

IS THE MORMON CHURCH TURNING CHRISTIAN?

February 27th, 2009



Judging from the number of visits to this site, my previous article, "*The Principles of Mass Movements*," is still generating a lot of interest. It explains why a cult's longevity is not proof of divine origin, and also holds an interesting parallel to the sweeping election of President Obama. For those of you who missed it, you can access it in the newsletter archive. And remember, if you want to be on my email list and be notified each time a new article is posted, please contact me. I post a new one about every two months.

The subject this time may prove rather startling, because some of you may be unaware of the flurry of controversy over the "New Mormonism." Yep, there's a big change taking place. What kind of a change? Well, brace yourself.

The leaders of the Mormon Church want to eradicate their reputation as a cult and become a mainstream Christian church. This is an enormous, mind-blowing undertaking of tsunamic proportions!

Will they succeed? Well, here's the story . . .

The Mormon Church's plan.

In 1994, LDS leaders, F. Burton Howard and F. Enzo Busche of the First Quorum of the Seventy, were quoted in the Salt Lake Tribune as saying: "We have an obligation to conceal our doctrines [because] we are trying to be a mainstream Christian church." Their point in saying this was to defend the church's practice of hiding doctrines, even going so far as to excommunicate those members who insist on revealing them because their goal is to become Christian. Church leaders feel that doctrinal concealment and excommunications are okay because the end justifies the means. (1)

I was stunned--not so much about concealing doctrines and excommunicating member--that's nothing new. But. . . a Christian church? How on earth do they plan to accomplish that?

Some may say that the only course is for them to officially and openly renounce all their non-Christian doctrines and temple rituals. But, are they going to do that? Of course not. As a former Mormon I know the serious repercussions this would cause—so do the leaders.

If the LDS Church were to come out and officially renounce Joseph Smith, his First Vision, as well as the visitations of Peter, James, John, Elijah, John the Baptist and Elias, their unbiblical ordination of men to the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods, plus their sacred literature, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price, not to mention their belief in Godhood, temple rituals, Celestial (plural) marriage and revering church presidents as Prophets, Seers and Revelators, members' whole world would come crashing down on them. There would be such devastation that I believe some might possibly come close to committing suicide. You might be able to imagine the wreckage to a certain degree, but there is no way unless you actually go through it--which is exactly what ex-Mormons go through when they exit the church, even though believing it to be false. (*See my book, Out of the Cults and Into the Church.*)

An awareness of this consequence might cause one to say, "*Well, perhaps the concealment of doctrines is indeed the better way to go—but it's still deceptive.*" Let's examine the problem

more closely.

First, has any fringe religion or cult ever renounced its doctrines and become Christian? Yes . . . but not without severe devastation to its members. For example, Herbert W. Armstrong's World Wide Church of God.

Under his leadership the church believed in British Israelism, the Trinity was denied, the personality of the Holy Spirit rejected, no one could become born again until after the resurrection and, like Mormonism, man could become a God. After Armstrong's passing, succeeding leaders gradually repudiated his doctrines gradually over a ten-year period. But, even that length of time was too fast.

Worldwide Church of God members were totally devastated when told that what they had believed in for so long was not the truth. They spiraled into a severe spiritual crisis, plus were angry and hurt over the leaders' spiritual abuse they had endured for many years, not to mention the heavy financial demands and sacrifices they made, all of which seemed to have been for naught. Some stayed, while others left. Some formed churches, continuing to believe in Armstrong's doctrines, while others entered traditional churches. Some simply drifted away, trying to deal with the aftermath on their own. I suspect there may still be some who have not fully recovered yet. (See www.exitsupportnetwork.com)

So, obviously, there is good reason for the LDS Church not to lay it all on its members at once. To be stripped of one's faith is one of the worst things that can happen, and I'm sure LDS leaders took note.

"Very well," you say, "*since faith is a fragile thing, I can see the wisdom in the Mormon Church not officially renouncing everything up front and all at once.*" But, others may rightly argue, "*But their strategy of concealing doctrines as if they never existed, is deceptive.*"

Facing this dilemma placed the church in a Catch-22. If they decided to renounce everything immediately, they would not only devastate members but also lose them. They had to choose between that, or the concealment of doctrines. So, instead of choosing one or the other, they selected an in-between plan designed to do both. They would very carefully ease the membership out of the unchristian doctrines without their realizing it and the only instance where they would openly renounce any of their concealed doctrines would be when one might happen to come to light because of some public situation that pushed reporters into demanding an answer from them. (See *Strategy 2 below*) Yet, I say, if they conceal them without renouncing them, it leaves the non-Mormon world wondering if they really do still believe them.

So, at the present time they are stuffing their more bizarre doctrines in the back closet, hoping no one will notice. But, like Fibber Magee and Molly's closet (*for those of you who remember radio*), the door dare not be opened even a crack or so many unorthodox rituals, doctrines and beliefs would come tumbling out and crashing on to the floor that it would be a disaster—especially for today's new converts who know nothing about them. However, if the church can closet the beliefs long enough, say, over the next two or three generations until the older members have died off, then the new church will have been taken over by Christian-thinking converts who won't know about them. The church, then, will have achieved its goal.

Here are five strategies the LDS Church will use to accomplish this monumental goal, most of them already in use:

Strategy 1: Rearrangement of the Missionary's lessons, introduction of Christian terms, and use of a new evangelizing tool.

Rearrangement of lessons. In order to attract more Christian converts, the church began changing their missionary strategies after 1979. I heard that it was prompted by the failure of

missionaries in the Bible belt to convert Baptists. The change took place shortly after my daughter, Debra, returned from her two-year Indiana mission.

Prior to that, missionaries had seven lessons for contacts (*potential converts*), presented in a certain order. My daughter and her companion were instructed to first convert contacts to what was contained in the first five lessons, "Joseph Smith, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its leaders in Salt Lake City, tithing, Word of Wisdom (*no tea, coffee, alcohol, tobacco*) and the Book of Mormon." However, the problem as she saw it, was this: If contacts did not accept all the above by the third lesson, she and other missionaries were instructed to drop them. (*At least this was the rule in the Indiana mission.*) Contacts never heard about Jesus, because he wasn't mentioned until the *sixth* lesson. Debra was very upset when it dawned on her that she wasn't out there to convert people to Christ, but to the church.

So, because of missionary failure to convert Christians, the first change the church made was to rearrange the order of the lessons by presenting God and Jesus first. It proved to be an effective strategy.

Christian terms: The second change was the introduction of Christian terms into the missionary's vocabulary. The church believed this would exert additional influence on contacts. Therefore, missionaries now talk about God only in orthodox Christian terms and are told to conceal any unbiblical beliefs. But, here is the deceptiveness.

The missionaries, for example, will use the Christian term "gospel," but it is not interpreted by the LDS Church in the biblical sense (*the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection*). Rather, it means the whole ball of wax of what Mormons believe in: Joseph Smith, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, temple marriage, work for the dead, Godhood, etc. When members stand up in testimony meeting and says how much they love the "gospel," this is what they mean. But, missionaries don't explain this to contacts. This ruse is so successful, that many converts who later leave the LDS Church after realizing the truth, say they believed they were simply joining another Christian church.

Further, the missionaries falsely prioritize Jesus by giving the impression that the church believes in *full* salvation through Him alone, as stated in John 14:6. But, in reality, the church teaches that for members to be saved and exalted in the highest degree in the Celestial Kingdom, Jesus is not enough. One must qualify by participating in temple ordinances. They must also be worthy enough to receive Joseph Smith's certification before they can be resurrected. This explains why a member is expected to acquire a "testimony" of Joseph Smith's divine calling.

The missionary's presentation of their personal testimony: The third, more recent, change involves the church's new evangelizing tool based on a study guide entitled, *Preach My Gospel*." It does away with the memorized (canned) version missionaries previously used, making them give the lessons in their own words. Plus, the manual trains them how to strengthen their personal testimony of the truthfulness of the Mormon Church and Joseph Smith's divine calling. This culminates in an extra-ordinary conviction they didn't have before, and exerts a more powerful influence on potential converts when they verbalize, or "bear their testimony."

Lay members are also given this manual to strengthen their personal testimonies so they can have a more effective influence in wooing prospective converts, who they then turn over to the missionaries. Members are also required to teach this manual to their children and grandchildren, so that in the long run it will produce a greater number of more already-dedicated missionaries for the future.

Because the first lessons of the missionary's presentations are now about God and Jesus, and they use Christian terms, this, coupled with both theirs and lay members newly-acquired

personal testimonies, are bringing in over 300,000 converts a year (*more expected in 2009*), most of whom are Christians, with members boasting that they baptize the equivalent of a Baptist Church a week. Theologian, Dr. Carl Mosser, in *The New Mormon Challenge*, says that the local ward, according to eye-ball estimates, consists of an estimated 70 to 80% converts from Protestant backgrounds. (2)

Which denominations have Christians left?

Mormon author and attorney, Ken Driggs, says:

We changed from a denomination where the great majority of members were born, raised, and indoctrinated in the Church to a world where they are just a fraction. The great majority of members I encounter today are relatively recent Baptists, Presbyterians, Church of Christ, and Catholics. (3)

This "fraction" Driggs mentions of indoctrinated members born and raised in the church, including old-time converts, will die off in a couple of generations and, with them, their beliefs in the concealed doctrines. When that happens, hardly any of the younger members will remember or even know about those doctrines, except BYU scholars and lay members who happen to be avid studiers. However, if any of the older doctrines should happen to come to light, the next two strategies are designed to take care of this.

Strategy 2: Publicly devaluate and negate doctrinal statements of past leaders.

When pressed by the public or reporters about any beliefs stated by a previous President or General Authority of the church, it is dismissed. "*Oh, that was simply the opinion of early leaders.*" Never mind that these men were declared Prophets, Seers and Revelators.

Recently, Dale Bills, spokesman for the church, made an official announcement when the movie, *The Da Vinci Code*, came out. This film focused on Jesus' marriage to Mary Magdalene and his fathering a child by her. The church's press release was reported in the *Deseret Morning News*:

The belief that Christ was married has never been official church doctrine. It is neither sanctioned nor taught by the church. While it is true that a few church leaders in the mid-1800s expressed their opinions on the matter, it was not then, and is not now, church doctrine. (4)

The way the church gets around calling it "unofficial," is by saying that a belief must be contained in one of the four books the church refers to as "authorized." This means, *the Bible*, *The Articles of Faith*, by Talmage, *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, *Pearl of Great Price* and the church's rendition of the *Writings of Joseph Smith*. So, even if the church's earlier First Presidency declared it a church belief, if it isn't spelled out in any of the above publications, the church today is able to say that it isn't "official."

That the church taught that Jesus was married can be seen in the following:

The Apostle Orson Hyde asserted:

It will be borne in mind that once on a time, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; ... no less a person than *Jesus Christ was married* on that occasion. If he was never married, *his intimacy with Mary and Martha*, and the other Mary also whom Jesus loved, must have been highly unbecoming and improper to say the least of it.

I will venture to say that if Jesus Christ were now to pass through the most pious countries in Christendom with a train of women, such as used to follow him, ... he would be mobbed,

tarred, and feathered, and rode not on an ass, but on a rail...

At this doctrine the long-faced hypocrite and the sanctimonious bigot will probably cry, blasphemy! ... Object not, therefore, too strongly against the marriage of Christ ... (*Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pp.259-60*).

I discover that some of the Eastern papers represent me as a great blasphemer, because I said, in my lecture on Marriage, at our last Conference, that Jesus Christ was married at Cana of Galilee, that *Mary, Martha, and others were his wives*, and that he begat children. (*Journal of Dis. (vol. 2, p.210)*).

Orson Pratt commented:

... it will be seen that the great Messiah who was the founder of the Christian religion, was a *polygamist*, ... the Messiah chose to ... [marry] many honorable wives himself, show to all future generations that he approbated the plurality of wives under the Christian dispensation....

More quotes from five high-ranking LDS authorities, including Jesus fathering children, can be found at: www.EMNR.org/papers/jesusmarry.htm

Pratt also says that God the Father was married, and that he also had physical relations with Mary to conceive the earthly Jesus:

We have now clearly shown that *God the Father had a plurality of wives*, one or more being in eternity, by whom He begat our spirits as well as the spirit of Jesus His first Born, and another being upon the earth by whom *He begat the tabernacle of Jesus*, as his only begotten in this world. We have also proved most clearly that the Son followed the example of his Father, and became the great Bridegroom to whom kings' daughters and many honorable wives were to be married. We have also proved that *both God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ inherit their wives in eternity* as well as in time; ... it would be so shocking to the modesty of the very pious ladies of Christendom to see Abraham and his wives, Jacob and his wives, *Jesus and his honorable wives*, all eating occasionally at the same table, ... If you do not want your morals corrupted, and your delicate ears shocked and your pious modesty put to the blush by the society of polygamists and their wives, do not venture near the New Earth; for polygamists will be honored there, and will be among the chief rulers in that Kingdom (*The Seer, p.172*).

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie states:

This doctrine that there is a Mother in Heaven was affirmed in plainness by the First Presidency of the Church (Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund) when in speaking of pre-existence and the origin of man, they said that "man, as a spirit was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father," that man is the "offspring of celestial parentage", and that "all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity." (5)

William Clayton claimed that he learned from Joseph Smith that "the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on the earth, and that without obedience to that principle no man can ever attain to the fulness of exaltation in the celestial glory" (*Historical Record, vol. 6, p.226*).

These church beliefs taught by previous General Authorities who declared them not only from the pulpit but in their writings, are taken for granted by the membership. Long-time members

(including Fundamentalists) continue to believe Jesus was not only married to Mary Magdalene, but to other women and that God the Father was married. They believe it because it confirms the church's belief in plural marriage in eternity for members.

Therefore, the church's press release isn't a serious problem for the old-timers because they hold to the mindset that in order to protect sacred truths, "Heavenly Deception" must be used (a term first used by the Moonies, based on 1 Kings 22:23). This means that when church leaders lie to the public, it is justified in God's eyes in order to safeguard heavenly-revealed verities. To validate this deception, Matthew 7:6 is used, which says, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

Strategy 3: Excommunicate members who reveal historical doctrines.

The biggest offenders of revealing church beliefs have been LDS scholars and BYU historians. Pandora's box was definitely opened over the issue of DNA and the Book of Mormon. The latter claims that Native Americans descend from a people called Lamanite who came to this continent from Jerusalem and are of Israelite origin. Instead, DNA research proved that Native Americans are not from Jerusalem, but from the region of Asia around Mongolia. This, naturally, sheds an unfavorable light on Joseph Smith and whether the Book of Mormon is truth or fiction.

Mormon anthropologist, Thomas W. Murphy, was threatened with excommunication if he didn't stop speaking about the DNA subject at the University of Washington and other places. However, as soon as the press caught hold of the church's intention, LDS leaders took a step backwards and postponed their action. While I understand that Dr. Murphy no longer attends the Mormon Church, I don't know if the church followed through later and excommunicated him or not. But, knowing that outspoken members are usually given the option to save their membership by promising to conform to leaders' wishes, this may be what happened.

LDS Attorney and CIA employee, Michael J. Barrett, was also called on the carpet:

I'm going to be excommunicated for disobedience because [I was told] the public has no business knowing about [church doctrine and history]. (6)

In addition, Brandeis University scholar David Wright also found himself on the hot seat when he revealed details about the historicity of the Book of Mormon and exposed facts concerning Joseph Smith and early church leaders. He says:

I'm in a Catch-22: If I tell the truth about our doctrines and history, I get excommunicated. If I lie about the gospel, then Christ will condemn me for conceit [sic] (*word should be "deceit"*) about the gospel.(7)

The above individuals are just a few compared to the vast number of members who have been disfellowshipped or excommunicated for speaking out.

Strategy 4: Conceal beliefs in the local wards.

The church feels it is imperative that converts in the local wards do not hear about the non-Christian beliefs. Therefore, the rule for teachers in local wards is to totally stick with their manual and not deviate or offer extemporaneous comments about older doctrines. Mormon, Ken Driggs, gives his account.

For a long time, I taught the Gospel Principles class in my ward. One Sunday we sang a hymn in sacrament meeting that referred to our Mother in Heaven, Eliza R. Snow's *O My Father*. "In heav'n are parents single? / No, the thought makes reason stare!

/ Truth is reason; truth eternal / tells me I've a mother there." The manual touched on family that Sunday, and I mentioned the Heavenly Mother in my lesson. I did not see that belief as heretical. Rather, it was something I had been taught all my life. After class a furious missionary scolded me for bringing this up, for "not teaching from the manual." Apparently an investigator had been in class and freaked out at the reference. (8)

Strategy 5: Continue to introduce more Christian concepts.

Saved by Grace? The LDS Church, anxious to attract even more Christian converts, now proclaims that they believe in being "saved by grace." What has been their stance in the past about Christian salvation? Apostle Bruce R. McConkie states it with no qualms:

...a heresy originating in the same courts of darkness ...is the prevailing delusion and mania that prevails to this day in the great evangelical body of Protestantism--is the doctrine that we are justified by faith alone without the works of the law. It is the doctrine that we are saved by grace alone, without works. It is the doctrine that we may be born again simply by confessing the Lord Jesus with our lips ... (9)

Is there anything wrong with the church doing a turn-about-face and declaring salvation by grace today? No...not if the church totally accepts the Christian understanding. But, they don't.

What the church really means by "Saved by Grace," is clear to those who truly understand Mormon doctrine. Underneath everything, the church means that God's grace makes the whole Mormon plan of salvation *possible*. And while biblical salvation by grace will allow non-Mormons, Christians and inactive Mormons to inherit the two lesser heavens, the Telestial and Terrestrial, *full* salvation in the Celestial Heaven has to be earned and acquired through temple rituals.

The church's concept of "full" salvation is being exalted as Gods in the highest degree within the Celestial Kingdom and having a plurality of wives. This kingdom, or heaven, consists of three levels--not to be confused with the three individual heavens, Telestial, Terrestrial and Celestial. Here are the details:

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the biblical promise that believers will receive full salvation and inherit *all* that the Father has, doesn't apply to the LDS Church. God's grace alone is entirely insufficient to *guarantee* Mormons *that*. Jesus' sacrifice described in the Bible, according to Mormonism, is a general type salvation that simply allows all mankind, good or bad, to be resurrected. But full salvation must be earned by striving for perfection, being obedient to leaders, constantly trying to become perfect and worthy to qualify for temple rituals in which members must learn secret passwords and signs in order to pass by the angels who guard the gates of heaven. Without knowledge of these passwords and signs, plus plural marriage, they cannot be saved and enter into exaltation as a God.

This is in sharp contrast to the Bible, where Jesus promised that because of God's grace (*undeserved kindness*) salvation would be free to all those who believe in him— *without* the necessity of temple rituals. That all temple ritual was done away with at the crucifixion was evidenced when the veil to the temple was rent and Col. 2:14 says that the ordinances were nailed to the cross. "*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*" In other words, Jesus became the sacrificial lamb once for all, instead of priests having to do it every year at the temple with the people's yearly sacrifice of lambs and turtledoves. All temple rituals were no longer required. When Christ rose from the dead, he became our sole High Priest, and the only sacrifice required of us now is a broken heart and contrite spirit--not the blood of animals or any other type of temple ritual man can conceive of. (*Rom. 2:29*)

As of this writing, the church hasn't officially renounced temple rituals or Godhood yet except to

say for the latter that they now spell Godhood with a small "g" instead of a capital "G." (The spelling is supposed to make a difference?) Neither have they renounced plural marriage. Presently, this requirement is still stated in their official Doctrine and Covenants, although leaders explain that they do not practice it now because it's against the law. They anticipate practicing it again in the Millennium.

In addition, the Mormon Church does not believe Acts 4:12, that Christ is the only name under heaven by which a man can be saved. Rather, to be resurrected or saved in any of the three levels within the Celestial Kingdom, it is through membership in the LDS Church and Joseph Smith's name. (*Doctrines of Salvation* 1:350)

Brigham Young and other church leaders reiterated this:

No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith.

No man or woman in this generation will get a *resurrection* and be crowned *without Joseph saying so*.(10)

So hear it all ye ends of the earth; if you ever enter into the kingdom of God, it is because Joseph Smith let you go there.

...every man and woman must have the certification of Joseph Smith, Junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansion where God and Christ are. (Brigham Young)

There is no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith.

If we get our salvation, we shall have to pass by him [Joseph Smith]...we cannot get around him.(11)

Exaltation is available only to righteous members of the Church of Jesus Christ; only to those who accept the gospel; only to those who have their endowments in holy temples of God and have been sealed for eternity and who then continue to live righteously throughout their lives. (12)

(The church, however, believes that God's grace alone will definitely guarantee non-Mormons inactive Mormons and Christians a general salvation in the two lesser heavens [Telesstial and Terrestrial]).

Therefore, if God's grace alone is insufficient for the Mormon to achieve full salvation, then the church's public statement that they believe in being saved by grace is deceptive. Unfortunately, the average convert doesn't know what full salvation yet entails, so the use of biblical terms continues to attract many.

Another Christian concept: "We believe in One God."

This statement is glaringly misleading. Standard Mormon doctrine *officially* states the long-held belief that God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are three separate, individual and distinct persons, and the only way they are "one" is in unity and purpose. Apostle Bruce McConkie states:

This first and chief heresy of a now fallen and decadent Christianity...[is] a religion in which men worshipped a spirit essence called the Trinity. This new God, no longer a personal Father, no longer a personage of tabernacle (D&C 130:22), became an incomprehensible three-in-one spirit essence that filled the immensity of space. (13)

Further, Mormonism also believes that God is a man with a body of flesh and bones, contradicting Numbers 23:19 and Isaiah 31:3 that clearly states that he is *not* a man.

However, if an outsider were to ask a doctrinally knowledgeable Mormon today if they believed God is a man, he or she would state, "*No, we don't believe that God is a man, because man has a body of flesh and bones and blood.*" The last word contains their loophole.

The deceptive, side-stepping semantic the Mormon utilizes, is in using the word "blood." While the Mormon Church does not believe God, a man, has *blood* in his veins, it believes he has a *spiritual fluid*. The Mormon will feel no necessity to explain this technical deception of his statement to outsiders and new converts, believing that they must be given "milk before meat." They base this on Isaiah 28:9-10 which states that doctrine should be dished out line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little.

On the other hand, if comparatively new members were asked that question, they may be truthful in saying they don't believe that God is a man at all. This is because the doctrine isn't elaborated on in the local ward. I know of a former Baptist husband and wife who joined the church and only after 23 years did they find out (*by accident*) the church's real belief about God, after which they left.

I can't imagine the church, even in its desire to become Christian, being able to change this belief since Joseph Smith claimed in his First Vision that God and Jesus appeared as two separate personages, and both appeared as glorified men. Plus, the church's official doctrines confirm this belief and the whole foundation of Mormonism rests upon it. Further, the church believes that God is a resurrected man who earned his godhood on a previous world.

Joseph Smith's teachings clarify this:

We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see... he was once a man like us... and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves..."

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! (14)

In the church's "official" Articles of Faith, LDS Apostle James Talmage wrote:

We believe in a God who is Himself progressive, whose majesty is intelligence; whose perfection consists in eternal advancement - a Being who has attained His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow, whose glory it is their heritage to share. In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct charges of blasphemy, the church proclaims the eternal truth: 'As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be' (*A. of F.*, p. 430).

The church, therefore, believes that many men and women from other planets have already achieved Godhood--thus, their belief in a plurality of Gods. Because of these men and women's progression to Godhood, they always had a God over them, *ad initium* (back to the beginning). One might then become curious about the very first God. If the first God had no God over him, how did he become God? Well, Mormonism has an answer. But, before showing you the quotes that confirm Joseph Smith's teachings on this, I need to clarify the concept somewhat to make it easier to understand the scenario.

Eons ago (*when the first God came into existence*), the potential for all of mankind, including God and all future Gods, existed as a vast sea of eternal "Intelligences." Joseph Smith said that they had no beginning or end and could neither be created or destroyed. Inherent in them were laws, principles and free will. Also, in existence, was eternal matter (*spiritual form*), which was

the raw material, or potential for all eventual earths, trees, animals, etc. All of those Intelligences, laws, principles, free will and eternal matter were co-eternal with the first God.

According to Joseph Smith, God saw that he was more intelligent than all the other Intelligences, so came up with a plan for them all to advance. Here is what Smith taught:

The first principles [intelligences] of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. (15)

However, there was a condition upon which God could become God and stay in that position. He would only rise and remain in that rank if all the co-eternal Intelligences agreed to acknowledge him as such and support him in that role. He, in turn, was obligated to utilize all the existing laws and principles--in other words, he couldn't come up with anything that deviated from what already existed. Further, the Church teaches that if these Intelligences decide at any point of time not to continue to support him, then he would cease to be God. This is explained by LDS author, Cleon Skousen:

Through modern revelation we learn that the universe is filled with vast numbers of intelligences, and we further learn that Elohim is God simply because all of these intelligences honor and sustain Him as such.... But since God 'acquired' the honor and sustaining influence of 'all things' it follows as a corollary that if He should ever do anything to violate the confidence or sense of justice' of these intelligences, they would promptly withdraw their support, and the 'power' of God would disintegrate.... 'He would cease to be God.' Our Heavenly Father can do only those things which the intelligences under Him are voluntarily willing to support Him in accomplishing. (16)

An important point to note is that since the first God was subservient to these eternal Intelligences, this makes all later Gods as well as the God of this planet (*in Genesis*) far from being supreme as the Bible declares.

Because these Intelligences agreed with the first God's plan for advancement, each one, in their turn, began the process of advancing from Intelligence to spirit child, then eventually to human form on a planet. (*In Orson Pratt's book, The Seer, there were many in-between stages described in this evolution, including the transmigration of particles, but is too lengthy to present here.*) Once having gained mortality, the Intelligences proceed to earn their Godhood by the same process Mormons believe in, church obedience, temple rituals and plural marriage. Here is the scenario, using this world as an example.

Before our earth was brought into being by Elohim (*in Genesis*), he and his Goddess/wives, who all achieved their Godhood and Goddesshood after being resurrected in a previous world, look forward to their new experience. For the first stage, a pre-mortal (*spiritual*) world is created (*called, "Pre-existence" by Mormons*). Elohim organizes and forms the pre-existing, raw, eternal matter into spiritual trees, animals, universe, planets, stars, etc., that will exist in this pre-mortal world. These spiritual creations are the prototypes for the soon-to-be physical world.

But first, in this pre-mortal sphere, God and his many wives begin procreating and produce spiritual offspring (*spirit babies*), into which the Intelligences can enter. These spirit children have no mortal bodies yet. (*You and I were supposedly one of these spirit children.*) Since God wants all his spirit children, male and female, to become like himself and his wives, that is, a man or woman with a glorified, resurrected body, they all look forward to being born into mortality. Now, God is ready to start off this *physical* universe. He tells Jehovah, his first born spirit-child, and Michael to organize and form the physical world, using the spiritual trees, animals, planets, stars, etc., as the life force behind all they create. But first, a note:

It should be disconcerting to Christians that since all materials used in the Genesis creation are organized from pre-existing materials, the God of Genesis is not the supreme "Creator" who brought things into existence *ex-nihilo* (creation out of nothing), but only an "Organizer." The term for what Mormons (*also the Islamic world*) believe about creation is, *creatio ex materia* (creation out of eternally pre-existent matter). Other creation beliefs include *creatio ex-deo* (creation out of the being of God). Since Christians go by the Bible, any other creation process other than *ex-nihilo* is unacceptable.

Now, God is ready to start off the human race with a physical Adam and Eve (*another long story*) to be placed on the new earth he has organized (*the Genesis account*). The temple ceremony teaches that Michael became Adam, but the early church taught that Michael was God, and it was he who came down and took on the role of Adam so he could also start off the physical race, like he did his spiritual one. (17)

The spiritual offspring of God and his various wives are sent (*born*) into the physical bodies of the offspring of Adam and Eve and their descendants, to go through human life and eventually earn their Godhood through the same process that all Gods have done before them. (18)

In my view, considering all the teachings of Joseph Smith on the subject, the LDS Church would have a difficult time refuting all the above to qualify for Christian status. Leaders can't very well come out and publicly renounce Intelligences, the plurality of Gods and their creation account unless they renounce Joseph Smith, and they absolutely can't do that. So, these, along with a myriad of other beliefs, are concealed in the church's "Fibber Magee" closet. Converts, I'm sure, would be shocked to learn all this.

What are all the concealed doctrines the Mormon Church refuses to openly renounce?

- 1.The pre-existing and eternal nature of the elements that make up all mankind and creation
- 2.Pre-existence, the pre-mortal sphere where all mankind were first born as spirit children.
- 3.A mother in heaven, one of God's many celestial Goddess/wives.
- 4.God's lack of supremacy due to his being subservient to the Intelligences.
- 5.Tritheism (belief in three separate and distinct Gods, in contrast to the Christian Trinity)
- 6.God is a polygamist.
- 7.The plurality of gods
- 8.Mormons becoming future Gods and Goddesses
- 9.Temple rituals (*see article on the Temple in archives*)
- 10.Vicarious baptism and other temple work for the dead.
- 11.Celestial (temple) marriage for eternity (lovely concept, but includes plural marriage) (19)
- 12.Plural marriage in heaven after the resurrection, and continued procreation to people new worlds
- 13.Insufficiency of God's grace and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for *full* salvation.
- 14.Requirement of a testimony of Joseph Smith's divine calling and necessity of receiving his certification to be saved, resurrected and enter the Celestial Kingdom.
- 15.Salvation possible only through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Unless the church formally rejects the above beliefs, it still falls short of being considered "Christian." Yet, on the other hand, if they are able to keep Fibber's closet closed forever, at least for two or three more generations, plus continue to revise and edit out any references to them in their church books, they might, in time, be able to convince the general public and potential converts, as well as persuade future theologians, that they have totally become Christian. But, again, if they aren't officially renounced, does the church still believe them?

Would Christian converts still join if they knew about all the closeted beliefs?

Possibly. Here's why.

In these postmodern times, America has become a greater melting pot of various cultures and religions than ever before. This has produced a revolutionary reversal of thinking in the general public that has brought about a *laissez faire* broad-mindedness toward religions other than their own. Scott McConnell, Associate Director of LifeWay Research blames the "Oprahization of American Christianity," where everyone's God is okay whether he measures up to Biblical criteria or not. This has resulted in 52% of American Christians (65% of all Christians) now believing that other religions can lead to eternal life, along with 52% of the general public, including 40% of Evangelicals, believing the Mormon Church's theology to be Christian. (20 and 21)

Therefore, this biblically-uninformed broad-minded attitude can bring about easy conversions to churches other than Orthodox Christianity. This, plus reinforcement by the LDS Church's ongoing PR program in promoting Christian concepts, plus concealing bizarre doctrines and use of double-speak, will add to one's susceptibility to embrace Mormonism. (21)

What else might convince Christians to join the Mormon Church?

Knowing a member. Thirty-one percent of the 53% of the general public who have a favorable opinion of the LDS Church say that this is the biggest determining factor. This is no doubt because Mormons exemplify a moral life, promote the family, and aside from the church's deeper, non-Christian theology they may or may not know about, testify how they love Jesus who died on the cross for them. And many of them do love Jesus--especially, since the growing number of members are from Protestant backgrounds. As Ken Driggs says, "They bring their past religious experience and beliefs into the Church and do not have a lifetime of Mormon religious education. (22)

Do Mormons have their prayers answered?

The answer is. . .of course. Unfortunately, there are die-hard Christians who believe that God would never answer a Mormon's prayers. But, he does--I'm living proof of that. This may be a touchy subject for some, but I'm going to address it anyway.

I was raised a Methodist until the age of 14. At that point, my mother, looking for a church with a good youth program joined, bringing along my sister and me.

When I came out of the Mormon Church thirty-five years later and tried to share some of the wonderful answers to prayer I had received, die-hard Christians would caustically cut me off by responding with, "God would never answer the prayer of a Mormon!" I was crushed—also shocked at the small box they had put God in. What they were suggesting was that it was the devil that answered my prayers. No one will ever convince me of *that*. Matt. 7:10 says that if any of God's children ask for a fish, he will never respond by giving them a serpent or stone.

As a Christian today, I still love Jesus with the same intensity--in other words, no differently now as a Christian than I did as a Mormon. BUT, the big difference is that I now have my *theology* straight.

If God hadn't answered my prayers as a Mormon, I wouldn't be where I am today. He was mindful of me when he began to reveal himself in quite remarkable ways, the first being that Jesus is indeed the Christ (*sometime I'll have to share that story*). He also healed me of tuberculosis. . .helped me during difficult times as a widow raising my three children. . . miraculously healed my infant son on the spot. . .heard me when I prayed to be led to more truth. He was with me when I was held captive in a small room for nine months by the cult leader of a Mormon offshoot group--and even though I didn't pray and ask God to help me escape, he spoke audible words to me anyway, saying: "*I shall deliver you*," Then, he helped me do just that and brought me into a small, Christian church in Southern Utah. (*See my*

personal story.) There's more instances, but this will have to suffice.

God's presence in my life as a Mormon is a living reality to me. Even though many Mormons may not have as yet been led out to become full-fledged Christians, God is still mindful of them—especially when they ask for help and guidance. Theologians call this, "Prevenient grace."

The above may sound to some like I'm painting Mormons in too rosy of a light. Fortunately, I'm able to distinguish between a church's theology and its people and I don't hesitate to call the theology false. I believe in being honest and stating things how they really are. And remember, in many of my comments I'm speaking of individual members, not necessarily the church's theology which many may be ignorant of.

If the LDS Church appears Christian, why don't Christians stay with their own church?

The reason is because today's churches are becoming irrelevant to churchgoers. Many Protestant and Catholic churches are losing members. Unchurched Americans, according to a Barna Group surveys, are growing by about a million a year, and "devout believers," Christine Wicker states, in *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation*, are abandoning the Christian faith in droves." (23) There are a variety of reasons for this:

Drop-outs who have been interviewed list their reasons as: "dead and mediocre churches, boredom, lack of genuine spirituality, quenching of supernatural powers (*gifts*), watered-down theology, no meaningful and relevant counseling, ministers out of touch with the realities of life and glass ceilings for females." Plus, singles have their own set of problems. (*For a more exhaustive treatment, see Julia Durin's book, "Quitting Church: Why the faithful are fleeing."*)

In addition to the above reasons, many Christians are frustrated over the lack of satisfying answers to their existential questions (*is the universe and man purposeless?*) and those of a metaphysical nature (*need for a deeper explanation of the nature of being and reality*). While the answers to these spiritually-bent questions are not always spelled out in the Bible, they feel that pastors should have the answers. They usually don't. Why? Because it isn't in the Bible.

While not all drop-outs join the Mormon Church, many do. Michael Bennett, a Salt Lake City attorney and long-time, active Southern Baptist, joined the Mormon Church, as reported in *Christianity Today*, because he said it "provided answers he did not find as a Southern Baptist." (24)

And there is no question that he found answers.

The Mormon Church provides amazing, although unbiblical, answers that have enough scripture mixed in and lifted out of context to be convincing. It supplies extraordinary explanations to who and what God is (*short of deep detail*), provides information about heaven, eternity, where we came from, why we're here, where we're going, what the purpose of life is, what one's mission is, why there is suffering in the world and how and why the universe was created, all of which exerts a powerful influence on newcomers—especially since Christian pastors can't offer as much detailed information.

When an orthodox Christian who is frustrated with his or her present church hears all this amazing information, the psychological jolt of fresh new concepts has a strange effect. It invigorates and excites the mind, clears out any jumble of religious confusion, tickles the ears and gives one an "aha" moment, as if he or she has finally stumbled on to the *real* truth. "At last, a church with answers!"

Plus, in the Mormon Church there are numerous opportunities for personal achievement and spiritual fulfillment through the church's full spectrum of self-actualization and incentive

programs, plus appointments to positions that utilize one's talents—even for women. Further, members are called to ward positions by "revelation," rather than volunteering due to the Bishop and his counselors praying first about which person God wants them to ask and appoint. Then, there is also the church's outstanding welfare program.

If attending a Mormon Church (ward) today, what would you hear?

If you were to walk into a Mormon Ward, you will not hear any of the deeper, closeted doctrines. I visited a local ward recently and in their Sacrament meeting a member of the Stake Presidency gave a very good talk on prayer. That same morning, besides attending Relief Society, I also sat in on the Gospel Doctrine class. They were studying Third Nephi in the Book of Mormon. All the teacher talked about mostly was having a relationship with Christ, and she meant every word of it.

Members' belief in the Book of Mormon, however, raises a question. Why do members love the book so—even more than their other books of scripture? And why, when they exit the church is the Book of Mormon one of the things they find the most difficult to give up?

My response is, "How can they not love it?" After all, the principles and doctrines in the book are so scriptural and drawn from orthodox-Christianity that the pages fairly shout confirmation. (*Joseph Smith wrote the book before he came up with his more bizarre doctrines.*) The Book of Mormon denounces the plurality of gods, acknowledges that God is a Spirit, not a man, includes the United Presbyterian's Westminster Confession, contains names influenced by the book of Genesis and quotes more than 18 chapters of Isaiah, along with the ten commandments and portions from Deuteronomy, Malachi and other parts of the Old Testament. It borrows from Matthew, Mark and Paul's writings, and the stories parallel those of the New Testament in principle and content. No Mormon or ex-Mormon, will ever forget the stirring story in *Mosiah* of King Benjamin who, three years before he died, gathered his people together and using himself as an example taught them that when they are in the service of each other they are only in the service of their God.

However, where members and converts fall short concerning the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon is making incorrect *assumptions*. They pray about the book as they are told to, but their mistake is in only praying about the contents and assuming the rest by deduction. They assume that because their spirit receives confirmation of the truthfulness of the biblical scriptures and principles contained within the book's text, *therefore*, Joseph Smith must have been a prophet. From there it escalates--*therefore*, an angel must have given it to him.

My assessment of the change.

Even though Christian converts are coming in with their former theologies and the church is introducing a few Christian concepts at a time, I cannot say (*nor can today's theologians*) that the Mormon Church (*its theology, not necessarily individual Mormons*) can yet be considered fully "Christian."

One of the problems I see at this point in time, is that they have no plans to renounce their temple rituals. They are still constructing more buildings. As of February 2009, they have 146 worldwide temples, six of which are still in process of being built.

The only way I see that they could continue building temples and make their rituals acceptable to the Christian world at large is if everything non-Christian is eliminated. This means, baptism for the dead (*practiced by the New Testament Gnostics*) and other vicarious work, their washing and anointing wordings, physical undergarments that carry Masonic marks, their dramatizations, such as the story of the pre-existent Michael becoming Adam, calling their temple robes the "robes of the holy priesthood," secret signs and passwords, the death penalties, promises of godhood and the Masonic-inspired, five points of fellowship. With much

of that gone, they could then reduce their temple ceremony to only the Law of Sacrifice, Law of the Gospel, Law of Chastity and Law of Consecration, revising them to a Christian perspective.

Church leaders may already have this in mind since they have already eliminated a few things in the past that Christians have objected to, such as the put-down of Christian doctrines and stating that pastors are Lucifer's hirelings, as well as eradicating the verbalization and physical gestures of the blood oaths and death penalties (*although still alluded to*), participants embracing the men on the other side of the veil who represent the Lord, and no longer requiring participants to fully unclot for the washing and anointings.

The church, if genuinely trying to change to Christian, and it is not a ploy to gain more converts, is probably approaching its objective the only way possible—that is, gradually, over a very long time period. I don't want to see the devastating consequences to the members' faith by having all beliefs renounced at once. Yet, at the same time, I feel it's deceptive to conceal beliefs the church was founded upon because it then becomes questionable if they are still believed.

It is a difficult situation, and they have so much to change, that it seems impossible. For example, I don't see how they can ever do away with Joseph Smith's unbiblical teachings without admitting he wasn't God's prophet. If they can't even do that one thing, then how can they hope to ever be classified as "Christian?"

The church is pursuing a commendable path, but facing a tremendous task in its responsibility to keep members' faith undamaged and intact. The attempted process will, of necessity, take a long time. All I can say is whether the church succeeds remains to be seen.

END

ENDNOTES

1. "CIA Attorney May Get LDS Ouster CIA Work. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, page E1, 04/23/94)
2. *The New Mormon Challenge* by Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, general editors. (Zondervan, 2002), 67.
3. "A New Future Requires a New Past." (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Summer 2008)
4. "LDS Do Not Endorse Claims in 'Da Vinci,'" *Deseret Morning News*, May 17, 2006, B2. Cited in Ken Drigg's article, "A New Future Requires a New Past," in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Summer 2008, p. 76-77.)
5. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1979, second edition, p. 516.) He is quoting from, *Man: His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 348-355.)
6. "CIA Attorney May Get LDS Ouster/CIA Worker may get LDS Boot for Writing Letters." *Salt Lake Tribune*, page E1, 04/23/94)

7. "CIA Attorney May Get LDS Ouster CIA Work. *Salt Lake Tribune*, page E1, 04/23/94)
8. "A New Future Requires a New Past." (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Summer 2008), 75.
9. Bruce R. McConkie, *Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, edited & arranged by Mark L. McConkie, copyright 1989 by Bookcraft, Inc.
10. Conference discourse on October 8, 1854. See also, (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. VII, p. 289)
11. See *Journal of Discourses*, Joseph F. Smith, ed. (1854-1886; reprint, Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), 7:289.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 1969, 246.
13. Bruce R. McConkie, *Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, edited & arranged by Mark L. McConkie, copyright 1989 by Bookcraft, Inc.
14. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345-346.
15. TPJS, 354. compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Deseret News Press*, Second Edition 1940.)
16. Cleon Skousen, *The First 2000 Years*, pp. 355-356.
17. According to early doctrine, which is taught by the Fundamentalists, "Michael" is the name of an office or position. Usually it is a potential candidate from a previous world who has not earned his full godhood yet (*he must yet start off a another world with physical offspring, bodies for his spirit children to inhabit*). This world's particular God, prior to Eden, was a "Michael." He then assumes the role of Adam, the name of "Adam" also being a title. When he was through procreating as Adam, Michael/Adam partook of the Tree of Life, shed his mortality and corruptible blood, which was replaced with a spiritual fluid, reassumed his immortality and went back to his celestial world as God. Centuries later, he came to Mary and impregnated her. Some Fundamentalists advocate the Rosicrucianist belief that Adam had three wives. Like Adam, the name of "Eve" is also a title. All Adam's wives were Eves and also had mortal names: Eve/Eve, Sarah/Eve, and Lillith/Eve. Eve, produced the white race, through whom Adam/God's elect seed was destined to come through; Sarah, the yellow race, and Lillith the black race.

On April 9, 1852, Brigham Young publicly preached the Adam-God doctrine. In this sermon he declared:

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial

body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Archangel, the Ancient of Days! about whom holy men have written and spoken--*He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do*. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later ... (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, pp.50-51).

The above sermon was reprinted in *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* on November 26, 1853 (vol.15, pp.769-70). The fact that the Mormon people understood Brigham Young to mean just what he said concerning Adam being God is verified by other articles which appeared in the church's own *Millennial Star*. On December 10, 1853, an article entitled, "Adam, the Father and God of the Human Family" appeared in the *Millennial Star*.

18. Because Mormons believe they are the literal offspring of God and a wife, they do not believe in the biblical concept that man is basically evil. Their spirit is "good." After all, they have divine, spiritual blood, including God's DNA flowing through them.

19. In 1930 the LDS Church published *Latter-Day Revelations: Selections from the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. It was prepared by Apostle James E. Talmage. This was an abridged version of the Doctrine and Covenants and left out Section 132 on celestial (plural) marriage. But because Fundamentalist Mormons (who still practice it) accused them of abandoning Mormon doctrines, the Church removed the book from stores. Cited in, "New Future, New Past," Ken Driggs, p. 73, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Summer 2008.

20. LifeWay Research, "*Unchurched Americans Turned Off by Church, Open to Christians*" by Mark Kelly. www.lifeway.com (nd). Survey mentioned in article is dated 2007.) See also, "*Public Expresses Mixed Views of Islam, Mormonism.*" September 25, 2007. www.pewforum.org/surveys/religionviews07 This survey, conducted August 1 through 8, 2007, consisted of 3,002 adults.

21. "*Public Expresses Mixed Views of Islam, Mormonism.*" September 25, 2007. www.pewforum.org/surveys/religionviews07 This survey, conducted August 1 through 8, 2007, consisted of 3,002 adults. Fifty-two percent of the general public believed Mormonism Christian, while 31% (1 in 3) did not. Of Evangelicals, 40% said yes, while 45% said no. Those Evangelicals who attend weekly services and who do not believe Mormonism Christian, were 52%.

22. "A New Future Requires a New Past." (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Summer 2008), 74-75.

23. Wicker, Christine, *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Surprising Crisis Inside the Church*. Harper Collins, 2008, 4, xiii.

24. "*Mormons on the Rise: John W. Kennedy in Salt Lake and Provo.*"
www.ChristianityTodayLibrary.com; June 15, 1998, Vol. 42 No. 7.

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