

IS THE “CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS” (LDS, Mormons) A CHRISTIAN RELIGION?

by Larry Blythe, M.A.A.

A conversation has taken place publicly in the last few days, which was prompted by concerns that some in the Mormon community voiced about an online class and a biblical worldview text offered by Apologia. In both cases, Apologia makes it clear that we do not view Mormons as Christians. There are two issues at hand. The first question, primarily raised by the Mormons participating in this conversation: Should Mormons continue to buy Apologia curriculum and resources? The second question is: What are some basic differences between the Mormon religion and Christianity?

QUESTION #1: Should Mormons continue to buy Apologia curriculum and resources?

ANSWER: In an actual phone call with one of the Mormons, who is a homeschooling mom, it was essentially concluded that a Mormon can continue to patronize Apologia in good conscience. An example was given of buying gasoline from a store that also sells alcohol, tobacco, and lottery tickets. Even though a Mormon would never buy these products, they can still buy gas for their vehicles without violating their conscience.

Mormons have enjoyed the academically rigorous, creation-based science texts that Apologia publishes for grades K-12. The books have a conversational style that makes them effective and enjoyable to read and learn each science subject. There is no discussion of the Mormon faith in our science texts.

Apologia also takes the admonition of 1 Peter 3:15 seriously. This scripture tells us honor Christ as Lord, and to be prepared to give a defense of our faith, doing so with gentleness and respect.

Although we may have differences in our theology and doctrines, Mormons can continue to benefit in their homeschooling journey by using Apologia resources.

QUESTION #2: What are some basic differences between the Mormon religion and Christianity?

ANSWER: Mormon Americans are to be respected for their high moral virtues that socially and culturally advance common good. They protect religious freedom and are often open to honest dialogue. Mormons who try to live according to the teachings of their church are for the most part very moral people who love America and are conservative in their views on the most important social issues of our time (abortion, marriage, pornography, etc). For these things they are to be applauded.

As good as the above qualities are, none of the above automatically make someone or some organization “Christian.” These and other qualities are not tests for truth. Millions of humans

share the same qualities but are atheists, “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” Iglesia ni Cristo, Muslims, and others. An individual can have good qualities, but bad and erroneous doctrine. The following will address doctrine, teachings, and practices, not individuals.

We understand well that the members of “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” are taught by their leadership that they are Christians. However, it is very important to understand how key terms are defined. If two people having a discussion are using the same vocabulary but each is using a different dictionary, there can be significant confusion. Suppose one man says “I am an American,” and by that he means “I am a citizen of the United States.” Another man says “I am an American also,” by which he means he is a citizen of a country in South America. Both men are making the same claim, but they mean two different things, and those two meanings are very different.

Christians have enjoyed a two thousand year history beginning with the New Testament and the writings of the Apostles. We still believe the same doctrines today. Although there are many Christian denominations, the majority all believe the exact same essential doctrines and we continue to stand firm on those crucial truths. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has never been in need of restoration. We preach the same Gospel the Apostles preached two thousand years ago.

The following is a list of key doctrines with an explanation of what the Bible teaches and Christians believe versus what the Mormon Church believes:

1. **Is the LDS Church “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth”** (Doctrine and Covenants, 1:30, President Ezra Taft Benson, Teachings of, p. 164-5).
 - **The Bible teaches and Christians have Believed for two millennia:**

Christians for 2,000 years have believed that the true church was divinely established by Jesus and could never and will never disappear from the earth (Matthew 16:18; 18:15-18; 28:18-20; John 15:16; 17:11; Ephesians 3:21; Jude 3). Although there will always be a remnant of corrupt individuals in different times, the Church of Jesus Christ has held firmly to biblical essentials. Our essential doctrines have not deviated from the Apostles teaching since the Church was established in the New Testament.
 - **The Mormon Church believes:**
 - Christians are not true “Christians”¹
 - Christians have no salvation outside “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”²
 - Christian creeds (doctrines of the past 2,000 years) are an abomination³
 - Christianity is the Church of the Devil and is damned⁴
 - Christianity was hatched in hell⁵
 - Christianity is perverted and apostate⁶
 - Christianity is evil and the Whore of Babylon⁷
 - Christianity is the anti-Christ⁸
 - Christianity is wrong, corrupt, and unforgiven⁹

- Christians are liars and children of the devil¹⁰
- Christians know nothing of God¹¹
- Christians believe in a mythical Jesus¹²
- Christians believe in a Trinity that is a monster¹³
- Christian Pastors are corrupt and blasphemous¹⁴
- Christians are fools for believing in the Bible alone – The Christian Bible is untrustworthy¹⁵
- Christianity is leading people to hell¹⁶
- Christianity will be hewn down and cast into the fire of no return¹⁷
- Christians have no right to preach the Gospel¹⁸

2. Do Mormons Believe in One God or Many? Is there more than one true God?

- **The Bible teaches and Christians have Believed for two millennia:**
 - The Bible is clear that there has always been and always will be one true and living God – there were no others before or after. Christians have always believed God created and rules all things and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, though personally distinct, are one God, the Lord Jehovah, NOT three separate, individual God's. God is spirit, not flesh and bone, not a man in His divine nature, has always existed (eternally) as the all-powerful God (Genesis 1:1-31; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; 44:6-8, 24; Matthew 28:19-20; John 1:1; 10:30; 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 13:14, John 4:20-24; 1 Timothy 6:15, 16; Numbers 23:19; Hosea 11:9; Romans 1:22-23; Psalm 90:2; 102:12, 25-27; Isaiah 40:28; 43:10; 1 Timothy 1:17).
- **The Mormon Church believes:**
 - There are many Gods (polytheism)¹⁹
 - Many Gods made the world²⁰
 - The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate Gods²¹
 - The Father has a wife, our heavenly mother²²
 - We are the offspring of divine parents (in a literal sense)²³
 - God is an exalted man²⁴
 - God has a body of flesh and bones²⁵
 - Good Mormons can become Gods²⁶

3. Is Jesus Christ Satan's Brother and the literal (physical) offspring of Mary and God?

- **The Bible teaches and Christians have Believed for two millennia:**
 - Christians from the time of the NT Apostles to this day (orthodox Christianity) believe that the eternal Son of God, Jesus is the unique Son of God, who came down from heaven to become man, conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the supernatural creative agency of the Holy Spirit (John 3:31; 13:3; 16:28; 17:5; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:34-35).

- Jesus Christ who is God in flesh, made all things: spiritual powers (angels AND Satan, who rebelled against Him, Psalm 148:2-5; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).
- Human beings are not pre-existent but start to exist at the beginning of their physical lives (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; Job 38:4-7).
- **The Mormon Church believes:**
 - Jesus Christ, humans, angels, and fallen spirits including Satan are all eternal beings, never created and that are all spirit brothers and sisters.
 - Christ and Lucifer (Satan) were two spirit brothers
 - Christ supported the Heavenly Father's plan while Lucifer did not (all above, note 27) ²⁷
 - Jesus Christ is "the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh," (He was the literal "offspring" of the Father and Mary, "sired" by Heavenly Father as his only son in the flesh, so that he had two literal, physical parents—his immortal Father and his mortal mother Mary²⁸
 - The LDS Church denies that Jesus was "begotten" by the Holy Ghost, since it understands "begotten" literally to mean sired by a physical father²⁹

4. Is Salvation by our good works, and can those who reject Christ still go to heaven?

- **The Bible teaches and Christians have Believed for two millennia:**
 - The forgiveness of our sins and eternal life in God's presence has always been taught by orthodox, biblical Christians as a free gift of God on the basis of Jesus Christ's (not the one who is Satan's brother) sacrificial death on the cross (John 3:16; Romans 3:21-26; 5:6-11; 6:23; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 10:12, 19; 1 John 1:9).
 - Forgiveness and salvation cannot be earned nor can we ever be worthy of God's forgiveness, but must receive this gift by acknowledging our helpless, sinful state and trusting solely in Christ (Luke 24:47; John 11:25-26; Acts 2:38; 16:31; Romans 10:9-13).
 - When we place our trust in God's grace in Christ alone for our salvation, we will show our faith by our good works, but those works in no shape, form, or fashion save us (Romans 6:1-4; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-26).
 - Christ's atoning death on the cross provides the complete solution for humankind's sin problem.
 - Those who reject God's grace in this life will have no part in this salvation but are under God's judgment for eternity (John 3:18, 36; Hebrews 9:27; 10:26-27; 1 John 5:11-12).
- **The Mormon Church believes:**
 - Humans must become worthy in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life in the presence of God the Father through obedience to all the commands of the LDS Church, including exclusive Mormon temple rituals.³⁰

- Good works and ritual ordinances are requirements for this full, individual salvation, and Christ's atonement makes up what is lacking in a Mormon's best efforts ³¹
- The atonement assures resurrection and immortality to all people, including those who reject Christ in this life. ³²
- Only faithful Mormons and those who accept the Mormon gospel in the afterlife can live in God the Father's presence – most others will be given immortality in a heavenly kingdom of lesser glory, even those who rejected Christ in this life ³³

5. Is the Bible unreliable, incomplete, and corrupt?

- **The Bible teaches and Christians have Believed for two millennia:**
 - The Bible, the Word of God, the 66 books of Scripture preserve the words of the ancient prophets and apostles and of Jesus Christ himself (contained ONLY in the Bible) and are the unique, final, inherent, infallible, and inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15-16).
- **The Mormon Church believes:**
 - The Bible has been corrupted, is missing many "plain and precious parts," and does NOT contain the fullness of the gospel ³⁴
 - The Book of Mormon is more accurate and reliable than the Bible³⁵

The foundation of the Mormon Church, Joseph Smith claimed to be a prophet of God and gave new revelations that disputed the reliability of the Word of God as found in the 66 books of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. He also opposed two thousand years of historical, Judeo-Christianity claiming ONLY the LDS Church was the true Church.

Christians were warned this would happen instructing us in Matthew 7:15-23, 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15, Galatians 1:6-9, and 2 Peter 2:1 that false prophets would come and claim to speak in God's name but would be teaching "another Gospel." That is precisely what happened and now "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" teaches a profoundly different Gospel. They teach, contrary to the Apostles doctrine, a different view of God, Jesus Christ, and salvation. Mormonism invalidates all churches but their own. They also deny all baptisms except LDS.

Thankfully in America, we have religious freedom – we can disagree. LDS may teach whatever they wish. On the other hand, we Christians have the responsibility to proclaim the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and make clear the distinctions between authentic, orthodox Christianity and unbiblical teachers like those in the Mormon Church.

Does this mean we are "bashing" others? In no way. Consider how Mormons were branded as hateful bigots by homosexuals when they stood against Prop 8. Just as their disagreement did not equal hate or bigotry, Apologia's stand for the Gospel does not equal hatred or bigotry, even

for those who may disagree. We simply believe the LDS are in error and need to turn to the true and Living Savior.

¹ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p.132

² *Mormon doctrine*, p. 670)

³ Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith History 1:18-19

⁴ 1 Nephi 14:10; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah*, p.77

⁵ Prophet Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 6:176

⁶ *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p.132

⁷ *Mormon Doctrine*, p.138

⁸ *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p. 40

⁹ Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith History 1:18-19; Rulon S. Wells, Conference report, April 1936, p. 42

¹⁰ *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p.138

¹¹ President John Taylor, May 6, 1870, *Journal of Discourses* 13:225

¹² *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, 269

¹³ Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 372

¹⁴ Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith History 1:18-19; Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pg.55

¹⁵ Book of Mormon, Second Nephi 29:6; First Nephi 13:28

¹⁶ *Mormon Doctrine*, 1966, p. 419

¹⁷ *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p.139

¹⁸ *Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p.136

¹⁹ *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 163

²⁰ Book of Abraham 4:1-31

²¹ *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 41-42; *Articles of Faith*, by James Talmage, p.

35

²² *Ensign*, Jan. 1989

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 321; Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, p. 613-614; Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 345; Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, p. 333; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 275, 279; *Presidents of the Church Student Manual* [2003], 89; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* [2011], 71

²⁵ D&C (Doctrine & Covenants) 130:22

²⁶ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345-347, 354; DC 132:20

²⁷ (Doctrine and Covenants 93:21-33; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 9-10; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 355; "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, June 1986).

²⁸ *Ensign*, April 1997; Ezra Taft Benson, in *Ensign*, Dec. 2001; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 53; *Ensign*, Dec. 2010, 8

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Book of Mormon—2 Nephi 25:23; *Articles of Faith* 3; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 62-65, 109-112, 277-78

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Doctrine & Covenants* 76; 88:16-33; *Gospel Principles*, 61-62, 242-44, 271-73

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Book of Mormon—1 Nephi 13:26-29; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 206; *Gospel Principles* [2009], 45-48

³⁵ *Articles of Faith* 8; *Book of Mormon Teacher Resource Manual* [2004], 20