

Chapter 14

Christianity and the Mysteries

Early Christianity and the Restoration

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims to be the restoration of the early Christian Church. In fact, a book called *Offenders for a Word* and many other scholarly LDS writings have established the truth of that claim. Fundamentalist Christians though deny that Mormons are Christian. As mentioned, the name “Mormon” comes from the name of the prophet who compiled the Book of Mormon around A.D. 385. As explained, it is an ancient Mesoamerican book. It is a Jewish/Christian scripture that was written in reformed Egyptian upon thin metal sheets (probably gold alloyed with copper).

Now, if the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the restored Christian Church, it should have the doctrines and ordinances of the first century Church. Chapter 8 documented that the Christian Church reached a state of complete apostasy during the sixth century, and by that time many of its sacred doctrines and ordinances were lost. This means that these original doctrines and ordinances are not present in Catholic or Protestant churches.^{1 2}

Some of the doctrines and ordinances that were lost are: men can become gods, three degrees of heaven, the chance to accept the gospel in the afterlife, baptism for the dead, temple endowments, temple marriage (eternal marriage), and the Melchizedek Priesthood, which includes the authority to perform baptism for the remission of sins. Although some claim that the LDS temple rites were derived from Masonic ritual, those claims have since been proven to be false. In fact, there is good evidence that the LDS temple rites were practiced, in one form or another, in ancient Judaism and early Christianity.^{3 4}

The Knights Templar and their Influence

Next, the history of the warrior monks known as the Templars, who came to power in the twelfth century A.D., will be addressed. The ancient Jewish priests practiced esoteric rituals that were eventually practiced by the early Christians, the Knights Templar (Knights of the Temple), the Masons, the Rosicrucians, and the members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. These ancient Jewish temple secrets probably originated with revelations given to Adam, Abraham, and Moses, and in part from Egypt. The Templars learned such magical secrets in part from the Sufis and also from other sects such as the Johannites (a Gnostic sect in Jerusalem). The ancient Christian mysteries were probably preserved in records hidden beneath the temple of Herod around A.D. 67.

Historical evidence suggests that the Knights Templar found those records beneath the Temple Mount along with great treasures in the early twelfth century during the Crusades. It seems that they knew where to find them because they were descendants of the Jewish priests who had buried these treasures before fleeing to Europe around A.D. 67. The Crusades thus allowed them to return to Jerusalem and gain possession of the records and treasures. This claim is supported by the fact that the Templars gained great wealth during the twelfth century. In fact, the Copper Scroll, which was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, states that records and treasures were hidden beneath the Temple Mount.

It seems that there were originally nine Templar knights who went to Jerusalem under the guise of protecting pilgrims. Yet, according to some researchers, there is little historical evidence that they did so. Instead, it seems that they arrived in Jerusalem and then began to excavate under the Temple Mount—a claim that is supported by the discovery around the end of the nineteenth century of Templar artifacts in tunnels beneath the mount. Thus the fact that after the Templars went to Jerusalem the Catholic Church accused them of heresy is evidence that they found secret teachings. Indeed, if they found such records, the Templar clerics would have been able to read and interpret them.^{5 6}

The Western Mystery Tradition

Magick has a long history that must be understood. It involved the Jewish Cabala, alchemy, and the medieval rituals of the Knights Templar—magickal wisdom, much of which, along with that of many Magickal Orders, can be traced back to ancient Egypt. For instance, Rosicrucianism was founded by Pharaoh Thutmose III and was then taught by his grandson Akhenaton, and by King Solomon, as well.⁷ The Essenes also practiced Rosicrucianism, as did Leonardo da Vinci and Benjamin Franklin, and not surprisingly, Masonry and the Golden Dawn are connected with it, as well.^{8 9}

One thing most Mystery Schools have in common, along with certain modern Christians, such as Mormons and Bahá'í's, is sacred temples and their rites. Mormonism and its temple rites can be traced back to early Christianity when it was still involved with the Qumran Essene community. This shows the importance of temples.

The Essene community practiced the Egyptian Mysteries that were handed down to them from Moses. The Jewish mysteries were later obtained by the Knights Templar during the crusades after which they were brought back to Europe. There they were later incorporated into Masonry and other European Mystery Schools.¹⁰ The Jewish Cabalistic mystery tradition is thus connected with Ancient Egypt. It is believed that an angel gave the Cabala to Adam as he left the Garden of Eden. Later, Abraham and then Moses (as an Egyptian prince) were initiated into its mysteries.¹¹

The Essenes, Early Christianity, and Mormonism

Now, there is a connection between the early Jerusalem Church and the Essenes. This history helps to show that Mormonism is the restoration of early Christianity. The Jews rebelled in 167 B.C. after Antiochus IV defiled the Jewish temple. This was the Maccabean Revolt, which lasted until 142 B.C.¹² During this period, in 152 B.C., Alexander Balas raised Jonathan Maccabaeus up as high priest of the Jews.¹³ Then, between 152 and 142 B.C., the Zadokite priests and keepers of the Mysteries left Jerusalem and formed Qumran in the desert near Jerusalem, under the leadership of the "Teacher of Righteousness."¹⁴ These priests were the descendants of Zadok, who was the first Jewish high priest over the temple at the time of King Solomon. After the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity, the Zadokites alone had the divine right to officiate in the temple (Ezekiel 40:46; 44:10-16). In fact, they had unbroken control of the priesthood until 152 B.C. After that, the true priesthood no longer ran the temple. Instead, it was officiated by a false priesthood made up of Hasmoneans.¹⁵

According to the apocryphal Book of Maccabeus, this new priesthood was both popular with the people and of Jewish design. The Essenes though taught that the Hasmoneans had usurped

the priesthood.¹⁶ This false priesthood lasted until 35 B.C. when it was overthrown by King Herod the Great.

So, who hid the treasures beneath the Temple Mount? To answer this, it must be understood that in the fall of A.D. 67 the Zealots took the city of Jerusalem and the temple, after the righteous Essenes had fled the land of Judea in obedience to Luke 21:20-23. Thus the Essene leaders buried the records and treasures before this. This history is confirmed in *The Hiram Key* by Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, which links the Essenes with the Nazarenes, the Qumran community, and the early Jerusalem Church.¹⁷

Furthermore, the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm that the Jews at Qumran became Christians. This is because the scrolls seem to refer to Jesus and the New Testament. For instance, one scroll implies that at some point the Essene community had accepted Jesus as the crucified Messiah. And another scroll states things like “Son of God” that was New Testament terminology, not Jewish. But this is not all. Other fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls seem to be quotes from the New Testament.¹⁸

The next two paragraphs thus explain connections between the Essenes of Qumran and Mormonism. The next paragraph gives a list of religious practices that occurred at Qumran. The paragraph after it documents that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also has the same religious practices:

There is evidence that the Essenes at Qumran: built a temple; practiced temple ordinances;¹⁹ wore white ceremonial clothing; practiced baptism as a necessity for membership; were led by a council of three and secondarily by a council of twelve; practiced a communal order; and had a higher priesthood (the “order of the Melech Zedek”) and a lower priesthood (the “order of Aaron”).^{20 21 22}

Does any of this sound familiar? Jesus taught repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, organized a council of twelve, and his early followers practiced a communal order (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32). Indeed, Mormons also have all of these beliefs, ordinances, and councils—including a council of three (called the First Presidency). The Mormon Church is even officiated by a higher priesthood called the Melchizedek Priesthood, and Jesus was a high priest after “the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 6:20). The LDS Church also has a lower priesthood called the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood. As you can see, the names of these two priesthoods are surprisingly similar to the names of the two priesthoods of Qumran.

There is even evidence that Jesus, Joseph, and Mary were Essenes.²³ Dr. M. D. Magee in *Similarities and Differences between Jesus and the Essenes* has answered attacks on this idea.²⁴ Many of the differences between Christianity and the Essenes were because Jesus had the authority to reform not just the Law of Moses but also the Essene community.²⁵ The Essene community though was quite diverse. Differences in beliefs and ordinances existed among them.

Qumran was a strict monastery for celibate men. Some scholars claim that it was not an Essene organization, since it has a graveyard with children and women buried in it. It is mistakenly believed by these scholars that Essenes would normally have nothing to do with children. But the truth is that there were actually large Essene communities with children and women. The Essene headquarters was on Mount Carmel near Nazareth. This is where the headquarters of the Bahá’í Faith are today. Like other Essene communities, this one had men, women, and children and less restrictive rules.

Jesus lived in northern Israel at the Essene village called Nazareth. John the Baptist though lived in southern Israel at the Essene community called Qumran. John 1:31-33 says that John right before he baptized Jesus did not recognize him. This is because it had been a long time since they had seen one another.²⁶ In fact, most of the events Jesus was involved in that are recorded in the Gospels took place in northern Israel far from Qumran.

John the Baptist lived in the desert where he preached repentance and baptism. Since he grew up in the desert (Luke 1:80), there must have been others there with him, for he could not have survived at a young age on his own. Tradition says that John was baptizing people in the Jordan River near the Dead Sea and Qumran, which was in the desert. These facts suggest that he lived at Qumran.

Now, at the time of Jesus, there were two principle Jewish sects besides the Essenes. They were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. And while they are mentioned in the New Testament, the Essenes are not.²⁷ Thus since Jesus is judgmental of the Sadducees and Pharisees and yet makes no direct mention of the Essenes suggests that there was nothing to condemn concerning them. It turns out that the Essenes of Qumran were awaiting a final Teacher of Righteousness, a Messiah, at the end of a Naros cycle.

After the crucifixion, Jesus' brother James the Just was the bishop of Jerusalem. Then, after an uprising in Jerusalem, James was killed, and the Jerusalem Church was then wiped out. The fact that many Essenes became Christian and accepted the authority of the Jerusalem Church was not documented until after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Now we have evidence that early Christianity was more like Mormonism than it was like Evangelical Christianity.

Gnosticism, the Nag Hammadi Texts, and the Pseudepigrapha

In 1945, near Nag Hammadi, Egypt, a farmer accidentally discovered fifty-two ancient Gnostic Christian texts, which date to the fourth century A.D. and include "lost gospels." The Gnostic Faith existed before the time of Christ in various forms (some of which were quite erroneous). It was derived from the Greek mysteries, certain Eastern teachings, and from Jewish mysticism. Many Gnostics even believed that a savior would come, and they recognized Jesus Christ when he came (unlike the Jewish leaders). Some Gnostic Christians even claimed to have records of secret teachings that Jesus gave to some disciples.^{28 29}

The truth is that Gnosticism was a major movement in Christianity up until the beginning of the Catholic Church. Many Gnostics were even prominent Christian leaders. Still, critics claim that none of the Gnostic texts are authentic accounts of the teachings of Jesus and that none of them were written by any of the true apostles. Yet there is reason to believe that perhaps some of them are authentic.³⁰ This is because Irenaeus wrote in A.D. 180 that many Gnostic Gospels were widely known and accepted (from Gaul to Asia Minor). Thus this means that the Gnostic writings he was referring to were written no later than about A.D. 120-150. There are also many other ancient "lost books of the Bible" besides the Nag Hammadi texts. These other lost books are called the Pseudepigrapha, but they will not be discussed any further in this book.³¹

It was actually not until the late second century that a canon of New Testament scripture was formed. And then, after that, all other scriptural writings were first discouraged, and then in time, systematically destroyed. The early Gnostic Christians traced their teachings back to the apostles (Peter, Mark, Paul, Matthew, Thomas, etc.). Many teachings in the Nag Hammadi texts support the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Those teachings suggest that early Christianity was more like Mormonism than it was like Fundamentalist Christianity.³²

Indeed, orthodox Christianity did not exist during the first century. Although many Christians did teach Christ's public teachings during the late first century, there were also many Gnostic Christians, who knew what Christ had taught to some disciples in secret after his resurrection.³³ However, beginning with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus during the second century, an orthodox Christianity unlike the original was carved from Jesus Christ's public teachings. His private Gnostic teachings though were misunderstood and suppressed mainly because they contained a lot of information that was symbolic but instead was taken literally.^{34 35}

Paul and Gnosticism

Few people know that many early Gnostic Christians claimed that Paul had taught them secret teachings. The fact that some of Paul's teachings are Gnostic certainly supports this claim. Valentinus, a prominent Christian, was initiated into the Gnostic mysteries by Theodus who was himself initiated by Paul. In fact, Paul wrote his epistles to seven churches that taught Gnostic Christianity. During the second century, these churches were led by a Gnostic Christian named Marcion, who claimed to follow the teachings of Paul. Indeed, the oldest copies of Paul's letters have prologues written by Marcionites. These Marcionites even claimed to have had Gnostic scriptures written by Paul.³⁶ It must be understood though that the Christianity taught by Paul was the same as that taught by the other apostles (Galatians 2:1-10; 2 Peter 3:15-16). This is confirmed by the fact that the gospel author Luke wrote the Book of Acts and was also a close companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14).³⁷

Apostolic Authority and Papal Succession

Out of the many churches in existence, only two trace their authority back to Peter. Those two churches are the Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thus, if it can be proven that the Catholic Church did not receive its priesthood authority from Peter, then perhaps the Mormons are right, and Peter did appear with James and John to confer the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Joseph Smith. This would mean, then, that the Mormon Church alone has the authority given by Jesus to Peter and the other apostles (Matthew 10:1-2; Mark 3:14-15). The Bible teaches that "no man takes this honor to himself" (Hebrews 5:3-5), for those in authority must give it. Still, some Christians claim that Hebrews 7:23 says that Jesus' priesthood was "untransferable," but the Greek word in question, *aparabaton*, actually means "permanent."³⁸

Catholics and Mormons agree that Peter was the head apostle and that he was therefore the one who would have passed on the authority to lead the Christian Church. Catholics erroneously claim, however, that Peter was the first bishop of Rome and that he held the office until his death. They also believe he gave his priesthood authority to the next bishop of Rome, and that each bishop of Rome afterwards did likewise. Thus they claim that the Catholic Church still has this same authority to this very day. They even cite the writings of the early bishops of Rome from A.D. 68 to 318 to support the claim that these bishops had primacy from the mid-first century onwards. William Webster though has shown that they did not claim to have primacy until the late second century onwards.³⁹ The bishop of Rome's primacy was simply one of honor. This was because Rome was the political seat of the empire.⁴⁰

The biblical and historical evidence proves that Peter did not spend twenty-five years in Rome as Catholics contend; instead, he spent a total of no more than about four years in Rome

during his two visits there. He visited Rome from A.D. 44 to 45 and again from A.D. 66 to 68. He was then martyred on February 22, A.D. 68. Between these two visits, Peter was evangelizing in Asia, Britain, and other parts of Europe. Historical support for his ministry in Europe comes from Eusebius (ca A.D. 324), Onuphrius (late fourth century), and Macarius Magnes (ca A.D. 400). The scriptures also confirm that Peter was not in Rome from A.D. 45 to 66. For around A.D. 55, at the close of his Letter to the Romans, Paul greets twenty-eight people who lived in Rome, but he does not mention Peter once.^{41 42}

The truth is that Peter was never the bishop of Rome. According to the earliest list of Roman bishops, written by Irenaeus, the first three bishops of Rome were: Linus, Cletus, and Clement I.⁴³ Some Church Fathers confirm that Linus was the first bishop of Rome, but other Church Fathers state that Clement succeeded Peter as bishop of Rome. This is because Peter ordained Clement to the office in A.D. 68. This was right before Peter died—hence the idea that Clement succeeded him.⁴⁴

The *Liberian Catalogue* and the *Liber Pontificalis* are mid-fourth century and early sixth century compilations, respectively, of earlier church writings. They state that from A.D. 56 to 68 Linus was the first bishop of Rome. They also state that he was ordained by Paul, who, according to historical sources, arrived in Rome in A.D. 56.⁴⁵ The Church Father Eusebius wrote that Linus and the next bishop of Rome each served twelve years. He also wrote that Cletus became the bishop of Rome in Titus' second year (A.D. 80).⁴⁶ Thus Linus was ordained in A.D. 56 and Cletus was ordained the third bishop of Rome twenty-four years later in A.D. 80.

Furthermore, according to the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Peter wrote that Clement was ordained the next bishop of Rome after Linus.⁴⁷ Thus based on this and on the information in the previous paragraph (such as the fact that he served twelve years), Clement was bishop of Rome from A.D. 68 to 80. This date range for Clement is supported by himself, Tertullian, and the *Liberian Catalogue*.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, although in the fourth century Optatus wrote that Peter sat in the “chair of Rome,” what he actually meant was that Peter presided directly over the Church of Rome during his two visits there.⁴⁹ So, this paragraph and the two paragraphs preceding it prove that the first two bishops of Rome, who each served twelve years, were Linus (A.D. 56-68) and Clement (A.D. 68-80), and that they were then followed by Cletus (beginning in A.D. 80) who was the third bishop of Rome.⁵⁰

Where though did the idea that the bishop of Rome held primacy originate besides the fact that Rome was the political seat of the empire? Well, one reason was because Rome was the site of Peter's and Paul's martyrdoms. The first Roman bishop who tried to force other bishops to accept his view though was Bishop Victor in the late second century. These other bishops lived in Asia Minor, and they were asserting a tradition about Easter that they claimed came from John. But Bishop Victor disagreed with it and claimed a contrary tradition supposedly from Peter. Bishop Victor even threatened to excommunicate these other bishops if they did not agree. Earlier, around A.D. 120, Polycarp of Smyrna had argued with Anicet of Rome about this same matter. Yet there is no indication in the account that Anicet had supreme authority over the other churches. Certainly, if Polycarp were aware that the bishop of Rome had such authority, he would have accepted his final judgment on the matter. In reality, Victor was the only bishop of Rome in the first two centuries who tried to assert “Papal authority.”⁵¹

There is a difference between an apostle and a bishop. The Catholic Church built itself upon a foundation of bishops, whereas Christ's church was built upon “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20 KJV). After all of the apostles died, the remaining church leaders were without the revelation, guidance, and

authority of the Twelve Apostles. Without such revelation, guidance, and authority, the Church began to slide into apostasy. The Catholic Church was not established through prophetic revelation. Instead, it was established through the general consensus of the Church Fathers. Yet they argued with each other about many doctrines, and many of them held beliefs that contradict official Catholic doctrine.⁵²

The reason we know the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was meant to continue is because Matthais was appointed to take Judas' place (Acts 1:23-26). This again made twelve, not eleven, apostles. Also, before Jesus ascended, he called three of his twelve apostles to the office of the First Presidency, since he would no longer be on earth to embody that office. Three other apostles were later called to fill such vacancies: Paul (1 Corinthians 1:1), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), and James the brother of the Lord (Galatians 1:19). This was done to preserve a full quorum of twelve apostles. Later, to fill another vacancy, Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, wrote that Philip was called as an apostle. It must also be pointed out that seven were called to assist the Twelve (Acts 6:5-6), and that, the early church also had a Quorum of the Seventy (Luke 10:1, 17). Only one church on the face of the earth has this same structure today. It is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Now, the Catholic Church can be traced back to one man—Simon Magus, the Samaritan sorcerer, who was also an interpreter of the Babylonian mysteries. This Simon, who was a Pagan, became confused with Simon Peter because the interpreters of the Babylonian mysteries were called *Peters*, which means “opener.”

Catholic scholars claim that Peter was the bishop of Rome for twenty-five years from A.D. 42 to 67. This claim comes from Eusebius (early fourth century). As detailed, Peter was not in Rome during most of that period. The early accounts of Peter's stay in Rome disagree. For instance, Lactantius disagrees with Eusebius. He states that Peter came to Rome during Nero's reign and then was executed while Nero was still alive. And so, because Nero ruled from A.D. 54 to 68, this account rules out a twenty-five year stay. Simon Magus, on the other hand, was in Rome for twenty-five years, so he must be the “Peter” referred to in the accounts that mention a twenty-five year stay. He arrived in A.D. 42 and then lived there until he died in the winter of A.D. 67.⁵³

The truth is that Simon Magus: beguiled the Roman populace with his miracles and soon after won favor with Emperor Claudius and later with Nero; was believed by the people of Rome to be a god; and, while in Rome, founded a church that mixed Paganism with Christianity. This religion then had a strong influence upon the early Catholic Church.⁵⁴

The Catholic Church was founded by Emperor Constantine in A.D. 325. As mentioned, it was quite influenced by the teachings of Simon Magus, which fit well with those of Constantine, who was a sun worshiper unto his death. Although he became a so-called Christian after seeing a cross in the sun and attaining military victory by having his soldiers fight with the sign of the cross painted upon their shields, Constantine was still, at heart, a Pagan. Indeed, if the cross had not been seen in the sun, he probably would not have paid much attention to it.

That he was still, at heart, a Pagan after becoming a so-called Christian is certain for a number of reasons. For instance, he continued to have coins minted with the names and images of the old gods upon them. They also read, “To the sun, the unconquered.” He even retained the Pagan title Pontifex Maximus, and, in Constantinople, while a “Christian,” he commissioned an arch to be built that displayed the sun god, and he had a statue made to that god, as well. Also, during his reign, Catholics began to celebrate Jesus' birthday on December 25, the day Pagans celebrated the birth of the sun god. (Chapter 7 proved that Jesus was not born on that day.) He

even believed that Jesus was a manifestation of the sun god.^{55 56}

Also, before he became a “Christian,” he could see that Christianity was well organized, and that, if it was blended with Paganism, it could help to unite the empire. Thus he decided to use it to his advantage. First, he claimed to be a Christian to attract Christian recruits to his army. Then he began to merge Christianity with Paganism. This was through the teachings of Simon Magus. After Constantine became a “Christian,” he remained very brutal and inhumane; thus, he was not a true Christian.^{57 58}

He also called together the Nicene Council in A.D. 325. This was the first Catholic Council. This was when the Church was divided over many important doctrines. About 250 Christian bishops attended. He gathered them in one place so that, under his authority, official doctrines could be formulated. Indeed, to enforce unity, he simply gave his support to the majority and condemned as heretical all others. The Catholic Church was not born through prophets and revelation; instead, it was born through the doctrines of men. An era of darkness began to descend upon mankind, one from which we still have not fully awakened.^{59 60}

Conclusion

Most Christians today believe in the public teachings of Jesus Christ. However, his secret teachings were preserved by the Knights Templar and then by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The preparatory mysteries are held by organizations such as the Rosicrucian Order AMORC and the Mormon Church. The early Christian teachings were more like Mormonism than Evangelical Christianity. The Gnostic teachings were written in symbolic language to hide the higher teachings. The Essenes are connected to early Christianity and the Knights Templar. John the Baptist and Jesus were Essenes. The Essenes had secret magickal teachings from Adam through Moses. The Catholic Church is based on the Pagan teachings of Simon Magus. The apostle Peter was never a bishop of Rome. The champion of the Catholic Church was Constantine, who was a cruel Pagan and a sun-worshipper unto his death.

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