



# Mormonism

## Comparative Theology

- **Introduction**
- **Views On God**
- **Man and the Universe**
- **Salvation and the Afterlife**
- **Morals**
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# Introduction

- **The Mormon Church or as it is officially known as the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS), is the fastest growing and most successful cult in the United States and perhaps the world.**
- **In their advertisements as well as in their lifestyle, Mormons promote a highly attractive and admirable face that communicates strong family values, clean living and a commitment to Christ like living that would put many Christians to shame.**

# Introduction

- **To understand Mormonism, one needs to look at their sacred texts and consider where they came from. The church claims to believe in the Bible, "insofar as it is correctly translated" (The 8th Article of Faith), which basically means whenever it does not conflict with good Mormon theology.**
- **The real source of Mormon teachings comes from the other Sacred Works: The Book of Mormon (BOM), Doctrines and Covenants (D&C), and The Pearl of Great Price (PGP) as revealed to Joseph Smith Jr.**

# Introduction

- **The story of Mormonism centers on Joseph Smith Jr. and his many claimed revelations. When he was only 14, he had a vision where he was visited by 2 “persons”-whom he believed were the Father and the Son.**
- **When asked which denomination he should join, they responded with none, they are all “wrong and corrupt.” Three years later, he had another vision, this time of the angel Moroni who told him of a book written on golden plates by former inhabitants of the continent that contained the “fullness of the everlasting gospel.”**

# Introduction

- **At the age of 21, he found these plates and began translating them using “seer” stones an occult divination technique he had honed with his dad when hunting for treasure. By 1830, Smith had published the Book of Mormon. For the next 10 years, he continued to receive revelation which would become his additional inspired scripture of D&C and PGP.**



# **Introduction: Book of Mormon**

- **This book covers the history of 2 great civilizations which supposedly made their way from the Middle East to America around 600 B.C. These 2 nations, the Nephites and Lamanites, were of Jewish origin and for centuries were enemies.**

# **Introduction: Book of Mormon**

- **Mormon, the commander of the Nephites recorded on the gold plates what was to be the BOM. Mormon gave these plates to his son, Moroni, who hid them until they were uncovered by Joseph Smith Jr. The Mormon church has gone to great lengths to justify the BOM – even coming up with its own archeological support of its authenticity.**



# **Introduction: Book of Mormon**

- **No non-Mormon archeologist, however, has given it any credibility. Interestingly, there are no manuscripts for the BOM to be studied as Moroni came back and took the gold plates. Mormons must accept all on Joseph Smith Jr.'s word.**

# **Introduction: Doctrines and Covenants**

- **Although the BOM was termed the “most correct of any book on the earth,” the D&C has 13 key doctrines not found anywhere in the BOM. Among these new revelations were: plurality of gods, God as an exalted man, a human being’s ability to become God, three degrees of heaven, polygamy, eternal progression and baptism for the dead. In addition, it is laden with prophecies by Smith that never came true (which would make him a false prophet).**

# **Introduction: The Pearl of Great Price**

- **This book was translated from papyri fragments found when Smith bought some Egyptian mummies. According to Smith, this is a record of writings by Abraham while he was in Egypt. Assumed lost, these papyri resurfaced in 1967 when they were studied by non-Mormon scholars.**

# **Introduction: The Pearl of Great Price**

- **It was discovered that the characters were indeed Egyptian but translated into instructions for embalmers. Smith, however, understood it to teach the Mormon doctrines of preexistence, the priesthood and the nature of God.**

# Introduction

- **Mormon doctrine states that God is “progressive”, having attained His exalted state by advancing along a path that His children (Mormon) are allowed to follow.**
- **In Mormon thinking, God is not the cause of everything. He was created by another god who had been created by another infinitum.**

# Introduction

- **The Mormon Father God actually grew up as a man on another planet, learning all he could and finally dying and then being resurrected into Godhood whereupon he returned to a heavenly place with a body of flesh and bones.**
- **There he joined with his goddess wife to have millions of spirit children who would eventually populate Earth.**



# Introduction

- **This spirit world is called “preexistence”. The first born of these spirit children was Jesus, followed by his brother Lucifer.**
- **God called a meeting called the Council of Heaven to tell of his plan to send the spirit children to earth to be tested and returned to him after death. He needed a savior to implement his plan.**

# Introduction

- **Jesus won the contest, Lucifer lost. Lucifer was so enraged with jealousy that there was war in heaven and Lucifer and his angels were cast out. All of us in our pre-existence, fought in the war; our skin color reflects how well we fought (the lighter the shade the better).**

- **Jesus came to earth, through relations between God and St. Mary, and died on the cross. Exaltation for each of us can be reached by living a worthy life and going through the temple ceremony; in the highest level of celestial glory we become gods ourselves.**

# Introduction

- **Mormons hold Jesus to be the literal son of God the Father. They claim he is: "our Redeemer and our Savior. Except for him there would be no salvation and no redemption".**
- **In fact, this is a deceptive claim. True Mormon salvation has virtually nothing to do with the person of Jesus. Mormon salvation, or more correctly stated, exaltation, is a complicated quest.**

- **There is a general "salvation by grace," but this only means that one is resurrected to immortality and this applies to everyone. An individual's exaltation is much more complicated.**

- **Salvation is a process of works, faith having no real importance. Jesus' death only made it possible to be resurrected. The real path includes living a life of good works and temple participation. Keeping the whole law is absolutely central.**



# Introduction

- **Doctrines of Salvation 2:41 states: Those who gain exaltation in the celestial kingdom are those who are members of the Church of the Firstborn; in other words, those who keep ALL of the commandments of the Lord".**
- **In a nutshell, a Mormon must be a member of good standing, tithing regularly, get a temple recommend, be sealed in the temple, and follow all of the Law.**

- **Mormons are taught the doctrine of continuous revelation. Through continuous revelation, the current prophet of the church can over-rule any previous revelation, the BOM, the Bible and anything else previously taught and believed.**

- **"Modern revelation is what President Joseph Smith said, unless President Spencer Kimball (or, now, Howard W. Hunter) says differently." In essence, he's saying that God can, and does, change his mind; God can contradict himself!**

- **A good example of this "Latter Day Revelation" is demonstrated in the 1978 declaration which let blacks finally hold the priesthood. Previously, the church had held that black men would never hold the priesthood because they held the "mark of Cain" (i.e. they fought for Lucifer in preexistence).**

- **Joseph Smith said "Had I anything to do with the Negro, I would confine them by strict law to their own species, and put them on a national equalization."  
(History of the Church 217-218)  
Brigham Young actually said "Shall I tell you the law of God in regards to the African race?"**

# Introduction

- **If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so." (Journal of Discourse 290-291)**
- **Clearly, the African race had no place in the early Mormon Church and was condemned by church doctrine. But, according to the church, God changed his mind in 1978, and the church changed its theology.**



- **The significance of this, and many other changes in Mormon doctrine, supposedly the Gospel restored to Earth, should not be overlooked.**

- **Mormonism teaches polytheism (versus monotheism taught in the Bible), believing that the universe is inhabited by many gods who produce spirit children. Joseph Smith declared, "I will preach on the plurality of Gods.**

- **I have always declared God to be a distinct personage. The Lord Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit. And these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 370).**

- **In Mormon theology the god of our planet is believed to have once been a man on another planet. Who through self-effort and the help of his own father-god, was appointed by a counsel of gods in the heavens to his high position as the god of planet Earth.**

- **And now has a physical, resurrected, glorified body. Mormonism teaches that through the atonement of Christ and by their good deeds and "holy" living, men can one day become gods, and with their multiplicity of "goddess wives," populate their own planets.**

- **Mormonism acknowledges the divinity of Christ, but as noted above, Mormon doctrine on what constitutes divinity falls seriously short of the Biblical standard.**



- **Mormonism teaches that The Lord Jesus Christ, Lucifer, and all the demons, as well as all mankind, are actually all spirit brothers and sisters, born in the spirit world as spirit babies to our man-god Heavenly Father and his goddess wives.**

- **Mormon leaders have consistently taught that God the Father had sexual relations on earth with St. Mary (his own spirit daughter), to produce the physical body of The Lord Jesus Christ.**
- **Early Mormon apostles also asserted that Christ was a polygamist, and that His wives included Mary and Martha (the sisters of Lazarus) and Mary Magdalene.**

# Man and the Universe

- **The Mormon Church teaches that man was a pre-existent spirit and that mankind is of the same species as God. Our origin is supposed to have been as procreated children of God, born as spirits in some other realm.**
- **In that spirit world existence we progressed as far as was possible, but to become truly like our Heavenly Father we needed to obtain physical bodies. We also needed to learn the difference between good and evil.**

# Man and the Universe

- **Since our Heavenly Father has progressed so far that He cannot allow evil into His presence, it was necessary for us to leave Him for some place where we could encounter and overcome evil ourselves:**
  - **"The mind of man is as immortal as God Himself...God never did have the power to create the spirit of man at all" (Times and Seasons 5:615 and History of the Church 6:310-311).**
  - **"We were first begotten as spirit children in heaven and then born naturally on earth" (Journal of Discourses, 4:218).**
  - **"Before coming to this earth, all humans were begotten by our heavenly parents and were born with spirit bodies" (Mormon Doctrine p. 428, 516-17).**
  - **"all had a previous existence, thousands of years ago, in the heavens, in the presence of God" (Journal of Discourses 1:62).**

# Man and the Universe

- **So, according to Mormon teaching, this world was prepared as a school, where we have been sent to obtain physical bodies and to learn the lessons of mortality.**
- **The Mormon Church teaches that God, men, angels, and devils, are of the same nature, but at different levels of progression. It also teaches that man may progress to become a god.**

# Man and the Universe

- **Therefore, in Mormon theology, those who achieve godhood will have spirit children who will worship and pray to them just as we worship and pray to God the Father. This has been taught by a large number of prominent LDS leaders, including its founders.**



# Man and the Universe

- **According to LDS, Adam's fall was a 'fall upward' and it was not sinful. Mormonism maintains that Adam's sin was necessary for the propagation of the human race. As Mormon scriptures state:**
  - **"Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy" (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:25).**
  - **"And in that day Adam blessed God...saying...for because of my transgression my eyes are opened and in this life I shall have joy" (Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses 5:10-11).**



# Man and the Universe

- **Mormon writers go on to explain:**
  - **Adam's sin was "a necessary step in the plan of life and a great blessing to all mankind" (Gospel Principles, p.31).**
  - **Joseph Fielding Smith stated: "The fall of Adam came as a blessing in disguise...nor do I accuse Adam of a sin...it is not always a sin to transgress a law...we can hardly look upon anything resulting in such benefits as being a sin" (Doctrines of Salvation 1:114-115).**

# Man and the Universe

- **"Adam fell, but he fell in the right direction. He fell toward the goal...Adam fell, but he fell upward" (Desert News, p.7, July 31, 1965)**
- **John A. Widtsoe stated: "Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden "became a necessary and honorable act in carrying out the plan of the Almighty" (Joseph Smith---Seeker After Truth, p.160).**

# Man and the Universe

- **"Mormonism rejects the notion that man's condition is best described by 'depravity'. Nowhere within Mormon theology is its optimism concerning man's natural condition more apparent than in this denial of the Christian doctrine of original sin" (Owen Kendall White, Jr., The Psychological Basis of Mormon New-Orthodoxy", p.101-104, University of Utah thesis, June 1967).**

# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **Mormon theology teaches that the atonement of Christ was essential to our salvation and eternal life with God, but that it is not sufficient. Christ's shed blood on the cross provides for universal resurrection of all people, but does not pay for personal sins; according to Mormonism, only Christ's blood shed in the Garden of Gethsemane atones for personal sin.**
- **Besides faith in Christ, complete and permanent repentance of all sin as well as many good works are required.**

# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **Mormonism also teaches that one must be baptized in water to be saved, and that salvation will also be available in the next world for those "missing-out" in this one. Therefore, Mormons avidly pursue genealogy and practice baptism for the dead.**
- **Mormonism teaches that there are three degrees of glory: Celestial (for good Mormons able to cease sinning in this lifetime, Terrestrial (for good people who do not comply with all the teachings of Mormonism), and Telestial (for those who have lived unclean earthly lives).**

# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **Mormonism teaches that there is a hell, but only for the "sons of perdition," a very small number of souls that cannot be redeemed.**
- **According to Mormonism, then, the vast majority of mankind will be "saved," though it should be obvious that no one will make it to the Celestial Kingdom.**



# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **Black people used to be totally out of the equation: "Black people are black because of their misdeeds in the pre-existence" (Three Degrees of Glory, LDS Apostle Melvin J. Ballard, p. 21);**
- **"The Negro is an unfortunate man. He has been given a black skin. But that is nothing compared with that greater handicap.**



# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **He is not permitted to receive the priesthood and the ordinances of the temple, necessary to prepare men and women to enter into and enjoy a fullness of glory in the Celestial Kingdom" (Elder George E. Richards).**
- **In 1978, however, the Mormon Church announced that God had lifted his curse from the African race.**

- **One of the most notable things of Mormon believers is the moral life they lead. The Church encourages Latter-day Saints to create strong families. They ask all families in the Church to set aside one day a week specifically for spiritual teaching and bonding in the family.**
- **From an early age, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are encouraged to show their love for others through service.**

- **It is not uncommon to hear of church members providing service at a local nursing home, helping a family in need, sewing quilts or dresses for humanitarian aid projects, or providing volunteer work in their community.**
- **The idea of serving is further taught through the service that members are asked to provide within the Church. Teachers, bishops, presidencies, those who provide music, and those who assist the ward in any way all do so out of charity; none are paid for their services.**

- **Members are also asked to give of their own substance to help those in need. The first Sunday of each month is set apart as fast Sunday. On this day members are asked to go without eating two meals.**
- **They then donate the money they would have spent on those meals (or more) to the Church. This money is used to help provide for in the area those who have less. Sometimes, the funds are used for a specific group of people or for a specific need.**

- **Latter-day Saints are always encouraged to continue improving and make themselves better. Again from President Hinckley,**
- **May God help us to be a little kinder, showing forth greater forbearance, to be more forgiving, more willing to walk the second mile, to reach down and lift up those who may have sinned but have brought forth the fruits of repentance, to lay aside old grudges and nurture them no more (Gordon B. Hinckley, "Forgiveness," Ensign, Nov. 2005, p. 81).**

- **In addition, Mormons abstain from tobacco, tea, coffee and limit their intake of meat.**



- **There are 2 kinds of worship in the Church of Latter Day Saints: chapel worship and temple worship. Chapel worship is the primary family worship service called sacrament meeting.**
- **This meeting is held in chapels on Sunday and lasts approximately 70 minutes, involving the whole community together. During the service the members receive a sacramental communion of bread and water, during which they remember the Last Supper, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and their own baptismal promises to serve the Lord and keep his commandments.**



- **The sacrament is distributed by Deacons. The service is led by the bishop, and his two counselors. (The bishop is the ecclesiastical leader of the local Church, and is a lay minister.)**
- **The service begins with hymns followed by prayers. There are a number of short talks or sermons given by members of the congregation chosen by the bishop. These talks range from quite formal doctrinal lectures, to more informal chats about the application of faith to family life. Talks can be given by any church member regardless of age.**

- **Temple worship is something altogether different. First of all, it takes place in the Temple (unlike the chapel worship which takes place in the chapel building).**
- **Mormon temples are used for baptisms for the dead, and what is known as "endowment ceremonies" for both the living and the dead. Vicarious baptisms for the dead comprise a great majority of the activity behind temple doors. Mormon Apostle Bruce McConkie explained the endowment ceremony as "certain special, spiritual blessings given worthy and faithful saints in the temples...because in and through them the recipients are endowed with power from on high" (Mormon Doctrine, pg. 226-227).**

- **Also performed in the temple are marriages which Mormons feel will last for "time and eternity." Mormon families can also be "sealed" together with the hope that, following this life, they will be reunited as a family unit in eternity.**

- **A former Mormon explained an endowment ceremony:**
  - **"The ritual began in a small cubicle where we had to strip completely. We then put on 'the shield,' a poncho with a hole for the head, but open on the sides (similar to a hospital gown). We went through a series of 'washings and anointing', as various parts of our bodies were touched by elderly temple workers who mumbled appropriate incantations over them. Our Mormon underwear, 'the garments,' are said to have powers to protect us from 'the evil one.'..."**

- **“...It had occult markings, which were so 'sacred' that we were instructed to burn them when the garments wore out. The endowment ceremony mocked all doctrines held to by Biblical Christianity, and Christian pastors were portrayed as servants of Satan. We had to swear many blood oaths, promising we would forfeit our lives if we weren't faithful, or if we revealed any of the secrets revealed to us in the temple ceremonies. We were made to pretend by grotesque gestures to cut our throats, chests, and abdomens, indicating how we would lose our lives...”**

- **“...We were never told who would kill us! The inference was, and history testifies to, that it would be the Mormon priesthood.” (Testimony of a former Mormon). [Note: The blood oaths and portrayal of Christian pastors were removed in April of 1990, despite the fact that the ordinance was purported to have been given originally by a revelation and was never to be changed].**



# Conclusion

- **If it weren't that people's salvations were at stake, Mormonism would make for great science fiction. Mormons are so far from historic Christianity that it is a wonder how anyone could consider this theology as true. Real Truth is eternal, it does not change.**
- **The Bible also makes it explicitly clear that God does not change; that he is the same yesterday, today and forever.**



# Conclusion

- **Therefore, it must be stated that the Mormon doctrine of continuous revelation, that God would actually change what He has previously revealed, is blatantly untrue by any standard, and therefore has no place in a true Christian church.**
- **The Mormon faith is polytheistic. Ask a Mormon to his/her face and they will probably tell you that they believe in "God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost." Sounds pretty orthodox, until you define those terms.**

# Conclusion

- **In reality, Mormons believe that the three parts of the trinity are separate gods, and that there are in fact innumerable gods, and that any man can himself become one. God the Father is only the god of Earth, just as every other planet in the universe (and there ARE other inhabited planets out there) has their own god. It seems that Exodus 20:2 is a bad translation.**
- **In point of fact, Jesus is not the one Mormons are following. . .Joseph Smith Jr. is!**

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