

Progression: Man becomes God

As we begin to study LDS doctrine, we must immediately note that, however the LDS Church attempts to show itself as being Christian, it is not. LDS General Authorities have admitted that the Jesus of the LDS Church is not the Jesus of conventional Christianity. Our future studies will explore the gospel of the LDS Church in detail, but for the moment, we will direct our attention to the core of LDS theology: the idea that man can become a god.

It would be nice if we could start this study from a very clear, commonly understood point. Unfortunately, no such point exists. LDS theology comprises a universe of ideas strange to most of us. These ideas are interdependent and use definitions which are different from those of Christianity. As a result, there will be some concepts which will be used while they are still poorly understood. Unfortunately, this is unavoidable.

At this point, we need to define a few terms.

- A. Scriptures: The four books which have been defined as canonical by the LDS Church
 1. The Bible. The King James Version, as revised by Joseph Smith. This is known as the Joseph Smith Translation. Of the four books, this is the least used, and most often disregarded book. In many ways it is still regarded by the LDS Church as being full of errors.
 2. The Book of Mormon. This book, actually composed by Joseph Smith in 1827-30, purports to tell the story of the original inhabitants of the western hemisphere, and the visitation of Jesus to them after His ascension from Judea. This book is “the most correct book ever written” according to Joseph Smith’s “History of the Church”. It has been extensively revised to make keep it in accordance with changing Mormon doctrine.
 3. The Doctrine and Covenants. This is a collection of “revelations” given to Joseph Smith during the early days of the LDS Church. It was originally published about 1833 as the “Book of Commandments”. When it was reissued as the D&C, numerous of the commandments were extensively revised. The D&C contains many doctrines which are not found in either the Bible or the BOM.
 4. The Pearl of Great Price. This book contains a collection of writings of Joseph Smith. The first, “History of the Church” includes only an excerpt of his six volume work, devoted primarily to the “First Vision”. The “Articles of Faith” are a short collection of specific concise doctrinal statements, most of which Christians could adopt without trouble. The final two works, the “Book of Moses” and the “Book of Abraham” are supposed to be translations of the written works of these patriarchs which were lost and rediscovered by Joseph Smith.
- B. General Authorities: These are the officers of the church who have the “Gift of the Holy Ghost” and are privileged to have face to face audiences with the Almighty. This gives them (although they do not use the term) “infallible teaching authority”. These officers are the President (also known as the Prophet) and the Twelve Apostles.
- C. Progressive Revelation: The doctrine that the General Authorities, under the direction of the Holy Ghost or by direct audience with God receive new truth. This truth may or may not be in accordance with prior revealed truth, and as such may change theology.

One problem rapidly surfaces. Because the “truth” may change, it is impossible to be absolutely certain as to what truth is. And this immediately runs afoul of God’s commandments (Q1). God told His people through Moses that any person, whether they be a prophet, stranger, or family member, who taught anything about gods other than Yahweh was to be killed. Paul put it a bit more gently when he said that anyone who taught a different gospel was to be “accursed”. With this anchor in the ultimate unchanging truth of God, we may now proceed into the doctrine of Progression.

Progression states that intelligences are eternal in existence. They have no beginning. Even God could not create them. In fact, God once was such an intelligence. He then became a spirit by the physical sexual activity of God the Father of his world and his wife. The Father God of that world created life on that world, and each spirit child then occupied a physical body. After a full lifetime, in which he learned of his Father God, the god of this world died. This came because he had sinned in his lifetime. However,

because he had converted to Mormonism, and lived according to its laws, he was resurrected to a glorious spirit life. In this life he progressed in knowledge and purity sufficiently to become a god. Then he was given our world to form and to fill with life.

This cycle of worlds and gods had no beginning, and will not end (Q2). This has some awful consequences, the worst of which is that there will never be a time when sin is completely abolished. Sin will always exist somewhere. That means that God is powerless to overcome sin! We must contrast this obvious weakness with Mormon Apostle Bruce McConkie's statement: "God is omnipotent . . . Omnipotence consists in having unlimited power, and God has all power, and there is no power which he does not have . . . Those who obtain exaltation will gain all power and thus themselves be omnipotent." (Mormon Doctrine, p. 544)

According to LDS teaching, God has a body of flesh and bones. He is of the same species as us. This limits Him to being in one place at a time. The same applies to the Son. Only the Holy Ghost has the ability to be in multiple places at once. We will deal with the Trinity shortly, but for the moment, we must notice what the Bible says about God (Q3). He "fills the heavens and the earth". "Heaven and earth cannot contain" Him. This is not the picture of a physically constrained being. God, by His very nature, cannot be limited in space. This denies the possibility of being a physical creature with "flesh and bones".

The Bible goes considerably further in describing God (Q4). John explicitly states that God is a "spirit", not a physical being. Jeremiah repeats the points we just covered, noting that God "fills" heaven and earth. No physical man can do this. In the Psalms, God points out that man thought that God was like him, but He is not. In Numbers, this becomes more forceful. God is "not a man . . . or a son of a man". This is repeated by Hosea in a different form. "I am God, and not man". God and man are two different kinds of being. God is not and was not a man.

At this point we must step aside from the questions to note that every time when men try to invent gods, they look like men. They have the virtues and vices of men. In the RCC, we found Jesus to be temperamental and vindictive. The LDS god is literally a man who sinned, died and progressed to bigger and better things. In each case, the image of man falls short of the reality of God. Man was created in God's image. That is, man was given the capacity to reflect the goodness of God. When man creates God in man's image, that god acquires the reflection of man. All the failures and evils of man appear. Also, because this god is only an image of man, it cannot save man from sin. Only the Creator can save the creature.

We have been made theomorphic. The Mormon god is anthropomorphic. We must be careful to remember that we have been made to reflect God's image. Any failure to recognize this fact becomes an act of rebellion against the true God.

The Mormon god had his beginning on a planet somewhere. The BOM does not tell us of this kind of God. In fact, it speaks to a god who is "from everlasting unto everlasting", the same as the Bible does (Q5). The true God has an existence which is so independent of time that He tells us simply that "I AM". This claim excludes any possibility of existence before God. When we look in Isaiah (which the JST does not change), we find the explicit claim that God is "the first and the last". There was none created before Him, and there will be none after. He has life in Himself.

It is here that we find the most explicit refutation of LDS doctrine. God cannot lie, does not change, and has provided us with His word of truth. If the LDS member truly believes the Articles of Faith, then he must admit that the Bible is true. We can then open the JST to Isaiah (43:10, etc.) and show how there is only one God, who is eternally pre-existent. When we have shown this, we can then begin to show the wonders of the true God, who exists in three persons, and died to save us.

The second person of the Godhead, the Son, is the creator (Q5b). Unlike the Mormon Jesus, who is the physical son of God, and had nothing to do with the creation, Jesus is also "from everlasting to everlasting". When he created man (Q6), God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul. We see repeated references which use the metaphor of a potter to emphasize the fact that man was created by God. Mormons deny this by saying that God never had the power to create anything. He merely "organized" pre-existing matter into the earth. The metaphor of the potter demonstrates the contrast between the creator and the created. The fact of creation is used as the source of God's authority to command our obedience. (Acts 4:24; 14:15, Rev 10:6).

The Mormon god is said by some General Authorities to be constantly increasing in knowledge, while others have contradicted this view. The current orthodoxy suggests eternal increase. By contrast, God claims to be "perfect in knowledge" (Q7). He does not change, and no one can claim to have directed

or taught Him. The Mormon god had to learn about perfection in order to become a god. Can we imagine a greater difference between gods?

The Mormon god was a sinner (Q8)! Because of his sins, he died and was buried. As a result of this, he had to be redeemed by the death of another "Son" on another world. He was resurrected because after accepting the sacrifice of this "Son", he had "worked out his salvation by obedience" to the laws and ordinances of the Mormon Church. This stands in stark contrast to the God of the Bible who is perfect, was perfect, and will always be perfect. This perfection is inherent in every statement of the Bible, and is concluded by the choirs of heaven singing "Holy, Holy, Holy".

In order to avoid the clear statements of the Bible, the LDS Church teaches that the true gospel was lost from the earth for eighteen centuries and that the Bible was horribly corrupted. Yet we find that even in the JST, clear statements of the truth remain. The *Shema*, (Deut 6:4) is the fundamental statement of Jewish faith (Q9). Jesus emphatically confirms that it is the most important part of the most important commandment. "Our God is one God". There is only one. This is emphatically stated in Isaiah where, in the "Trial of the False Gods", Yahweh points out that "Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me." (Is 43:10). This explicit denial of Progression has no answer. The only possible reply by Mormons is to amend the text with "in this eternity", in contravention of God's command not to add to or take away from His word.

As we conclude this section, we must review the Biblical (and BOM!) understanding of God (Q10). The testimony of Three Witnesses and several passages of the BOM declare God to be a single entity ("I am the Father and the Son" Ether 3:14). This is a result of Joseph Smith composing the BOM before he developed the doctrine of multiple gods. It was not until nearly the end of his life that the doctrine of Progression was formally developed. Then this was possible only because of a denial of *sola scriptura* and the institution of progressive revelation which allows truth to change. The time delay before Smith developed the doctrine allowed the D&C to have a similar statement. "And the Father and I are one. I am in the Father and the Father is in me . . ." (D&C 50:43, see John 10:38; 14:10-11). The only way Mormons can harmonize these statements is to add to them "in purpose". Even then, it is disingenuous, since the clear intent of the statement is to declare the identity of the Father and the Son.

The Creator (Q11) is the Son. The Holy Spirit (Q12) is the third person of the Trinity, and is equally God (Q13). While there is no text which explicitly identifies the Holy Spirit as God, he is treated personally as part of the godhead in multiple passages. And it is impossible to blaspheme against anyone except God, so blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against God.

These identifications allow us to clearly state that God consists of three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are one God, not three separate beings (Q14). While this seems difficult for us to grasp logically, scripture repeatedly speaks to its truth. We will have to wait for the kingdom to fully understand this mystery (1 Cor 13:9-12).

As a final note (Q15), the never-ending nature of the "God Cycle" in the doctrine of Progression has awful things to say about God. First, He has no power to create. He is impotent in the face of some greater power of the universe which created the primordial intelligences and matter. But even worse, He has no power to truly triumph over sin. We are assured that in the kingdom, sin will be vanquished. The Mormon God has no such power. When he assumes godhood, he gets right back on the sin treadmill, and sires unnumbered offspring who will once again sin and die. The horror of such a picture should be revolting to any Christian.

The Mormon Church tries to present itself as being Christian. The alternate title of the BOM, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ" emphasizes that idea. Yet, upon examination, there is nothing of the true God in Mormonism. They try in "How Wide the Divide" to say that there is no real difference between "them" and "us". Yet the divide is very wide, indeed. The Christ of the LDS Church is not the Christ of the Bible, and, as we will see later, it is not the Christ of the Cross.

When we witness to Mormons, it is easy to "prove" the error of their theology. Yet this will only drive them away by confrontation. As we learn about their false god, we must strive to keep the true God in focus.