

## **Mormonism and Its Heretical View of Jesus Christ**

Author: C. VanSteenselen

October 11, 2019

## Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, also known as the Mormon Church, was founded by Joseph Smith. He was born on December 23, 1805 in Sharon, Vermont and killed on June 27, 1844 in Carthage, Illinois.<sup>1</sup> In his family, there were different views regarding religion. His mother was originally from a conventional Congregational church but later became Presbyterian. His father did seldom go to church. This contrast made Joseph doubt about what the true church was. In 1820 at age fourteen, he asked in prayer what the truth was. He saw, according to own interpretation, God and Jesus as two different personages in a revelation. Nonetheless, the truth of this vision was doubted by a local minister. Certain years later, Joseph wrote the Book of Mormon. This was a translation of the golden plates that he found by instruction of an angel. Later, he began his own church, temples and, settlements. This movement became known as Mormonism.<sup>2</sup>

### Writings of Joseph Smith

Though the Mormons believe that the Bible is true as far as it is translated correctly, they argue it is not the only Scripture. Regarding this, the following is said in their Articles of Faith, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God *as far as it is translated correctly*; we *also* believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God”<sup>3</sup> [emphasis added]. As a Bible translation, the Authorized Version is officially accepted and used, but nonetheless seen as containing errors it. Therefore, they have a revised Authorized Version with the translation notes of Joseph Smith. Interestingly, they admit that this version is “not the official Bible of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” though, “the JST (Joseph Smith Translation) offers many interesting insights and is an invaluable aid to biblical interpretation and understanding.”<sup>4</sup> An example of such revisions is in the gospel of John. In the Authorized Version, it is written, “God *is a Spirit*: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). However, in the JST is said, “*For unto such hath God promised his Spirit. And they who worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth.*”<sup>5</sup> Joseph Smith shows that he denies that God is a Spirit by adding that God promised it. Besides the revision of the Bible, Smith translated and wrote several other

---

<sup>1</sup>. Richard L. Bushman, “Joseph Smith” (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., June 23, 2019), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Smith-American-religious-leader-1805-1844> (accessed September 24, 2019).

<sup>2</sup>. Bushman, “Joseph Smith.”

<sup>3</sup>. James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith: Being a Consideration of the Principal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1966), 2.

<sup>4</sup>. “Joseph Smith Translation (JST),” *Bible Dictionary* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/joseph-smith-translation?lang=eng> (accessed September 24, 2019).

<sup>5</sup>. Joseph Smith, *Joseph Smith Translation Appendix* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013), v. John 4:26, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/jst>.

books as it was ‘revealed’ to him. The first book is the Book of Mormon, which is a translation of the “golden plates”, that appeared on the shelves in 1830. Other ‘revelations’ were written in the Book of Commandments, later called the Doctrine and Covenants, which was completed in 1835.<sup>6</sup> The Pearl of Great Price, written in 1851, also contains a set of selected revelations.<sup>7</sup> All these revelations, written in those books, are seen as Scriptures. This writing demonstrates that extra ‘scriptures’ besides the Bible leads to an unbiblical view of God, as taught by the Latter-Day Saints Church, which believes that the Godhead exists as three different Gods; that Jesus Christ is but a lesser god and spiritual brother of angels, devils, and mankind; and that He was literally conceived in Mary by the Father.

---

<sup>6</sup>. Bushman, “Joseph Smith.”

<sup>7</sup>. Joseph Smith, *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 1.

## View of the Godhead

It is necessary to know the Mormon view of the Godhead before one is able to understand their view of Christ. Therefore, this issue will be addressed first through demonstration and refutation from the Scriptures.

### Polytheistic Gods

The Mormon church believes in the existence of God, and at the same time denies the Trinity as expounded in the Nicene Creed. The creed shows that the Father and the Son are of the same essence, saying, “One Lord Jesus Christ...being of one substance with the Father.”<sup>8</sup> However, in the Mormon Articles of Faith is written, “The Godhead: The Trinity – Three personages...(1) God the Eternal Father; (2) His Son, Jesus Christ; and (3) the Holy Ghost. That these three are *separate individuals, physically distinct* from each other...Each of the members of the Trinity is called God, together they constitute the Godhead”<sup>9</sup> [emphasis added]. Also, Joseph Smith said the same in a different manner when he wrote, “Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God! I say that is a strange God anyhow—three in one, and one in three!...All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God—he would be a giant or a monster.”<sup>10</sup> Both writings show that Mormons believe in the plurality of gods. At the same time, however, they say to confess the existence of only one God; “And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth”<sup>11</sup> (Mosiah 15:4). The unity between the Father and the Son, however, is not one of essence, but “in attributes, powers, and purposes of its members.”<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, the Bible teaches that there is but one God in essence only. As the prophet Isaiah, says, “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me” (Isa. 45:5). As James White says, this and other texts of Isaiah make plain that God is the unique and only God. He writes, “God made the fact of His utter uniqueness as the only God *painfully clear* through the prophet Isaiah...So we see that the first of Smith’s concepts is directly contrary to the Word of God. There is only one God.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, concerning the unity between the Father and the Son, Ron Rhodes writes in regards to Hebrews 1:3, “The

---

<sup>8</sup>. *Historic Creeds and Confessions*, electronic. (Oak Harbor: Lexham Press, 1997).

<sup>9</sup>. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 39–40.

<sup>10</sup>. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1938), 372, <http://scriptures.byu.edu/tpjs/STPJS.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup>. Joseph Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1981), 176.

<sup>12</sup>. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 40.

<sup>13</sup>. James White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder* (Southbridge: Crowne Publications, 1990), 61.

word [brightness] indicates not a reflection but an outshining of resplendent light - a shining forth to the world of the very character, attributes, and essence of God in Jesus Christ...[it] is speaking of Christ's *deity*...Jesus is portrayed as the absolute authentic representation of God's being *in terms of the divine nature*."<sup>14</sup> He also says regarding Colossians 1:15, "'The image of the invisible God.'...the Greek word *eikon* ('image') literally means 'the very substance of God.'"<sup>15</sup> Therefore, when Jesus Christ says that He and the Father are one (John 10:30), it is a unity in essence and not only in attributes, power and, purposes, as the Mormons would define.

### God a Bodily Exalted Man

Secondly, Mormons believe that their god has a body and is an exalted man. Their Articles of Faith say concerning that God has a body, "The Father is a personal being, possessing a definite form, with bodily parts and spiritual passions...we know that the Father and the Son are in form and stature perfect men; each of them possesses a tangible body...a body of flesh and bones."<sup>16</sup> This statement is based on 'revelation' to their prophet Joseph Smith, as written in the Doctrine and Covenants, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit"<sup>17</sup> (D.&C. 130:22). Furthermore, Mormons believe that, in the past, their god was just like every other human being but was ultimately exalted. They say, "Remember that God our Heavenly Father was perhaps once a child and mortal like we are...[he] was once a mortal man who passed through the school of earth-life...He became God – an exalted being, through obedience."<sup>18</sup>

In response, it can be said that it is ultimately blasphemy to say that God is similar to human beings with even a body. The Scriptures say regarding Him that "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent" (Num. 23:19). Also, the Bible gives surety in regard that God has no body, saying, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). As James White says, "The God of the Bible will not allow Himself to be put into human categories. He directly denies the idea that He is like a man, and surely He is not a changeable being like man is."<sup>19</sup> Also, when God has a body, He will be limited where He can be present. Therefore, the Mormon view that God is a is like a human being with a body is refuted by God's Word and the logical conclusion of limitation.

---

<sup>14</sup>. Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), 237.

<sup>15</sup>. Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons*, 237.

<sup>16</sup>. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 41–42.

<sup>17</sup>. Joseph Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1981), 265.

<sup>18</sup>. Walter R. Martin, *The Maze of Mormonism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 80–81.

<sup>19</sup>. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 62.

## View on Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, though He is in the godhead, is believed to be a separate being compared to the Father and Spirit, and therefore a separate god. Nevertheless, the Bible says that there is one God only (Deut. 6:4, Isa. 45:5), and that the three persons in the godhead are one (John 10:30, 1 John 5:7). Furthermore, the Mormon view differs from Scripture regarding Christ's eternity past, in the term 'son of god', and the virgin birth.

### Christ a Subordinate God and Brother of Lucifer

Regardless the fact that Mormons believe that Jesus Christ is 'god', He is it in a different degree than God the Father. He is seen as a spiritual son of God, as are all the angels, devils and human beings. In their Articles of Faith, it is written, "Among the spirit children of Elohim [that is the Father] the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors...the fact that human beings generally are similarly existent in spirit state prior to their embodiment in the flesh...that He is by spiritual birth Brother to the rest of us."<sup>20</sup> This article demonstrates that Mormons believe that Jesus Christ has the same level as the other "spiritual children" of God the Father, like human beings, and therefore has in a lesser degree than the Father. Interestingly, James White, who did much research regarding the doctrines of the Mormon Church, says regarding this birth, "God the Father, Elohim, begat a son with one of his celestial wives – the spirit child's name was Jehovah, or Jesus...according to LDS teaching, Christ entered into spiritual existence as a spirit-child of God the Father."<sup>21</sup>

In response to this view, it has to be said that according to the Scriptures, Christ is fully God and equal to the Father. Paul writes, "Who, [ Jesus Christ,] *being* in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be *equal* with God" (Phil. 2:6) [emphasis added]. Also, as said in *Cults and the Occult* regarding man's sonship of God, "We become the children of God at conversion (John 1:12)".<sup>22</sup> This shows that there is difference between the natural Son of God, and the adopted children by conversion. Furthermore, the distinction between Jesus Christ and mankind is shown in the case of worshiping. The Bible gives various accounts that Jesus was worshiped; "And in every instance, Jesus accepted the worship...Jesus considered such worship as perfectly appropriate."<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, when man or angels were worshiped, it was refused. This happens for instance with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:11) or with a fellow servant of John (Rev. 19:10). When that is compared with the Scriptures that only God ought to be worshiped, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. 34:14), the conclusion must be that Christ is God and that He has not the same level as human beings.

---

<sup>20</sup>. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 471–472.

<sup>21</sup>. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 257.

<sup>22</sup>. Edmond C. Gruss, *Cults and the Occult*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1994), 42.

<sup>23</sup>. Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons*, 273.

Furthermore, Mormon doctrine shows that Jesus Christ is the same degree as Lucifer, the devil. This is written in their magazine, *Ensign*, of June 1986. One asked a question how Jesus Christ and Lucifer could be brothers with such a different character. Regarding this brotherhood, the answer says, “Both the scriptures and prophets affirm that Jesus Christ and Lucifer are indeed offspring of the Heavenly Father and, therefore, spirit brothers.”<sup>24</sup> Though it is agreed that their characters are totally opposed to each other, the affirmation that they are brothers is there.

This can be refuted by the fact that “the Bible does *not* teach that Jesus Christ was the spirit brother of Lucifer...the entire angelic realm – including the angel Lucifer – was personally created by Jesus Christ,”<sup>25</sup> as said in Colossians 1:16 that all things were created by Jesus Christ. Interestingly, Rhodes also says that there is a class difference between one who is Creator and the creation, especially angles.<sup>26</sup> Also, James White refers in his book the passage of Ezekiel that speaks of Lucifer’s creation; “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth...Thou wast perfect in thy ways *from the day that thou wast created*, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezek. 28:14-15). From both passages, it is sure that Lucifer is a created being and Christ the Creator. Therefore, it is not possible that Christ can be a spirit brother of Lucifer.

#### Christ the Only Begotten in the Flesh

Moreover, Mormons believe that the title “only begotten Son of God” has to be understood with Jesus Christ’s coming in the flesh. A number of times when in their writings is spoken of “Only Begotten Son”, the sentence “in the flesh” is added.<sup>27</sup> James White quotes regarding this case Bruce R. McConkie; “These name-titles all signify that our Lord is the only Son of the Father in the flesh. Each of the words is to be understood literally. Only means *only*. Begotten means *begotten*; and Son means *son*. Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers.”<sup>28</sup> White says concerning this, “Some have tried to deny that the LDS Church teaches that God the Father is *literally and physically* the parent of the child Jesus. The above quotes...teach otherwise.”<sup>29</sup> This confirms that Mormons believe that Christ is the only begotten Son of God, because he was a physical child from God the Father, and that while human beings are only spiritual children of God. Furthermore, it is argued by Wells that there was a physical relationship between a bodily God the Father and the virgin Mary. As said this Mormon says, “This title [Only Begotten Son] signifies that Jesus’ physical *body* was the offspring of a mortal mother and of an *immortal Eternal Father*”<sup>30</sup> [emphasis added]. This shows at the same time the denial that Jesus Christ was conceived by the

<sup>24</sup>. Jess L. Christensen, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, June 1986.

<sup>25</sup>. Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons*, 275.

<sup>26</sup>. Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons*, 276.

<sup>27</sup>. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, April 2000.

<sup>28</sup>. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 262.

<sup>29</sup>. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 262.

Holy Spirit. Brigham Young says, “When the virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>31</sup>

In response, the Bible teaches that Christ as a human was begotten by the Holy Spirit and not by the Father, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child *of the Holy Ghost*” (Matt. 1:18) [emphasis added]. This surely contradicts the teaching that Jesus Christ was conceived by God the Father. As James White points out, “The Holy Ghost began the pregnancy by supernatural means. The Holy Ghost did not have to use sexual means to begin the process growth - God created us, so He knows fully well how we function. Mary was still a virgin, having known no man, including an ‘exalted man’, at the time of birth of Christ.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore, because God, who began the pregnancy in Mary, is Creator, He was able to use supernatural means to conceive Jesus Christ in Mary. Also, as said by White make Mormons the mistake to see God’s Father-Son relation only from a human perspective.<sup>33</sup> In conclusion, the term ‘Only Begotten’ means according to Mormons that the Father literally conceived Christ in Mary. Nonetheless, the Bible refutes this by saying that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

---

<sup>30</sup>. Robert E. Wells, “Our Message to the World,” *Ensign*, November 1995.

<sup>31</sup>. Brigham Young, “Journal of Discourses,” n.d.

<sup>32</sup>. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 271.

<sup>33</sup>. White, *Letters to a Mormon Elder*, 271–272.



## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, extra ‘revelations’ of the Latter-Day Saints Church beside the Bible, which are seen as Scriptures, have caused an unbiblical view of the Godhead and Jesus Christ. First, the godhead is believed to be three different beings called god, which unite only in attributes, powers and purposes, ultimately leading to a plurality of gods. Nonetheless, the Bible teaches the existence of only one God, with a unity of the trinity in essence. Secondly, according to Mormons God has a body and is an exalted man that had similar experiences as every human. However, the Bible says that God is not a man but a Spirit. Regarding Christ, Mormons believe that He differs in degree with God the Father, for He is the spirit brother of all mankind and Lucifer. The Bible, on the other hand, refutes it and acknowledges the equality of Christ with God, and says that all things were created by Him, including mankind and angels. Ultimately, in Mormon doctrine, the title “Son of God” means that the Father physically conceived Christ by Mary. Nonetheless, the Scripture teaches that Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost in a supernatural way.

## Bibliography

- Bushman, Richard L. "Joseph Smith." Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., June 23, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Joseph-Smith-American-religious-leader-1805-1844> (accessed September 24, 2019).
- Christensen, Jess L. "I Have a Question." *Ensign*, June 1986.
- Gruss, Edmond C. *Cults and the Occult*. 3rd ed. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1994.
- Historic Creeds and Confessions*. Electronic. Oak Harbor: Lexham Press, 1997.
- "Joseph Smith Translation (JST)." *Bible Dictionary*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/joseph-smith-translation?lang=eng> (accessed September 24, 2019).
- Martin, Walter R. *The Maze of Mormonism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962.
- Rhodes, Ron, and Marian Bodine. *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1995.
- Smith, Joseph Fielding. *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Provo: Brigham Young University, 1938. <http://scriptures.byu.edu/tpjs/STPJS.pdf>.
- Smith, Joseph. *Joseph Smith Translation Appendix*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2013. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/jst>.
- . *The Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1981.
- . *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1981.
- . *The Pearl of Great Price*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981.
- Talmage, James E. *A Study of the Articles of Faith: Being a Consideration of the Principal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1966.
- "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles." *Ensign*, April 2000.
- Wells, Robert E. "Our Message to the World." *Ensign*, November 1995.
- White, James. *Letters to a Mormon Elder*. Southbridge: Crowne Publications, 1990.

Young, Brigham. "Journal of Discourses," n.d.