
The Latter Day Saints

A Question of Identity

Mormonism

“Mormonism” is the term usually applied in derision to a religious sect established April 6, 1830, by Joseph Smith, as the outgrowth of a series of spiritual experiences he claimed to have had. The church, which resulted, in point of doctrine, ritual, and constitution, was in accord with the New Testament.

The organization, together with all of the strange circumstances associated with its origin, was in fulfillment of many Bible prophecies. The churches of his day having departed from the teachings of the New Testament, were therefore in a state of apostasy. Through the events referred to, the original gospel with its power and authority was restored.

The standard of doctrine and polity of this church is the Bible, Book of Mormon, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

The Book of Mormon as a history of the primitive inhabitants of the American Continent gives an account of their origin, civilization, and decline, together with their spiritual and religious experiences. Joseph Smith translated this record and it was published March, 1830.

The Book of Doctrine and Covenants is a compilation of revelations, which Joseph Smith claimed to have had for the guidance of the church, and the church accepted them as such.

Two Churches

At the present there are two organizations claiming to be the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. One, the (so-called) “Mormon” Church of Utah; the other, the Reorganized Church, with headquarters at Independence, Missouri.

These two churches have distinct identity, different theologies, constitutions, and policies, and should not be confused.

The Mormon Church

The "Mormon" Church is the larger institution and has its headquarters at Salt Lake City, Utah. It is presided over by Heber J. Grant; succeeding Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and Brigham Young, respectively.

From 1830 to June 27, 1844, there was but one church, having one faith, one ritual, and one organization. On the above date, Joseph Smith was assassinated and the church disrupted. From this time the church, divided into several factions, was victimized by the antagonisms of the would-be leaders. Brigham Young, the chief aspirant, at this time was the president of the Twelve Apostles and he had a large following, though ultimately only a small percentage of the original church accepted his leadership.

The Secession

This confusion should not have occurred, because the accepted law of the church as contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants (43: 2; 99: 6; also Utah Edition 43: 2-7; 102: 9) is very explicit in providing for the selection of a new president of the church. Briefly stated, the law is as follows: The incumbent by revelation appoints or sets apart his successor, and the church has the constitutional right to approve or reject the appointment by vote. In accord with this constitutional law, Joseph Smith publicly set apart his son (also named Joseph) to succeed him. Therefore, when death overtook Joseph Smith, the church at that time had its duty clearly defined.

Brigham Young and others, however, ignored both the constitution and the historical fact of the selection of "Young Joseph," as he was called. This violation of the accepted law was in itself the initiation of secession. Brigham Young's following went out from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Kaneshville (now Council Bluffs), Iowa, and in 1847 emigrated to the Salt Lake Valley, Utah, where he reorganized his followers into a new church by

rebaptism, reconfirmation, and reordination, thus repudiating the authority of the original church.

Historically, legally, and organically from June 27, 1844, the parent church disclaims all responsibility for the acts of Brigham Young's following, who, it is clearly evident, are secessionists.

Other Points of Departure

Without entering into a detailed analysis of doctrines and ritual of the two churches, we merely call attention to the subject of marriage, in addition to that of the successor to Joseph Smith.

The Law of Marriage

In the original church the law of marriage was very clearly and emphatically stated, the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Book of Doctrine and Covenants being appealed to as the standard. Summed up it was found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants (see section 111 in any edition from 1835 to 1876) as follows: "We believe that one man should have one wife; and one woman but one husband, except in case of death." Also in the Book of Mormon, "There shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." (See Jacob 2:36, Authorized Edition; also Utah Edition 2:27, where polygamy was also classified as a "grosser crime.")

The History of "Mormon" Polygamy

It was in the Tabernacle at Salt Lake City, and by the authority of President Brigham Young, that on the 29th day of August, 1852, polygamy ceased to be a "crime" and became "a necessary virtue to secure celestial glory," according to the "Mormon" Church. The doctrine of polygamy is incorporated in a law known as "the celestial law of marriage," and bases exaltation to the highest glory in heaven on the principle of "marriage for eternity" (including a plurality of wives), so as to bring about an endless increase of progeny. Those who obey this law are promised a part in the "first resurrection" (that of the just), although in this life they have been guilty of all manner of blasphemy (except the shedding of inno-

cent blood.) See Doctrine and Covenants 132: 17, 19, 26, Utah edition.

This doctrine is still authoritatively taught by the "Mormon" Church in their official books on doctrine.

The Other Church

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has its headquarters at Independence, Missouri, and is presided over by Frederick M. Smith, who succeeded his father, Joseph Smith, as president; this Joseph Smith being the son of the Martyr.

After the tragic death of the founder, and the consequent disruption, the members and local congregations which adhered to the original tenets and doctrines were reorganized under the direction of some of the leading ministers, and in 1852 held the first conference after the dispersion from Nauvoo. At this time the loyal remnants of the church, repudiating the secessionists of every name, avowed their belief in and adherence to the original organization.

On April 6, 1860, at the conference in Amboy, Illinois, Joseph Smith took his father's place with the confidence of the church expressed by unanimous vote, and directed the church in all of its developments up until his death in December, 1914.

The Reorganized Church has preached the gospel as restored, in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament, proclaiming Christ as the universal Savior. This church has insisted that the future destiny of each and all is the result of the cultivation of goodness, virtue, justice, and truth in this present life. Regarding morality and marriage, without compromise this church has maintained that polygamy is a violation of the divine law, and that in marriage "one man, one wife; one woman, one husband" is the unchangeable law of God; and further, it is for this world only, its obligations ending with death. The teaching of eternal progression of God and man predicated on Mormon polygamy is heresy.

Salvation or Condemnation

The Reorganized Church teaches that Christianity leads to the continual increase

of goodness “going on to perfection, as God is perfect”; and our salvation depends upon individual worthiness, the attainment of the Christ character which is “the high mark of our calling.” This identity with Christ can only be realized by faithful obedience to the principles of truth, as set forth by our Lord and his immediate apostles.

The elaborate rituals of the Mormon temples are “vain imaginings,” and at best, works of supererogation, tending to obscure the grace of God and lessen the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our condemnation will be inevitable if we place ourselves in rebellion against Him. Neither can there be any substitute for the worth of character; as taught by New Testament Christianity—every man shall be judged according to his works.

Tithing in the Two Churches Contrasted

In Doctrine and Covenants 119:4 Utah edition, and 106:1 Lamoni edition, it is clearly set forth that tithing is the payment of one tenth of the interest annually, the evident intention of the law being to equalize the responsibility by placing the heaviest burden upon those who are well-to-do and consequently better able to meet this requirement, which of course is voluntary. It was Brigham Young who at Nauvoo, August 15, 1844, in a general epistle issued nearly three months after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, interpreted tithing in the following language: “Let every member proceed immediately to tithe himself or herself a tenth of all their property and money . . . and let them continue to pay a tenth of their income from that time . . . and let this law or ordinance be henceforth taught to all who present themselves for admission to this church.”

This change in the fiscal teaching of the church in its administration bears heavily upon the wage earners and the poor, contradicting the divine intention as expressed so frequently in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Reorganized Church financial inequalities which exist after the payment of tithing are regulated by the law of consecration.

Two Decisions of the United States Courts

The following court decisions are sufficient to show that an unbiased investigation admits that in doctrine and practice the Reorganized Church is a continuation of and successor to the original church established in 1830 and therefore entitled to all the rights and properties of that church:

Judge Sherman, in the Court of Common Pleas, Lake County, Ohio, February 23, 1880, said:

“That the church in Utah, the defendant of which John Taylor is president, has materially and largely departed from the faith, doctrine, laws, ordinances, and usages of said original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and has incorporated into its system of faith the doctrines of celestial marriage and a plurality of wives, and the doctrine of Adam-God worship, contrary to the laws and constitution of said original church. And the Court do further find that the plaintiff, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is the true and lawful continuation of, and successor to the said original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, organized in 1830, and is entitled in law to all its rights and property.”

Judge Philips, in the United States Circuit Court, Kansas City, March, 1894, decided as follows:

“Beyond all cavil, if human testimony is to place any matter forever at rest, this church was one in doctrine, and government, and purpose from 1830 to June, 1844, when Joseph Smith its founder, was killed. It had the same federal head, governing bodies, and faith. During this period there was no schism, no secession, no “parting of the ways,” in any matter fundamental, or affecting its oneness. . . . There can be no question of the fact that Brigham Young’s assumed presidency was a bold, bald usurpation. Decree will go in favor of the Complainant.”
(The Reorganized Church.)

J. W. RUSHTON.

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