



What to say to Mormons ... Ch. 5 Mormon Evidences?

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Chapter 5 Mormon Evidences?

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So what evidence is there that Mormonism is true? While Mormon scholars admit valid challenges to Mormonism from archaeology and the *Book of Abraham*, they say the evidences of Mormonism's truthfulness is the *Book of Mormon* itself, God's confirmation in your spirit, and the number of changed lives. When talking to Mormons, expect to hear them say, *"I know the Book of Mormon is true because I have prayed to God and asked him to tell me if it is true. And he has confirmed it in my spirit that it is."*[47] In other words, *"We don't need evidence. God has told me that the Book of Mormon is true. He has confirmed it in my spirit so that no amount of evidence against Mormonism would convince me that it is wrong."* Mormon missionaries are trained to keep on telling you how the Holy Spirit has confirmed to them that the *Book of Mormon* is true, that Jesus has changed their life and has meant so much to them.

Expect it and don't let it surprise you. This belief is extremely difficult to overcome when talking to your Mormon friends. Much is going to depend on them having an open mind. So we have now come to the heart of the matter in talking with Mormons. In this important chapter we will discuss the insufficiency of these evidences provided by Mormons for Mormonism's truth.

1. Feelings are often inaccurate

Have you ever doubted your salvation? Many have at some time. However, your feelings do not change the fact that either you are or are not saved. Can you imagine God requiring a new conversion every time you have a mood swing which results in doubts? It is possible for someone to have doubts about being a Christian, and still be one. Likewise, it is possible for someone to feel confident that they are okay in their relationship with God but in reality are not (Matthew 7:21-22). Think of the confidence many of the Jewish leaders in Jesus' time had that they were doing the will of God. Yet, Jesus said to them, *"You are of your father, the devil"* (John 8:44). The apostle Paul was a perfect example. He believed he was doing the will of God by persecuting and killing Christians, but found that he was actually persecuting the Son of God (Acts 22:1-8).

People of other religions claim a confirmation from within themselves as evidence that their religion is true. Islam makes the same claims and yet Mormons do not regard the *Qur'an* or Islamic doctrine as being divinely inspired. Mohammed made claims of visions similar to Joseph Smith's. Regarding the *Qur'an* he claimed that *"this Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than God"* (10:37). He further boasts *"if the whole of mankind and Jinn [good and evil spirits] were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support"* (17:88). What supposedly makes the *Qur'an* even more amazing is that someone alleged to be illiterate wrote it (7:157). Muslims also argue that the number of changed lives and cultures by the *Qur'an* are evidence of its divine origin.[48] In other words, the *Qur'an* is so beautiful in its literary style that all of mankind and spirits working together could not produce it, only God could. The truthfulness of Islam is also evidenced by its incredible transforming power.

Is Islam true? No.[49] Certainly Mormons do not believe that it is. So one can be sincere and confident that God has shown them the way and still be mistaken, as is the case with Muslims. Satan can counterfeit feelings of certainty and answer prayer.[50] The Mormon says, *"God has confirmed it to me."* But the Muslim says the same thing and so do Christians. What is the difference

between the confirmations of Mormons, Muslims, and Christians? Mormons are not the only ones to err on this point. Many Christians, myself included, have been guilty at some point of presenting feelings and spiritual experience as evidence that their beliefs are true. I don't want to downplay the authenticity of feelings and spiritual experiences. I believe much of the peace in the life of the Christian and his or her spiritual experiences are authentic. I acknowledge that people of other faiths have experiences as well. However, I interpret them as having a different source than my own (e.g., self or demonic). The only way to determine the true source is to look at outside evidence. When we do this with Mormonism, the prognosis is not good.

2. Defenders of the faith, both the religious leaders of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament, used proof, not feelings

The Old Testament leaders encouraged people to remember what God did for them: delivering them from Egypt, the plagues and the parting of the Sea, delivering them in the wilderness from the snakes, giving them manna from Heaven, and bringing them into the land he promised (1 Chronicles 16:12; Isaiah 46:9). The New Testament leaders "reasoned" from the Scriptures (Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19) and offered proof, namely Jesus' resurrection (Acts 9:22; 17:31). No one ever suggested, "Just read this book and pray about it. God will show you that it's true."

I once had a discussion with a Mormon gentleman who works for the Mormon Church in Utah. I shared many of the challenges to Mormonism presented earlier. He responded that Mormon leaders are continually telling Mormons that they must believe *in spite of the facts*. I pointed out to him that neither the Old Testament prophets nor the New Testament apostles were hesitant to provide evidence for their claims. I continued, "What the Mormon Church is asking you to do is to believe that God worked a certain way until less than 200 years ago." Be prepared to present the evidence for your position. For example, you can say to Mormon missionaries, "We both are confident and assured that we are correct in our own beliefs. Since our beliefs differ, and they do or you wouldn't be here today, one of us is wrong. How will we know which one? Only by looking at the evidence outside of ourselves."

When we do we observe that the Bible is reliable and has been accurately preserved. This verifies my position, because I accept the Bible. When we look at Mormonism independently we observe that there is no confirmation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon from archaeology or history. In fact, the lack of archaeological evidence that ought to be there is hurtful to Mormonism. Finally, since Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham has been shown to be fraudulent, his ability to translate the Book of Mormon accurately is also in serious question. Since we both have inward feelings that our own view is true, the outside evidence makes my position much more likely than yours."

3. One can be sincere but wrong

When Mormons sense they are losing a lot of ground during the conversation, they may bring up universalism, the belief that every sincere person will make it to Heaven, regardless of their beliefs. This is in accordance with Mormon doctrine. However, it is not compatible with biblical doctrine.

Romans 10:1-2 says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Paul prayed for the Jews' salvation, although he recognized they had a zeal for God. Their zeal, however, was not compatible with truth. Sincerity is not a test for truth and is not enough for eternal life. Several other verses in the Bible indicate that Jesus is the only way to obtain eternal life. (See John 3:36, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:26-31.) The biblical view of faith is that it is always a trusting commitment based on known fact. The disciples knew their faith was grounded in truth, not because they had the feeling that it was true but because Jesus had fulfilled his promise to rise from the dead. There are three types of faith:

- 1) Faith with evidence. This is reasonable faith (e.g., many events in the Bible including Jesus' Resurrection).
- 2) Faith with no evidence, for or against. This is blind faith (e.g., the Exodus from Egypt).
- 3) Faith in spite of evidence against it. This is stubborn faith (e.g., archaeological problems with the *Book of Mormon* and the translation problem with the *Book of Abraham*).

The type of faith Mormons exhibit is the third type and is not the way God works as modeled throughout the Bible. Unless there is a better foundation than feelings for your faith in a system that you hope will allow you to have eternal life, it may be time to start looking around at alternatives.

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References:

[47] Mormons appeal to Moroni 10:3-5 found in the *Book of Mormon*: “Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”

[48] Islamic scholar, Ajjola claims that “the transformation wrought by the Holy Qur’an is unparalleled in the history of the world and thus its claim to being unique stands as unchallenged today as it did thirteen centuries ago.... No faith ever imparted such a new life to its votaries on such a wide scale.” Alhaj A. D. Ajjola, *The Essence of Faith in Islam* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, Ltd., 1978), pp.100-101.

[49] For a critique of Islam see Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995). For a debate between a Muslim and Christian, see Josh McDowell and John Gilchrist, *The Islam Debate* (San Bernardino: Here’s Life Publishers, Inc., 1983). For an audio taped debate, see Jamal Badawi and William Craig. *The Concept of God in Islam and Christianity: A Muslim-Christian Dialogue* (Madison: InterVarsity Audio, 1997). This tape can be ordered by calling 1-800-828-2100.

[50] See Luke 4:5-7 where Satan offers to give Jesus the kingdoms of the world if he will worship him.

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