

An Interview With A Mormon, On Christ

**A Reflection Paper
Submitted to Dr. Steve Tracy
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**by
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The following comments regarding Christ are from a man seeking sincerely to serve God by observing the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints:

In overview, Christ is a unique person and member of the Godhead. The members of the Godhead consist of The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all of whom have spiritual bodies. Before incarnation, The Son was like the Holy Spirit, in that they both had a spiritual body but no fleshly body. The Father, however had both. Now, after the incarnation, The Father and Son both have perfected physical bodies of flesh and bone. Christ is our spiritual brother and we were much alike before we were all born, as then we all existed together in heaven. Christ is Jehovah of the Old Testament. Christ has always been sinless, before birth, and even now. As there was a time before Christ had a physical body, there was also a time before Christ had a spiritual body, but we don't know the form of this existence.

Before the world began, God the Father begat a spiritual family including Christ, Lucifer, you, and me. These spirit children had freedom of choice/agency. Some rebelled, like Lucifer. Others followed the Father closely and some never failed, like Christ. Soon it became obvious that Christ was special and that He had a special assignment. God the Father then introduces His plan to His family and Christ is central. There will be an Earth which will be a test for all the spirit children who have not yet rebelled. These would progress and receive a fleshly body and dwell on Earth for a time. They will have a veil of forgetfulness which will prevent them from remembering their pre-existence and they will have to find out about the Father and His plan in other ways. If they follow the plan, they will progress, if they don't they will stop their progression. The plan is risky, in that many children will not return.

Lucifer introduces another plan which is rejected. Lucifer and a number of spirit children rebel and are not given the opportunity to participate. The plan proceeds. Christ creates the Earth.

The Father knows that everyone but Christ will fail and He factors that into His plan. In Christ's incarnation, He will die the death deserved by those who fail. This will provide a way for them to be reconciled to The Father. Christ's payment will be available to everyone. His atonement is infinite and eternal, in that it is sufficient to overcome any amount of sin and will cover all that is owed. Individual sin does not add to Christ's suffering. On Earth, Christ was mortal in that He could die, have hunger, pain, etc. Christ willingly submitted Himself to the cross even though He had power to put an end to it at any time.

The Divinity of Christ means that He is a member of the Godhead, has the authority and power over death, to command elements, etc. The Godhead has 3 members, each separate and distinct individuals/entities/people. They are all 'one' in the sense that they are all united perfectly in purpose. The Son's will is engulfed in the Father's will. The Godhead can be understood as the Presidential Committee of the Universe. The distinction between the Father and the Son is 'not much'. The Father has a paternal role in the relationship. The Father is in charge. Though it may be merely repeating speculation, it might be said that the Son has a 'family resemblance' to the Father.

Christ is priest. Priesthood is defined as authority to act in the name of God the Father. Today the priesthood continues, is limited to men, and grants the same authority/priesthood as Christ but

not permission to *exercise* all authority. The priesthood passes to a man when he is interviewed and deemed called of God by prophecy and laying on of hands. The priesthood is conferred from man to man. Priests have differing assignments. Some baptize, some are bishops, some are apostles. A priest must first check the faith of the person to whom they may potentially administer. God must also first approve.

Christ is unique in that He is the only begotten in the flesh of the Father. Each of us were begotten in the flesh by spiritual brothers, but Christ was begotten in the flesh by God the Father. This begetting was not done by the Father having physical intercourse with Mary, but rather, the Holy Spirit came upon her and somehow caused Mary to conceive for the Father. Christ is also the only perfect spiritual child of the Father. During His incarnation, He was tempted and able to sin, but chose not to, which further established His unique perfection. Christ was the first spiritual child of the Father to resurrect and receive a perfected physical body of flesh and bone; “the firstfruits of them that slept.” Christ is Head of His Church. Christ will judge all embodied spirits.

In contrast, Satan's and his angels have rebelled and have already been judged. Since they rebelled before the world began, they ceased to progress before receiving fleshly bodies. Angels mentioned in the Bible are spiritual children who did not rebel and serve as angels after receiving their physical body and resurrecting. In some cases, angels are spirit children who have not yet been embodied, including all angels mentioned in the Old Testament and before Christ's resurrection, since

Christ had to be the firstborn from the dead.

God is bound by law. It is possible for God The Father to fall if He disobeys the laws of the Universe. But this is against His nature. In the Universe, there are things that act, and things that are acted upon. There are small tiny building blocks of the Universe that act for themselves and always obey God. This is how God has His power. It is conceivable these building blocks could 'strike', and not obey God, but they won't.

Would Christians who do not follow the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints believe these same things? It seems many might be commonly affirmed. “Christ is a unique person and member of the Godhead. The members of the Godhead consist of The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...” On these we are in agreement, but does the LDS Church mean the same thing that the Bible teaches?

The LDS Church affirms that “Christ is Jehovah of the Old Testament,” and that Elohim is God The Father. This is a drastic shift from what non-LDS Christian Churches teach. Can the Bible be read consistently in this light? Before looking at Scripture, we should note the background of the suggested names Elohim and Jehovah. These are both attempts at transliterating Hebrew into Roman/Latin script (the English Alphabet). Elohim, (אֱלֹהִים) is literally a plural form of the Hebrew word for 'god' (אֱל) and is used all over the Old Testament to simply mean 'god'-- both Good and bad. Jehovah is derived from the Hebrew יְהוָה and is used as the personal name for the God of Israel throughout the Old Testament. In the King James Version of the Bible, whenever the Hebrew יְהוָה (Jehovah) is being translated, the typeset convention of SMALL CAPS is used (typically, LORD or GOD). Doing a quick search for verses which contain both Elohim and Jehovah, turn up interesting results (1149 verses in the Old Testament). A few follow:

Genesis Chapter 2 is riddled with the compound אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה (Jehovah Elohim), and is translated “Jehovah God”, or in the King James, “LORD God” (notice the SMALL CAPS). If these were meant to be 2 individuals, there would have been a conjunctive 'and' (Hebrew ו) starting the second, and would have

produced “Jehovah **and** Elohim”, but there is not. An exemplary verse in Chapter 2 is verse 4:

“[[These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים) made the earth and the heavens (אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם),”

Notice the conjunction (וְ) starting the second word (וְשָׁמַיִם) (Hebrew is read right to left), and in the same verse gives us both “Jehovah God” and the example of a conjunction “earth and heavens”. As you can imagine, 'and' is a popular construct and can be found in nearly every verse in the Bible.

Another interesting verse is Exodus 18:11, where, commenting on Jehovah's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, we read:

“Now I know that the LORD (יְהוָה; Jehovah) is greater than all the gods (אֱלֹהִים; Elohim); indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people.”

A simple search for verses containing these names will provide hundreds of examples for future research.

Continuing on, “Before incarnation, The Son was like the Holy Spirit, in that they both had a spiritual body but no fleshly body. The Father, however had both. Now, after the incarnation, The Father and Son both have perfected physical bodies of flesh and bone.” The Mormon Church's website

(<http://mormon.org>) confirms this, “God the Father and His son Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820. Joseph revealed that the Father and the Son each have a 'body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's' (D&C 130:22)”. Does the Bible affirm or at least give room for God The Father to have a physical body? The online resource uses a number of Old Testament passages to support this claim. First, Genesis 1:26 is used:

“¶ 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over... 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (KJV)

It is interesting to note the Joseph Smith translation of this passage (which actually appears in Genesis 1:27 and 29 in the JST):

“27 And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so. 28 And I, God, said, Let them have dominion over... 29 And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.” (JST)

The Mormon Church doesn't typically give authority to the JST for various reasons, but a search for this translation of this verse will yield it quoted by sources who are deemed authoritative, most importantly The Pearl of Great Price, Moses 2:26-27 reproduces the JST translation verbatim.

The problem here is that the Church also teaches that Elohim's Only Begotten, Jehovah, didn't have a body until after the creation.

The rest of the statements made in this profession-- though true to the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints-- are similarly contradictory to Biblical teaching and internally with other statement of the Mormon Church itself. I believe God calls us to Himself through many paths, and the Mormon Church may very well be a stepping stone to a right understanding of Him, but the Church itself does not teach a right understanding.