MAJOR PROBLEMS
OF
MORMONISM

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1989

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1358 S. West Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84115
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1. A Marvelous Work?

In 1830 the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon—a volume of over 500 pages which purports to be a history of the “former inhabitants of this continent.” The same year he organized a church in the state of New York.

Today, the two main groups which claim to base their teachings upon Joseph Smith’s works are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [now known as the Community of Christ]. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is by far the largest of these two groups, claiming to have about seven million members. The church’s magazine, The Ensign, May 1988, page 20, reported a membership of “6,440,000” members “at the close of 1987.” The same publication indicated that the church had “34,750” full-time missionaries and that “227,284” converts were baptized into church during 1987.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, are commonly referred to as “Mormons” or “Latter-day Saints” (abbreviated as LDS).

Besides being one of the fastest growing churches in the world, the LDS Church is one of the richest. Bill Beecham and David Briscoe gave this information in Utah Holiday, March 22, 1976, pages 4-6:

Today, the LDS church is a religious and financial empire with . . . assets in the billions of dollars and an income in contributions and in sales by church-controlled corporations estimated at more than $3 million a day. . . .

There has never been an accounting of modern church income or wealth. The church’s last disclosure of expenditures was made 17 years ago, . . .

Asked by two Associated Press reporters why this information is now withheld, President N. Eldon Tanner of the church’s First Presidency said, “It was determined that continued publication of the expenditure was not desirable.” He did not elaborate. Asked about church income, he replied, “I don’t think the public needs to have that information.” . . .

Church holdings, as outlined in the Associated Press report, would rank the church among the nation’s top 50 corporations in total assets—those with $2 billion or more. Church property included more than 5,000 mostly-religious buildings throughout the world, a 36-story apartment house in New York City, a 260,000 acre ranch near Disney World in Florida, a village in Hawaii and an estimated 65 acres of business and religious property in downtown Salt Lake City, including a $33 million headquarters building.

In 1980 Michael Parrish published an article which contained this statement: “. . . the AP came up with revenues of some $3 million a day in 1975. David Briscoe, of the AP news team recently said he thought the figure would exceed $4 million today” (Rocky Mountain Magazine, Jan.–Feb. 1980, page 23).

Miraculous Claims

The validity of Mormonism rests upon the claims of Joseph Smith. When Smith was a young man, his family moved to the state of New York. Within a few miles of his home there was a hill, which Joseph Smith called the “Hill Cumorah.” According to Smith, this was no ordinary hill, for on this hill two of the greatest battles in history were fought. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie says: “Both the Nephite and Jaredite civilizations fought their final great wars of extinction at and near the Hill Cumorah . . . which hill is located between Palmyra and Manchester in the western part of the state of New York. It was here that Moroni hid up the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated” (Mormon Doctrine, 1979, page 175). Apostle McConkie further stated: “It is reported by President Brigham Young that there was in the Hill Cumorah a room containing many wagon loads of plates” (Ibid., page 454).

An ordinary person would probably see nothing of importance about this hill, but to the Mormons this is one of the most important places on earth.
While Joseph Smith was digging a well for Clark Chase, he found “a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone” (Comprehensive History of the Church, by B. H. Roberts, vol. 1, page 129). This might have been just an ordinary stone (maybe a little unusual in appearance), but to Joseph Smith it became a “seer stone.” This stone was supposed to have been prepared by God, and through it Joseph Smith received revelations.

Joseph Smith claimed that on the night of September 21, 1823, he had a visitor. But this was no ordinary visitor, it was an angel sent from God. The angel told Smith that gold plates were buried in the Hill Cumorah. The next day Joseph Smith found these plates, and, if his story is true, he made the greatest discovery in the history of archaeology. Archaeologists have searched for years trying to piece together the history of the ancient inhabitants of the land, but Joseph Smith turned over one stone and found all the answers. Underneath this stone he found a box which held the gold plates. The plates contained “an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang.”

More important than this, however, they contained “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel.” According to the Mormon leaders, the Book of Mormon is far superior to the Bible because it contains the “pure” words of Christ. The Bible, they charge, has been altered by wicked priests. Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards claimed that “the ‘everlasting gospel’ could not be discovered through reading the Bible alone . . . this is the only Christian church in the world that did not have to rely upon the Bible for its organization and government . . .”. (A Marvelous Work and a Wonder, 1966, page 41).

After the Mormon church was organized, Joseph Smith gave a revelation which stated that the Saints were to gather at Jackson County, Missouri. To other Mormon leaders, this was no ordinary land; they taught, in fact, that it was the place where the “Garden of Eden” was located. Apostle McConkie explained: “The early brethren of this dispensation taught that the Garden of Eden was located in what is known to us as the land of Zion, an area for which Jackson County, Missouri, is the center place” (Mormon Doctrine, page 20).

In Daviess County, Missouri, Joseph Smith found some rocks which he maintained were the remains of an altar built by Adam. Apostle McConkie continued: “At that great gathering Adam offered sacrifices on an altar built for the purpose. A remnant of that very altar remained on the spot down through the ages. On May 19, 1838, Joseph Smith and a number of his associates stood on the remainder of the pile of stones at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri” (page 21). Oliver B. Huntington added further details in an article published in the Mormon publication, The Juvenile Instructor, November 15, 1895, pages 700-701:

Adam’s Altar . . . Joseph said, “That altar was built by our Father Adam and there he offered sacrifice.” . . . according to the words of the Prophet Joseph, mankind in that age continued to emigrate eastwardly until they reached the country on or near the Atlantic coast; and that in or near Carolina Noah built his remarkable ship, in which he, his family, and all kinds of animals lived a few days over one year without coming out of it.

In the year 1835 a man came to Kirtland, Ohio, with some mummies and rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith examined the papyri and stated that “one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt” (History of the Church, vol. 2, page 236). As we will show later, when Josiah Quincy visited Nauvoo in 1844, Joseph Smith pointed out “the handwriting of Abraham . . . the autograph of Moses” and some lines written by “his brother Aaron.” Smith translated the “writings of Abraham” and they are published by the church today in the Pearl of Great Price under the title, “The Book of Abraham.”

The Mormons claimed that Joseph Smith’s power as a “seer” extended far beyond this earth. In 1892 the following statement by Oliver B. Huntington appeared in the church publication, the Young Woman’s Journal, vol. 3, pages 263-264:

Nearly all the great discoveries of men in the last half century have, in one way or another, either directly or indirectly, contributed to prove Joseph Smith to be a Prophet.

As far back as 1837, I know that he said the moon was inhabited by men and women the same as this earth, and that they lived to a greater age than we do, that they live generally to near the age of 1000 years.

He described the men as averaging near six feet in height, and dressing quite uniformly in something near the Quaker style.

While very few Mormons today would try to defend Joseph Smith’s ideas about the “inhabitants of the moon,” the church still teaches that the Book of Mormon is scripture, that Adam’s altar is in Missouri, and that the Book of Abraham was actually translated from the Egyptian papyrus.

Although Joseph Smith lived to be only 38 years old, the Mormon leaders claim that he had numerous visits from “glorious personages” from heaven. Not only was he visited by God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, but by John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah, Elias, Michael, Raphael, Nephi, Moroni, Mormon and possibly others.
bad for your growing, impressionable girls. Comedies, farces, operas of the lighter sorts, dramas, concerts and negro shows are good to cheer and amuse all, even the dear innocent girls, so once a week, say, we will allow Our Girl to visit a theatre. Out of door sports in winter or summer are excellent if conducted by the proper people and in proper places. It is self-evident that reading and quiet games are beneficial to all. Yet, see to it that the book is elevating in tone and treatment, and full of such thoughts as you want impressed on the plastic young mind. The games will be interesting, if you will help to make them so. The point is, that you yourselves must enter into every one of these amusements and attend every one that you allow your daughter to attend if that is at all possible. If you are kept at home, you will find your girls will be willing to get most of their innocent “fun” at home, if you will allow them to invite their young friends to share their pleasure. Don’t scowl and be cross when the young visitors come in, but welcome them with a smile, and do you take the lead of their fun and frolic; at least take the leading-strings in your own firm and gentle hands, turning the current whenever it seeks to approach danger-spots, and with all the enthusiasm you can muster enter into the youthful sports and plays. I know one mother who goes down upon her knees in company with her young daughters just before the young visitors arrive and asks the blessings of God to rest within the portals of that house and upon the heart of every inmate and visitor while enjoying themselves together. I may add, the young people love to visit at that house and consider it an honor to be invited there. In one last word let me call your attention to the fact that you must insist upon one especial point in every sort and kind of amusement and that last word, that especial point, is moderation.

Our Sunday Chapter.

The Inhabitants of the Moon.

O. B. Huntington.

Astronomers and philosophers have, from time almost immemorial until very recently, asserted that the moon was uninhabited, that it had no atmosphere, etc. But recent discoveries, through the means of powerful telescopes, have given scientists a doubt or two upon the old theory. Nearly all the great discoveries of men in the last half century have, in one way or another, either directly or indirectly, contributed to prove Joseph Smith to be a Prophet.

As far back as 1837, I know that he said the moon was inhabited by men and women the same as this earth, and that they lived to a greater age than we do—that they live generally to near the age of a 1000 years.

He described the men as averaging near six feet in height, and dressing quite uniformly in something near the Quaker style.

Photographs of two pages from the Mormon Church’s publication, *The Young Woman’s Journal*, 1892, vol. 3. Notice that O. B. Huntington claimed that Joseph Smith taught the moon was inhabited.
It should be obvious that Joseph Smith was either one of the greatest prophets who ever walked the face of the earth, or the whole thing is a fraud from beginning to end. John Taylor, the third president of the church, set forth the issue in these terms:

. . . if God has not spoken, if the angel of God has not appeared to Joseph Smith, and if these things are not true of which we speak, then the whole thing is an imposture from beginning to end. There is no halfway house, no middle path about the matter; it is either one thing or the other. (Journal of Discourses, vol. 21, page 165)

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth president of the church, likewise maintained:

Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He is either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he is one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground. If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who wilfully attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false . . . I maintain that Joseph Smith was all that he claimed to be. (Doctrines of Salvation, 1959, vol. 1, pages 188-189)

The Only True Church?

The LDS Church sends missionaries throughout the world with the message that God has spoken from heaven and restored the true church of Christ to the earth. These missionaries are instructed to teach that the LDS Church is the only true church and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. They are supposed to persuade the contact that his church is false and that he should join “the true church of Jesus Christ.” In 1979 the LDS Church reprinted a missionary manual entitled, Missionary Discussions for the Jewish People. On pages JC-15 and JC-17 we find the following:

Missionary: After the days of the Apostles, revelation from heaven to the Church of Jesus Christ ceased, and divine authority was taken from the earth. This was the beginning of the false Christianity that has now multiplied into hundreds of rival churches . . . In spite of the attempts of the reformers to reestablish the Messiah’s original church, they had no authority or revelation from God; and the final result of their efforts was to replace one apostate church with hundreds of apostate churches.

More than fifty pages of the Introduction to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are devoted to proving that all churches except the LDS Church are in a state of apostasy. The following, for example, is found on page XL: “Nothing less than a complete apostasy from the Christian religion would warrant the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Mormons affirm that in 1820 God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ visited Joseph Smith and told him that he “must join none” of the churches,

for they were all wrong: and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.” (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:18-19)

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt wrote:

The gates of hell have prevailed and will continue to prevail over the Catholic Mother of Harlots, and over all her harlot daughters shall be hurled down to hell . . . (Pamphlets by Orson Pratt, page 112)

Although the present-day leaders of the LDS Church are becoming more subtle in their attacks on other churches, they still teach that the LDS Church is the only true church and that all others are in a state of apostasy. Those who are not Mormons are considered inferior. Tenth president, Joseph Fielding Smith, asserted that Mormons “are, notwithstanding our weaknesses, the best people in the world. I do not say this boastingly, for I believe that this truth is evident to all who are willing to observe for themselves. We are morally clean, in every way equal, and in many ways superior to any other people” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, page 236).

Third president, John Taylor, boasted: “ . . . we are the only people that know how to save our progenitors, how to save ourselves . . . we in fact are the saviours of the world . . .” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 6, page 163). In the History of the Church, vol. 7, page 287, Brigham Young even claimed, “Every spirit that confesses that Joseph Smith is a Prophet, that he lived and died a Prophet and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God, and every spirit that does not is of anti-Christ.” President Joseph Fielding Smith added that there is “no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith . . . if he told the truth. . . . No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pages 189-190).

Thus it is clear that the claims of the LDS Church are of such a nature that it cannot be considered as just another church. It is either the only true church, or it is nothing but a shadow.
End of sample pages.
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