**MORMON DOCTRINE OF GOD—DOES GOD HAVE A HUMANLIKE BODY?**

Mormons teach that God the Father was once a mortal man just like us. They say He continually progressed to become a God and we can become gods too, by adopting and faithfully adhering to Mormonism. *The Journal of Discourse says*, “God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man.” How did the Father become an exalted man? Mormon authority, Milton Hunter, says “God the Eternal Father was once a mortal man who passed through a school of earth life similar to that through which we are now passing. He became God—an exalted being—through obedience to the same eternal Gospel truths that we are given opportunity today to obey.” *The Journal of Discourses says*, “that today God the Eternal Father, our Father in Heaven, is an exalted, perfected, and glorified Personage having a tangible body of flesh and bones.” What evangelical Christians believe regarding the immateriality and spirituality of God is thus categorized by Mormons as an apostate doctrine.

**REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES**

Mormon Teaching: The Image of God

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

Their argument is, if man has a physical body, and if man is in the image of God, then God too must have a physical body. They take Genesis 1:26-27 literally, and not is some mystical or figurative sense.

Biblical Teaching:

Genesis 1:26-27 is not referring to man being created in the physical image of God. Donald Barnhouse says, “it was not a physical image, for God is Spirit (John 4:24), and a spirit hath not flesh and bones.” (Luke 24:39) If man was not created in God’s physical likeness, then how exactly was he made in God’s image? Bible scholar Allen Ross tells us that “being created in God’s image means that humans share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God’s nature, that is, in His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him.” This seems to fit the context of Genesis well, because throughout the rest of the book we find God engaged in fellowship with different human beings. When talking to a Mormon about the “image of God” you will want to emphasize that God is not an exalted or glorified man. Let’s point to verses that make a distinction between God and human beings.

I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city. (Hosea 11:9)

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (Romans 1:22-23)

Even the Book of Mormon denies that God is a glorified man.

 And Aaron said unto him: Yea, he is that Great Spirit, and he [created](http://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/alma/22?lang=eng) all things both in heaven and in earth. Believest thou this. ( Alma 22:10)

 Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a [spirit](http://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/alma/31?lang=eng), and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever.(Alma 31:15)

Another way to affirm that God does not have a physical body is to show that, according to the Bible, God the Father is invisible.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. (Colossians 1:15)

No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared. (John 1:18)

Mormon Teaching: The Face of God

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle. (Exodus 33:11)

If Moses saw the Lord face to face then God must have a face and if he has a face then he must have a whole body.

Biblical Teaching:

Face to face is a Hebrew way of indicating “personally,” “directly,” or “intimately.” Moses was in the direct presence of God and interacted with Him on a personal and intimate basis. Even though the Bible speaks of God as if he had a face, the Bible “clearly teaches that God is a spiritual being and ought not to be depicted by an image or any likeness whatever.

When Moses asks God to “Show me thy glory” God warned Moses.

And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.(Exodus 33:20)

Mormon Teaching: The Father Has a Body Like the Son Does

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? (John 14:9)

James E. Talmage comments, “even in bodily appearance the Father and Son are alike.” He concludes from the above scripture, “it is clear that the Father is a personal being, possessing a definite form, with bodily parts and spiritual passions.

Biblical Teaching:

Jesus’ mission, His words, and His works centered on the Father. And in this way Jesus was the ultimate revelation of the Father. The purpose of Jesus coming was to reveal the Father to humankind.

No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. ( John 1:18)

And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. (John 12:45)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. (John 13:20)

Jesus’ works also revealed the Father.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:10)

Jesus came as the ultimate revelation of the Father, and there is nothing at all in the context that supports the Mormon claim that God the Father has a physical body. This is especially apparent in the verses that follow John 14:9.

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 14:10-11)

If the Father has a physical body of flesh and bones, as the Mormons claim, then how is it possible for the Father to dwell within Jesus?

Mormon Teaching: The “Exact Representation” of God

3Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: (Hebrews 1:3)

James E. Talmage says, “We are assured that Christ was in the express image of His Father, after which image man also has been created. Therefore we know that both the Father and the Son are in form and stature perfect men; each of them possesses a tangible body, infinitely pure and perfect and attended by transcendent glory, nevertheless a body of flesh and bones.” Mormons, also, point out if the Father did not have a physical body of flesh and bones, then how could Jesus Christ have possibly sat down at the “right hand” of the Father? If the Father has a right hand, then He must have a body of flesh and bones.

Biblical Teaching:

The phrase “right hand” in the Jewish mind refers to a place of honor. Bible scholar Ray C. Stedman notes, “the phrase *sat down at the right hand* is meant symbolically, not literally, for God has no right hand. It denotes the supreme honor accorded to the triumphant Lord, who is risen from the dead.”

**THE PLURALITY OF GODS**

Mormonism teaches that the Persons of the Trinity are not three Persons *in one being*, as historic Christianity has always taught; rather, Mormons say the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *three separate beings*—they are three separate, distinct Gods. The Book of Mormon published early in Joseph Smith’s career attest to the existence of one God, Smith eventually went on to teach the plurality of Gods. In one message Smith said this:

I will preach on the plurality of Gods…I wish to declare I have always and in all congregations when I preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached by the elders for fifteen years. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. If this is in accordance with the New Testament, lo and behold! We have three Gods, anyhow, and they are plural; and who can contradict it?

Joseph Fielding Smith adds that “Joseph Smith taught a plurality of gods, and that man by obeying the commandments of God and keeping the whole law will eventually reach the power and exaltation by which *he also* will become a god”

It is critical to recognize that in Mormon theology, just as Jesus has a Father, so the Father allegedly has a Father, and the Father of Jesus’ Father has a Father. This endless succession of Fathers goes on and on, up the hierarchy of exalted beings in the universe. Not only are there numerous Father-gods, there is also a “Heavenly Mother.” Even though the Mormon doctrine of a Heavenly Mother, who begets spirit-children in heaven, is not found in any Mormon scripture, it is definitely a teaching proclaimed by the General Authorities of the Mormon church.

Milton R. Hunter, who served in the First Council of the Seventy, said, “The stupendous truth of the existence of a Heavenly Mother, as well as a Heavenly Father, became established facts in Mormon theology.” What do the “Heavenly Father” and” Heavenly Mother” do? In 1853, Orson Pratt explained:

In the Heaven where our spirits were born, there are many Gods, each one of whom has his own wife or wives which were given to him previous to his redemption, while yet in his mortal state. Each God, through his wife or wives raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters…As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits…he, in connection with his sons, organizes a new world, after a similar order to the one which we now inhabit, where he sends both the male and female spirits to inhabit tabernacles of flesh and bones…The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and worship their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited.

Mormons believe in numerous gods. Even though they believe the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the principals gods with whom we have to do, they also believe there are innumerable gods besides these. And they believe that they, too, will one day become gods.

**REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES**

Mormon Teaching: A Plurality of Gods?

In the Book of Abraham (purportedly authored by Abraham himself and supernaturally translated by Joseph Smith from Egyptian papyri fragments and later included in the volume of Mormon scripture know as The Pearl of Great Price), a dramatically different version of the Genesis 1 account of creation is given—and the plural form, “Gods,” is found throughout. The “Gods” created the universe, the Mormon scriptures teaches. Joseph Smith tried to justify this polytheistic rendering by stating that the Hebrew word usually translated God, Elohim, has a plural ending. Smith claimed that “the doctrine of a plurality of gods is as prominent in the Bible as any other doctrine. It is all over the face of the Bible. It stands beyond the power of controversy. Smith was sure that “in the beginning, the head of Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it.”

Biblical Teaching:

The collection of Egyptian writings that the LDS church now calls the Book of Abraham has no credibility whatsoever and is actually irrefutable proof that Joseph Smith had no divine ability to translate. In fact, some of the original papyri actually used by Smith to prepare the book were rediscovered in 1966 and translated by professional Egyptologist, who unanimously identified them as a collection of typical pagan funerary texts and confirmed that they have nothing to do with the ideas and events portrayed in the Book of Abraham. As far as the Hebrew word for God, Elohim, having a plural ending, Christian scholars believe the plural from, Elohim, is actually a “plural of majesty”—pointing to the majesty, dignity, and greatness of God. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe suggest that “the plural nature of the Hebrew word Elohim is designed to give a fuller, more majestic sense to God’s name.

Even the Book of Mormon states plainly that there is only one God.

25 And now thou hast lied before God unto me. Thou saidst unto me—Behold these six onties, which are of great worth, I will give unto thee—when thou hadst it in thy heart to retain them from me; and it was only thy desire that I should deny the true and living God, that thou mightest have cause to destroy me. And now behold, for this great evil thou shalt have thy reward.

26 And Zeezrom said unto him: Thou sayest there is a true and living God?

27 And Amulek said: Yea, there is a true and living God.

28 Now Zeezrom said: Is there more than one God?

29 And he answered, No.

30 Now Zeezrom said unto him again: How knowest thou these things?

31 And he said: An [angel](http://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/alma/11?lang=eng) hath made them known unto me.(Alma 11:25-31)

Mormon Teaching: “Ye Are Gods”

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. (Psalm 82:1, 6)

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? (John 10:34)

Mormons are sure these scriptures support the doctrine of the plurality of Gods. If the psalmist said it, and if it was confirmed by Jesus, surely it is clear that there is a plurality of Gods in the universe.

Biblical Teaching:

When we read Psalm 82 carefully we find that God is pronouncing judgment against the evil judges of Israel. These judges were supposed to act righteously and be God’s representatives on earth. But they became corrupt and were unjust in their dealings with men. God’s charge against them was that they administered justice unjustly, showing favor to the wicked instead of upholding the rights of the helpless and oppressed. The judges were called “gods” not because they were actual deity but because they pronounced life-and-death judgments against people.

Looking at the context of Psalm 82, it is clear that the Lord, through Asaph, is speaking in irony in this verse. He is saying in effect, “I have called you ‘gods,’ but in fact you will die like the men that you really are.” When Jesus quoted from this psalm, He was saying what the Israelite judges were called in irony and in judgment, He is in reality. “He does what they could not do, and is what they could never be.”

Notice also that in John 10:34 Jesus spoke in the present tense, “Ye are gods.” This is important, because not even Mormon leaders claim that they are gods at the present moment. Rather, they believe in a future exaltation. So John 10:34 doesn’t properly fit the context of Mormon theology.

Rhodes says it is time now to pull out the “heavy guns.”

Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44:8)

Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. (Isaiah 43:10)

If this verse is true, then God could not have had a Father and a Grandfather who were gods in their own right (as Mormons teach). Otherwise, we would have to say that the God speaking in Isaiah 44:8 was either lying or forgot His own Father. Since there were no gods before the God of the Bible, this means that God had no Father-gods or Grandfather-gods before him. Since no gods will come after God, this means that none of His children will become Gods.

Mormon Teaching: Separate Gods in Separate Places?

In Matthew 3:16-17 we read, “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

James E. Talmage says:

That these three are separate individuals, physically distinct from each other, is demonstrated by the accepted records of divine dealing with man. On the occasion of the Savior’s baptism, John recognized the sigh of the Holy Ghost; he saw before him in a tabernacle of flesh the Christ, unto whom had had administered the holy ordinance; and he heard the voice of the Father. The three personages of the Godhead were present, manifesting themselves each in a different way, and each distinct from the others.

Thus, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cannot be “one person,” as Trinitarians believe.

Biblical Teaching:

In Matthew 3:16-17 the doctrine of the Trinity is plainly evident: The Son is baptized, the Father speaks of His Son, and the Holy Spirit descends on the Son like a dove. Mormons typically misdefine the Trinity as being “three in one Person.” Mormon missionaries often think that if they can show you that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct (as evident in Matthew 3:16-17), then they have proven the “three-in-one-Person” doctrine wrong. They desperately want to prove that there are three distinct and separate personages evident in this passage.

Of course Trinitarians do not believe in “three in one Person.” Trinitarians believe that there is one God, but that within the unity of the Godhead there are three co-equals, co-eternal Persons. So the Trinity is not “three in one Person” but “three Persons in one Godhead.’

**The Person of Jesus Christ in Mormonism**

Do Mormons believe in the Jesus of the Bible? According to official Mormon teaching, Jesus Christ was “begotten” as the first spirit-child of the Father (Elohim) and one of his unnamed wives (often referred to as “Heavenly Mother”). Because the Heavenly Father and Mother had many spirit children, Jesus is often referred to by Mormons as **“**our elder brother.” (Lucifer, too, is the spirit brother of Jesus.) Jesus, as a spirit son, then progressed by obedience and devotion to the truth in the spirit world until he became a God. Prior to his incarnation Jesus was the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Jehovah is the premortal Jesus Christ and came to earth being born of Mary.

How was Jesus conceived in Mary’s womb? Mormon doctrine actually teaches that Jesus, in His mortal state, was begotten through sexual relations between a flesh-and-bone Heavenly Father and Mary—the only earthly off spring so conceived. Mormon authorities argue that Jesus as the “Son” of God was
“begotten” of the Father, and these terms are to be taken literally. According to Mormon doctrine, then, Jesus was begotten not by the Holy Spirit but by the Father (Elohim*). Doctrines of Salvation* affirm that “Christ is not the Son of the Holy Ghost, but of the Father.”

Such a doctrine, of course, raises the questions about the virginity of Mary. Mormon theologians maintain that even though the Father had sexual relations with Mary, she remained a virgin. Bruce McConkie argues that a “virgin” is a woman who has had no sexual relations with a *mortal* man. Because God the Father was an immortal man, Mary remained a virgin after have relations with him.

Even though Mormons believe in innumerable gods, they try to argue they are not polytheists because they worship and pray to only one God, the Father. They do not worship or pray to Jesus.