

Mormonism's Claim To Be Christian

By Marvin W. Cowan

The Mormon Church today emphatically claims to be Christian. To prove that, they often point to their official name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, even though they often refer to themselves as Mormons or members of the LDS Church. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie declared, "Mormonism is Christianity; Christianity is Mormonism; they are one and the same, and they are not to be distinguished from each other in the minutest detail" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 513). On the same page, McConkie further said, "Mormons are true Christians; their worship is the pure unadulterated Christianity authored by Christ and accepted by Peter, James, and John and all the ancient saints." We'll consider this claim in later articles. But, if Mormonism and Christianity are "one and the same," does Mormonism believe that other Christian denominations are as fully "Christian" as Mormonism is?

Bruce R. McConkie was not only a Mormon Apostle and son-in law of Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth LDS President and Prophet, but he is also one of their best theologians. He wrote about the word, "Christendom," saying, "The term applies to the whole body of supposed Christian believers; as now constituted, this body is properly termed apostate Christendom" (ibid. p. 131). And on page 132, McConkie said, "A perverted Christianity holds sway among the so-called Christians of apostate Christendom." McConkie then said, "This (LDS) Church is 'the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth' (*Doc. & Cov.* 1:30), the only organization authorized by the Almighty to preach his gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation, the only church which has power to save and exalt men in the hereafter" (ibid. p. 136). He also said on p. 670, "There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." McConkie's statements show that Mormonism is a very different kind of "Christianity" from that found in other "Christian" churches.

Mormonism teaches the above ideas because they believe there was a universal apostasy that resulted in the extinction of the true church and gospel. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts wrote, "Saddening as the thought may seem, the Church founded by the labors of Jesus and His Apostles was destroyed from the earth; the Gospel was perverted; its ordinances were changed; its laws were transgressed; its covenant was, on the part of man, broken; and the world was left to flounder in the darkness of a long period of apostasy from God...a universal apostasy from the Christian doctrine and the Christian Church took place" (*History of the Church*, Introduction, pp. 39 and 41). LDS Apostle Orson Pratt also declared, "Jesus made His appearance on the earth in the meridian of time, and He established His kingdom on the earth. But to fulfill ancient prophecies the Lord suffered that kingdom to be uprooted; in other words, the kingdoms of this world made war against the kingdom of God, established eighteen centuries ago, and they prevailed against it, and the kingdom ceased to exist. The great beast that John saw made war with it and prevailed against it, and human institutions, without prophets or inspired men, usurped the place of the ancient kingdom of God (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 13, p. 125). Wilford Woodruff, the fourth LDS Prophet, agreed when he said, "For the last eighteen hundred years, the people that have lived and passed away never heard the voice of an inspired man, never heard a gospel sermon..." (ibid., vol. 19, p. 228).

The previous statements are not just opinions of ordinary Mormons, but they are LDS

beliefs taught by the highest authorities in Mormonism, their Apostles and Prophets. The Mormon Church has three books of scripture in addition to the “Bible, as far as it is translated correctly” (8th Article of Faith). All three of those “scriptures” make exclusive claims for the LDS Church. The *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sec. 1:30 says the LDS Church is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.” In the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith-History 1:19, Joseph Smith, Mormonism’s founder, said that the Lord told him that the existing churches “were all wrong—all their creeds were an abomination in His sight—that those professors were all corrupt—.” And *The Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 14:10 says, “there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil...” Since Mormonism claims to be “the church of the Lamb of God,” that automatically makes all other churches belong to the devil. LDS Apostle Orson Pratt, certainly taught that when he wrote, “But who in this generation have authority to baptize? None but those who have received authority in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; all other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God; and any person who receives baptism or the Lord’s Supper from their hands will highly offend God; for He looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people. Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the ‘whore of Babylon’ whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornication and wickedness. And any person who shall be so wicked as to receive a holy ordinance of the gospel from the ministers of any of these apostate churches will be sent down to hell with them, unless they repent of their unholy and impious act” (*The Seer*, p. 255).

Such teachings are an attack upon historic, Biblical Christianity. Yet, when Bible believing Christians reject or answer these LDS claims, Mormons often call them “Mormon bashers” or “anti-Mormons.” Christianity was about 1800 years old when Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith, claimed that it was universally corrupt and that he alone was authorized by God to restore the true gospel. Thus, it was Joseph Smith and Mormonism that attacked Christianity, not Christianity that attacked Mormonism. Christianity is merely responding to the “Christian Bashing” by Mormons.

Even a casual observer should be able to see that there is a very real difference between Mormonism and Christianity. Why else would Mormonism have 60,000 missionaries who proselyte around 300,000 people per year, primarily from other churches? Why does Mormonism need three additional books of scripture if they are Christians? The Bible has been sufficient for Christians for about 2000 years. If Mormonism is Christian, why are Christian parents excluded from their own children’s weddings when those children become Mormons and are married in a Mormon temple? Obviously, when McConkie said that “Mormonism is Christianity; Christianity is Mormonism—” he did not mean that Mormonism is the same as historic Biblical Christianity.

We will discuss some of those differences in future articles. But, the next article will deal with Joseph Smith’s claim that Mormonism is a “restoration” of the church that existed in New Testament days.

For further information you may order my book, *Mormon Claims Answered* which is available in English, Spanish and Russian.