

LDS Church Leaders Declare Christianity to be in a State of Total Apostasy

By Sandra Tanner

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as the Mormons, claims that with the death of Jesus' apostles the Christian church went into total apostasy. This lasted until God chose Joseph Smith to restore the true faith in 1830. LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated:

If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is **no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.** (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, p. 670)

Joseph Smith claimed that in the spring of 1820, as a young man praying for direction on which church to join, he was visited by God the Father and Jesus Christ. He later gave this account of the event:

My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The **Presbyterians** were most decided against the **Baptists** and **Methodists**, and used all the powers of both reason and sophistry to prove their errors, or, at least, to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand, the **Baptists** and **Methodists** in their turn were equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others.

In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together?

...

After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. . . .

I was answered that I must join **none of them**, 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, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

He again **forbade** me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home. And as I leaned up to the fireplace, mother inquired what the matter was. I replied, "Never mind, all is well—I am well enough off." I then said to my mother, "I have learned for myself that **Presbyterianism is not true.**" (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:9-20)

Thus we see that at the heart of Mormonism is a condemnation of all other churches. This view is also promoted in the Book of Mormon, first published in 1830.

In it we read a clear denunciation of the various churches:

And he said unto me: Behold there are save **two churches only**; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the **church of the devil**; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church which is the **mother of abominations**; and she is the **whore of all the earth.** (1 Nephi 14:10)

And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the **mother of harlots**, which is the **great and abominable church** of all the earth, whose foundation is the **devil**, then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence . . . (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 14:17)

Joseph Smith's contempt for ministers of other churches is seen in this quote:

The only principle upon which they judge me [Joseph Smith] is by comparing my acts with the **foolish traditions** of their fathers and nonsensical teachings of **hireling priests**, whose object and aim were to keep the people in **ignorance** for the sake of **filthy lucre**; or as the prophet says, to feed themselves, not the flock. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Deseret Book, 1977, p. 315)

At another time Smith claimed:

"What is it that inspires professors of Christianity generally with a hope of salvation? It is that smooth, sophisticated **influence of the devil**, by which he deceives the whole world." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 270)

When Joseph Smith was asked "Do you believe the Bible?" he replied "If we do, **we are the only people under heaven that does**, for there are **none of the religious sects of the day that do.**" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 119)

Only True Church

The LDS Church leaders continue to affirm that their church is the "only true church," thus excluding all others. Brigham Young went so far as to state:

. . . he that confesseth not that Jesus has come in the flesh and sent **Joseph Smith** with the fullness of the Gospel to this generation, is not of God, but is anti-christ. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9, p. 312)

Even the *Doctrine and Covenants* quotes God as saying that the LDS Church is "the **only true** and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 1:30).

Past LDS President Ezra Taft Benson said:

This is not just another Church. **This is not just one of a family of Christian churches.** This is the Church and kingdom of God, the **only true Church** upon the face of the earth . . . (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 164-165)

Temple Changes

The LDS contempt for other churches was clearly portrayed in their temple ritual prior to 1990. The temple film contained a segment depicting the devil making a deal with a minister, in clerical attire, to preach his doctrines for pay. In the 1990 version the devil said:

LUCIFER:—If you will preach your orthodox religion to these people, and convert them, I will pay you well. (Jerard and Sandra Tanner, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony: 1842-1990*, 1990, p. 19)

After this portion of the ceremony was deleted in 1990, Vern Anderson reported:

Among the changes . . . a portion of the ceremony with an actor portraying a non-Mormon “preacher” paid by Satan to spread false doctrine has been eliminated. “The general consensus is that it’s a breath of fresh air,” said Ross Peterson . . . “You don’t put down other churches, or imply that they are Satan’s children.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1990)

We have been told that all the material belittling both Protestants and Catholics has now been eliminated. The ceremony as it was previously given, not only implied that all ministers were working for the Devil, but also had Lucifer claiming he would buy up “Popes” to help him in his evil work.

Doctrine of God

Mormons insist that part of the evidence of the total apostasy was the loss of the true understanding of the nature of God and Christ. Contrary to the teachings of the Bible and Christianity at large, Mormonism teaches that God has not always been God, that he was once a mortal, finite being. They also teach that there are multitudes of beings who have achieved godhood and rule other planets. Each god also has a wife. Joseph Smith stated:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an **exalted man** . . . I am going to tell you **how God came to be God**. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. **I will refute that idea** . . . God himself, the Father of us all, **dwelt on an earth**, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did; . . . you have got to learn **how to be gods yourselves**, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as **all gods** have done before you . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, ch. 14, pp. 305-6).

LDS President Brigham Young declared that God was once a finite being:

It appears ridiculous to the world, under their darkened and erroneous traditions, that God has once been a finite being. (*Deseret News*, Nov. 16, 1859, p. 290)

LDS Apostle Melvin Ballard explained that God has a wife:

“For as we have a Father in heaven, so also we have a **Mother** there, a glorified, exalted, ennobled Mother.” (As quoted in *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, LDS Church manual, 1976, p. 129)

In 1998 President Gordon B. Hinckley admitted that the Mormons do not believe in the same Christ as traditional Christianity:

In bearing testimony of Jesus Christ, President Hinckley spoke of those outside the Church who say Latter-day Saints “do not believe in the traditional Christ.” “**No, I don’t. The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak.** For the Christ of whom I speak has been revealed in this the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. He together with His Father, appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in the year 1820, and when Joseph left the grove that day, he knew more of the nature of God **than all the learned ministers of the gospel of the ages.**” (*Deseret News*, Church News, June 20, 1998)

Speaking at the April 2002 LDS General Conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley stated:

As a Church we have critics, many of them. They say we do not believe in the **traditional Christ of Christianity**. **There is some substance to what they say.** Our faith, our knowledge is not based on ancient tradition, the creeds which came of a finite understanding and out of the almost infinite discussions of men trying to arrive at a definition of the risen Christ. Our faith, our knowledge comes of the witness of a **prophet in this dispensation** who saw before him the great God of the universe and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. They spoke to him. He spoke with Them. He testified openly, unequivocally, and unabashedly of that great vision. It was a vision of the Almighty and of the Redeemer of the world, glorious beyond our understanding but certain and unequivocating in the knowledge which it brought. (*Ensign*, May 2002, p. 90)

LDS Denounce Other Churches

Mormons often complain that they are being persecuted when members of other faiths question LDS claims. They state that their church does not attack other people’s religion and resent those who challenge their doctrine. However, this is overlooking the whole history of the LDS Church and its attack on historic Christianity.

Below are a number of statements by various LDS leaders denouncing all of the Christian churches.

Brigham Young, second prophet and president of the LDS Church preached:

The Christian world, **so-called**, are **heathens** as to the knowledge of the salvation of God. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 8:171)

With a regard to true theology, a more ignorant people never lived than the present *so-called* Christian world. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 8:199)

Should you ask why we differ from other Christians, **as they are called**, it is simply because they are not Christians as the New Testament defines Christianity. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10:230)

The religion of God embraces every fact that exists in all the wide arena of nature, while the religions of men consist of theory devoid of fact, or of any true principle of guidance; hence **the professing Christian world** are like a ship upon a boisterous ocean without rudder, compass, or pilot, and are tossed hither and thither by every wind of doctrine. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10:265)

. . . the time came when Paganism was engrafted into Christianity, and at last Christianity was converted into Paganism rather than converting the Pagans. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 22:44)

In 1858 LDS apostle John Taylor preached:

The world has been apostate for generations past: it has been under the dominion of the prince and power of the air, even the god of this world, . . . **We talk about Christianity, but it is a perfect pack of nonsense.** . . . it is as corrupt as hell; and the Devil could not invent a better engine to spread his work than the Christianity of the nineteenth century. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6:167)

Brigham Young was the next speaker after Taylor and Young commented:

Brother Taylor has just said that the religions of the day were hatched in hell. The eggs were laid in hell, hatched on its borders, and kicked on to the earth. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6:176)

B. H. Roberts, one of the Seventy and noted LDS historian, declared that every church and minister, at the time of Joseph Smith, was in a state of total apostasy:

The Announcement of the Universal Apostasy

It is a most startling announcement with which the Prophet Joseph Smith begins his message to the world. Concerning the question, he asked God—"Which of all the sects is right, and which shall I join?" he says:

"I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were **all wrong**, and the personage who addressed me said that **all their creeds were abomination in His**

sight: that those professors were *all corrupt*; . . . " [*Pearl of Great Price*]

This is a tremendous arraignment of all Christendom. It charges a condition of **universal apostasy** from God, especially upon Christendom that was dwelling in a fancied security of being the farthest removed from the possibility of such a charge; each division of the **so-called** Christian Church felicitating itself with the flattering unctiousness that its own particular society possessed the enlightened fullness of the Christian religion. While the boldness of this declaration of the young Prophet is astounding, upon reflection it must be conceded that just such a condition of affairs in the religious world is consistent with the work he, under the direction of divine Providence, was about to inaugurate. **Nothing less than a complete apostasy from the Christian religion would warrant the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.** Of sects there were already enough in existence. Division and subdivision had already created of confusion more than enough, and there was no possible excuse for the introduction of a new Christian sect. But if men through **apostasy had corrupted the Christian religion and lost** divine authority to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, it was of the utmost importance that a new dispensation of the true Christian religion should be given to the world. It should also be observed at this point, that Joseph Smith, then but a boy, scarcely removed from childhood, was not himself pronouncing judgment upon the status of Christendom. It was not he who declared **the sects to be all wrong, their creeds an abomination, and the professors thereof corrupt.** He of all persons, both on account of his extreme youthfulness and his lack of general information, was among the least qualified to pronounce upon such a question. . . . His seeking knowledge from God upon this very question—"which of all the sects is right?" is a confession of his own inability to determine the matter. No human wisdom was sufficient to answer that question. . . . God has been the judge of apostate Christendom, Joseph Smith but His messenger, to herald that judgment to the world.

It now becomes my melancholy task to trace through the early Christian centuries the **decline** of the Christian religion. By this phrase I mean that a **really unChristian** religion was gradually substituted for the beautiful religion of Jesus Christ; that a **universal apostasy** from the Christian doctrine and the Christian Church took place. So tracing the **decline of Christianity**, I shall establish the truth of the first great message with which the modern prophet, Joseph Smith, came to the world; and shall also prove the fact, that a necessity existed for the establishment of such a work as he claims, under God, to have founded, and of which the several volumes of this work are the detailed history. (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Introduction and notes by B. H. Roberts, Deseret Book, 1951, vol. 1, pp. XL-XLI)

Writing in the 1850's, LDS Apostle Orson Pratt declared:

Since the Church with its authority and power has been caught away from the earth, **the great mother of harlots with all her descendants has blasphemously assumed the authority of administering some of the sacred ordinances of the gospel.** They have blasphemed the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, by using it without authority in their ministrations. They have dishonored the name of Christ, by calling their powerless, apostate, filthy and most abominable churches, the Church of Christ. **The whole Romish, Greek and Protestant ministry, from the pope down through every grade of office, are as destitute of authority from God, as the devil and his angels.** The Almighty abhors all their wicked pretensions, as He does the very gates of hell. (A Series of 6 Pamphlets, Liverpool, England, 1850-51, No. 1, "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," by Orson Pratt, pp. 18-19)

Further on in the same pamphlet, Orson Pratt wrote:

28. . . . The word of God given in past ages, whether written or unwritten, was never considered by the true Church a sufficient rule of faith in any dispensation since the creation of man. Such an idea was never originated in the Church of God. It was the **apostate Catholics** that first originated the idea and by them the fatal delusion has been handed down from generation to generation; and all the children that she has brought forth, or that have left her communion, have, more or less, imbibed the same great features of the **apostasy**. Well might the Revelator John, speaking by the spirit of prophecy, call her "the Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth!" It is her true name, for all the "harlots" which she has brought forth have walked in the footsteps of their "Mother" in declaring against new revelation, and in pretending that ancient revelation is a sufficient rule of faith. It is to be expected that as is the **Mother, so will be her Harlot daughters.** The daughters in some respects are more corrupt than the mother; for they have limited their rule of faith much more than the mother. . . . As the mother decided on the word of God by tradition, so did the daughter, and as tradition taught the mother to reject many books and receive others, so tradition taught the daughter to reject all that her mother rejected, and some half-a-score besides. After awhile this harlot daughter brings forth a numerous progeny of children, each of whom alters her creeds, so as to disagree with both mother and grandmother's creeds; yet the **church of England** with all her daughters agrees in the rejection of the old canon of scripture, and in the reception of the newly-formed one.

29. In the meantime **another harlot daughter of the Catholics—the Lutherans**, formed another canon, and rejected many books that the English daughter did not. . . .

40. Secondly, it is objected that if the Church of Christ has not continued, then the gate of hell must have prevailed against her; and they refer us to that cheering passage in Matthew 16:18 which reads thus:—"And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my

Church, and the gates of hell shall riot prevail against it." They argue, that if the Church has ceased to exist, the gates of hell have prevailed over her and the promise of Jesus must be falsified. **But we would inform the Catholics, that the Church of Christ has not ceased to exist, neither has Peter ceased his existence, but both the Church and Peter are in heaven, far out of the reach of the gates of hell, and far out of the reach of the abominable soul-destroying impositions of popery. The gates of hell have prevailed and will continue to prevail over the Catholic mother of harlots, and over all her Protestant daughters;** but as for the apostolical Church of Christ, she rests secure in the mansion of eternal happiness, where she will remain until the apostate Catholic church, with all her popes and bishops, together with all her harlot daughters shall be hurled down to hell; then it shall be said, "Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her;" . . . (Orson Pratt, *Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 39-44)

On January 25, 1874, LDS Apostle Orson Pratt declared:

It is said by some that the church has continued from the Apostolic period down until the present century of the Christian era. But if it has, I cannot find it, . . . Its members may believe in the Bible, and they may be honest, we do not dispute the honesty of men; but unless they have this distinguishing characteristic [of apostles] of the church of the living God, we have no right to suppose them to be the real, true Christian church. . . . The people had **entirely apostatized** from that ancient order of things. There were no doubt many who were very zealous and who professed Christianity, and claimed to be the church of God, but where were their Apostles? Nowhere to be found among men. Where were the Prophets in what was called the Christian church towards the latter part of the second century? Nowhere upon the face of the earth; the spirit of prophecy was entirely rooted out, and the Gentiles, through **apostacy** and unbelief, had fallen as the Jews had done before them. . . .

"Well," says one, "am I to understand from your remarks that there has been **no real Christian Church** on the earth, for a great many centuries that are passed?" These are my views, and these are the views of the Latter-day Saints—we believe that, so far as the eastern hemisphere is concerned, there has been no true Christian Church for some seventeen centuries past. . . .

. . . **Says one, "Do you mean to unchristianize not only the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches, but also all those Protestant denominations who have sprung from them?"** Certainly I do, and it is in fulfillment of that which was spoken of by Paul in the 11th chapter of Romans, where he declares that if they do not continue in the goodness of God, they also shall be cut off, that is, cut off from all those blessed privileges and spiritual gifts which characterized the Church of Christ whilst it was on the earth.

This being the condition of things no wonder that God has left on record, in this good old book, that in the

latter days he would again restore the kingdom to the earth; as **there has been no Christian Church, with divine authority, in the four quarters of the globe for many centuries past**, it is no wonder that the ancient Prophets saw a period of time when God would restore to the earth the true Church. . . . Go and ask any of these fallen churches,—go to the oldest among them, the Roman Catholic, or the Greek church, . . . How can I obey any institution that belongs to the Christian Church, wherein authority is necessary, unless such authority be on the earth? Consequently if they, in their zeal towards God, say that they have the Gospel, I will admit it so far as the letter of the word is concerned, but they have not the authority to administer its ordinances, having lost it, because they have lost the power of revelation, and the power of the Priesthood. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 16, pp. 344-349)

Orson Pratt, writing in 1854, stated:

Q. Is the Roman Catholic Church the Church of Christ?

A. **No**: for she has no inspired priesthood or officers, without which the Church of Christ never did nor never can exist.

Q. How long since the Roman Catholic Church lost the authority and ceased to be the Church of Christ?

A. She never had authority, and never was the Church of Christ; and consequently she could not lose that which she never was in possession of.

Q. If the Roman Catholics are not the Church of Christ, where has the Church of Christ existed since inspired men ceased from the earth:

A. She has existed in heaven where the gates of hell never can prevail against her, because she is built upon the rock; and the inspired Apostles are in heaven with her whom the Saviour promised to be with always, even unto the end of the world.

Q. What has become of the Apostles' successors?

A. **The Apostles had no successors after those died off** who were called by inspiration and new revelation.

Q. After the Church of Christ fled from earth to heaven, what was left?

A. **A set of wicked Apostates**, murderers, and idolaters, who, after having made war with the saints, and overcome them, and destroyed them out of the earth, were left to follow the wicked imaginations of their own corrupt hearts, and to build up churches by human authority, and to follow after the cunning craftiness of uninspired men; having no Apostle, Prophet, or Revelator to inquire of God for them: and thus, because of wickedness, the Church, and Priesthood, and gifts, and ordinances and blessings of the everlasting Gospel, were taken from the earth, and reserved in heaven until the fulness of times, when it was predicted that they should again be restored among men to continue until the end should come.

Q. Who founded the Roman Catholic Church?

A. **The Devil**, through the medium of Apostates, who subverted the whole order of God by **denying immediate revelation**, and substituting in the place thereof, tradition and ancient revelations as a sufficient rule of faith and practice.

Q. Did the great Protestant Reformers restore the Church of Christ to the earth?

A. **No**: for they had no inspired Apostles, Prophets, or Revelators among them, without which the Church could not be restored . . .

Q. But did not the first Protestant Reformers receive their ordination and authority from the Catholics?

A. Yes: and in this manner they received all the authority that their mother church was in possession of; and **the mother having derived her authority from the Devil, could only impart that which his Satanic majesty was pleased to bestow upon her**. . . .

Q. Are all the Baptisms administered by the Catholics and Protestants, and the different sects which have, from time to time, dissented from them, **illegal**, because the ministers were not authorized?

A. **They are**, every one of them, illegal, and null, and void, and without effect; and will not be considered baptism in the day of judgment any more than the acts of unauthorized men in human governments are considered legal. (*The Seer*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 204-206)

Further on in the same volume, Orson Pratt wrote:

Baptism in order to be acceptable in the sight of God must be administered by a man ordained of God and authorized of Jesus Christ, otherwise, it will be a solemn mockery before God, and highly sinful in His sight. But who in this generation have authority to baptize? None but those who have received authority in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints: **all other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God**; and any person who receives Baptism or the Lord's supper from their hands will highly offend God, for he looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people. **Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the "whore of Babylon" whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornications and wickedness**. And any person who shall be so wicked as to receive a holy ordinance of the gospel from the ministers of any of these apostate churches will be sent down to hell with them, unless they repent of the unholy and impious act. If any penitent believer desires to obtain forgiveness of sins through baptism, let him beware of having any thing to do with the churches of apostate Christendom, lest he perish in the awful plagues and judgments, denounced against them. **The only persons among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people who have authority from Jesus**

Christ to administer any gospel ordinance are those called and authorized among the Latter-day Saints. Before the restoration of the church of Christ to the earth in the year 1830, there have been no people on the earth for many generations possessing authority from God to minister gospel ordinances. We again repeat. beware of the hypocritical false teachers and imposters of Babylon. . . .

But the moment that God sent angels from heaven to earth [to Joseph Smith], and raised up inspired men, and **once more restored the true Christian Church** to the earth, the devil, with all his combined armies of Catholics and Protestants, was enraged . . . **The devil soon found that there was not the least shadow of evidence to sustain the Catholic and Protestant imposition against the doctrine of continued revelation.** This forlorn hope having utterly failed him, his next and most successful operation was to ridicule and denounce the doctrine, and lie about it, and, if possible, to close the eyes, and ears, and hearts of the people effectually against it. . . . (*The Seer*, vol. 2, no. 5, pp. 255-258)

Thus we see that Mormonism has always drawn a clear line of distinction between their church and all others naming the name of Christ. They continue to preach the total apostasy of Christianity shortly after the death of Christ's apostles and that the true church was taken from the earth until restored by Joseph Smith.

However, the Christian church is not a particular organization, it is the spiritual union of all believers in Christ. As born-again Christians we are part of God's church. Paul wrote of the various parts of the body as being an example of how all the Christians make up the body of Christ, the church:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

Christ promised that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:19-20).

He also promised that the "gates of hell" would not prevail against his church (Matthew 16:18). Then it could not have been lost from the earth for over 1700 years.

For further information on the nature of the true church, see J. C. Ryle's article, *The True Church* [http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/truechurch_jcyle.htm].

(Bold added for emphasis)

Also see: Mormonism Research Ministry: *Is This Bigotry? A Response to Latter-day Saints Who Say, "We Never Criticize Christian Churches"* [<http://www.mrm.org/we-never-criticize>]

The Mormon Church Claims to be the Only True Church [<http://www.leaderu.com/offices/michaeldavis/docs/mormonism/onlytrue.html>]



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