

The Apostle Paul said to those of another religion: “...as certain also of your own poets have said....”

—from Acts 17:28

Paul spoke in Athens to people who made no pretense of being Christians. Today we have opportunities to speak with Mormons, who say they are Christians—different, to be sure, but Christians, they say, nonetheless. Maybe we, like Paul, can cite religious poets to advance the gospel’s good news in conversations with Mormons.

If Mormons say they are Christians, is that the end of the conversation? No, because Mormons themselves invite our response. At the church’s Web site and in speeches and media interviews Mormon church leaders have asked, “Are Mormons Christians?” Thinking the answer is obvious, they want all to agree with them that, indeed, they are Christians.

When Mormons raise the subject face-to-face or in a public way, they bank on timidity or naiveté even among Christians, or on a blissful unconcern in the general population (“They say they are Christians, and that’s fine. Who am I to judge? Who defines ‘Christian,’ anyway?”). But—

We can say No to Mormons and inform the public credibly and kindly.

Remind Mormons about their poets—their hymns

HYMN 51 in the Mormon church’s standard hymnal is “Sons of Michael, He Approaches.” Michael is called “the ancient father” and “the ancient one.” He is called “our head,” and he’s coming again.

The hymn enjoins all to “bow low before him” and “minister at his feet”; to greet, acclaim, and hail him and “[his] glad reign”; to celebrate his reign with song.

Michael’s wife is the “Mother of our generations, glorious by great Michael’s side.” The hymn asks her to accept mankind’s “adoration” and calls for “glorious dance” to celebrate her return.

What you need to know. In Mormon religion, Michael and his wife are Adam and Eve. Michael is also “the Ancient of Days” (as in Daniel 7). Mormons teach that before the second coming of Christ Adam will return to preside over a gathering of resurrected prophets from his own day to the present, a cause for celebration of an imminent Millennium.

What Mormons need to know. Adam is not “our head” to Christians. Universally Christians will not adore or bow before Adam and Eve, or any other man or woman. Adam is not the Ancient of Days.

Speak plainly: For example, “Glorifying Adam and Eve seems unhealthy, even unchristian, to me. There’s nothing in the Bible or Christian history to support the idea that Christ would want Christians to exalt or adore Adam and Eve or bow at their feet.”

HYMN 292 in the Mormon hymnal is “O My Father.” It pleads, “...Father, Mother, may I meet you in your royal courts on high? ...When I’ve completed all you sent me forth to do, with your mutual approbation let me come and dwell with you.”

What you need to know. Mormon religion teaches: Every person lived in heaven with divine parents before creation. The parents designed mortality as a test, part of a plan of salvation. Sent forth from heaven, a person has opportunity to please the parents and win their approval to return—some to live there forever, and others to become new generations of heavenly parents. People can please Father and Mother by following today’s “living prophet” and submitting to the doctrines and duties of Mormon life.

What Mormons need to know. Christian faith has never imagined a pre-mortal life in heaven, nor literal parents living there. Christians never plea to two divine beings for their “mutual approbation,” or approval. Christian faith and God’s grace are not mere opportunities for proving worthy by joining the right church, performing its rituals, and obeying its laws and ordinances.

Speak plainly: My faith is in Jesus Christ, not myself and not my church. I am saved by grace through faith, and I will live forever with Him solely because of His love and grace and initiative. I do not plead to a Father and Mother for approval. Although many of your words are familiar, I sense that your gospel is not really good news. Instead I find that because of Christ, God credits me with righteousness and does not hold sin against me (Romans 4:6, 8). Your religion does not seem to be an authentic part of the common Christian faith embraced by churches today and throughout history.

HYMN 27 is “Praise to the Man,” a lyric poem exalting Joseph Smith, the founder and first prophet of the Mormon church: “Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.” His shed blood shall “plead unto heaven while the earth lauds his fame.” He will “enter his kingdom, crowned in the midst of the prophets of old.”

The refrain hails “the hero” — “the Prophet, ascended to heaven!” There, he is “mingling with Gods” and planning “for his brethren.”

Speak plainly, because Mormons need to know: No Christian imagines “Gods” conferring with a deceased, revered Mormon prophet. There is one God. Jehovah said, “Is there a God beside me?...I know not any” (Isaiah 44:8). To sing otherwise—that alone—contradicts a profession of Christian faith; it denies the essential foundation of thousands of years of Judeo-Christian truth.

—Ask a Mormon, “Can you show me your hymnal?”—

Caution: The Mormon hymnal includes many hymns with words and music familiar to Christians, and a Mormon may use that to excuse false, even blasphemous, notions illustrated above. Don’t be distracted.