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How God Showed This Christian that the Mormon Church is Founded on the Real Christ

September 2011 by Cal Fullerton

The Curse of Denominationalism

I was raised in a traditional Protestant church in Vermont. However, I didn't come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ until I reached the age of twenty-four. That was when I encountered charismatic Christians in Tennessee.

After becoming a Christian I began looking back and realized I had been cheated by that traditional Protestant church. Many of its members were born-again, yet they never taught us to "expect a miracle," as Oral Roberts would put it. They didn't encourage anyone to operate the "charismatic" gifts of the Spirit such as supernatural languages or prophecy. They didn't teach us how to receive physical healing through faith in the name of Jesus. Nor did they demonstrate the value of getting caught up in praising God. They didn't exhibit enough of the joy of the Lord to convince me it was in my best interest to become a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, after becoming a Christian and joining the charismatic movement, I looked back with a grain of bitterness toward the old church. I reasoned that if they had demonstrated the full gospel or simply told us of other churches that did, perhaps I would have become a Christian sooner. In later years I repented of my bitterness, but **I learned a lesson at the time that I did not want to forget. I never again was going to limit myself to one denomination or get trapped into denominational traditions.** I thought, If there is still another even better movement out there somewhere, I'm not going to miss it.

I began to develop habits which would guard me against false teachings. One of the first I adopted was to compare all teachings to the Bible before accepting them.

In 1983, a month after becoming a follower of Jesus, I was terminated from my job as a radio announcer in Tennessee and had to relocate. After moving to Virginia I deliberately used plenty of time shopping for a new home church. Curious about why there were so many different denominations, I visited at least eight churches, some many times. I found this experience illuminating. When I recognized that each church had its own strengths and weaknesses, I decided that if I soaked in the strengths of each while resisting the influence of their weaknesses I would grow into a more mature and balanced believer.

One consistent fact was found. In every place of fellowship, the beliefs of the regular attendees matched their pastor's. If the pastor emphasized certain truths so did his flock. If the pastor taught on a particular topic in an imbalanced fashion, his flock was also out of balance. One reason for this is that they are continually listening to their pastor and continuously fellowshiping with those who believe the same.

If you listen to something long enough you tend to believe it whether it's true or not. The Communists understood this concept. They forced prisoners to listen for hours to recordings of propaganda that said, "Communism is good. Communism is good. Christianity is bad. Christianity is bad."

The unique spiritual flavor of your home church can become so fixedly branded on your mind that other Christian worship centers become unacceptably strange and foreign. Azusa Street Revival leader Frank Bartleman wrote, "Most movements go 'round a circle. They wear a rut so deep they cannot see out."¹

Seventh-day Adventists

One of the first places I visited was a Seventh-day Adventist church. The pastor gladly came to my apartment once a week so I could drill him with questions.

As a brand new believer I wanted to be like the Bereans—they "examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). Knowing my desires, after each of my questions, the pastor would momentarily and thoughtfully squint at the wall, during which time verses would pop out of his memory. Then he would tell me to read them. He let the Bible answer my questions.

However, his view that the Sabbath (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday) should still be observed today wouldn't settle in my heart. One Saturday I

tried it. I stayed at home. I turned down going out with friends because I didn't want to encourage any restaurants to stay open, thus requiring someone to work. (If you're going to test something you might as well go all the way.) However, I didn't sense the Holy Spirit's pleasure with my actions (or lack of actions!). I later learned why—the Sabbath law was “a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ” (Col. 2:17).

It fascinated me that a fine Christian like that pastor who knew God's Word so well, could be so deceived on that one issue. I discovered how easily a person—even a whole denomination—can be wrong on a few issues while being right on most. I locked this knowledge in my mind.

We tend to think a belief system is either all from Jesus or all false. But the reality is that the teachings of all Christian persuasions or sectors are never perfectly crystalline. **All places of worship are run by imperfect leaders who see the Father imperfectly—as if they “were peering at his reflection in a poor mirror” (1 Cor. 13:12 LB).**

Meeting Mormons

During the same period I also had a series of meetings with missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) of Salt Lake City, Utah. Although they were neat, mannerly, and well-dressed, predominant and pervading rumors about them caused me to regard them with great suspicion from the start. I quickly learned that they indeed carried some very bizarre ideas. And their efforts to convert me implied that I did not already have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

They asked me to read the Book of Mormon, a book they used as scripture along with the Bible. Then they asked me to ask the Holy Spirit to tell me if it was true. That was reasonable, I thought. James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God.” The fact that the Mormons mentioned James 1:5, didn't mean the verse wasn't true! I decided to attempt to be totally objective and open-minded.

So, after settling in at home that night, with fear and trembling I dared to open the Book of Mormon. However, after reading two sentences, I closed it. I thought I heard the Spirit of God tell me it was a counterfeit. I knew Satan imitated God. I thought, This book looks and sounds way too much like the Bible—it must be Satan's imitation.

The Book of Mormon was put on paper in the late 1820s. The style of English is similar to that of the King James Bible—there are phrases like, “Behold, it came to pass. . . .” The text appears in two columns, is organized in verses identified with numbers, and above all, it has profound truths that coincide with the Bible.

I told a separate set of missionaries at a later series of meetings that the devil wrote the Book of Mormon. After that, they became more suspicious of me than I was of them! Telling a Latter-day Saint that the devil wrote the Book of Mormon is like telling a Christian that the devil wrote the Bible.

When the missionaries I spoke of earlier used 1 Corinthians to support one of their doctrines, I did what I had committed myself to do years earlier—the Berean thing—I studied the verses carefully by myself. Without the “salesmen” around I could think more clearly. . . . Without a doubt, they were twisting the Bible. Upon that discovery, I made a decision that the Mormon Church was a satanic trap designed to divert people from accepting the true gospel.

“Don’t Cut Off Contact”

After the last of my meetings with those missionaries, I drove home with various emotions. The beams of my car’s headlights and the darkness encompassing them ominously matched my emotions. On one hand I had been blessed by their apparent concern for my welfare. I felt warmed, as if relatives were disappearing down the highway after a few days’ visit.

I also felt sorrow that these decent people had no idea how deceived they were, that hell instead of bliss was ahead for them. A third emotion was relief that their pressure to make me into a Mormon had ended. Still a fourth emotion was a pride or a satisfaction that I was strong enough not to give in to their subtle push.

In the midst of these mixed feelings, I sincerely wanted to know where to go from here. While driving home, I asked God how he wanted me to react to Mormons I would meet in the future. Do you want me to shun them? Both the quickness and method of God’s response surprised me. He spoke not just with a heart impression but with words. The gist of it was: “Don’t join them, but don’t cut off all contact with them.”

To be 100 percent sure it was God who had spoken, I rationally tested the words, analyzing them from every possible angle. But I couldn’t talk myself out of the sense of knowing that I had in my spirit—it was God.

Having established that, the next step was asking myself why God said what he did. I thought the reason was quite obvious. God loves Mormons, wants them saved, and may want to use me to help them find the real Jesus. Not until years later would I realize the full reason God didn't want me to cut off all contact with them.

Strange Kinship

It wasn't long before I had a chance to apply the Lord's instructions. A couple Mormons happened to drop into the front office of the radio station where I worked. I was deliberately congenial. They returned my cordiality with equal enthusiasm even though at least one of them was one who had tried unsuccessfully to convert me. No indication of bitterness on his part.

Strangely, I felt a kinship with them.

Again, I wondered why. The answer I gave myself was that although they didn't know the Lord, they did enjoy talking about the contents of the Bible. And even during this brief encounter I noted a contrast between them and the secretary in the front office. **The unsaved secretary was uncomfortable with the topic of Christ; the Mormons weren't.**

Impostors

In the meantime, God began to reveal to me that there is no neutral ground regarding salvation—no in-between, no fence to sit on.

Luke 11:23 [Jesus speaking]
He who is not with me is against me.

Mark 9:40 [Jesus again]
Whoever is not against us is for us.

Then I realized that if the Latter Day Saints are against Christ, they would not be ordinary unbelievers. Since they claim to be for Christ, they would be hypocrites. The word hypocrite in Greek means "play-actor." They would be pretenders, actors.

Hypocrites are worse than ordinary non-Christians. They are even worse than witches of the occult. By claiming to represent God and living like the

devil, they give God a bad reputation, scaring away potential new Christians. Not only that but they ought to know better. They know the Word of God.

This is why Jesus was so hard on the hypocritical teachers of the Law. He publicly rebuked them in no uncertain terms, calling them sons of hell, sons of vipers, blind guides, fools, snakes, and dressed-up tombs (Matt. 23).

I wondered why I hadn't heard anyone call the Mormon Church hypocritical. It seemed people quietly whispered their condemnation rather than proclaiming from rooftops that they are vipers in disguise.

I believe God had to allow me to take a step backward in order to take me forward. I decided I would pick up the boldness the body of Christ lacked. I blazoned to five or six fellow Christians that the Mormon Church is today's version of the wicked Pharisees. Most of them looked at me as if I were overstepping my bounds. Yet, they wouldn't defend the Mormons either. This irritated me. I wanted to say, "Take a stand! If Mormons are against Christ, then call them hypocrites; if they are for Christ, then defend them as your brothers and sisters in the Lord." It's like the poster that says, "DO SOMETHING! Either lead, follow, or get the heck out of the way."

A Friend's Witness

Approximately a year after becoming a Christian and after visiting the spectrum of churches in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, I decided to make the First Assembly of God my home church. Later on, the youth pastor of my church condemned Mormonism during a special series on his radio programs. I was fully in support of his action.

In reaction to the programs, a Mormon wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. She calmly, sweetly, and graciously explained that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was a Christian church and that our youth pastor was uninformed. The letter touched and convinced my best friend, who showed it to me and suggested earnestly that the LDS was Christian.

I said, "Oh, no, I'm afraid not." However, I didn't say much more because I realized I wasn't prepared to prove they weren't. This friend was the only non-Mormon, prior to my revelation, who ever suggested to me that the LDS was Christian.

In time, despite my guarding against a denominational attitude, I became increasingly cozy in my Assembly of God church. I started imagining that

God's main focus of attention was on our worship center and Christians of other worship centers in our little town ought to straighten up, obey the Lord, and join our church. If someone from another place of fellowship told me what wonderful things God was doing among their members, I had mixed feelings about it. I didn't share their joy wholeheartedly.

Oneness Pentecostals

About this time I visited a Oneness Pentecostal church, which I knew only by their slang name—"Jesus Only." (They rejected the Trinitarian three-in-one formula and stated that God is one, and Jesus is that one.) Their worship was twice as exuberant as ours. They did more than dance. They would jerk their bodies around—apparently under the power of the Spirit. I had heard of Holy Rollers. Now I felt I was close to seeing some!

Yet someone there with whom I became acquainted was one of the most Spirit-filled persons I'd ever met—gentle, kind, humble, and one who prayed for many hours a day. I became torn with confusion about how Oneness Pentecostals could be so different from us at the Assembly of God while at the same time seem to have a close relationship with Jesus. I've since learned that as we come in contact with the various streams in the body of Christ we have to be constantly alert to keep confusion from plaguing us. Some have become so caught up in confusion that they have fallen through the cracks in Christ's fragmented body, losing their faith altogether.

Realizing that your home church is not as perfect as you once thought it was can be a rude jolt, shaking your faith to its foundations. When this happens, let the quaking shake off what is not of God and cling tightly to the cornerstone of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord, like a solid rock, will serve as a preventive for falling away due to spiritual dizziness. We must stay close to him or the enemy will deceive us one way or the other.

God also confirmed to me that the devil builds denominational walls in the same way he breaks up personal relationships—with such evils as bitter arguments, unforgiveness, pride, jealousy, slander, and gossip.

Gossip, for example, builds division by decreasing unfairly the quality of the image we have of another denomination. When I hear unkind words about a church, it's usually a half-truth or an exaggeration. Even if it's true, my image of the church is left distorted unless I also hear about their strong points.

This spiritual person from the “Jesus Only” camp, being isolated in her little room of our Father's big house, knew about my church only through the grapevine. She sincerely thought we believed in three separate gods: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!

This underlines the fact that if we want the truth about another place of worship, we must ultimately go directly to the leaders of that group.

We also must consult our Father in heaven. “It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man” (Ps. 118:8). God once relayed a message through a friend of mine to the two of us. She saw it written on a scroll in a vision. It read:

My children, many times you will come to a path which forks and you will not know which way to turn. Do not turn to other people for answers. Do not turn to the world for answers. Turn to me and I will set your feet upon the path that will lead to me. For I am your Lord.
(August 28, 1985.)

A Book Heightens Suspicions

While in Virginia I also substantially increased my Bible meditation and prayer time, which enabled me to hear God’s voice more distinctly. When I arrived at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1986, I heard a popular minister, Larry Lea, encouraging us to pray for one hour per day. I felt no guilt—I already was!

In Oklahoma I visited more Christian churches, and after moving to Rock Hill, South Carolina, still more. In South Carolina I started reading a book about cults. One chapter was on the Latter-day Saints.

At that time I read practically nothing but the Bible and books by Kenneth E. Hagin. Kenneth Hagin was full of the Spirit. By 1988 more than three million of his eighty-plus books were being distributed annually,² and for good reason—they’re scrumptiously inspirational.

I seldom read second-rate Christian books or secular material. The Holy Spirit liked my reading habits and if I began to read something with a mediocre anointing he quickly let me know. This chapter on the Mormon Church was mediocre. I was eager to read it but when I started to read it I sensed that the Holy Spirit was not impressed with it. I didn’t understand why.

Eventually, I compromised—I skimmed it.

I also decided to begin again from scratch in judging the LDS. I scanned the pages for evidence that the Church was or was not Christian. Learning that their founder, Joseph Smith, liked to dig for treasure when he was young didn't help me at all! I just wanted to know if the message of today's Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints drew people to a personal relationship with Jesus.

The question that came to mind was: Do they believe he is the Christ, the Son of the living God? My Bible indicated this was an identifying question: "If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God" (1 John 4:15). The anti-Mormon chapter didn't even mention the question, much less the answer!

I became suspicious. I must have felt like reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein as they investigated the scandalous Watergate cover-up of the 1970s. The book did make Latter-day Saints look unchristian by detailing many of their false beliefs, but it failed to address that vital question. If the organization is not Christian, I thought, this book does a poor job of proving it.

I knew I should not base my judgment on this book alone. Like a common practice of secular media, the book might take quotes from LDS publications out of context. It might also neglect to mention their biblical teachings. All this would provide an overall false impression. The check I had in my spirit as I read encouraged me to suspect foul play. I thought, If I really want to know what Mormons believe, I need to ask the Mormons themselves. That's elementary.

Seek And You Will Find

I was following the presence of God, not human beings. I was asking God every day for wisdom and searched for it like it was more valuable than gold—because it is!

Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

Because I prayed and searched diligently for revelation I began to get some. My Father was putting a puzzle together for me piece by piece.

While attending Oral Roberts University I heard a story that illustrated God's faithfulness to give to those who search. The nearby Arkansas River overran its banks, flooding the apartment community where I lived. This forced everyone to evacuate—a new and bewildering experience for me, having been raised at a safe elevation on Vermont's rolling green mountains crisscrossed by harmless creeks and brooks. The school herded everyone into its gymnasium where for hours we had little to do but talk.

The wife of a seminary student said she had prayed earnestly and persistently to be used by God to heal people miraculously. Her dream became reality one day when she laid hands on the ankle of someone's abnormally short leg. She could feel the leg lengthening under her fingers.

She had received her God-given desire because she asked for it and searched for it diligently.

Luke 11:9

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Whatever Is Good

After moving back to New England in 1987, I looked for the best charismatic church in the area and settled into one that seemed to fulfill the description. I also visited the traditional church I had been raised in. I didn't know that the Lord was about to lay another stepping stone before me.

I waited for the Spirit of God to tell me which worship center to attend regularly. He seemed to be happy for me to attend both. His presence was stronger at the contemporary church—because of the praise and worship, I presumed. So most Sundays I attended the charismatic church. But by also fellowshiping on a weekday with the more traditional Christians I could play a small part in bridging a denominational gap. This also helped open my mind to imbalances among charismatics. Someone said if you want to know about water don't ask a fish—it has never compared it to land.

At first, it was difficult to sit through the traditional service without concentrating on deficiencies and defects. The pew seats were hard. The sermons were monotonous—they were packed with scholarly words and long sentences. I had become accustomed to a more enthusiastic style with flamboyant fluctuations in volume.

There was no time allotted for testimonies from ordinary people. No prophecies or words of knowledge. No miracles or expectation of them. No raising of hands or prolonged praise times.

However, after the services I noticed something significant—by concentrating on negatives, I had short-circuited the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart. Realizing this, I pressured myself to grow in positive thinking.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

If God tells us to focus on positives you can bet Satan will do the opposite. He will make us negative, scornful, and cynical. Our old natures naturally lean in that direction.

Also, negativity makes it harder to see through God's eyes. I think some imagine that if you focus too much on positives you won't see what the devil is doing and he'll be able to deceive you. But it's just the opposite. The more you focus on positives—the truth of God—the more God sheds light on the schemes and lies of the enemy.

When I looked for positives, I had to admit there were some. The pastor's sermons were biblical, Christ-centered, and uncompromising. Seven years prior, God had given this fundamental church the insight to break away from the denomination they were associated with to avoid slippage toward liberalism. I was reminded that hand raising, drum beats, and spiritual gifts such as supernatural languages, although valuable, are not of the greatest importance.

1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:1, 13 NLT

Let me show you a way of life that is best of all. If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. . . . Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

Through all these experiences the Lord Jesus Christ had renewed and readied my mind for an exciting discovery.

A Revelation

In the fall of 1987 I visited the Joseph Smith Memorial in South Royalton, Vermont. Joseph Smith founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints in 1830 (originally named "The Church of Jesus Christ"). Before I drove onto the property I hesitated. I remembered someone once saying, "Don't go onto the devil's territory."

But was it really the devil's territory? How would I ever know if I never ventured in? Curiosity won. I decided to trust the Lord's guidance.

The hosting woman was amicable, considerate, and warm. Her face seemed to emit the purity of God. Jesus' words in Matthew came to mind: "You'll know them by their fruit."

She led me on a tour of rooms containing drawings, inscriptions, artifacts, exhibits, and sculpture. I decided to try an experiment. I would pretend my mind was a clean slate, and instead of looking for negatives, I would do what God had trained me to do at that old traditional church—concentrate on the good I could find—if there was any.

In one room my hostess seated me on what I recall was a replica of an antique wooden bench. The empty bench on which I sat reminded me that no other guests were in the room. I was receiving personal attention.

Then she opened a curtain revealing a statue of Joseph Smith. My heart sank as she told me he was a prophet whom God used to restore the true church of Jesus Christ to the earth. It was difficult for me to imagine how the LDS could be Christian while they lift a corrupt man up so high. But I forced myself to be responsible. I asked myself, Has the Holy Spirit told you Joseph Smith was not a man of God? I answered, No, I can't honestly say that the Spirit is telling me he was not a man of God. So I put that issue on a shelf for later.

As we moved into the next room, my LDS hostess explained a painting on the wall depicting the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. She told me Jesus is the Son of God. I kept my facial expression steady, but in my spirit my mouth dropped wide open and my feet jumped up and down. The book on cults never informed me of that!

No wonder the book bypassed the issue—if you're trying to convince someone that the Mormon Church is not Christian, the fact that they honor Jesus as the Son of God is not going to lend to your purpose! First John says, "If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God" (4:15).

Now that I was fellowshiping with various kinds of Christians, burying my nose in the Word of God, praying in tongues intermittently throughout each

day, praying in English more than ever, and free from enough fear and cynicism so that I could see the Church somewhat objectively, God was able to begin to pull back the veil of deception from my eyes!

As the woman and I walked through the other rooms she told me of doctrines which I knew to be false. I asked myself, **Would these falsehoods contradict or cancel out a saving faith in Jesus? The Holy Spirit made it clear they would not.**

Cautious Excitement

As I left the Joseph Smith Memorial I was excited but determined to be careful with the revelation. Kenneth E. Hagin said, "If you receive a revelation from God, prove it out first before you start preaching or teaching it. Don't proclaim it until you prove that it's in line with the Word and with experience."³

So I studied the claims of critics who insisted—usually by implication—that the Mormon Church fell short of Christianity. I investigated every criticism of the Church to see if or to what extent the accusations were accurate. Then I compared the Mormon falsehoods with the Bible's prescription for salvation.

My excitement was due in part to the realization that the body of Christ was a wee bit larger than I had been assuming! I didn't know what percentage of Mormons were actually saved, and I knew Christians were still a minority on a narrow path, but God would have that much more fruit to harvest at the return of his Son! I was happy for God as well as honored that he had given me such a significant revelation.

I also became acquainted with many more Latter-day Saints who, even though they adhered to all the unbiblical teachings of their organization, had Jesus living in their hearts.

Five years later I met my wife-to-be, Helen, who was to receive the same prophetic insight.

God had opened a hatch in a denominational wall so thick that even peepholes were rare. He had uncovered one of Satan's most successful underground operations to keep Christians divided. Hordes of evil spirits must have been squealing with fury!

¹ Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1980), 165.

² R. M. Riss, "Hagin, Kenneth E." Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements. ed. Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee and Patrick H. Alexander. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993. 345.

³ Kenneth E. Hagin, How God Taught Me About Prosperity (Tulsa: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1985), 23.

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