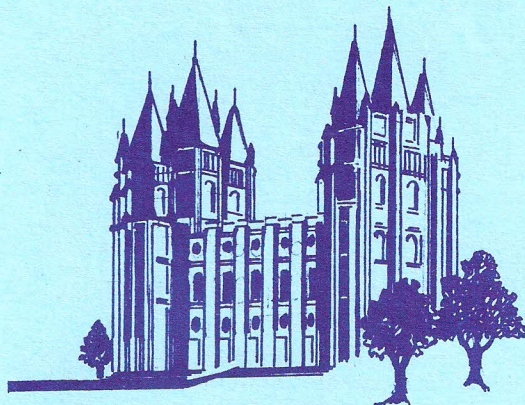


“... And Ye Shall
Be As God”



THE MORMONS' STRANGE SALVATION

When Joseph Smith Jr. preached at the funeral of follower King Follett, he said that people had to learn how to become Gods as all the Gods before them had done.¹ That sermon, more than anything else Smith taught, set the course of Mormon doctrine.

In the *Book of Mormon*, Smith reflected the theology of his Christian neighbors. He held that there was only one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit²; that at death one entered either eternal torment in hell or happiness in heaven³; and that a spiritual birth in the soul wrought through trusting in the atonement of Christ was necessary for eternal salvation⁴ (See the PFO tract, *Divine Truths in The Book of Mormon*).

However, over the next 10 years, Smith developed a much different view of God and salvation. Drawn not from the authoritative Mormon Scriptures - the Bible, *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price* - but mainly from his oral teachings, this theology is taught today by the Mormon Church in Utah, known officially as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Getting to Be God

Building on Smith's final theological developments, the Utah Mormons teach that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three separate Gods. The first two of these have flesh-and-bone bodies, while the Holy Ghost has a body of spirit, which is more refined matter⁵. These three localized deities keep in touch with the world through an omnipresent substance called the Holy Spirit, a kind of communication system, not to be confused with the Holy Ghost⁶.

The Father, whose name is Elohim, once lived as a mortal

on another planet⁷. Through his "conquest over sin"⁸ and obedience to his Heavenly Father who ruled that planet, he had earned the right to become a God. Part of this obedience consisted of taking wives to himself for eternity⁹. This entitled and equipped him to procreate children for all eternity. His wives would be eternally pregnant, producing spiritual offspring to populate Elohim's planets¹⁰.

The many Gods who had reached Godhood before him taught our Heavenly Father the principles and laws by which he could shape eternal matter into our Earth. When this was accomplished, he gave his third-born spirit child, Michael, a physical body. Thus, now entering this world as Adam, Michael could begin a line of mortal bodies into which the spirit children, produced by Elohim and his wives, could enter and pass through a period of probation¹¹. If they successfully completed this earthly existence, sealing at least one wife to themselves for eternity, they too would become Gods, fashioning worlds and populating them with their spirit children. This is the goal of every Mormon who goes to a Mormon Temple to be married to his wife or wives for eternity.

In the early days of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, it was taught that only those who had taken many wives in the earthly life would reach Godhood.¹² Young said the parable of the talents taught that the man who married only one wife would in eternity have her taken from him and given to the man who married many. Today, however, while many in Utah believe Elohim has at least a thousand wives, Mormon leaders have stressed that it is only necessary for a man to seal one wife to himself in order to qualify for exaltation to Godhood¹³.

The Son and Satan, Kindred Spirits

In the Mormon system, Elohim's first spirit child born in eternity was Jehovah. When the time came for him to receive a mortal body, Elohim came down to Earth himself. He took the virgin Mary as his wife, had sexual relations with her and personally begat a body for his first-born Son.¹⁴ Thus Mormon leaders repeatedly have taught that Jesus was not begotten by the Holy Ghost, but by the Father¹⁵. The logic of this is apparent. With each Mormon God existing as a separate and independent being, Jesus could not be the Son of the Father if he had been begotten by the Holy Ghost. On their construction, therefore, he can be the Father's Only Begotten Son, even though this contradicts both the Bible and the *Book of Mormon*.¹⁶

The second spirit child, whose name was Lucifer, led a rebellion of a third of Elohim's spirit children against a plan of redemption suggested by his brother Jehovah (later and on Earth known as Jesus). Jehovah wanted to give a free will to people in their mortal state on earth, while Lucifer wanted to predestine all to salvation. For this rebellious act Lucifer became Satan and those who joined him became demons. They were punished by being denied the right of ever having physical, mortal bodies.¹⁷

Mormons Are the Best?

Those spirit children who were the noblest, most obedient and honorable in the pre-existent state are given the privilege of receiving their bodies through Mormon parents. One might expect, therefore, that Mormons would

lead the world in moral character and exemplary behavior. While Mormon leaders often have asserted this to be the case, some alarming statistics would seem to suggest the opposite.

In Utah, a state in which Mormons predominate, conditions exist that would not suggest this high degree of moral character. For nearly 20 years, Utah has had the nation's highest divorce rate. It has ranked first in fraud schemes, has ranked high in teen pregnancies and teen suicides, and maintained a high crime rate. Salt Lake City, home of the LDS headquarters, currently is faced with a growing homosexual community and has at least a half-dozen gay bars. Statistics also indicate that Salt Lake City also has an increasing number of female alcoholics.¹⁸

For a state and a city peopled predominantly by "the cream of the spirit children crop," Utah and Salt Lake City appear to be little better off than New York, California, or any place else. Perhaps this is attributable to too much emphasis on "free will."

In fairness, it should be noted that the 10 percent of married Mormons who have been sealed to their spouses in temple ceremonies appear to have a lower divorce rate than the national average. However, temple divorces do occur occasionally.

Pick Your Place in Glory

Finally, in the Mormon system, few if any are really lost for eternity. Nearly all people reach one of three degrees of glory. The Celestial Glory is for those who have been most faithful and have earned the right to Godhood. A Terrestrial Glory will accommodate those morally good but who have not lived up to the requirements for becoming Gods. The remainder will enter the Telestial Glory where they will be far from the presence of Elohim and Jehovah (Jesus).¹⁹ Only a relatively few "sons of perdition," such as apostates who knowingly oppose the Mormon Church, will be sent to hell.²⁰

Before the final lot is fixed, people still can change their minds and choose a better destiny. However, they cannot move up to a better lot unless some relative is baptized by proxy for these dead people.²¹ Consequently, many Mormons are obsessed with genealogical research so that they may rescue dead relatives. What of those whose ancestry is not recoverable? The LDS church teaches that they will be cared for during the Millennium when everyone's roots will be fully known.²²

Christian or Not?

As is evident, this theological system bears little resemblance to anything taught in the Bible. The average Mormon has no understanding of what is meant by salvation by grace. *Articles of Faith*, by Mormon Apostle James E. Talmage, which is sold at every Mormon visitor center, calls justification by faith "a most pernicious doctrine," which "has exercised an influence for evil."²³ It is true that Mormons can pull proof-texts out of context and fool those not well-grounded in the Scriptures, but when such a text is looked at in its setting, it can be proven that Mormon doctrine is not found in the Bible.

Further claims of the Mormon Church that one cannot have salvation apart from accepting Joseph Smith²⁴ and that anyone who denies he lived and died as a "prophet" is of the Antichrist²⁵ likewise separates it from the biblical truth that salvation is alone found in the person and work of Christ Jesus.

While they regard themselves as Christians and a number of their members display an affability and moral character derived from the morality of the Bible, on balance their total system is certainly not the Christianity of the New Testament. To reach them with the Gospel requires a great deal of patience, kindness, and love. Simple terms such as God, sin, and redemption carry such vastly different connotations to the Mormon mind that at times, communication with a Mormon is as difficult as communicating with someone who speaks a different language. But it is worth the effort, since those who find their way out of Mormonism into God's grace and love carry with them a remarkable spirit of thankfulness to God and a deep concern for the welfare of others still locked into the Mormon mind-set.

Footnotes:

- 1) *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pg. 346. See also *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, pg. 306.
- 2) *Book of Mormon*, 3 Nephi 11:27. See also "Testimony of the Three Witnesses" found in the front of the *Book of Mormon*.
- 3) *ibid.* Mosiah 16:11.
- 4) *ibid.* Helaman 5:9.
- 5) *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 6, pg. 3.
- 6) *Mormon Doctrine*, pg. 753.
- 7) *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 6, pg. 3.
- 8) *Come Unto Christ* (Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide, 1984) pg. 46.
- 9) *The Seer*, pg. 158.
- 10) *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 11, pg. 122. See also *The Seer*, pp. 37-38; *The Gospel Through the Ages*, pg. 127; *Life Eternal*, pg. 23.
- 11) *The Improvement Era*, Sept. 1902, pp. 876-877.
- 12) *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 11, pg. 269; Vol. 21, pp. 9-10.
- 13) *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 2, pg. 65. See also *The Gospel Through the Ages*, pg. 181.
- 14) *The Seer*, pg. 158. See also *Mormon Doctrine*, pg. 742.
- 15) *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, pg. 18.
- 16) *The Holy Bible*, Luke 1:35. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 7:10.
- 17) *Mormon Doctrine*, pg. 164.
- 18) John L. Smith, "The Evangel." [various editions]. Ed Decker and David Hunt, *The God Makers*, Harvest House, 1984; pg. 19.
- 19) *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76. See also *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 347-348.
- 20) *Mormon Doctrine*, pg. 746
- 21) *ibid.*, pg. 73
- 22) *ibid.*
- 23) pp. 107, 480
- 24) *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, pg. 189
- 25) *History of the Church*, Vol. 7, pg. 287.



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