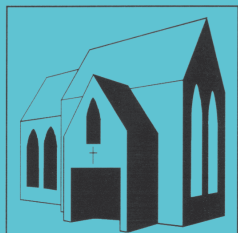


POINT

by

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A CRITIQUE OF
WHICH CHURCH IS TRUE?
A Process of Elimination Using the Bible

Steven Lee

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Utah Lighthouse Ministry
www.utlm.org



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Background and Introduction

I first encountered the paper *Which Church Is True?: A Process of Elimination Using the Bible* in 1988 when my wife (who was a casual friend at that time) gave me this series of 27 questions. She was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also called the LDS Church or commonly referred to as the Mormon Church). The questions were arranged in the pattern of spokes on a wheel to try to prove the truthfulness of the Mormon religion. She proceeded to explain to me that a person could determine which was the one true church by using this list of questions.

She explained that I was to use this paper in the following way. First, I should make a list of all churches that might be considered to be true. Then, I should work my way through the test point by point and place checks by all the churches that do not meet the test under consideration. She said that when I finished I would, of course, come to the inescapable conclusion that the LDS Church is the only true church.

As I worked my way through the list of questions, my sole purpose in answering the 27 questions was to respond to her personally regarding what I thought about the topics under discussion.

I have always tried to give Christians a way to share their faith intelligently and to understand the LDS Church's teachings while encouraging a healthy discussion of the differences between the historic Christian and the LDS positions. I also hope this written response will help thoughtful Mormon people clearly see the gulf between their faith and that of Christians.

Ever since I first saw this series of tests, I have been curious who the author of the work might be. My wife only knew that while she was attending Weber High School in Ogden, Utah, her seminary teacher used this as a handout in one of his classes. Years later when she asked her former instructor about the paper, he was either unable or unwilling to disclose the author. One of the workers at the seminary seemed to be overly abrupt regarding my wife's inquiry and seemed to try to discourage her from pursuing the matter any further. He even questioned her motives for wanting the information. I don't wish to read too much into the encounter,

however, it always did strike me as odd that the teacher and others would be unable and even unwilling to try to find out who the author of this work was and give credit where it was due. This was particularly strange since the LDS seminary teacher had been passing it out to his students in his classes. Surely, I thought, he must respect, admire and value the work that someone within the LDS Church had labored to create since he was making use of it in his classes.

LDS lists such as this have appeared from time to time. The most widespread and well known may be the small card called the “Seventeen Points of the True Church” which has been published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is available at most LDS Church-owned bookstores. Alpha and Omega Ministries has put together a compact response to the “Seventeen Points of the True Church” card.

I am writing this response for the reason that the Mormons continually claim to be true Christians (even to the point of declaring that they belong to the only true church and that all others are corrupt and an abomination in the sight of God) and also because confusion seems to exist as to whether or not the LDS Church represents a legitimate Christian faith. As a result, I hope that Christians may understand where the LDS Church’s teachings are not compatible with commonly held orthodox Christian doctrine.

A second reason I am writing this is out of a sincere and humble love for the Mormon people. I have never doubted their sincerity or the good intentions in their faith. However, no matter how sincere a person may be, sincerity does not—and has never—determined truth. Even the LDS Apostle Orson Pratt said “. . . convince us of our errors of doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the word of God, and we will be ever grateful for the information, and you will ever have the pleasing reflection that you have been instruments in the hands of God of redeeming your fellow beings. . . .” So I write with this open invitation in mind. I only ask for the reader to be willing to read openly and honestly and to see the differences between the Bible and the LDS Church’s teachings.

Obviously, this response does not attempt to give an exhaustive handling of each of the tests that will be examined any more than

does the LDS paper of 27 questions. This work is an introductory survey to show that the LDS understanding of the Biblical passages used in these tests is often not in line with the historic teachings of Christianity. Each LDS test is enclosed in a box at the top of the page with its accompanying references from the Bible and the instructions for the placing of marks to eliminate churches from consideration. A Christian response to the LDS test question being considered is given next. Some responses include additional information from LDS sources that demonstrate contradictions to the LDS question being asked.

Christians and others must realize that there are certain core doctrines (such as a monotheistic concept of God) that must be agreed upon in order to legitimately call a faith system Christian. At the same time there are other areas of teaching and practice (e.g., mode of baptism and style of worship) where complete conformity and unanimity are not required. The inability to make such distinctions between essentials and non-essentials of belief has often been something that I have witnessed in Mormons and other pseudo-Christian groups. As a Christian theologian stated so beautifully:

In essentials—*Unity*,
In non-essentials—*Liberty*,
In all things—*Charity*.

Test #1

DOES GOD HAVE A BODY?

Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 5:1-3; Luke 23:46; 24:36-39;
Hebrews 1:1-3 & James 2:26

Put a mark by any church which does not believe
God is as these describe Him.

Christian Response

Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 5:1-3

The words *image* and *likeness* are to be understood as synonyms. This is true not only here but throughout both the Old and New Testaments. This *image* or *likeness* is a moral and spiritual capacity and a statement of the kind of beings we were created by God to be. These terms can not be understood to be referring to the physical nature of mankind for the following reasons. First, if these passages mean a physical nature for God then his omnipresence would be a logical impossibility. However, scripture clearly teaches that God himself is present simultaneously throughout all of the universe and yet is not to be identified or equated with the created world but that he transcends the whole of creation (see 1 Kings 8:27 and Jeremiah 23:24). Furthermore, this idea that mankind has been created in the physical likeness of God would certainly be in conflict with other passages of scripture where it teaches that God is beyond all that has ever been created and all that ever will be created and that he is by very nature a being of Spirit (see also John 1:1-4, 12, 14, 18; 4:24).

Luke 23:46

The phrase “in your hands” is a figurative expression which if given literally would be “into your care.” This should not seem unfamiliar to anyone today since we use the same phrase figuratively

to mean not literally someone or something being placed into the hands of someone but rather that the person is understood to be caring for and being given responsibility for someone or something.

Luke 24:36-39

Compare this passage with John 4:24. Furthermore, John 1:14 makes it clear that God (Jesus) became a man [flesh] to save us. Christians affirm the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. However, this in no way proves the Mormon claim that God the Father has a body. John 1:1-4 and John 1:14 prove that Jesus has always been God himself and there is not anything in existence that he (Jesus) did not create.

Hebrews 1:1-3

The phrases “express image of his person” and “on the right hand” are again figurative language. The former speaks of having the same inward nature. The latter declares that Christ is in the position of authority and power. This is precisely what Stephen was testifying to when he saw Jesus during his stoning in Acts chapter 7. This is what the right hand represents, even in the use of the phrase today when someone is referred to as a “right-hand man.”

James 2:26

Notice in this passage, which Mormons use in an attempt to prove that God is a physical being, that the words are “the body without the spirit is dead.” However, the LDS are attempting to reverse what this actually says. This axiom can not be turned around and still be true. Many times error creeps into our thinking by inadvertently using the truths of one discipline to try to show the truths in another area of study. For example, in math class we all learned that if A is equal to B then B must also be equal to A. While this is true and it is good mathematics it is not true for good logic. Consider this example: *All humans are mammals*. Surely, that is a true statement; but, the statement can not be reversed and still be true. (*All mammals are humans* is not a true statement.) Likewise, in James 2:26 it is certainly true that the body without the spirit is dead. However, the reverse of this statement (the spirit without

the body is dead) is most certainly not true nor does it necessarily follow from the stated text. This is an example of eisegesis (an interpretation that expresses the interpreter's own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text itself) rather than exegesis (an interpretation that expresses the meaning of the text itself).

Finally, one would have to admit that God would be a very strange being indeed if every description of him were to be taken literally and not as figures of speech. Anthropopatheia (which is the ascribing of human attributes, etc. to God) is employed by the authors of the books of the Bible to express a truth about the God of scripture in a relatable way. For example, in Deuteronomy 4:24 God is referred to as a consuming fire. God is called a fountain of living waters in Jeremiah 2:13 and is said to cover people with his feathers and his wings (Psalm 91:4). Surely the Psalmist is not attempting to imply that God is some sort of bird. In like manner it is quite certain that no one believes that Peter is teaching in 1 Peter 2:4-5 that we worship a God made out of stone and that when we become believers in God that we ourselves are literally transformed into stone too.

While some may want to say that John 4:24 only teaches that God has a Spirit, that is not what this passage says. It is one thing if I tell others that I *have* a transistor radio and quite another if I start to claim that I *am* a transistor radio. In the first case there is no real need for special interest to be paid. However, in the latter case if I truly believed what I was claiming then others would have valid reasons for seriously having deep concern for my mental sanity. Here Jesus does not merely assert that God has a Spirit but that he is Spirit in his very nature. And this declaration is made even more forceful by the deliberate use of the figure of speech known as ellipsis where in this case the being verb is omitted. In the Greek language this omission adds emphasis to the fact that the nature of God is one of spirit.

LDS Contradictions

Further evidence that these passages can not be properly understood as referring to the physical make-up of God in bestowing upon mankind the attribute of image and likeness are the ideas

that flow from LDS teaching itself. First, there is the problem as to why God would say “let us make man in *our* image” [emphasis added] if only God the Father possessed a physical body at the time when these words were uttered. In order to be consistent with LDS teaching wouldn’t God have had to say “let us make man in *my* image” [emphasis added]? The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible identifies the Father as the one who is speaking and the Son as the one being addressed (see JST, Genesis 1:27, 29; 6:9).

How can these passages be understood to be referring to a physical likeness of God when mankind is so diverse in his make-up physically? If the physical likeness is literal then does that include God’s racial identity as well? Joseph Smith apparently related to those around him that he saw God was “a personage in the fire light complexion blue eyes” (*Improvement Era*, April, 1970, p. 12, note 12). There are so many different physical appearances which one should be seen as the true representation of the image of God? In the past, this sort of thinking has given legitimacy to racist dogma.

To further complicate the issue is the fact that Genesis 1:27 tells us “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” and in Genesis 5:2 “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.” So the question which obviously arises is this: if the image of God is both in the male and the female how can the image be related to the physical make-up of the female?

Many may be interested to learn that the Mormon scriptures themselves do not agree with the current LDS Church’s dogma concerning whether God has a body or not. Alma 18:26-28, 22:8-11 and 31:15 in the *Book of Mormon* clearly teaches that God is a God of Spirit.

Finally, listen to what Joseph Smith taught to a class of elders in the LDS Church regarding the nature of God. This was recorded in Section V of the Lectures on Faith as originally published in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*:

The Father being a personage of *spirit*, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness: The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of *tabernacle*, made, or fashioned like unto man, . . . and is called the Son because of the flesh. (paragraph 2, p. 53) [emphasis added]

Test #2

IS THE GODHEAD ONE IN PURPOSE OR IN BODY?

John 10:30; 17:11; 17:20-23 and Acts 7:55-56

Put a mark next to any church which does not teach the Godhead is three distinct personages who are one in purpose.

Christian Response

These passages must be read according to what the text says and not according to what might be inserted into the text by the reader's mind and the grid through which one may want to see the text. The text must be allowed to speak for itself. When a passage of text is understood for what it says then the passage has been properly exegeted; however, when ideas are inserted into the text that are not inherently present in the text then the reader is guilty of eisegeting the text. Inserting the idea of one "in purpose" is not a legitimate handling of these passages for that is simply not what the text itself says.

This concept of God would conflict with easily understood passages such as Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4; 32:39; 2 Samuel 7:22; Psalm 86:10; Isaiah 43:10; 45:22 and 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. Furthermore, all the passages relating to the nature of God must be included in this discussion. If only certain passages are admitted for consideration then an incomplete or faulty understanding of God will inevitably follow. There seems to be an obvious avoidance of looking at the context of passages where Jesus undeniably asserted his oneness with God.

It must also be said that the concepts of one in purpose and one in essence are not mutually exclusive ideas. It is important to note

that the traditional, orthodox understanding of the triune nature of God includes the ideas of perfect harmony, fellowship (communion) and purpose. That is to say that the members of the Godhead are not, nor ever have been or ever will be in opposition to one another. Just because God is one in purpose tells us nothing regarding the composition of his essence.

From the context of passages such as John 10:22-42 it is clear that Jesus was not merely claiming unity of purpose with God. Even the Jews themselves would have claimed this and thus Jesus' words would not have been any cause for special attention, concern or alarm. Jesus, however, was claiming to be God himself. The reaction of his Jewish listeners was swift and plainly evident. It should be noted also that Jesus did not say something like "Wait a minute! You have misunderstood me. I only meant that I am one in purpose with God." No, Jesus stands firm in his declaration and he allows their understanding of that pronouncement to be an accurate reception and interpretation of his words. He boldly says this even while believing and teaching that the greatest commandment includes the idea of strict monotheism as expressed in Mark 12:29-30, "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment."

Acts 7:55-56

The idea that this could refer to the physical body of God and thus the separateness of the persons within the triune Godhead has been addressed in the response to Test #1. In these verses, Stephen rightly sees Jesus as having the authority and position of God and that consequently Jesus is to be counted as God. The Jews listening to Stephen understood this all too well and took action without delay. The persons of the Godhead are, however, one in essence or being. Just because some may wish to argue that the idea of three persons within one being is a difficult concept to come to terms with, this does not make it any less true. How many things exist in this universe which seem to defy complete understanding? For example, science has yet to fully explain whether light is a particle or a wave. Simply because we humans may not fully comprehend something does not automatically deny its truthfulness or its existence.

LDS Contradictions

Even within the framework of Mormonism there is the claim of only one God. The *Book of Mormon* emphatically declares the existence of only one God and yet affirms the plurality of the persons within the singular divine being of God. Examples of this are 2 Nephi 31:21; Alma 11:22, 26-31 and Mosiah 15:4-5. In Mormon scripture, the *Book of Mormon* does not speak alone on this issue for both the *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:28 and the *Pearl of Great Price* in Moses 1:6 agree that there is only one God.

Notes

Test #3

**HOW IS THE TRUE CHURCH
TO BE ORGANIZED?**

Luke 10:1; Acts 1:23-26; 14:23; Ephesians 2:19-21;
Philippians 1:1 and Hebrews 5:1,6,10

Place a mark by any church which does not have apostles, bishops, etc.

Christian Response

All believers are called to be apostles of Christ as messengers of the word of God to the world (see John 13:16). The Greek word *apostolos* which is transliterated into the English language as *apostle* means “messenger” or “sent out ones.” We all are to be sent out as messengers of the gospel in obedience to Christ’s command in Matthew 28:19-20. The New Testament clearly shows that the term apostle can be more flexible than simply an office of narrow official appointment such as the twelve enjoyed (see Luke 10:1-24).

Additionally, there is no record of a leadership position consisting of 70 or 72 members in the life of the early church. Furthermore, this term can not be one of official capacity within the church as the church had not yet been formed at the time of the word’s initial use.

The perpetual office of apostle simply does not exist in the framework of the New Testament or the writings of the early church fathers. This is due to the fact that the apostles were the foundation of the church and one does not continue adding to a foundation indefinitely. Also it is impossible for anyone to meet the qualifications necessary to hold the title of apostle in the narrow sense of the word (see Acts 1:20-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:8-9).

When Paul discusses *apostles* it is typically in the context of the use of gifts which should be used as a way of ministering to others not official titles of leadership in the church. Does the LDS Church rank leadership positions in the same order as given by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth (i.e. 1. apostles, 2. prophets and 3. teachers)?

The word *bishop* (*presbyteros*) which means “overseer” and *elder* (*episcopos*) are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament (see Acts 20:17-28 and Titus 1:5-9). Modern usage of this word would include “pastor,” “minister,” “reverend,” etc.

The term *deacon* in Greek means “one who serves” and comes from Acts 6. The obvious question here is how can a Mormon deacon, at age 12, meet the qualifications for a deacon as set forth in the Bible? For the list of qualifications for both the office of bishop (elder) and deacon see Paul’s first letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 3:1-12) and his letter to Titus (Titus 1:6-9).

The Melchizedek Priesthood and the position of High Priest in the LDS Church are at odds with the teachings of the Bible. First, all of the priests in both the Old and the New Testaments were Aaronic priests. There is no indication that any Israelite (with the exception of Jesus) ever held the Melchizedek Priesthood. According to Hebrews 7:3, 16 only Jesus could meet the qualifications of the Melchizedek Priesthood. This is the basis for the entire argument by the author of Hebrews as to why Jesus’ priesthood is superior to the priests who served in the temple. Furthermore, there was only one High Priest at any given time and this priest had to be an Aaronic priest (Leviticus 21:10; Hebrews 5:1-6). The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that there were approximately 83 High Priests from the time of Aaron to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. Each High Priest was prevented from continuing in his office because of death. But since Jesus lives forever, his priesthood is unchangeable [not transferable to anyone else] (Hebrews 7:23-24). In contrast to all of this, there are countless thousands of High Priests in the LDS Church today.

LDS Contradictions

Even the present day organization within the LDS Church is self-contradictory and contrary to scripture. For example, why are

there more than seventy persons in the capacity of the Quorum of the Seventy? Why are there 15 rather than 12 apostles in the group known as the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles? The LDS Church insists that it must be organized in the exact pattern that Jesus used to build the early church. The Mormons believe that since Jesus had 12 apostles so should they. They also believe Peter, James and John sat in the position of the First Presidency in the early church. However, it must be recognized that Peter, James and John were part of the 12 apostles not in addition to the 12.

Additionally, many offices exist today in the LDS Church that have no support from the Bible. Examples of this are the positions of President, Counselors to the President, Stake Presidents, General Authorities, Quorum Presidents, etc. Furthermore, how many of those currently serving as Apostles within the LDS Church today could honestly state that they have lived up to the mark of a true apostle of God as given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:12?

Even the second president of the Mormon Church Brigham Young said:

When you have got your Bishop, he needs assistants, and he ordains Counsellors [sic.], Priests, Teachers, and Deacons, and calls them to help him; and he wishes men of his own heart and hand to do this. Says he, "I dare not even call a man to be a Deacon, to assist me in my calling, unless he has a family." It is not the business of an ignorant young man, of no experience in family matters, to inquire into the circumstances of families, and know the wants of every person. Some may want medicine and nourishment, and to be looked after, and it is not the business of boys to do this; but select a man who has got a family to be a Deacon, whose wife can go with him, and assist him in administering to the needy in the ward (*Journal of Discourses* 2: 89).

Without a doubt this teaching is no longer heeded within the LDS Church. So the question must be asked was Brigham Young in error when he said this or has the church fallen into error since his day?

Test #4

FROM WHERE DOES THE TRUE CHURCH GET ITS AUTHORITY?

Numbers 27:18-23; John 15:16;
Acts 8:18-20 and Hebrews 5:4

Do any of your churches on your list claim to have direct authority from God? Place your marks by the ones which do not.

Christian Response

The authority of the church comes from the person of Jesus Christ, who is its head (Ephesians 5:23). All believers have the authority given to them by Jesus Christ to go into all the world and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Since Jesus said he would build his church all those who believe in Him are part of his universal and invisible body—the church. The true church is not restricted to one place, time or even the association with a particular person or group. For Paul himself said, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). Paul also goes out of his way to press home his point to believers in the city of Corinth that those claiming to be of one following or another are in effect dividing Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10-17). The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to comfort and guide believers into truth. The Greek word for “church” is *ekklesia* and can be translated as “assembled ones.” The labels attached to these persons neither prove nor disprove a teaching which is in harmony with the Bible. Even in the Bible Jesus predicted that some would come who would make use of his name, yet he would declare that he never had any relationship with them as they claimed to have with him (Matthew 7:21-23).

Test #5

DID REVELATION CEASE UPON CHRIST'S DEATH?

Matthew 16:14-19; Acts 1:1-2;
Galatians 1:11-12 and Hebrews 13:8

Do any of your churches not believe in continuing revelation?
Put a mark by them.

Christian Response

Revelation did not cease upon the death of Christ, but it did cease on the close of the canon of scripture in God's Revelation to the Apostle John (who was the last living disciple/apostle). Paul informed the early church that even if an angel should appear and preach another gospel we should treat that messenger as accursed (Galatians 1:8). Does this sound familiar at all? See Joseph Smith's own testimony regarding his visits with angels and personages of light in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith–History 1:15-20 (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15 esp. v. 14).

Furthermore, in order for additional revelation to be accepted it must first be weighed against the rest of scripture. If it clearly contradicts, or is at odds with anything in the Bible, or if it teaches something which can be tested for validity and found to be untrue, then the revelation must be looked upon as suspect. Additionally, along this same vein, the one claiming to function prophetically must be scrutinized as to whether or not the individual and the prophecies given meet the tests given by God in Chapters 13 and 18 of the book of Deuteronomy and in Jeremiah 28:15-17.

LDS Contradictions

Many of the “prophetic” utterances of the leaders in the LDS Church have been shown to be false. One quick example here,

which Floyd McElveen relates in his book *God's Word, Final, Infallible and Forever*, is from the pen of David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the *Book of Mormon*. Whitmer wrote that Joseph Smith gave his followers instructions that they should go and sell the copyright of the *Book of Mormon* in Toronto, Canada. I will simply include here a passage from David Whitmer's book *An Address to All Believers in Christ* and allow it to speak for itself.

Brother Hyrum said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and sell the copy-right of the *Book of Mormon* for considerable money; and he persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph concluded to do so. He had not yet given up the stone. Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right to the *Book of Mormon*. Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copy-right, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father's house when they returned. I was there also, and am an eyewitness to these facts. Jacob Whitmer and John Whitmer were also present when Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery returned from Canada. Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some of the brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: "*Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.*" So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right was not of God, but was of the devil or of the heart of man. (p. 31)

Also in *Doctrine and Covenants* 114 Joseph Smith gave a false revelation that a man by the name of David W. Patten should "settle up all his business as soon as he possibly can, and make a disposition of his merchandise, that he may perform a mission unto me next spring, in company with others, even twelve including himself, to testify of my name and bear glad tidings unto all the world." The problem with this revelation is that it was given on April 17, 1838. Mr. David W. Patten, however, died in the fall of

1838 and thus could not fulfill this prophecy (see the *History of the Church* Vol. 3, p. 171). Since Joseph Smith failed repeatedly in his ability to function as a legitimate prophet of God, he is to be forever seen as one who speaks presumptuously for the Lord and is in reality a false prophet.

The claim to prophetic power is rendered meaningless if it is not exercised. I, too, could claim to be a prophet but if I fail to give some tangible indications that my words have some basis in fact then my words are empty assertions. The current *Doctrine and Covenants* contains only four revelations by Presidents other than Joseph Smith. The last one was received in 1978.

Notes

Test #6

ARE PROPHETS NECESSARY IN OUR DAY?

Amos 3:7 and Proverbs 29:18

The Lord will not do anything but
He revealeth His secret to His prophets.
How many churches claim prophets?

Christian Response

Prophets who speak to foretell the future are no longer necessary in our day due to the fact that God has fulfilled this need in the prophecies of those such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and the apostle John by telling us what will occur right up to the day of eternity. As a result there is no need for a divine amendment to God's plans.

Is there anyone who can meet God's tests of a prophet as given in Deuteronomy 18:18-22? If a false prophecy were given one would be labeled as a false prophet from then on (see Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Isaiah 9:13-16; Jeremiah 14:13-16 and Ezekiel 13:1-9). More than likely a person in Old Testament times who gave a wrong prophecy or who presumed to speak in the name of the Lord would have been stoned to death immediately.

The word translated "prophecy," "prophet" and "prophecy" in the New Testament all come from the same root word in Greek and often do not mean "to speak of future events" but simply "to preach or proclaim publicly." This gift of the Holy Spirit to speak publicly is certainly a wonderful blessing for the edification of the body of Christ, which is the church.

LDS Contradictions

Prophetic acts seem to be markedly absent from the leadership of the LDS Church today. It is no good to claim to have the capacity and even the current day need for a prophet of God and then not have an active demonstration of this principle. As an example, the Church could have met this need during the excitement and anxiety leading up to the arrival of the year 2000. There was real concern felt by many that major disruptions might occur in society due to the inability of computer systems around the world to accurately make the shift beyond the year 1999. During this time the prophet of the LDS Church said that there was no real need for concern but people should prepare themselves in case something did go wrong. What a lack of prophetic leadership! Had he been able to exercise real prophetic gifts he could have either declared that God had specifically told him that there was nothing to worry about or that a major upset was upon us. In any event he remained decidedly quiet and vague right when many people were looking to him for guidance.

In like manner, when he has been repeatedly questioned by the press about his revelations he steers the conversation away from the topic and seems uncomfortable discussing his “ability” to speak with God. This was seen in his interview in *The New Yorker* magazine dated January 21, 2002:

Mormons are taught to pray for a “testimony” whenever they encounter doubts about the truth of their religion, and they look for guidance to their president, whom they also call a “prophet,” “seer,” and “revelator,” because he is assumed to be in direct communication with God. “We believe in the principle of continuous revelation,” Hinckley told me. “To me, it’s so perfectly clear and understandable that God who revealed himself in the comparatively simple days of the Old West would not fail to reveal himself in the very complex times in which we now live.”

When I asked him to describe his own revelations, Hinckley demurred. “They’re very sacred to me. They’re the kind of things you don’t want to put before the world,” he said. (page 48)

It seems more than just a little out of character for a prophet of God to not wish to be able to tell the world about what God has to say.

Finally, how does the Mormon claim differ in any substantial way from the way in which any Christian can claim to be led by God? Listen to Hinckley's response regarding how God "revealeth His secrets to His prophets" in an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle on April 13, 1997.

Q: What do you see as some of the differences between Mormon theology and other Christian theologies?

A: . . . Modern revelation. We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, we believe he has yet to reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. So, we believe in the principle of continuous revelations.

Q: You are the president, prophet, seer and revelator of the Mormon Church?

A: I am so sustained, yes. (Laughter) . . .

Q: And this belief in contemporary revelation and prophecy? As the prophet, tell us how that works. How do you receive divine revelation? What does it feel like?

A: Let me say first that we have a great body of revelation, the vast majority of which came from the prophet Joseph Smith. We don't need much revelation. We need to pay more attention to the revelation we've already received.

Now, if a problem should arise on which we don't have an answer, we pray about it, we may fast about it, and it comes. Quietly. *Usually no voice of any kind, but just a perception in the mind.* I liken it to Elijah's experience. When he sought the Lord, there was a great wind, and the Lord was not in the wind. And there was an earthquake, and the Lord was not in the earthquake. And a fire, and the Lord was not in the fire. But in a still, small voice. Now that's the way it works. [emphasis added]

Notes

Test #7
SHOULD WE PAY OUR
MINISTERS?

John 10:11-13; Acts 20:33-34; 1 Corinthians 9:18

Put a mark by those churches which pay their ministers.

Christian Response

The Bible makes it clear that Christians should be willing to pay ministers as needed for them to continue to be able to serve the needs of the church. Jesus himself made the argument to the Pharisees that even the Levites took a portion of the offering to the Lord for their own use and they were justified in so doing since God himself has made provision for them in this matter in the Law (Mark 3:23-26). In the passage of John 10:11-13 Jesus states the “hireling” does not love the sheep but serves out of selfish desires to gain wealth. But Jesus did not condemn the legitimate support of those serving the Lord. The church should pay those who do the Lord’s work—not for the greed of those individuals but for legitimate needs. Paul personally made this argument also in his letter to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 9:3-18 and 2 Corinthians 11:7-12).

In both Acts 20:33-34 and 1 Corinthians 9:18 Paul showed those to whom he had taken the gospel that he was not out to take advantage of them. He also made the point that he chose to not ask for support from them so that he would not be in a position of owing anyone anything. By turning back to 1 Corinthians 9 it can be clearly seen in verses 7-14 that Paul taught that those who do God’s work are justified in taking what they need from the church to live on. Notice here I said what they need—*not* what they want. As the basis for this claim, Paul (like Jesus) used the example of the Levitical priests who would take what they needed from the people’s offerings made at the temple. Finally, Paul repeats this

instruction to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 that those who “rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward.” Paul is quoting here from Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7.

LDS Contradictions

The LDS Church is less than forthright today when it claims that it is against paying those who are in the full-time service of the Church. There are many paid positions in the LDS Church today including the President of the Church, his counselors, apostles and seventies. The Church’s refusal to disclose this is understandable for if they were to do so it would reveal their hypocrisy. The Church will only say that they allow for a “modest living allowance” whatever that amounts to since they decline to make that information available to the public (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 2, p. 510). Furthermore, it is readily evident that throughout its history the Church has supported various persons financially who are engaged in the service of the Church. There are many instances in the *Doctrine and Covenants* where individuals received support (financial, material, etc.) from the Church (sec. 31:5; 51:14; 75:24 and 90:28-30).

Today, not all missionaries pay their own expenses. The LDS Church has a general missions fund for those unable to raise their own support. How is this practice different from the support Christians give to those who serve full time?

Notes

Test #8

DOES THE BIBLE ASK US TO PAY TITHING?

Genesis 28:20-22 and Malachi 3:8-10

How many churches ask for a
tithe (10%) of their members' income?
Place a mark by those which do not.

Christian Response

The Bible never commands Christians to pay the tithing that God required of the nation of Israel. When commands and promises are given in scripture care must be taken that the reader is to be included in the group to whom the command or promise is given. Otherwise, Christians could inadvertently end up claiming promises that were never intended for them; and they could end up committing acts under the umbrella of “the command of God” that in reality are not commands at all from God for believers today.

Christians are not to give only a required part of themselves to God but all of what they are able to give “as he purposeth in his heart . . . not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” Christians are to give with a cheerful, generous spirit all the while remembering that verse six states that “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Believers need to ask themselves if they desire to receive only a fixed 10% of the Lord’s blessings or do they instead desire God to give to them generously from his bounty. Christians are taught by Jesus himself to give all that they can and rely on God to meet their needs (Luke 21:1-4). Furthermore, followers of Christ should not continually try to find ways or reasons to justify themselves

in God's sight (Luke 18:9-14) but should give according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit keeping 2 Corinthians 9:7 in mind as they are giving.

It is also interesting to note that Jesus is recorded mentioning the paying of tithes only three times in the New Testament. In two of these occurrences it is with a negative connotation. This is a remarkable fact in light of the centrality of the tithe under the Law. However, Jesus should not be seen here as contradicting the requirements of the Law, but rather he is elevating our relationship to go beyond the letter of the Law to the spirit of the Law. This is a much more demanding task than merely upholding the strictest interpretation of the Law.

If a person decides that a tithe is to be given then that gift to the Lord is a pleasing and wholly acceptable act of worship. For many people who are not accustomed to worshiping God through regular giving, the tithe is a reasonable amount to develop the habit of giving to God. This also allows for continued growth and maturity in their understanding that all that we have is from the hand of God and we are called to exercise wise stewardship of that which God has entrusted to us (Matthew 25:14-30).

Notes

Test #9

DOES THE BIBLE TELL US WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL OF HOW WE TAKE CARE OF OUR BODIES?

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

How many churches teach abstinence from body defiling products?

Christian Response

Christians should exercise care when it comes to our bodies. God informs us that as believers we are the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells or takes up his permanent residence (1 Corinthians 6:19). Nonetheless, Jesus himself taught that it is not that which goes into a person's mouth that makes one unclean but rather what comes out of the heart through the mouth (Matthew 15:1-20). Read also in Romans 14:1-23 to see that this is an area of Christian liberty. The drinking of wine, for example, may be wrong for one and not for another. However, this does not give either side the prerogative to pass judgment against one another.

Jesus himself drank wine (by his own admission) to the point of wrongly being accused of being a wine bibber (Matthew 11:18-19); he offered and consumed wine at the Last Supper with his disciples in the upper room and prophesied that he would not drink of the cup until he comes again. This of course implies that when Jesus returns he will again drink of the cup. Jesus changed water into wine at a marriage feast not because there was never any wine available but because the supply had been exhausted. Why would Jesus do this for a crowd who had obviously had too much to drink already as

the master of the banquet's remark suggests? Would Jesus really give an inherently defiling item for people to use? Jesus' own words are that it is not what enters a man that defiles but rather that which comes from within (Matthew 15:11).

Finally, Paul commands Timothy to stop drinking only water and to drink some wine for the sake of his stomach (1 Timothy 5:23). How could he propose such a course of action if the consumption of wine were inherently evil? The Bible makes it abundantly clear that the use of wine is not wrong but the excessive partaking of it is. For it is then that a person is being controlled by the drink and not controlling it. Paul admonishes the church to care for the body by exercising control over it rather than allowing the body to be the controlling force in their lives (Romans 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 9:27).

It is important the Mormons know Christian churches teach that since our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and he takes up his permanent residence within us we have a responsibility to care for the body. For we are no longer our own but we have been bought by God at a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The LDS faith does not corner the market in this teaching.

LDS Contradictions

In the *Doctrine and Covenants* (Sec. 89) there are several things taught that the Church does not adhere to. First is the fact that the prohibition is against hot drinks. This section does not specifically name caffeine as the thing to be avoided. The early Mormons understood this prohibition to be much broader than is admitted today. The early Mormon apostle George Q. Cannon said:

We have heard considerable of late, especially since twelve months to-day, on the subject of the Word of Wisdom. Almost every elder who has spoken from this stand has felt the necessity and importance of calling the attention of the people to this subject. We are told, and very plainly too, that hot drinks—tea, coffee, *chocolate*, *cocoa* and all drinks of this kind are not good for man. We are also told that alcoholic drinks are not good, and that tobacco when either smoked or chewed is an evil. We are told that *swine's flesh* is not good, and that we should dispense with it; and we are

told that flesh of any kind is not suitable to man [during?] the summer time, and ought to be eaten sparingly in the winter. . . . We must prevent the use by them of every article that is hurtful or noxious in its nature. We must not permit them to drink liquor or hot drinks, or *hot soups* or to use tobacco or other articles that are injurious. [emphasis added] (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 12, pp. 222-223)

The second major point to notice is that the revelation in section 89 instructs for the sparing use of meats except for during “winter, or of cold, or famine.” The Word of Wisdom ironically also allows for “mild” barley drink. The plain understanding of a barley drink would logically include beers, ales, and the like.

Also it should be noted that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and even the LDS Church itself were guilty of inconsistency regarding the Word of Wisdom.

The *History of the Church* states that Joseph Smith consumed alcoholic drinks after the Word of Wisdom was given (Vol. 7, p. 101). Joseph Smith also is recorded as riding through the streets of Nauvoo smoking a cigar. (*Joseph Smith as an Administrator*, M.A. Thesis, BYU, May 1969, p. 161)

Brigham Young admitted using tobacco for years (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 12, p. 404). He counselled others that there is nothing wrong “if a person is weary, worn out, cast down, fainting, or dying, a brandy sling, a little wine, or a cup of tea is good to revive them. Do not throw these things away, and say they must never be used; they are good and to be used with judgment, prudence, and discretion.” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 12, p. 403)

Furthermore, both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young excused themselves by making special allowances to create alcoholic drinks (*History of the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 111 and *Lights on Mormonism* by Josiah Gibbs, pp. 248-249).

Under Brigham’s direction Mormons cultivated highly successful vineyards in Southern Utah and used the wine produced from this as tithing payments. Nels Anderson wrote in *Desert Saints*:

Thus the church found itself the CHIEF single producers of wine in the Dixie area . . . Dixie brethren did not follow Brother Brigham’s counsel. They drank so much of the wine that by 1890

drunkenness was a worry to the church leaders. The tithing office discontinued accepting wine for tithes and abandoned its own presses. . . .

From the moral angle, church leaders were forced to recognize that their people could not be makers of liquor without being drinkers of it, too. There were too many drinkers of wine and too few moderate drinkers among them. (pp. 373-374 and 435-436)

The LDS Church itself sold alcoholic drinks, tea, coffee and tobacco products in their Church owned Z.C.M.I. store and even admitted that they prospered heavily in the sale of these products (see *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 16, p. 238).

Incidentally, in the LDS Church's observance of sacrament, water is used today instead of wine. This is in clear contradiction to and in violation of the command given in *Doctrine and Covenants* 89:6 which says, "And, behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make."

Notes

Test #10

**IS FAITH THE ONLY
SAVING PRINCIPLE?**

John 3:5; Acts 2:37-38; Hebrews 11:6 and James 2:26

Mark churches not believing in Faith, Works, Repentance,
Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Spirit as saving principles.

Christian Response

Faith is the only saving principle. Hebrews chapter 11 in its full context clearly shows that all of the people listed here were justified by God and called righteous by their faith before they ever did anything in obedience to God. Obedience only affirms to men what God already knows about the heart. The best example of this, found both in the book of Hebrews and in the book of James, is Abraham who was counted as (declared) righteous by God about 40 years prior to his offering Isaac as a sacrifice. Isaac would not even have been born at the time God called him (Abraham) righteous. Abraham's obedience did not make Abraham righteous but rather only confirmed (or was the natural fruit of) his being righteous. Refer also to Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4; John 1:14; John 3:16; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:1-14; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:3-9; 1 Corinthians 3:10-16 and Hebrews 11 to see that salvation is presented within scripture as a gift and is not achieved by human effort.

LDS Contradictions

The primary source from within Mormonism that disputes current church teaching about salvation comes from the *Book of*

Mormon itself. Since Joseph Smith had not yet fully developed his theology into its later expression, the *Book of Mormon* ends up reflecting a message that is much closer to the teaching of historic Christianity. Here is a list of some of the major places where the *Book of Mormon* parallels the traditional understanding of salvation. 2 Nephi 10:24; 25:13; 33:12; Mosiah 4:8; 16:13, 15; 25:22; 27:24; Alma 38:9; and Helaman 5:9; 13:6 and 14:8.

Notes

Test #11

HOW SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

Matthew 3:16-17; John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39 and Romans 6:4-5

Can a church which baptizes by sprinkling water on a person's head pass this test? Must one be immersed in water?

Christian Response

Baptism, which is a transliteration from the Greek word *Baptizo*, means both “to submerge” or “to immerse” (Luke 16:24) and also “to introduce into a new environment so as to permanently alter the thing being immersed” (Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:17).

I would personally agree that immersion in water best illustrates outwardly the identification of the believer with Christ. We have died to our old selves, are buried with Him and then are raised as a new creation with a new life in Christ. As can be easily seen, both of the original meanings of the word *baptize* are present in the Christian New Testament usage of this word (see Romans 6:3-4 and 2 Corinthians 5:17).

However, having just said this, the earliest extant artwork which depicts the baptism of the Lord Jesus (dated from c. 300 A.D.) shows John the Baptist using a shell to pour water over the head of Jesus. The accounts in the gospels do not exclude this possibility. The method of baptism must not get in the way of uniting the universal body of Christ. Baptism is merely an act of obedience to God that flows as a response of gratitude for what God did in saving us and as a means to publicly declare our identification as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and his body the church. Baptism itself does not contribute anything to the justification of the believer (see 1 Corinthians 1:16-17).

This is similar to the practice of the Lord's Supper in the life of the church. Some may use various kinds of bread and wine (or grape juice) but the elements here do not make one justified in the sight of the Lord. Rather it is the faith of the person taking these elements which has value. The elements themselves are powerless to bring righteousness into a person's life. On the contrary, if the person has not examined his or her own life according to Paul's admonition, then the taking of these elements can result in judgment—not benefit (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). So it is evident it is the faith of the one participating that is crucial.

LDS Contradictions

One must wonder why the need exists at all within the LDS framework for the baptism of those in their church on their 8th birthday. According to Mormon teaching anyone younger than age eight is below the age of accountability. In the LDS Church baptism is seen as the means by which the remission of sins occurs. So the question must be asked, what is the reason for baptizing an 8 year old since no guilt of sin exists due to the belief that they were under the age of accountability?

The *Book of Mormon* itself speaks out on this topic. It states quite forcefully that children who are not yet accountable for their personal sins have absolutely no need of baptism and to do otherwise would be a mockery before God (Moroni 8:5-23).

If baptism effects the remission of sins, why was Jesus baptized? Is the Church contending that Jesus had sins of his own that needed to be remitted? If Jesus had his own sins to deal with then logically he would be ineligible to pay the price for anyone else's sins on the cross. As a result this position would render the death of Jesus a cruel act that yielded no benefit for the world as the scriptures claim.

Notes

Test #12

**HOW DOES ONE RECEIVE
THE HOLY GHOST?**

Acts 8:17

Does every church believe in the laying on of hands?
Check those which do not.

Christian Response

The Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit—which are synonyms in the Greek New Testament) is given as a gift at the moment of believing in Christ and his finished work on the cross for salvation and as a seal, guaranteeing the ultimate salvation of the believer. Examples of this include the multitude that were saved in Acts chapter two on the day of Pentecost and who gave evidence of his indwelling presence through the manifestation of the gift of tongues (Acts 2:38). Nothing in this passage indicates that the disciples needed to lay hands on each of these people in order that they might receive the Holy Ghost. It is by faith after hearing the word of God and consequently placing trust in Jesus as Savior that the Holy Spirit is received (Acts 2:38; 10:44-48).

The laying on of hands as seen in the New Testament is for one of the following purposes. The church may publicly grant authority or ministry responsibilities to those within the church (2 Timothy 1:6). Second, the church may also need to publicly declare another individual within the church to be under the care of God and not mankind alone (James 5:14). Finally, the church may wish to make a public statement that the ones receiving the laying on of hands recognize and are in submission to the legitimate authority of the church, its leadership and its teaching. This is precisely what the Samaritan believers needed to do in Acts 8:17.

Paul himself wrote that anyone who does not have the Spirit is not a part of the true body of believers (Romans 8:9). Paul asks the believers in the city of Galatia the following questions:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? *If it be* yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:2-5)

Obviously the answers are self-evident; the believers, of course, received the Spirit by faith. Only later were they trying to fulfill the requirements of the Law to obtain the goal of righteousness.

LDS Contradictions

In both the *Book of Mormon* and the Book of Moses, from the *Pearl of Great Price*, there is the teaching that the Holy Ghost is received by being baptized. While this is not technically accurate from a Christian viewpoint, it does not align with the current position of the LDS Church or the test under consideration here. In the *Book of Mormon* the passages to refer to are: 3 Nephi 26:17; 27:20; 28:18 and 4 Nephi 1:1. Moses 6:52 is a passage from the *Pearl of Great Price* which gives information concerning the reception of the Holy Ghost and yet makes no mention of the need for the laying on of hands.

Notes

Test #13

CAN ONE BE HEALED BY FAITH AND LAYING ON OF HANDS?

James 5:14-15

How many churches practice this great and sacred principle?

Christian Response

Believers can be healed by faith and the laying on of hands. Nonetheless, Christians should be suspicious of anyone who claims to have this ability without any verifiable proof. Even if a healing occurs the praise and glory should be directed to God and not the person performing the act or the process of the laying on of hands itself. There is no magical result which comes about simply by performing the act; it is merely God in his mercy answering a prayer offered in faith. Just because Christians may perform this act, God is not then under any compulsion to answer in the affirmative.

Incidentally, the word for “oil” used here in James chapter 5 is not *chrío*, the oil used for the ceremonial uses such as anointing of kings, priests, etc. Rather this word is *aleipho*, the oil which was a medicine in the ancient world. Therefore, God is allowing for the judicious use of medicines alongside prayers offered in faith for the combating of illnesses.

It is important to recognize the truth declared in verses 15 and 16 where James says that it is the prayer of faith that will save the sick and that the Lord will raise him up. There is an interesting and noteworthy absence of crediting the laying on of hands or the anointing with oil for the healing and restoration of the sick. This is especially important to grasp in light of the fact that both the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil were mentioned only one verse before in verse 14.

Test #14

WHO WILL BE RESURRECTED?

Luke 18:29-30 and I Corinthians 15:22

Place a mark by those churches who do not believe all will be resurrected.

Christian Response

In both Luke 18:29-30 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 the promise is given that those who are followers of Christ will be raised from the dead to eternal life. The immediate context of Luke 18:29-30 speaks of the rewards given for faithful service and devotion to God above all else. All humanity will be raised from the dead for the purpose of the judgment—not to automatically possess eternal life (see Revelation 20:5-15). After the judgment—and based on this judgment—all persons will either go to heaven or to hell. In both of these instances the place to which a person is sent is permanent, real and a corporeal experience. This is seen through Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31.

Notes

Test #15

**WILL RESURRECTED BEINGS
HAVE A BODY?**

Luke 24:36-39 and Philippians 3:20-21

Place a mark by those on your list which do not believe
we will have a body after the resurrection.

Christian Response

All people will have bodies for eternity. Those who suffer endless torment in hell will experience not only emotional, psychological and spiritual loss and suffering but they will experience hell physically as well. This is abundantly clear from the many occasions on which Jesus Christ taught on the topic of hell and eternity. Incidentally, Jesus taught far more frequently on the topic of hell than he ever did heaven. For believers, the body which they will gain will be glorified and markedly different from the body which they had before the resurrection. The limitations of this body will be gone. For additional information on this please read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

Notes

Test #16
ARE OUR WORKS HERE ON
EARTH IMPORTANT?

Revelation 20:12-13

Which churches believe we do not need to be concerned about our works if we only have faith or believe in Christ?

Christian Response

Works here on earth are very important for each believer. Good works bring glory to God and not to ourselves (see 1 Corinthians 10:31). They also serve as a verification that our faith is not merely professed but is rather possessed (James 2); and finally are the basis on which God bestows rewards to us for services given to God (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). If we have nothing in the way of good works that God determines to be of lasting worth, all our works are burned up and yet we still enter into heaven albeit by the skin of our teeth (1 Corinthians 3:15). Christians must understand that to enter eternity in such a position will certainly carry with it the remorseful reality of having suffered a loss which is all too real. Therefore, Christians should naturally be compelled to do that in life which pleases God. How could Christians desire to do anything less than do works which are good—not to deserve God’s favor but rather out of the natural overflow of a heart filled with gratitude for the matchless gift given to us in Jesus?

The above italicized question within this test reveals the misunderstanding of the historic Christian position by the LDS Church. The Christian church has always taught the importance of good works but not as a means for right standing with God. Rather the church has always taught that our good works come as a reflection of the right standing that we already have with God. The question may be asked why it is that works would be of any

importance at all. There are many possible reasons for holding good works in high regard as a Christian. Here are just a few of the more prominent ones that Christians have always held forth.

First, the Christian considers good works to be of the utmost of importance to truly demonstrate the gratitude and thankfulness for so great a salvation that God has given to us in the offering up of his son, Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1).

Second, the good works that a believer performs are a wonderful way in which the reality of our faith can be made manifest to those around us and who might otherwise have no means by which to judge the reality of our profession of faith in God (James 2:14-26).

Another reason for the importance of our works is that we are then fulfilling our God-given purpose on earth. According to Ephesians 2:10, God has prepared good works in advance for us to do. Christians have always believed that salvation is not just something which is for our own good but rather that God gives each of us the privilege of being used by him to draw others to him. That is why God does not immediately take us to heaven to be with him upon our acceptance of his paying the price for our salvation. Some wonderful examples of God giving this opportunity to bring others to a knowledge of God's gift of salvation are found in Mark 5:19 and John 13:34-35.

A final reason to hold good works as important is that our works have the potential to glorify God and not ourselves. This is no small matter. True Christians have always understood that the works we do are not for our own trophy shelf in life as a way of saying "Look at what a wonderful person I am and how much God must be pleased with me" (Luke 18:9-14). Instead, Christians have desired to glorify God and to show the world the transforming power that he gives in the capacity to do good works that will not benefit ourselves but rather others around us. Christians take Christ's admonition seriously when he said ". . . Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45).

Test #17

ARE THERE DIFFERENT DEGREES OF GLORY FOR THE RESURRECTED BEING?

I Corinthians 15:40-42

How many churches do not believe in differing degrees of glory?

Christian Response

The Bible clearly teaches that only two destinations await mankind. Heaven, which is dwelling without end in the presence and fellowship of God (eternal life) or hell, which is an existence forever separated from God's presence and fellowship (eternal death). Christ's own teaching in Matthew 25:31-46 makes it abundantly clear that only heaven (paradise) or hell (torment) await each person. The silence of scripture and the testimony of history demonstrate that Christianity (and Judaism from which it sprang) never held to the idea of multiple levels of glory in heaven.

The three heavens of scripture that some have misunderstood to be levels of heaven are as follows: the heavens of the atmosphere where birds fly and clouds move (Genesis 8:2), the heavens of the universe (outer space) where the stars, planets, galaxies, etc. exist (Isaiah 13:10), and the heaven of the dwelling place of God and his heavenly hosts (1 Kings 8:43).

Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 15:40-42 does not even list three kinds of glorious bodies mentioned in the text but rather two kinds. While the words *celestial* and *terrestrial* are words that mean "of the heavens" and "of the earth" respectively, the word *testial* is a word Joseph Smith made up and possesses no meaning outside the teachings of Mormonism.

LDS Contradictions

Even the *Book of Mormon* agrees with the message of the Bible that only two possible destinations await all of humanity (2 Nephi 2:27; 10:23; Mosiah 16:11; Alma 40:12-14, 17). One may either go to the very presence of God himself for all eternity (eternal life—a quality of existence not just a length) or one may go to hell which is without end (eternal death—a permanent separation from the presence of God—again both quality and quantity are parts of the total meaning of the term). The absolute silence of the *Book of Mormon* regarding heaven having three divisions of celestial, terrestrial and telestial levels is deafeningly noticeable, and it stands in stark contrast to later teachings from the Church. This is especially noteworthy when the *Book of Mormon* is claimed to be far more complete than the Bible and that it contains the fulness of the Gospel. The *Book of Mormon*, which represents Joseph Smith's early period of thinking, reflects a much more traditional Christian position. Many of the teachings that the LDS Church now embraces cannot be found within the pages of the *Book of Mormon*. For example, it does not teach three levels of heaven, eternal progression, the idea that God was once a man who has progressed to his present glory, temple marriage and a whole host of other doctrines as well.

The current position of the LDS Church teaches that virtually all of humanity will go to one of three possible heavens. Hell is seen only as a temporary place for people to pay for their evil: they will eventually progress to one of the heavens, (usually understood to be the lowest of the heavens—namely the telestial). This thinking is very similar in nature to the Roman Catholic concept of purgatory and is without any basis whatsoever from the Biblical record.

Notes

Test #18

**DID YOUR SPIRIT LIVE
BEFORE YOU WERE BORN?**

Ecclesiastes 12:7; Jeremiah 1:4-5 and Hebrews 12:9

Place your marks by those churches which believe we had no pre-existence.

Christian Response

The spirit never existed prior to the body. In Genesis 2:7 it says “. . . and man became a living soul.” How can you become something you already are according to LDS teaching? Furthermore, Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 that the physical being exists before the spiritual being does.

In Jeremiah 1:4-5 the prophet is speaking of God’s foreknowledge, not that we existed and had any kind of relationship with Him. In the same way, Psalm 139:2-4 records God’s foreknowledge. This should not be twisted to mean God is personally responsible for or is the author of all the words that might be spoken or the thoughts that might be entertained—including the evil ones.

The verse cited from Hebrews 12:9 speaks to the fact that God is the Father of our spirits but it can not be made to answer *when* that happens. Passages such as John 1:14 and Ephesians 1:5 must be referenced in order to see that it is at the moment of belief that God accepts us and adopts us as his sons. Consequently, we become his children as we experience the second birth that Jesus spoke of in John 3.

Ironically, if the statement in Jeremiah 1:4-5 “before I formed thee . . . I knew thee” must be understood as proof of the pre-existence then wouldn’t Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:23 “And then

I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” teach that there are people of whom God is not aware. Clearly, this would be absurd.

LDS Contradictions

Again it must be asked where is the support for the pre-existence in the *Book of Mormon*? It should be noted here that this teaching stems from the Book of Abraham—a work which purports to be a “translation” by Joseph Smith but that is absolutely baseless. In 1835, Joseph Smith purchased Egyptian papyri and claimed they were the writings of the biblical patriarch Abraham. Although no one could challenge Joseph’s claims at that time, Egyptologists today know that the papyri have nothing whatsoever to do with Abraham but are in fact a common Egyptian funerary text called *The Book of Breathings*. Further information on this topic is available in the book *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus* by Charles Larson and a video entitled *The Lost Book of Abraham*.

Notes

Test #19

WILL YOU GO TO A SPIRIT WORLD AFTER YOU DIE?

Luke 23:43 and 1 Peter 3:18-19

Place your marks. How many churches have
several marks against them already?

Christian Response

The scriptures make it more than clear that we have an existence after we die and before the final resurrection. Christians would agree that both of the above passages given here (Luke 23:43 and 1 Peter 3:18-19) show very plainly that there is spiritual existence after death. The best and clearest example of this is in Luke 23:43 where Jesus personally promises the thief next to him on the cross that he will be with Jesus in paradise that very same day.

Another strong passage would be Philippians 1:21-23. In Philippians, Paul explains that for him “to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . for I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is better by far.” Paul could only have said such a thing if there truly is a continued existence between death and the final resurrection as he taught in 1 Corinthians 15. The possibilities for that existence would be only the Biblical alternatives of heaven and hell as previously discussed under Test #17.

The apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that the resurrected body, although radically transformed, will still be a body. In addition to this the Lord Jesus presented himself repeatedly to his disciples after his resurrection allowing them to touch him, eat with him and thus know by direct experience that his body was physical and that he was not just an apparition—a creation of the mind or a phantom being—but that he truly possessed a body of flesh and bones.

Test #20

**WHAT ABOUT
“PROXY” BAPTISM FOR THOSE
WHO HAVE DIED?**

1 Corinthians 15:29

Could that scripture be more plain? There is probably only one church
which will not receive a mark on this test.

Christian Response

Using this one passage of scripture as the only evidence that the church practiced the ordinance of baptism for the dead in the years immediately following Christ’s death and resurrection is questionable at best. Paul is merely arguing the point to his readers that the dead will in fact be raised. It is significant that Paul uses the third person plural pronoun “they” and not the first or even the second person singulars or plurals (“I”, “we” or even “you”). The significance of Paul’s choice in using the third person plural pronoun here cannot be overstated. This use of the pronoun which excludes both Paul and his readers in Corinth from those who participate in this rite shows that Paul was referring to the heathen Greeks and not to the believers in Christ to whom he was writing. The LDS view would also contradict Luke 16:19-31 and Hebrews 9:27.

Furthermore, there is no positive mention of baptism for the dead being performed or even the need for its observance from Jesus, the apostles or any early church father. Also, there is no mention from any of the critics or opponents of Christianity. All of this testifies decidedly against the argument that this was or should have been a practice of the early church. This would be unthinkable if in fact this doctrine should form a central part of the practice of the church. Once again the LDS Church is guilty of attempting to

construct an elaborate and detailed doctrine from a single oblique passage of scripture. Building such a superstructure from this one passage is absolutely without legitimate justification and shows just how far away from the clearly proclaimed truths of scripture they have wandered.

LDS Contradictions

When confronted with the evidence that the choice of the pronoun that the apostle Paul used here creates an impossibility for support for their position Mormons will often resort to the tactic that says that many plain and precious things have been taken out from the Bible or it may not have been translated correctly. If that approach is temporarily allowed then it becomes a self-defeating argument. For if the text may not be trustworthy in its translation, or if things are missing, then the text cannot be used by anyone to support any given point of view. Therefore, Mormons would not be able to appeal to this passage to justify baptism for the dead. The lack of certainty of the correct wording and thus the meaning of the text is a knife that cuts both ways. Additionally, if there were a problem with this one particular passage with something being either changed or omitted then why is it that Joseph Smith did not make the needed corrections when he gave his “inspired translation” of the Bible? And why is it that the LDS Church does not use of Joseph Smith’s translation? Instead, they merely insert portions of it in an appendix at the back of the Bible that they publish.

Notes

Test #21

CAN YOU BE MARRIED TO YOUR MATE FOREVER?

1 Corinthians 11:11 and 1 Peter 3:7

Would a loving God separate families? Place your marks.

Christian Response

The two passages given in the above test do not speak of eternal marriage but rather that there is to be unity in the body of Christ. These verses teach that while men and women may have different roles to fulfill there is no difference as to their worth in the sight of God through Christ (Galatians 3:28). Additionally, both men and women enjoy salvation by equal means—that God does not view men as being worth more than women. Thus he does not create different rules by which each may partake of salvation or that the benefits extended to men are greater than for women.

The parallel passages of Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27 and Luke 20:27-40 all show that when Christ was confronted by the Sadducees, who did not even believe in a resurrection, he stated that there will be no marriage in heaven. If the complexities of LDS celestial marriage existed at that time one might rightly expect any number of possible responses from Jesus. However, what Jesus did *not* say here is as telling as what he did say. Jesus did not ask any questions regarding the persons involved. He did not ask whether they belonged to the true Church, if they had a temple recommend, etc. Additionally, Jesus did not inquire about the marriage act itself. He never asked if any or all of the marriages were for time only or whether they were sealed in the temple and were thus married for time and eternity. Jesus did not ask if any sealing cancellations had

been granted during the course of this hypothetical situation. The reason is obvious; temples were not used for marriages (There is no evidence that suggests the Jewish people ever used the temple for any marriage ceremony). The idea of eternal marriage in heaven (i.e., a “temple marriage”) and a subsequent progression to Godhood did not exist. If the temple were used for such things as this one could reasonably expect to find some mention of this from contemporary Jewish writers, Roman authorities, Greek philosophers, or even from the extensive body of writings that come from the early church fathers—some of whom had grown up with a Jewish heritage of their own.

The marriage that will occur symbolically is between Christ and his bride (the church) in the final days according to the apostle John’s account in the book of Revelation 19:7-9. Believers will become part of one family of God for eternity.

LDS Contradictions

Of course this afterlife construction raises a litany of unanswerable problems for the LDS Church. If families are to be together forever then how can each temple-sealed couple also go off to create their own heavens and earth? Consequently, they won’t all be together. Or if they can do this wouldn’t that mean that God also leaves this world alone from time to time and goes off to visit his family on other worlds? (This sounds very much like the taunting that Elijah laid on the priests of Baal when they were calling their god to answer their prayers in 1 Kings 18:27.) And if this is so wouldn’t Jesus be off in another universe now rather than staying with his father, etc., etc.?

How does the LDS position of God requiring the separation of family members who reject LDS teachings fit in with the claim that a loving God will not separate families? Finally, how does it differ from the orthodox view that God doesn’t separate anyone from eternal fellowship with him but each person chooses to remain separated from God as the offer of salvation is rejected?

Test #22

WHERE WILL THE TRUE CHURCH BE ESTABLISHED IN THESE LATTER DAYS?

Isaiah 2:2

How many churches have headquarters in the mountains?

Christian Response

This passage in Isaiah 2:2 is referring to Mount Zion in the eastern part of the city of Jerusalem itself when it says the "... mountain of the Lord's house..." An almost identical passage can be found in the writings of a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah in the book of Micah. Micah says in 4:1-3, "But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

LDS Contradictions

First it must be noted here that the Salt Lake City temple is not *on/in* the mountains but is *by* the mountains. This is a distinction that God would not miss carelessly and thereby allow his word to be vulnerable to such charges. Furthermore, the temple in Salt

Lake City is not built above the hills but rather is situated at the base of them. Consequently, the Salt Lake temple cannot be the temple being spoken of here in either Isaiah or Micah. God does not leave himself open to such charges of careless error. There is no reason to believe that Isaiah was referring to anything other than the historic Mount Zion on which Jerusalem is built. If the LDS view is accepted then what meaning would the listeners of Isaiah and Micah have had for these words?

Even if this position were momentarily accepted as being true, would this then mean that the LDS Church was not a true church in the eyes of God until it moved finally to Utah? Until this time were they also an abomination to God? Surely no one can consider Ohio, Illinois, or even Missouri to qualify as the mountain headquarters of the true Church.

As a side note here it should be mentioned that the LDS Church was not “established” in the mountains but in the flat lands of western New York. And how does all of this fit with the LDS Church’s predictions that Jesus will return to set up his kingdom on earth in Missouri and not in Utah where the LDS Church has its headquarters? If this reference should refer to the end times when all nations will stream to the mountain of the Lord, why would they stream to Missouri? Especially when the portion of Missouri under consideration is not located in what any reasonable person would see as mountainous. The use of this passage is merely an attempt to gain legitimacy for the Church by tying into the Salt Lake City area mountains. But Joseph Smith taught in *Doctrine and Covenants* 57:1 and 84:2-4 that the end time gathering of the saints would be in Independence, Missouri, which is not in the mountains.

Notes

Test #23

IS ISRAEL TO BE GATHERED?

Isaiah 11:11-12

Would missionary work help in gathering Israel?
Place your marks by those which believe in the gathering.

Christian Response

Israel is to be gathered again in the last days. Although, I believe that this will occur and that even LDS authorities agree with this view, it seems that the above question and statement for this test was erroneously written by the author of the “Which Church Is True?” paper. I think the author of the this LDS paper may have meant to have his readers place marks by those churches which do not believe in the gathering of Israel. He seems to have carried this mistake forward for the remainder of the test questions in his work. To place a mark next to those who do believe in the gathering of Israel would immediately exclude the LDS Church as a possible contender as the true church. Even the noted Mormon Apostle Bruce McConkie in his work *Mormon Doctrine* defends the LDS position of the reality of the coming gathering of Israel in the article entitled “The Gathering of Israel.” There are also many sections within the *Doctrine and Covenants* that affirm the LDS Church’s position of the coming gathering of the nation of Israel. Finally, there is the 10th Article of Faith which teaches this doctrine.

Notes

Test #24

**IS THE BIBLE OUR ONLY
BOOK OF SCRIPTURES?**

Ezekiel 37:15-20

How many churches believe there are two different books
or sticks of scripture as mentioned here?

Christian Response

The Bible must be seen as the only book which claims to be God's word to mankind and is able to withstand serious scrutiny. For more information refer to F. F. Bruce's book *New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*

The passage cited here can not be legitimately used to support the idea of additional works being brought into the body of scripture. The Hebrew word used here is *ets* and means "stick." Had Ezekiel wanted this to be understood as referring to a book or a scroll he would not have chosen the word that he did. He would have used either *sepher*, *siphrah* or *dabar*. The word selected alone is enough to demonstrate that the Mormons have failed entirely to be true to the meaning of this passage.

God has not left the reader without a way to understand what the sticks represent. Ezekiel 37:22 explains the meaning of the two sticks as the two kingdoms which split apart following the death of King Solomon. 1 Kings 12 gives additional historical information that is helpful here. Read beyond verses 15-20 in Ezekiel 37 until it is clear that the two sticks are representations of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah after King Solomon's death and not of two books (or collection of books) of scripture. God gave

prophecies that speak also of the reuniting of the divided halves of the nation of Israel. Turn to Jeremiah 3:18; 23:5-6; Ezekiel 33:23, 39; Hosea 1:11 and Amos 9:11 for these additional passages which also predict the bringing together again the fractured nation of Israel.

Even if the second stick could be argued to be another collection of books being brought into the corpus of scripture then the logical addition would be the New Testament and not the *Book of Mormon* since the New Testament did not yet exist. Also, the book of Revelation tells us all that will happen up to the last times. Revelation 22:18-19 makes it clear that God does not intend to add any divinely inspired yet inadvertently overlooked last minute revisions.

Notes

Test #25

HOW MANY CHURCHES BELIEVE THAT ELIJAH HAS COME?

Malachi 4:5-6

If these questions are difficult, prayer and study will help.
If you know the answer, place your mark.

Christian Response

The LDS Church makes some serious mistakes regarding the coming of Elijah. Mormons believe Elijah's appearance in the Kirtland temple fulfilled Malachi 4:5-6 and thus restored the practices of temple marriages, sealings, and baptism for the dead. This cannot possibly be, however, because the New Testament authors and Jesus himself make it clear this was fulfilled in Jesus' day. Malachi 4:5-6 was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist who came in the spirit of Elijah who preached a message of repentance and preparation for the coming of the Lord as stated in Luke 1:17. John the Baptist directly fulfilled the stated mission of Elijah in Malachi 4:6. This verse obviously does not teach that John the Baptist was Elijah reincarnated but that he functioned in the same way as Elijah by preaching repentance and preparing the way of the Lord. Jesus himself also referred to John the Baptist as the Elijah who was to come in Matthew 11:14 and 17:10-13.

Furthermore, the LDS Church errors when it teaches that Elijah and Elias are two separate persons. In the *History of the Church* it states that both Elijah and Elias appeared "on the same occasion." (Vol. 2, p. xxii) Joseph Smith laid out in further detail an erroneous distinction between Elijah and Elias (see *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, pp. 249-254). This cannot be since they are one and the same

person. There is no evidence outside LDS teaching which suggests that Elijah and Elias are two separate persons. A quick reading of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) will show that each instance of the Hebrew name Elijah was rendered as Elias. Likewise, in the New Testament the King James translators were simply expressing the Greek form for the Hebrew name of Elijah when they spelled it out as Elias. The same thing happened with the name of Isaiah (the Hebrew form in the Old Testament) and Esaias which is the Greek form of the same name. This practice should not surprise anyone since names often change form and spelling when taken from one language to another. Even the name *Jesus* has *Joshua* as its counterpart in the Old Testament.

Also many scholars think that Elijah (who was miraculously taken to heaven and who appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration) will be used by God one more time before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes and is one of the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11:3. But this possibility does not alter the fact that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the prophecy as given through the prophet Malachi. The testimony of none other than Jesus himself makes this fact undeniable.

Notes

Test #26

**AFTER WHOM SHOULD THE
CHURCH BE NAMED?**

Ephesians 5:23-24

Christ's church should carry Christ's name.
How many churches are named after Christ?

Christian Response

The name of the church does not need to include the word “Jesus” or “Christ” in it. As evidence of this fact see Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 2 Corinthians 1:1 where the church is referred to by names not including the word or designation of “Jesus” or “Christ.” The first use of the term Christian occurred in Acts 11:26 where it was given to believers in an attempt to ridicule their faith. The word “Christian” is the diminutive form of the word “Christ” in the Greek, and therefore meant something like “little Christ.” Surprisingly enough to those who despised the followers of Jesus, the believing community embraced the term as a compliment and used it to refer to one another from that time onward. Prior to this the terms used for those who accepted Christ were believers, brothers or sisters, disciples and followers. However, it would be foolish to assert that simply because the name “Christian” was not yet attached to followers of Jesus that they were not part of his promised church that began on the Day of Pentecost. Again the word for “church” in the original Greek is *ekklesia* which can be properly translated as “assembly” or “church.”

LDS Contradictions

Even within the *Book of Mormon* the true believers are said to have belonged to the “church of God” (see Mosiah 18:17; Alma 27:27; Helaman 3:26; 4:11 and 5:35). The strict inclusion of the name “Jesus Christ” is not always adhered to even in this work. So if the *Book of Mormon* is truly the “most correct book” as Joseph Smith declared then the LDS Church would need to back off of their dogmatism on the absolute necessity of the name “Jesus Christ” being a formal part of the name of any group of believers.

More importantly, even the LDS Church has not always included Christ’s name. When the Church was first formed in 1830, it was known as “The Church of Christ.” In 1834, it was “The Church of the Latter Day Saints.” The name of the Church was further amended in 1836 to “The Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints.” Finally, since 1838 the Church’s name has been “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” due to *Doctrine and Covenants* 115:4 (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 3, p. 979). This evolution in the name of the Church is important for at least two reasons. First, why would “Christ” be removed from the name of the Church if its inclusion is of such critical importance? Second, would this demand an admission that the LDS Church would now have to be considered a false church which had fallen away because of the name changes?

Finally, they should cease their use of this as a litmus test for the identification of those who are seen by God as part of the true church of Christ. Surely, clear thinking LDS persons would have to agree that although a church might include the name of Jesus Christ in its official title, this does not mean Mormons would automatically accept them as being the true church regardless of what the content of their teachings might be.

Notes

Test #27

SHOULD MEMBERS OF THE TRUE CHURCH BE CALLED SAINTS?

1 Corinthians 1:2 and Ephesians 1:1

How many are called saints? Place your final mark! Which church is true?

Christian Response

All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are saints. The word *saints* comes from the Greek word *hagios* which means “holy ones; set apart ones.” This word is used almost exclusively in the plural to refer to the community of believers. Nonetheless, this is the position of believers when Jesus becomes their savior. In the same way, according to the scriptures, all Christian believers are priests (1 Peter 2:5-9) and disciples of Jesus Christ (from the Greek word *mathetes* which means “student of; pupil”). All believers are appointed to be messengers of God to spread his word to fulfill the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19-20).

Believers are disciples and are responsible to continue to grow in this discipleship role which is an obligation of all Christians. Christians must become pupils of Christ and learn from Him as their Great Teacher. This is a remarkable transformation of the ancient teacher/pupil role. In the ancient world when a pupil progressed to be called a teacher and subsequently took students of his own he was no longer seen to be a pupil of the former teacher. But in Christianity no matter how mature one may become, or how many others may sit under our instruction, we are never above or released from the obligation to continue in our own role as a student of the Lord Jesus himself.

Throughout the New Testament members of the true church are identified by a wide range of terms. These include such names as brother, ambassador, believer, follower and friend.

LDS Contradictions

It is interesting to note that the term *saint* is found very infrequently within the *Book of Mormon*. It certainly is not the term of choice for the members of the true church in that work. Additionally, nowhere within the *Book of Mormon* is it declared that members of the true church should be called “saints.” This is a troubling omission if in fact this should be a means by which to discern the real members of the true church from false ones.

Notes

Summary

I would like to make just a couple of quick observations concerning the “Which Church is True?” paper which elicited my response. First, I cannot help but wonder what criteria were used to determine the tests to be included. It seems to me that the author of the work was guilty of circular reasoning by using pre-determined “proof tests” to automatically arrive at the desired outcome rather than seeing if the teachings of the LDS Church align with the clear teachings of scripture. The tests listed here seem to have been created in order to prove a position already held. The questions clearly reveal a preconceived agenda to prove one’s own church true. This was done by asking only questions about beliefs already held and by avoiding questions that may reveal a conflict. This would naturally lead to the forced conclusion that the LDS Church is the only true church. It is not legitimate to check the validity of a viewpoint by first determining the main points held by that view and then developing questions from those main points. Logically, the only possible outcome would be that of affirming the original view. This reverse construction to prove a point of view is of very little critical value.

By carefully comparing the teachings of the LDS Church with the Bible the inescapable conclusion is that the Mormons are not in fact worshipping or proclaiming the Christ of the Bible. The LDS Church is instead lifting up another Jesus who is fundamentally unlike the Jesus who is the eternal God made incarnate. Even President Gordon Hinckley stated:

. . . 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* section: week ending June 20, 1998, page 7)

The LDS Church may wish to refer to itself as Christian; however, Jesus himself warned that there would be those who would come using his name but who are in fact not really of him (Matthew 7:21-23). Whenever a deceiving counterfeit comes along it must resemble the true article enough to work effectively. Certainly no one would believe for a moment that a U.S. dollar bill that was not printed with green ink was genuine. Similarly, in order to create a convincing facsimile to the truth of God's word there must be no glaring traits that give it away as a cheap fake. The deception must attempt to use the same language and from the outside seem to have the same appearance as the true article.

By now it should be readily apparent that the teachings and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not based on the teachings of the Bible or the record of the early historic Christian church. In fact, it appears that the Bible becomes authoritative only when necessary to support one of the teachings of the Mormon Church. Otherwise, the Bible is generally held in low esteem and is not trusted. Indeed, in order to defend many of the current teachings, the LDS Church chooses to put aside God's word in the Bible. This is done by claiming that a passage that does not square with the LDS position must be either missing "plain and precious truths" or has been translated incorrectly. Many times this argument carries with it the unspoken charge that there has been a deliberate effort on the part of "scheming scribes and monks" to alter and destroy the record of the original teachings of the church that Jesus Christ founded. Instead, the LDS Church ends up relying on other works and authorities which are placed on a higher level of authority and reliability than is granted to the Bible. This is a subtle yet effective tactic to the unwary investigator.

Furthermore, for a variety of reasons I wonder why this LDS author would appeal to the Bible and the Bible alone. First, the LDS Church expresses serious doubts about the trustworthiness of the Bible. In the 8th Article of Faith, the LDS Church states that "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the *Book of Mormon* to be the word of God." The reader should notice the qualifying condition which is placed on the authority of the Bible and is not placed on the *Book of Mormon*. This is no small affair. The implication is that the Bible

is not to be trusted as much as the *Book of Mormon*. The noted Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt declared “Who knows that even one verse of the whole Bible has escaped pollution, so as to convey the same sense now that it did in the original?” (*Orson Pratt’s Works*, pages 195-196). Even Joseph Smith himself said that the *Book of Mormon* is the most correct book on the face of the earth (*History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 4, p. 461). However, if the *Book of Mormon* were the “most correct book” when Joseph Smith made this bold declaration, one must wonder then why it has undergone so many changes while the Bible continues to be proven more and more reliable with every new bit of textual evidence that surfaces.

Additionally, why would anyone appeal to an authority when even they question its accuracy and therefore its trustworthiness? Surely no one drinks from a water source of unknown purity and content.

Likewise, if the Bible really has had “plain and precious truths” taken from it, as consistently claimed by the LDS Church since Joseph Smith’s *Book of Mormon* first made this indefensible assertion (1 Nephi 13:34), and if the LDS Church truly has a president who is annually affirmed to be a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, then what greater gift and service could the LDS Church give the world than to restore these priceless “truths” again so that all may come to a full knowledge of God?

Since the *Book of Mormon* should complement the teachings of the Bible and it is claimed that the *Book of Mormon* contains the fulness of the Gospel (*Doctrine and Covenants* 20:9), I wonder why no appeal like this can be made to the *Book of Mormon*. Likewise, how would the “believers in Christ” in the *Book of Mormon* fare if they also were judged according to these tests based on what they purportedly believed and taught as recorded in the *Book of Mormon*?

Along this same line, I wonder how the LDS Church would do on these questions if the basis for determining the results came only from the information contained within the *Book of Mormon*? Can anyone show where the *Book of Mormon* gives any support to doctrines such as baptism for the dead, eternal progression, pre-existence, word of wisdom or even the idea that God has a physical body?

It has become painfully evident that the gap that exists between LDS and Christian terms and teachings is insurmountably wide. The reader must also understand that while many of the same terms are used by both groups, the meanings behind the terms are radically different. Jerald and Sandra Tanner of the Utah Lighthouse Ministry of Salt Lake City have put together a great fact sheet entitled “Terminology Differences” contrasting the terms common to both the LDS Church and historic Christianity. For anyone who truly desires to understand many of the key points which separate the LDS and the Christian understanding, this resource is indispensable.

For the doubting Mormon, remember that simply because Mormonism isn’t true, it doesn’t automatically follow that Jesus is not true. Please don’t be guilty of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. In other words don’t reject Jesus just because Mormonism is not true. Jesus still offers freely his gift of salvation to all who would accept his atoning sacrifice on the cross as payment for their sins which separate them from God.

Salvation comes by each one of us deciding to personally place our trust and faith in Jesus’ work on the cross—not by the church where our name happens to be listed as a member. This is not to say however that being part of a healthy and doctrinally sound church is unimportant. The New Testament tells us that we should crave as newborns the pure milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2) and “. . . let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25). God wants each of us to be involved with a local group of believers for at least the following reasons:

1. Discipleship—we should be students of Jesus, our master, and his word, *not* just converts (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. Edification—by meeting together we help to build one another up in the Lord so that together we become so much more than we ever could have been on our own (Romans 14:19; 2 Corinthians 10:8).

3. Encouragement—Just because we are believers does not exempt us from the trials, temptations and pain that this evil world brings. Therefore, as “Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:10-12).
4. Service—the true reason for our salvation besides the love of God for us is that through us God may choose to use us to draw others to himself. Through acts of Christian service we allow ourselves to become instruments to show others God more clearly. Jesus himself said that “But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45).
5. Stewardship—God has given each person unique skills, talents, abilities, possessions, opportunities and gifts. We are called to be wise stewards of that which he has entrusted to us. How wonderful indeed to have the hope that one day our Savior will look at us and how we have chosen to make use of what he provided us and say “Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).
6. Love—we are called to a life of living out the same kind of love that God so richly gave us (John 13:34-35). John

says in his first epistle, “We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21).

7. Gifts—as believers God has given gifts to each of us for the benefit of the entire body of Christ. We need one another and we should use these gifts out of our mutual love for one another (1 Corinthians 12:1-14:25).
8. Growth—In order to grow up in our faith we must see that each of us needs to have spiritual elders to help us as we mature. And we should also be looking for opportunities to bring new believers along to maturity in their walk with God.
9. Avoid Error—by joining together with other believers we protect ourselves in part from entertaining or cultivating unique and unsound beliefs. As Christians we are not called to be spiritual islands all on our own. John again tells the early church that “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us (1 John 2:19). By setting yourself apart from other believers you open yourself up to Satan’s attacks and the greater possibility that you may end up embracing unsound doctrines.

The offer of the gift of salvation is and always has been there for the receiving. Each of us must simply acknowledge our need of salvation to God. That is to say, we must know that our sinfulness must be dealt with before we can enjoy eternity in the very presence of God. We must confess this sinfulness to God and realize that the penalty for our sins is death and separation from God. Then we must believe that Jesus himself personally paid the penalty for our sins

when he died on the cross. If you now believe this for the first time you could pray a prayer to God that would go something like this:

“Dear God, I know that I am a sinful person and that the penalty for my sins is to be eternally separated from you. But Lord, I believe that Jesus Christ came down from heaven and took all the guilt and judgment that was due me when he died on the cross for me. I am trusting in his perfect finished work alone as the payment for all my sinfulness. Thank you God for freely offering so great a salvation to me. Now God, may I start to live a life that will glorify you and that will serve you and draw others to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, my savior, Amen.”

If you have just done this for the first time you are now a new creature in Christ—the old has gone and all things have been made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Also you can have the firm assurance that you now possess eternal life since you are a believer in Christ (1 John 5:13). Please make it a priority to seek out a church which preaches Jesus as your only means of salvation and the Bible without reservation. If you would like to you could also contact me through Utah Lighthouse Ministry. I would be thrilled to learn of your new life in Christ that has just begun.

Closing Remarks

I stand on the shoulders of those who have labored before me. Since much of this author's efforts have come as an indirect result from the painstaking research of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, appreciation, admiration and acknowledgment of their work is in order here. I should also mention the inspiration I gained from Floyd McElveen's work *God's Word: Final, Infallible and Forever* to put pen to page and carefully respond to each of these tests in an orderly way. Having said this, it goes without saying that I am solely responsible for the contents of this book.

If you would like to support any ministry efforts directed to reach Mormons with God's love then the Utah Lighthouse Ministry run by the Tanners or the Institute for Religious Research are great choices.

I was also encouraged to keep pressing forward with this work by friends, fellow Christians, Sandra Tanner and especially my wife who helped me to consider not only what I was saying but how it was being said as well.

If you would like more information or you have comments, suggestions or opinions of this work you can contact me either through Utah Lighthouse Ministry's address or email given at the end of this work.

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Jim and Judy Robertson

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(with LDS study helps and cross references and excerpts of the Joseph Smith Translation)

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Bruce R. McConkie

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