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## Christian Argument Applied to "Mormonism"

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**Abstract:** The angel Moroni visited Joseph Smith telling him of the records that contain an abridged history of the ancient inhabitants of America and the fullness of the gospel. Joseph Smith received the plates and translated them using the Urim and Thummim. Witnesses testified of the plates.

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—hear ye him.” (III Nephi 11:7.) Once more the introduction has been enlarged. The Son of God has finished his fore-ordained task; the world has now a way and a name by which its inhabitants may be saved. Thus in the work of the Christ has the name of the Father been glorified.

But one more heavenly introduction was found to be necessary in order that the divine plan of the ages might be consummated. And this is indeed an outstanding one. Centuries had passed and the Church of Christ had been destroyed among the ancient inhabitants of America. Likewise, the true Church of Christ, with its holy priesthood, its gifts and blessings, and the doctrine taught by the primitive Church, had ceased to exist on the eastern continent. And all this because of wickedness and unbelief.

Like the business and industrial world of a century ago, the so-called Church of Christ was hopelessly divided, and stood helpless before a thousand world problems. A voice of authority was needed for would be employees; a great Proprietor was needed, who understood and who could and would save the world from ruin by providing a way in which and through which it could solve all its problems. And lo! In the woods of New York state, on a spring morn of the year 1820, the Voice of authority, the great Proprietor comes. This time it is in person, and not in language from the clouds. This time the introduction is delivered by a pointing of the finger and the proud lighting up of the countenance. For the great Elohim, the Father of all, condescends to come to earth in response to a boy's prayerful supplication. He calls the future prophet by name. "Joseph, this is my beloved Son," are the words of that outstanding introduction. And then the Heavenly Father adds, in the language of the nineteenth century, "Hear him." It was the Son of God who was thus introduced to the world for the fourth time; and the boy prophet saw the personage and heard the words of the Savior of the world as he, the Redeemer, declared that the true

Church of God was not to be found upon the earth. Moreover, if he, the boy prophet, would be faithful, the true Church would soon be established, and through his own instrumentality.

What a wonderful introduction it was! And now that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been established, and has become a power in the earth for good, we are led to give honor and reverence to the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, for the world saving work which he began. But most of all, we remember in love and worship, the great Father who visited a needy world and introduced his Son—that the true Gospel of Jesus Christ might be established for the last time, never to be thrown down or left to another people.

#### CHRISTIAN ARGUMENT APPLIED TO "MORMONISM"

*By Elder B. H. Roberts, of the First Council  
of Seventy*

Archdeacon Paley, in his admirable work on the "Evidences of Christianity," says:

If the Reformers in the time of Wickliffe, or of Luther; or those of England in the time of Henry VIII; or of Queen Mary; or the founders of our religious sects since, such as were Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley in our own times, had undergone the life of toil and exertion, of danger and sufferings, which we know many of them did undergo, *for* a miraculous story; that is to say, if they had founded their public ministry upon the allegation of miracles wrought within their own knowledge, and upon narratives which could not be resolved into delusion or mistake; and if it had appeared that their conduct really had its origin in these accounts, I should have believed them.

All writers who have taken up the defense of the Christian religion have regarded the miraculous incidents connected with the ministry of Christ and his immediate followers as proof absolute of its divinity. Quite unmindful of the fact that there are other agencies than divine, capable of working miracles. Every one will readily call to mind the skill and power of the Egyptian magi who

contended with Moses before Pharaoh in producing miracles. Their productions were in imitation of and nearly as great as those of the prophet of God; yet no one believes the miracles of the Egyptian magi were divine.

Jesus was cautious to warn his followers not to put too much confidence in miracles as absolute proof of the divine calling of the worker thereof by telling them—

There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; inso-much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matt xxiv: 24.)

Again it is written in the visions of John:

I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to that battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Rev. xvi: 13, 14).

The same writer, in the 13th chapter of his Revelation, speaks of an evil power that—

Doeth wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.

In the light of what is here set down, it will be readily seen that the individual who is educated to put his trust in miraculous manifestations as proof positive of the divine calling of a person working the miracles, is very likely to be among those who will be deceived by these wicked spirits and false prophets to whom is given the power to work miracles and deceive the nations. It will also manifest the weakness of the argument of those Christian writers who insist that because the story on which their religion is founded is miraculous, it must therefore be of divine origin.

The healing of the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, cleansing the lepers, enlarging the substance of a few loaves and fishes until they become sufficient to

feed a multitude, may indeed be taken as proof of the divine power of the Son of God, but they are collateral rather than direct. Taken in connection with the other facts which go to prove the divinity of the Messiah's mission, they are very strong evidences in his favor, but considered by themselves, they fall very far short of being absolute, since agencies other than divine ones are capable of producing phenomena, which, for the reason that the cause is hidden, and we see only the result, we call miracles.

Yet, notwithstanding these observations, there is very much reasonableness and force in the statement of Mr. Paley, to the effect that if such men as Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley—men whose veracity and integrity were above question, and whose honor was untarnished, had endured the life of toil and danger and suffering through which they passed "for a miraculous story—that is to say, if they had founded their public ministry upon the allegation of miracles, wrought within their own knowledge, and upon narratives which could not be resolved into delusion or mistake; and if it had appeared that their conduct really had its origin in these accounts, "we know not how one could escape believing them."

Mr. Paley's position is this: The early Christians came before the world with a miraculous story; their public ministry was founded upon the allegation of miracles wrought within their own knowledge, and upon narratives which could not be resolved into delusion or mistake; their conduct really had its origin in these miraculous accounts; and in support of their declarations they endured lives of toil, poverty, persecution, danger and suffering; and for these reasons Mr. Paley, with the grand majority of Christians, believes the statements of the New Testament writers—to which we say amen! most heartily; and ask good Christians everywhere to apply the same reasonable test to the miraculous story upon which what the world calls "Mormonism" is based.

But first, we must inform our readers that what is known to them as "Mormonism" is founded upon a miraculous story—as that phrase is generally understood. In the year 1820 the boy Joseph Smith, in obedience to the divine injunction in the Epistle of James—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him"—retired to the woods to ask for wisdom, to enquire which of all the contending sects of religion was acknowledged of God as his Church—which one gave a correct exposition of the plan of salvation, that he might become connected with it. And in answer to that prayer, the heavens were opened and the youth beheld the Father and the Son. The Son, being introduced to him by the Father, answered his question in relation to the religious sects of the day, and informed him that none of them were his Church or kingdom, that the Gospel had been corrupted, the law thereof transgressed, the ordinances changed, and the covenant broken; that their creeds were an abomination to him, and that his authority was not with them. The youth was strictly commanded to join none of them.

Three years subsequent to this first revelation, this same young man received the visitation of an angel, who said that he was one of the ancient prophets that lived among the ancient inhabitants of America. He had been resurrected from the dead, and was now sent to him to reveal the existence of a record of the ancient inhabitants of the American Continent; which contained not only an abridged history of those people and the source from whence they sprang, but also contained the fullness of the Gospel as taught to them by the inspired servants and prophets of God who lived among them, and by the glorified and risen Redeemer who had visited them, after leaving his disciples in Palestine.

The plates upon which this record was engraven were first shown to Joseph Smith on the 22nd of September, 1823;

and four years later he received them at the hands of the heavenly messenger to translate into the English language, by means of a Urim and Thummim that had been hidden up with them. A man by the name of Oliver Cowdery, attracted by the story of Joseph Smith having the metallic plates, enquired him out, believed the declarations the boy prophet made to him, and assisted in the work of translation by becoming the scribe of the young man, who dictated to him the translation. The work of translation was completed in 1829.

Besides the testimony of the youthful prophet to the existence of this ancient record, is that of his scribe, Oliver Cowdery; David Whitmer and Martin Harris. The same heavenly messenger who revealed the existence of the record, exhibited the plates to these three men; and there were eight others to whom the Prophet Joseph himself showed the plates, and who handled them and examined the engravings thereon, and all these bear witness to what they had seen and handled.

Both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery testify that in May, 1829, while in the woods engaged in prayer, a messenger from heaven came to them and, placing his hands upon their heads, conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood, which gave them authority to preach repentance and baptize in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and there began their ministry.

The same men testify that subsequently three other heavenly messengers visited them—viz., the Apostles Peter, James and John; and conferred upon them the holy apostleship, which gave them authority to lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, to organize the Church of Christ, to confer the same power upon others, and thus build up the Church in all the world, and prepare the way for the glorious appearing of the Redeemer to reign with the righteous over the whole earth.

The foregoing is the miraculous story

upon what the world calls "Mormonism"—but what in reality is the restored Gospel of the Son of God—is based. And upon examination it will be found that it fulfills all the conditions laid down by Mr. Paley—and which, if fulfilled in the case of modern reformers, as that eminent scholar conceived them to be fulfilled in the case of the first introduction of Christianity, he said, "he would have believed them." Consequently, had Mr. Paley lived to have heard the miraculous story of "Mormonism;" had he examined into the circumstances connected with it; and had he applied the same excellent reasoning to "Mormonism" that he does to Christianity he would have accepted it as true. So also would all men who accept the Christian story upon the conditions named by the learned Doctor.

But let us see if "Mormonism" fulfills the Doctor's conditions:

First, then, the story is miraculous. It deals with direct revelations from God, the visitation of angels, the translation of an ancient record by the inspiration of God; receiving authority from heavenly messengers to preach the Gospel, which is to be attended by all the gifts and graces ever enjoyed by the saints.

Second: The first elders of this institution, known as the Church of Jesus Christ, founded their public ministry upon the allegation of these miracles.

Third: The miracles wrought were within their own knowledge, a number of them being both eye and ear witnesses to the miraculous manifestation, both seeing the angels and hearing their voices—nay, more—feeling the hands of the heavenly messengers as they were laid upon their heads.

Fourth: The miracles cannot be resolved into delusion or mistake. Unless the eye, ear and the sense of touch can be deceived, not only once, but repeatedly, and in the same manner.

Fifth: Their conduct, that is, their preaching the new dispensation, and

other acts growing out of it, really had its origin in these accounts we have related.

And now, after filling all these conditions laid down in Mr. Paley's argument, there remains but one thing to set forth to make it complete, and that is, did these first movers in the new dispensation endure lives of toil, care, exertion, danger and suffering for their miraculous story? The fact is so generally known that they did, that it scarcely becomes necessary to answer the question.

No sooner did Joseph Smith declare to men that he had received a divine manifestation, than persecution was arrayed against him, and continued to dog his footsteps nearly every day of his eventful life. Now throwing him into the hands of an infuriated mob to be whipped, beaten, tarred and feathered; then into the hands of a mob-militia, sent by authority to destroy his people, who condemn him to be shot in the presence of his family; delivered from that peril to be dragged to a loathsome prison in chains for weary months; escaping thence to be harassed with malicious and vexatious lawsuits arising from false accusations; now betrayed by false brethren; now kidnapped by his old enemies; and at last murdered with his brother Hyrum in cold blood, while under the protection of the Governor of the sovereign State of Illinois, who had plighted the faith of the State for his protection.

In the midst of all these cares and sufferings he was organizing the Church; bringing into existence and setting in order the quorums of the priesthood of God; sending elders to preach the Gospel to the world without purse or scrip; founding cities, building temples, translating ancient records, laboring in season and out of season for the general good of the children of men.

In all these labors he was seconded by the first elders who had shared with him the miraculous manifestations of heaven, to declare which was the cause of all this toil, danger and suffering. They

wandered from city to city and from land to land with the miraculous story. Enduring scorn, revilings, abuse, and not unfrequently personal violence, and sometimes death; until in comparison the toils and sufferings of Whitfield and Wesley, together with all other reformers since the days of Jesus and His apostles, pale into insignificance. And even to this day the same spirit of intolerance follows the footsteps of those who believe the miraculous story on which "Mormonism" is founded.

All the conditions laid down, then, by Mr. Paley are fulfilled in "Mormonism;" and in this particular feature of his argument the Doctor would find as much to convince him of the truth of "Mormonism" as he would of the truth of primitive Christianity.

We would remind our readers, in conclusion, that the miracles upon which the new dispensation called "Mormonism" is founded, are of such a character that the witnesses could not be mistaken. What they declare they saw and heard must be true, and they are honored servants of God, or else they are the vilest wretches that ever lived and conspired to destroy the souls of men. If any one shall choose to believe the latter is the truth concerning them, then he must also believe them to be—"villains for no end but to teach honesty, and martyrs without the least prospect of honor or advantage."

Truth is a gem that is found at a great depth; whilst on the surface of this world, all things are weighed by the false scales of custom.—*Byron*.

Some men think that the gratification of curiosity is the end of knowledge; some the love of fame; some the pleasure of dispute; some the necessity of supporting themselves by their knowledge; but the real use of all knowledge is this, that we should dedicate that reason which was given us by God to the use and advantage of man.—*Bacon*.

## THE MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM IMPENDING EVILS

By Elder Charles A. Callis, President Southern States Mission

(Address delivered at 99th Semi-annual Conference)

In every dispensation the Lord has chosen men to lead and preserve Israel who were statesmen as well as prophets.



PREST. CHAS. A. CALLIS

This is deeply significant. These statesmen-prophets have pointed to nations as well as to the people of their own faith the means of escape from impending evils and calamities.

In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, that great statesman-prophet, nearly one hundred years ago, the Lord said:

Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments. (Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 1:17.)

That awful hurricane in Florida, four weeks ago today (Sunday, September 16) evidences the truth of the revelation in which it is declared by the Lord that the testimony of the elders would be followed by the testimony of earthquakes, and other events.

And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people.

For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes. \* \* \*

And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunders, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 88:88-91.)

Tennyson says that "things seen are mightier than things heard." I was a horrified eye witness of the ruin and desolation wrought by that fearful tempest. I beheld the hurrying floods going on to their