

THE MORMON'S MISTAKE

H. A. IRONSDIE

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OR

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

BY H. A. IRONSIDE

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The incident referred to in the following paper happened exactly as indicated, and the conversation is as nearly as possible given verbatim, though of course I have had to depend upon my memory, as I did not take notes; but I can assure the reader that this little tract is not fiction in any sense, but an actual statement of fact.

H. A. IRONSIDE.

ON one occasion there came to my door a young man dressed in the conventional, pseudo-clerical style that readily proclaimed, to one at all acquainted with the so-called Latter-day Saints, that he was a Mormon "elder"—though "younger" might be a more correct term, (1 Pet. v. 5) as scriptural elders were invariably men of years and experience,¹ who could care for the flock of God (1 Pet. v. 1-3), but were not to lord it over the people of God as over possessions.

In the case mentioned, the Mormon introduced himself as a "minister of the gospel, doing missionary work among the mountain towns" of California, and stated that he would be pleased to put before me some of "the principles of the gospel." Intimating that I myself was also seeking to give forth God's good news to poor sinners (1 Tim. i. 15), he was told that if such was indeed his object, I would be glad to converse with him; so bade him be seated.

The Mormon Gospel Stated

"And now, sir," he was asked, "would you kindly favor us" (a number were present) "with a short statement of what the gospel really is?"

"Certainly," he replied. "The gospel consists of four first principles. The first is repentance; the second, faith; the third, baptism for the remission of sins by one duly qualified; while the fourth is the laying on of the hands

¹See 1 Tim. iii. 2-7; noting, as shown in Titus i. 5-7, that "elder" and "bishop" are the same; the former word referring to the age of the man; the latter, to his office. As to all this, Mormonism is in dire confusion.

of a man having authority, for the reception of the Holy Ghost."

"Well, and supposing one has gone through all this, is he then saved?"

"Oh, of course, no one can know that, in this life. If one goes on to the end, he will be exalted in the kingdom." Thereupon he proceeded to open a little Testament, with which, however, he was but slightly familiar, and pointed us to some proof texts showing conclusively that the Lord and the apostles preached repentance and faith, as also that Peter spoke of "baptism for the remission of sins" (Acts ii. 38; let the reader carefully note the verse and its context), and that in at least two instances (Acts viii. 14-17; xix. 1-6) apostles laid their hands on people in order to their receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. An effort was also made to find a verse to prove that no one can know he is saved now; but in the face of Eph. ii. 4-8; 1 Pet. i. 9; 1 Cor. i. 8; 2 Cor. ii. 15; and 2 Tim. i. 9, this was an utter absurdity, though he pointed to Matt. xxiv. 13, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved," in defense of his position.

As to this, one need only say that endurance certainly is a proof of reality. One who said he was saved, yet did not endure, would thereby prove the emptiness of his profession.²

"I quite agree with you," I said, "as to the fact that Scripture speaks of the four points you mention; but, possibly, you did not understand my query. I asked you for a statement of the gospel. If these so-called 'four principles' be indeed the gospel, then you have a gospel without Christ; in other words, a gospel with the gospel omitted. And if you are correct, then surely the apostle Paul, at least, labored under a most serious delusion, for he gives us a clear statement of his gospel, and actually says nothing of either one or other of the various points upon which you have dwelt. No doubt you will recollect the passage?"

He did not, however. He was not aware of any such direct statement on the subject. In fact, it was soon evident that, with the exception of a few verses on his favorite themes, his Bible was practically a sealed book. He turned, however, at my direction, to the fifteenth chap-

²I would commend to the notice of the reader who has difficulty here, "Fallen from Grace; or, Castaway," by W. Barker: also, "The Perseverance of the Saints," by F. W. Grant, 5 cents each; to be had of Loizeaux Bros., 19 W. 21st St., New York City.

ter of 1st Corinthians, to which, for a little, I would invite the reader's careful attention.

Paul's Statement of the Real Gospel

Commencing at the first verse of this precious and wondrous portion of Scripture, we read: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you *the gospel which I preached* unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also *ye are saved*, if ye *keep in memory what I preached* unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures" (see Isa. liii. 5, 6); "and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that He was seen of Cephas," etc.

Here I stopped, as the rest of the passage is devoted to bringing forth the eye-witnesses of Christ in resurrection, and therefore could hardly be considered doctrinal; though the reader will derive much benefit by meditation on the entire portion at his leisure.

"Now," I said, turning to the Mormon, "we have here a statement of the gospel—the gospel which Paul preached; and it is dangerous to preach any other, as we find from Gal. i. 8, 9 that the person who does so, though it be an angel from heaven, is under a curse, or devoted to judgment. I understand that you teach that your gospel was revealed to Joseph Smith by an angel. If true, that would prove nothing, if it be found, upon examination, to be other than that proclaimed by the apostle to the Gentiles. His gospel had been received by the Corinthians; in it they stood; by it they were *saved*, if *real believers*. It was not, you will notice, a careful obedience to certain ordinances or a walking according to certain rules, such as you mentioned a few minutes ago, that would insure their salvation, however blessed such might be, if properly understood; but it was keeping in memory this gospel.

Two Gospels Contrasted

"I noticed, then, to begin with, that this gospel is *concerning a Person*, and quite a different person than yours brings before us. It is 'concerning the Son of God,' as Rom. i. 3 tells us. Your gospel did not have a word about Him in all its four points. The subject of Paul's gospel has not a word about any one or any thing save Him. Perhaps we might say it also could be divided into four heads, though more properly three; but even divided into

four (to go as far with you as we can), what marked differences do we find! Your four heads are all concerning the poor sinner, and might be put this way:

1. The sinner repents;
2. The sinner has faith;
3. The sinner is baptized;
4. The sinner has hands laid on him.

Now, in contrast to this, see how the true gospel can be put:

1. Christ died;
2. Christ was buried;
3. Christ has been raised again;
4. Christ is the object for the hearts of His own.

“Surely the two gospels have nothing in common. You teach, I believe, that Christ died for Adam’s transgression, not for ours; but maintain that while Adamic sin is met by the Cross, our sins as individuals must be washed away by baptism. Paul’s gospel tells us that He died for *our* sins; and if that be so, and ‘the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin,’ where does baptism in your sense apply? If *all* my sins are met by His precious blood, if they were borne ‘in His own body on the tree’ (1 Pet. ii. 24), how many are left to be cleansed by baptism? Assuredly none. But, alas, this is but one instance in which the false gospel of Mormonism is opposed to the precious gospel of the grace of God as revealed in the Bible.

“But I go on to the second point. Christ not only died, but ‘was buried’; yet it was written of Him, ‘Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption’ (Acts ii. 27; Psa. xvi. 10). His burial declares the reality of His death, and surely speaks of His being forever through with the place He took on earth. It is the end of all the relationships in which He previously stood, and tells us He is dead to the law—having paid my penalty—and to sin—not His own, but mine—which He bore, and I am ‘buried with Him by baptism unto death’; so that I am not left where Mormonism would leave me, as a poor, struggling soul on earth, striving to continue to the end in order to be saved, but I am accounted as one who, with Him, has been buried to it all: thus I am brought to the third point:

Christ was raised from the dead, and I am raised with Him. His place is now mine as to acceptance with God. ‘He was delivered for our offences and *raised again*

for our justification'; His resurrection being God's open declaration that the believer is cleared from all charge of sin, since his Substitute is released from death.

"And now the One who is alive forevermore (Rev. i. 18) is presented as an object for the hearts of His own. 'He was seen'; and the same apostle exclaims, in another place, 'We see Jesus!' (Heb. ii. 9). Poor sinners are first led to see the utter impossibility of improving or rendering themselves more fit for God's presence. The eye of faith is then directed to the One who died, in whom believing, they are 'justified from all things' (Acts xiii. 38, 39). Now they have also an object for the heart, even Christ in glory (2 Cor. iii. 18). How different this from what you have presented! Here,

'Tis Jesus first, 'tis Jesus last,
'Tis Jesus all the way,'

while you are cast entirely on yourself.

Mormon Doctrine of Authority

"But now, another question. You spoke of men with *authority* to baptize and lay on hands. Where do you get that in Scripture?"

For answer, he turned to Heb. v. 4, and read, "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

"What 'honor' is here referred to?" I asked.

"The honor of the priesthood giving authority to baptize and confer the Holy Ghost."

"No; the first verse contradicts this. It is not a question of the 'priesthood' at all. As *all* believers now are priests, there is no special priestly class in Christianity, as is clearly shown by referring to Rev. i. 6; and 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9. The subject in Heb. v. is that of *High Priesthood*, and is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, called of God, as noted in ver. 6. Nor is there a word about baptism or imposition of hands; but it is a question of 'offering gifts and sacrifices for sins' (ver. 1; also Heb. ii. 17), and then of succoring His people in this world of trial. To apply such a scripture to human ministry is simply 'handling the word of God deceitfully,' and deserves the severest censure."

Such was, in substance, what I sought to put before the misguided young man; but, alas, so deceitful is the human heart, that man would rather be occupied with *his* repentance, *his* faith, or *his anything*, than with God's Christ; and I found this preacher of "a different gospel,

which is not another" (Gal. i. 6, 7, margin), to be of the same class as thousands in professed Christendom. The scriptures brought before him had but little weight compared with "present-day revelation," despite the word of Paul in Col. i. 25 that he was made a minister "to fully preach the word of God" (margin); so he went on his way, trusting to his fleshly religion and ignoring the "gospel of God."

Ere dismissing the subject, I might remind the reader that neither faith nor repentance is ever presented in Scripture as the *ground* of salvation. The Cross alone is that. Brought to it by the Spirit of God, the sinner will indeed repent; trusting the work there accomplished, the soul is saved.

Nor are repentance and faith as set forth in the Scriptures to be confounded with the vagaries of Mormonism. In that wretched system repentance is confounded with penitence, and faith with credulity.

In its Biblical sense, repentance is self-judgment; the owning that one is lost and guilty, righteously deserving the wrath of a holy God. Faith is trusting in Christ, whose finished work puts away sins forever. It is not simply crediting the statement that God exists, or that the historical Jesus was the Son of God. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 9, 10).

Of you, reader, we would affectionately ask, Are you making the same mistake as the "elder?" You might ridicule the "poor, benighted Mormon," and be amazed at the semi-heathenism taught by his church, but do you, perhaps, trust in something just as hollow, when judged by the book of God?

Remember: penances; wrought-up repentance, consisting in peculiar frames, feelings, and renunciations; intellectual acquiescence to the truths of the Bible, miscalled faith; baptism, whether administered by Mormon elder or ordained clergyman; laying on of hands, or any other human rite or divinely prescribed ceremony, will avail nothing for you.

Christ, and Christ alone, is your only salvation. *Discarding all else, fly, then, to Him. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts xvi. 31).

NOTE ON MORMON DOCTRINES

In the preceding paper it has been my aim not to follow all the devious errors of Mormonism, and seek to refute them, but rather to endeavor to show how opposed the system is to the *gospel* of the glory of the blessed God, which He has revealed in His Word.

It has been suggested, however, that a brief epitome of some of the more important doctrines of the sect on other lines might be helpful in serving as a warning to any who, allured by fair speeches and sophistical reasonings, are drifting towards its awful vortex.

The following statements can readily be proven to be part of the weird paganism of this dreadful quasi-religious cult, by examination of the more "advanced" of their publications, though some of them are often denied by the traveling "elders," whose business it is not to alarm by making public the "depths of Satan," but to allure by presenting a creed as near like that of orthodox Christianity as possible. Nothing could be more misleading than the statement of the "doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" which is now being circulated by thousands all over the land as their "Articles of Faith." This was compiled by the assumed prophet Joseph Smith in the infancy of the movement, long before "present-day revelation" had introduced many of the vagaries with which it abounds to-day.

The leading doctrines accepted among them to-day are, briefly, as follows:

They profess to believe in the Bible, but also to gain additional "light" from the "Book of Mormon," a collection of rubbish which one but needs to scan to see its utter absurdity and incongruity with the word of God. "The Book of Doctrine and Covenants," purporting to be a series of revelations, chiefly to Joseph Smith, is also considered inspired, as is "The Pearl of Great Price," which includes "The Book of Abraham," and other apocryphal works; while "prophets" and "apostles" abound who may at any time give forth further communications, all of equal authority with these.

They are really polytheist, and believe that there are many gods, but that all (save possibly the first—as to this their statements are conflicting) were at one time men, but gained their "exaltation" to divinity by their faithfulness in this state. It is the hope of each man to become

a god eventually. Their gods are supposed to retain their human forms and functions, including sex.

It is in connection with this that polygamy comes in. This relationship is carried on eternally. The progeny of the gods and their numerous wives will constitute their "kingdom" in the ages to come. Woman's welfare depends on her being united to one of the faithful.

Instead of the Biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity, they teach that there are three distinct Gods, who administer the affairs of the universe. God and Christ are said to have human bodies, parts and passions; while the Holy Ghost is omnipresent and has no body. The Holy Spirit is different, like light or electricity, the life principle of creation.

The preceding paper has outlined their teaching as to the salvation of the living. They also publicly proclaim salvation for the dead, to whom their kind of "gospel" is being preached, and who can be saved if their friends on earth will be baptized for them.

As to eschatology, they have a system of prophetic teaching embodying an exceedingly carnal view of the Millennium, ushered in by the return of Christ to re-gather Israel, including the ten tribes, to a Zion in America (!), and to destroy all the enemies of "the saints." This Zion is identified with Independence, Mo. The dead will be raised, and will appear on the earth. Referring to this time, Parley Pratt says, in his "Voice of Warning," "Our father Adam will sit enthroned as the Ancient of Days," etc., ascribing the words of Dan. vii. 9, 10 to refer to him!

A final judgment will conclude all things; but few will be eternally lost. There are three "degrees of glory," terrestrial, celestial, and *telestial*. In one of these all will eventually be found, except the "sons of perdition."

Such a system needs no attempt at refutation. It refutes itself. No child of God, who has at all apprehended the Cross, could be ensnared by it; but it is because many unwary and simple ones, anxious to be saved, but ignorant of God's way, are daily being entrapped by it, that this paper has been penned.

The Lord use it to deliver many from such "abominable idolatries!" (1 Pet. iv. 5).

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