in it still, though they do not practise it under present circumstances. But that it was ever taught and practised at all would be sufficient to condemn Mormonism as utterly opposed to the religion of Christ.

But, we shall be told, we must account for its success. Yet is that so difficult? Certainly natural factors alone can account for it. In its initial stages, the murder of Joseph Smith gave him the halo of martyrdom. That, not religious motives, but what was rightly considered disgraceful social conduct, aggravated by the evil reputation he had built up for himself, was the cause of his death was lost sight of by his followers in their excitement. And when Brigham Young, a man of indomitable energy and iron will took charge of them, they were only too ready to fall in with his plans.

Shrewdly, Brigham Young led them off to Utah before its incorporation as one of the United States, where he ruled as head of Church and State for thirty years. There, where others could not get at

them, and there was no escape for the faint-hearted, the Mormons were able to thrive. Is it not significant that the other and lesser Mormon sects, described earlier in this pamphlet, lacking the advantages the Utah Church gained by its migration, have made little or no progress at all during the same period of time? And even in Utah, now that the railroads have brought a great influx of other Americans, a halt has been called to the growth of Mormonism there. If it has survived with such vitality as it has retained, it is due to the vigorous start given it by Brigham Young, the sound material basis on which he established it, and to its being held together by the strong hierarchical organization with which he provided it. But, as credulity wanes, Mormonism is finding it more and more difficult to keep its spirit from declining.

The whole story of the movement, one among so many others that arose in the first half of the nineteenth century, merely proves that human beings are so incurably religious that if they have not got the right religion they will either invent a wrong one for themselves, or grasp at one proposed with enthusiasm by others. Joseph Smith, as we have seen, had not the right religion. He never knew Catholicism. And dismayed by the confusion of the Protestant sects around him, he merely added to the confusion by inventing yet another religion of his own, with the help of the revivalist preacher, Sidney Rigdon. Not in that way was peace to be found, either for himself or for his followers.

TRUE HAVEN OF PEACE

The only real road to true peace - and I speak as one who has himself travelled that road out of the very confusion of Protestantism I have mentioned so often throughout this pamphlet - is that which leads back to the Catholic Church, to the calm and quiet of the Ancient Faith.

If we have any real belief in Jesus Christ and in His divinity; if we believe that He holds the true key to the mystery of human life; if we believe that He alone can control the wayward hearts and wills of men; if we believe that His doctrines are authoritative and that it is upon them alone that the highest and noblest lives have been built up in the past, and can be built up in the future; if we want all the certainty of truth and all the means of grace He meant us to possess - then let us turn our attention to the one, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

That Church, which today numbers over 400,000,000 of Christians [1.1 billion in 2004], drawn from every nation on the face of the earth, Jesus Christ personally founded. That Church He commissioned to teach all nations in His name. Against that Church He promised that the gates of hell, or the forces of evil, would never prevail. And to that Church He promised His abiding presence and protection till the end of time. And they are the claims of that Church which no one can afford to overlook.

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