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# 1

## Missionaries at Your Door

The traditional picture of two young Mormon missionaries coming to your door has been considerably altered. The modern family situation, in which wife and husband are both working, has made it difficult for the missionaries to make satisfactory contacts in house-to-house visitation. The final objectives have not been changed, but the methods have been refined to suit the new family situation.

The new emphasis is to gain the whole family, and the procedure is to arrange for meetings with the entire family present, including the father, who is given the prominent place.

The new manual for missionaries is a masterpiece of organization, patterned after the very best in sales promotion literature. It is entitled *Uniform System for Teaching Families*, and was prepared by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Salt Lake City, in 1973.

The old, colorless, stereotyped, and sometimes boorish presentation of the two-by-two visiting missionaries has given way to a new, more subtle approach. The missionaries ask permission to come in for a visit. If the father is not at home, the callers will

attempt to make an appointment for an evening visit and discussion with the entire family present.

When the family is together, the missionaries try to create a friendly situation by urging the youngsters to play their instruments, and by engaging in family singing, storytelling, and recitation. After the desired atmosphere has been created, the leading missionary of the team will engage in a conversational-style presentation of the Mormon message. In their manual, the missionaries are instructed not to deviate from the memorized text and sequence of the arguments until they are completely familiar with them; then they may use their own words to some extent.

Care is taken to present the arguments in such a way as to elicit positive responses. All of the arguments are calculated to get the adult family members to a point of final assent to the teaching being presented. If a negative response is gained, the point is dropped until a time when a favorable response may be expected.

The historic Christian Church, including the family's denomination, is declared to be bankrupt, without an authorized priesthood, and with no apostles or prophets. The doctrine of the Trinity is ridiculed as an artifact of the apostate medieval church conferences. Athanasius is scorned and Arius is eulogized. The need for a prophet with divine authority is emphasized, and Joseph Smith is proposed as the divinely appointed prophet of the Restoration.

*The Book of Mormon*, supposedly translated from golden plates, is presented as the scriptures of the "new and everlasting covenant" of the Restoration. The "first vision" of the prophet, claimed to have

been experienced by Smith when he was fourteen, is given as the source of the Mormon doctrine that the Father and Jesus Christ are two separate gods of flesh and bones, who were once men like ourselves but have been elevated to the status of gods.

An important doctrine of the Mormon church is that all men were preexistent, unembodied spirits before being born as humans in the present state of probation. They insist that men who pass through this period of probation, as men with physical bodies, will become gods in a future life.

In the manual, the missionaries are asked to limit each discussion to forty-five minutes and, of course, to try to obtain consent for a sequence of teaching sessions, until the presentation has advanced to a point where the entire family is ready to submit to baptism. This is the Mormon equivalent to conversion.

There is no presentation of the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour of individual, lost sinners. There is no discussion of the fact that all men are sinners before God and need to experience the new birth. In the Mormon scheme, salvation is progressive and is initiated by baptism by immersion, followed by a lifetime of achievement through good works. The sin problem is taken care of by baptism.

The instruction manual is supplemented by a superbly constructed flip-chart which is held by the missionary who is not leading the discussion. This new device replaces the older flannelgraph method of illustrating the discussion.

The illustrations include beautifully done portraits of the prophet Joseph Smith in various settings that

relate to the key episodes of his life—Smith as a lad, kneeling in the sacred grove; the angel Moroni appearing in the prophet's bedroom; Smith and Cowdery being baptized and ordained. There are photographs of the high officials of the church in several groupings and of the temples. There is a portrait of Jesus, shown twice.

The final picture is that of a family group—father, mother, children, and grandparents—in the heavenly scene. Here the Mormon imagination flattens out completely, and the heavenly presentation is that of uninspired, blank faces, colorless and vacant, floating along on a nebulous, gray background. They have never been able to visualize a heavenly scene where the blessed are more than heavenly unemployed in a land of eternal sex, and where the sole responsibility seems to be to propagate spirit children who will eventually inhabit worlds like ours, in a future state of probation.

If the contact seems profitless, or the people are aware of the nature of Mormonism and have a positive testimony for Jesus Christ and the power of the Gospel, the young missionaries will withdraw.

If the young men get beyond their depth, but the prospect seems worth promoting further, men of greater experience and knowledge of the church's doctrines will follow up the work of the young callers.

It is standard practice for the missionaries to bear witness to "their assurance that these things are true, that Joseph Smith is the prophet of God, and the *Book of Mormon* is the word of God." They will often lay their hands on their breasts and convey this information with an extremely pious voice. At this point, any

born-again person has a splendid opportunity to witness to the facts of forgiven sins and assurance of salvation here and now. The Mormon can produce no equivalent testimony, and this clear and joyful assurance may give him serious thoughts about the superficiality of his own experience.

# 2

## The Restored Church

One of the most preposterous claims of the Latter-Day Saints is that on April 6, 1830, the true Church of Jesus Christ was reestablished on the earth, after a lapse of seventeen hundred years. In the use of the term "restoration," the Latter-Day saints do not mean reformation, revival, or revitalization; but complete reestablishment, with a restored apostolic authority. According to the Mormons, that authority was forfeited by the apostasy that followed the death of the twelve apostles.

James E. Talmage, one of the most scholarly theologians of the Mormon church, expressed the Latter-Day Saints viewpoint as follows:

We affirm that with the passing of the so-called apostolic age the church gradually drifted into a condition of apostasy, whereby succession in the priesthood was broken; and that the church, as an earthly organization operating under divine direction and having authority to officiate in spiritual ordinances, ceased to exist.

If therefore the Church of Christ is to be found upon the earth today it must have been reestablished by divine authority; and the holy priesthood must have



been restored to the world from which it was lost by the apostasy of the Primitive Church.<sup>1</sup>

Smith, and his associates, proceeded to “restore” to the Church a full complement of what he claimed were the officers of the early Church,—seers, apostles, elders, bishops, deacons, prophets, and a patriarch. He arrogated to himself the following posts: “Seer, a Translator, a Prophet, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and Elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> The priest-hoods, Aaronic and Melchizedek, were added during the early years of the church, after Sidney Rigdon became a member of the team.

If Joseph Smith’s claim that the “new and everlasting gospel” was restored by this new organization, the nineteenth century should have been one of the most spectacular, spiritually, since Pentecost. Let us examine the facts.

Jesus declared, “Upon this rock [Peter’s confession] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” (Matthew 16:18). If Jesus spoke with authority, this statement immediately invalidates Joseph Smith’s argument for restoration.

In His first message in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus declared, “He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of

1. James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy: Considered in the Light of Scriptural and Secular History*, pp. 18-19.
2. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, p. 84.

the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). Rebuking the Pharisees in the house of Matthew the publican, Jesus said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). During His ministry, He proved His claim to be the Messiah by raising the dead, cleansing lepers, opening the eyes of the blind, receiving harlots, thieves, and murderers, and forgiving sins. When Jesus commissioned His disciples, He commanded them to preach the Gospel to every creature, to go unto all nations—to the uttermost part of the earth.

What has the church of the Latter-Day Saints done to fulfill these basic qualifications of the Church of the risen Lord Jesus Christ?

They have preached a gospel of doing good works for salvation, that would immediately disqualify the sinners to whom Jesus gave forgiveness. They have consistently avoided preaching to the poor and destitute and have confined their ministry to middle-class whites. Until recently, they have had no ministry to prisoners and captives. (They are now attempting some rehabilitation work among prisoners.) They have raised no dead nor healed any lepers. They have not opened the eyes of the blind. (In their hospitals, they have removed cataracts from the eyes of patients, but so have doctors who are atheists and Christians.)

They have specifically ruled that harlots and murderers cannot be saved. Neither can apostates from Mormonism. They have opened no rescue missions, started no Salvation Armies, founded no refuges for unwed mothers or centers for the reclamation of dope addicts and alcoholics. They certainly have not gone into all the world with their message, for they specifi-

cally avoid going to black races. They have participated in no relief efforts in cases of world disasters: their vaunted relief program is available only to Mormons who have kept up their tithing record.

What has the Mormon church done with the tithes of the faithful, now approaching two million dollars a day? They finance supermarket chains and the food processors that supply those chains. They have control of the sugar beet industry of America. They have purchased automobile factories. They control the copper producing industry. They control railroads, paper mills, and a newspaper chain. They have organized insurance companies and savings and loan associations and have built a financial enclave second only to the Bank of America. They control the lucrative vice industry of Las Vegas. A count of the Mormon church listings in the Las Vegas telephone directory numbers more than sixty churches and other facilities, which means that probably half of the population is Mormon, and practically all of the population of Las Vegas is directly or indirectly engaged in work related to the vice industry.

By contrast, in the years since Joseph Smith went treasure hunting, found golden plates, and pretended to translate *The Book of Mormon*, what has the real Church of Jesus Christ been doing?

While Joseph Smith was hunting buried treasure, Robert Morrison was finishing his life's work of translating the Bible into the Chinese language.

While Smith was translating *The Book of Mormon*, another New Englander, Adoniram Judson, was translating the Bible into the Burmese language.

While Henry Harmon Spalding was translating the

gospel of Matthew into the language of the Nez Percés Indians, Smith was putting the finishing touches on *The Pearl of Great Price* and pretending to translate the Book of Abraham from Egyptian papyri, a now well-established fraud.

While James Evans was translating the Bible into the Cree language and creating his own syllabic script to do so, Smith was writing his *King Follett Discourse*, which involved the Mormon church, for all time, in the doctrine that God was once a man.

While David Livingstone was pushing into the heart of Africa with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and Hudson Taylor was pressing into inland China with the same message, Brigham Young was taking his Mormon followers to the mountainous West and establishing his Mormon empire.

While Brigham Young was reddening the soil of Utah with the blood of apostates and gentiles in pursuance of his "blood atonement doctrine," William Booth was establishing his worldwide Salvation Army to rescue thousands from the quicksands of vice and crime in the world's great cities.

While President John Taylor was fighting to preserve the plural marriage doctrine of the Mormon church, a thousand rescue missions were being operated throughout the United States and Great Britain.

What is the great difference between the highly successful, soul-saving mission of the Church of the Lord Jesus, against which He said the gates of hell would not prevail, and the ponderous establishment of the Mormon church, which can point to no lives transformed by the Gospel? Joseph Smith's gospel has no cure for sin and no power to weld together a living

body of believers.

The Mormon church boasts nearly thirty-five thousand missionaries in the field, with a worldwide membership of three million. The Church of the living Lord Jesus, in the same life span, has added multiplied millions to the Body of Christ. God does the counting in His Church.