

Through

the

Maze

Copyright 2009, James R. Spencer Box 8656, Boise, ID 83707 www.beyondmormonism.com 10/09

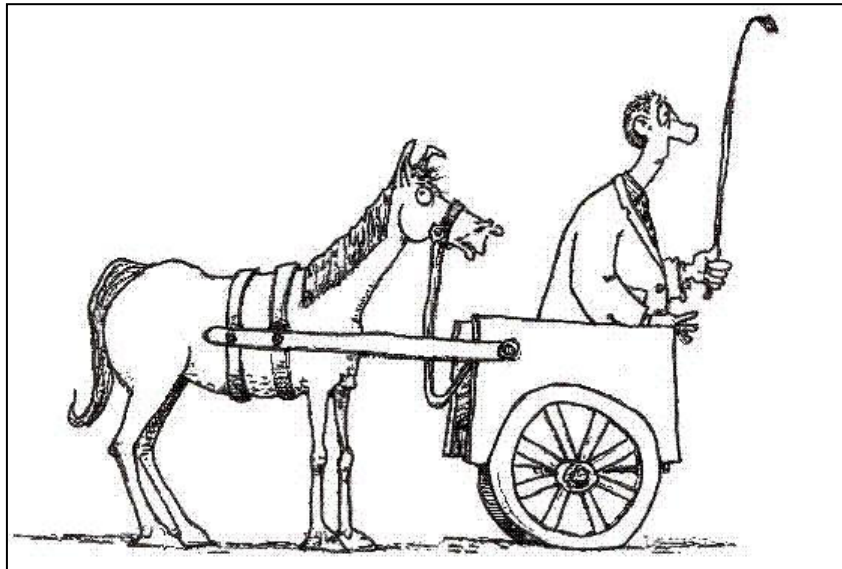
How Can They Get It So Totally Backwards?

One of the most contentious divisions between Mormons and Evangelicals is the issue of how one is saved. Evangelicals claim we born again by grace through faith, plus *nothing!* (As the Bible teaches in Eph. 2:8) Mormonism, on the other hand, teaches that salvation comes through “the Atonement of Christ *plus* obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” (See the Mormon Third Article of Faith)

Elder Theodore M. Burton, a Mormon General Authority for thirty years, explained the difference between the “Christian” born again experience and that of Mormonism in an address at Brigham Young University on October 27, 1982. He described an encounter he had with a young flight attendant while flying to New England. He said he tried to steer the conversation with her “toward the gospel.” He recalled:

She told me that she had recently been converted from her former manner of living and was now “saved.” I congratulated her. Then she added that she was now a “born-again Christian.”

I asked her how she was born again, and she told me that she had accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and now believed in him. I told her how wonderful that was, but explained that acceptance and belief in Jesus Christ is normally called faith. She said, “But I have changed my former way of thinking and living. I am now on the path of eternal life.” Again I congratulated her and told her that change is normally called repen-



tance. “But,” she said, “I have felt a marvelous spiritual change come over me which has purged all evil from my soul.” I then asked her if this were not a gift from the Holy Ghost. “I suppose it is,” she admitted, “but I mean I’ve had a sanctification experience, not through any work that I or any other person has done for me, but a work of grace whereby Jesus has pardoned my sins and promised me eternal life. I don’t need any formal church organization to

*accomplish this. A person needs only that wonderful, spiritual experience, or feeling of grace.” She added that she had truly been reborn spiritually. **From her words, I knew she did not understand what is meant by being “born again” nor what is termed the second birth.***

How ironic that a so-called Apostle of Jesus Christ could not understand the simple conversion story. It reminds me of when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Nicodemus “marveled” at Jesus’ command to be born again. Elder Burton was apparently as clueless as Nicodemus.

What Think Ye of Salvation by Grace?

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie was as confused about salvation as Elder Burton. Addressing the same student body as Burton had just two years later (January 10, 1984), McConkie spoke on the topic “What Think Ye of Salvation by Grace?” His opening statement to the Mormon students at BYU was, *I wonder*

how many of us are aware of one of the great religious phenomenon of the ages, one that is now sweeping through Protestant Christianity, as only one other thing has ever done in the whole Christian Era?

McConkie was addressing the BYU student body because of alarming reports that young Mormons were being influenced by Charismatic Christians. This was happening as the Charismatic Renewal—a wide ranging outpouring of the Holy Spirit which had begun in the early 1960s—was drawing to a close. Even BYU students were influenced.

McConkie said the problem was to be found in a false doctrine accompanying the revival: the doctrine that teaches “that we are justified by faith alone, without the works of the law.” He called that doctrine nonsense.

McConkie identified another, even more insidious doctrine, which he called the *First Great Heresy*—the doctrine of the Trinity. Of the Trinity he said:

This first and chief heresy of a now fallen and decadent Christianity—and truly it is the father of all heresies...It was the doctrine, adapted from Gnosticism, that changed Christianity from the religion in which men worshipped a personal God, in whose image man is made, into the religion in which men worshipped a spirit essence called the Trinity...The adoption of this false doctrine about God effectively destroyed true worship among men and ushered in the age of universal apostasy.

...Nearly a millennium-and-a-half later...the great Christian reformers lit a new doctrinal fire...the burning, flaming, heretical fire—that became the second greatest heresy of Christendom...a heresy originating in the same courts of darkness...This second heresy—and it is the prevailing delusion and mania that prevails to this day in the great evangelical body of Protestantism—is the doctrine that we are justified by faith alone.

McConkie abhorred the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. He mocked it:

We have all listened to sermons by the great revivalists and self-appointed prophets of the various radio and television ministries. Whatever the subjects of their sermons may be, they always end with an invitation and a plea for people to come forward and confess the Lord Jesus and receive the cleansing power of his blood.

McConkie said television broadcasts show stadiums filled with people while thousands go forward to make their confessions and to become born again Christians—“To be saved with all they suppose this includes.” In fact, McConkie recounted that while driving his car he listened to a radio preacher exhort people to touch the radio and say, “Lord Jesus, I believe.” McConkie, tongue-in-cheek, said:

“Unfortunately I did not accept this generous invitation to gain instant salvation; and so I suppose my opportunity is lost forever.” McConkie died fifteen months later.

Our Relationship With the Lord

McConkie preached another sermon at BYU a couple of years before the one I just cited (March 2, 1982). This one was precipitated by an unusual occurrence at BYU: Mormon students

were meeting in the dorms praying “for a special relationship with Jesus.” That set off alarm bells within Mormon Church hierarchy and McConkie was dispatched to put an end to the practice.

McConkie addressed the students with great solemnity, promising to “express the views of the Brethren” relative to what the students had to believe in order “to gain eternal life.” He opened his remarks by saying:

It is no secret that many false and vain and foolish things are being taught in the sectarian world and even among us about our need to gain a special relationship with the Lord Jesus. I shall...invite erring teachers and beguiled students to repent and believe the accepted gospel...

One of the first things McConkie wanted to make clear to the students was that they should *not* worship Jesus. “We do *not*,” he said, “worship Jesus.” Neither were the students to pray *to or through* Jesus. To do so, he said, is perilous:

Some “holier-than-thou” students...begin to pray directly to Christ because of some special friendship they feel has been developed. In this conception a current and unwise book, which advocates gaining a special relationship with Jesus, contains this sentence—quote: “Because the Savior is our mediator, our prayers go through Christ to the Father, and the father answers our prayers through his son.” Unquote.

This is plain sectarian nonsense. Our prayers are addressed to the Father, and to him only. They do not go through Christ...

McConkie said he recognized that some people would be offended that he counseled the students not to strive for a “special and personal relationship with Christ.” He accurately maintained Mormonism does not advocate such a relationship:

You have never heard one of the First Presidency or the Twelve...advocate this excessive zeal that calls for gaining a so-called special and personal relationship with Christ... never, never at any time have they taught or endorsed the inordinate and intemperate zeal that encourages endless, sometimes day-long prayers, in order to gain a personal relationship with the Savior.

In the end, McConkie concludes that the devil may be behind the drive to get people to have a personal relationship with Christ! He said:

I wonder if it is not part of Lucifer’s system to make people feel they are special friends of Jesus when in fact they are not following the normal and usual pattern of worship found in the true Church.

It’s always my responsibility to ask you to pray about your financial support for **Through the Maze**. The last year, as we are all aware, has been difficult for everyone. Many great ministries have fallen or have been severely limited because of a drop in giving. Help me keep this one alive.