

MORMON SCRIPTURE: The Articles of Faith, Part VII

By Marvin W. Cowan

We are continuing the discussion we began last month on the LDS view of repentance. LDS scripture in *Doctrine & Covenants* 42:18 says, "And now, behold, I speak unto the church, Thou shalt not kill; and he that kills *shall not have forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come.*" The tenth LDS Prophet, Joseph Fielding Smith also wrote, "Joseph Smith (Mormonism's founder) taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressor beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then *the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent.* Therefore, their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible on their behalf" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. I, p. 135).

But Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth LDS Prophet said, "Even the murderer is justified in *repenting* and mending his ways and building up a credit balance in his favor" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 131). If the murderer is not forgiven, what sort of "credit balance" will repentance earn him? Kimball also said, "All transgressions must be cleansed, all weaknesses must be overcome, before a person can attain perfection and godhood" (p. 16). Later he said, "This progress toward eternal life is a matter of achieving *perfection*. Living all the commandments guarantees *total forgiveness* of sins and assures one of exaltation through that *perfection*" (p. 208). If someone is "living all the commandments" and can "achieve perfection," why would he need forgiveness or even a Savior? Paul said in Galatians 2:21, "If righteousness came by the law [keeping the commandments], then Christ died in vain." And when I John 1:7 declares, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His [God's] Son, cleanses us from *all sin*," it does *not* say "all sin except murder."

But, Kimball said in *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, "Occasionally people who have murdered come to the (LDS) Church requesting baptism, having come to some partial realization of the enormity of the crime. Missionaries do not knowingly baptize such people... When a member of the Church is adjudged guilty of murder or what seems to approach the terrible crime, consideration should be given to excommunication, which in most cases is the penalty required" (pp. 130-131). While murder is a terrible sin, the Bible never calls it an unpardonable sin. God mightily used Moses, David, and Paul *after* they were guilty of murder. Therefore, God either forgave their sins or He used unforgiven sinners to do His work! But Kimball's teaching would exclude those men from membership in the Mormon Church!

Kimball also said of David, "For his dreadful crime, all his life afterward he sought forgiveness. Some of the Psalms portray the anguish of his soul, yet *David is still paying for his sin*" (p. 128). But, David himself said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Ps. 32:1-2). And Paul wrote, "David also described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness apart from works" (Rom. 4:6). That sounds like David knew that his sin was forgiven and that he had a perfect righteousness given to him!

Mormon scripture in *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:25-26 declares, "He that has committed adultery and *repents* with all his heart, and forsaketh it, and doeth it no more, thou shalt

forgive. But if he doeth it again, he shall not be forgiven, but shall be cast out.” Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith said, “If a man commits adultery, he cannot receive the celestial kingdom (highest heaven) of God” (*History of the Church*, vol. VI, p. 81). But among Joseph Smith’s 33 known wives were eleven women already married to other men when he married them. So, Smith committed adultery more than once according to the historic definition of adultery. But LDS never apply *Doctrine & Covenants* 42:25-26 to Smith.

Adultery is called “The Sin Next to Murder” in chapter five of Kimball’s book *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. LDS Apostle Bruce McConkie also said, “Sex immorality stands next to murder in the category of personal crimes” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 23). The Mormon Church would be much smaller if it excluded everyone guilty of adultery more than once. The LDS Church claims about 75% of the people in Utah are Mormons. Yet, Utah has a higher divorce rate than the national average and many of those divorces are caused by adultery. Some are excommunicated from the LDS Church for committing adultery more than once, but they can be reinstated if they repent, which is contrary to LDS scripture. In *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Kimball said of the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 8:3-11, “Note that the Lord did *not* forgive the woman of her serious sin” (p. 68). While Jesus did not say, “I forgive you,” He did say, “Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more (John 8:11). Does it make sense to say that Jesus didn’t forgive her but He didn’t condemn her either? Since God the Father “hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22), His word is the only word that matters.

For Mormons, repentance involves realizing they have sinned, being sorry for it, turning from it and confessing major sins such as adultery, fornication and other sexual sins “to the proper authorities of the Lord’s (LDS) Church” as well as to God (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 179; *D. & C.* 59:12). Repentance comes from the original Greek word “metanoia,” meaning a change of mind.

Biblically, repentance means a complete change of heart or an about face so that a sinner becomes one who loves and serves God. When man repents, God forgives. However, Romans 2:4 says the goodness of God leads us to repentance, so God is involved in both our repentance and our forgiveness. While salvation comes through faith alone, repentance is actually inseparable from faith. One cannot take one step of faith toward God without turning away from sin and that is what repentance is. Neither will a person repent without faith in God, for that faith is the reason for repentance. Biblical repentance involves sorrow for sin (II Cor. 9-10) and turning from it or forsaking it “to serve the living and true God” (I Thess. 1:9).

Next month we will continue our discussion of the fourth Article of Faith and consider the subject of baptism. For further information on the LDS view of repentance, see LDS Apostle James Talmage’s book *The Articles of Faith* which is published by the LDS Church in Salt Lake City.