

Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and the Bible

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Currently, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints defines the Godhead as consisting of three separate and distinct personages or Gods: Elohim, or God the Father; Jehovah, or Jesus Christ, the Son of God both in the spirit and in the flesh; and the Holy Ghost. The Father and the Son have physical, resurrected bodies of flesh and bone, but the Holy Ghost is a spirit personage. Jesus' title of Jehovah reflects his pre-existent role as God of the Old Testament. These definitions took official form in "The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve" (1916) as the culmination of five major stages of theological development in Church history (Kirkland 1984):

1. Joseph Smith, Mormonism's founder, originally spoke and wrote about God in terms practically indistinguishable from then-current protestant theology. He used the roles, personalities, and titles of the Father and the Son interchangeably in a manner implying that he believed in only one God who manifested himself as three persons. The Book of Mormon, revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants prior to 1835, and Smith's 1832 account of his First Vision all reflect "trinitarian" perceptions. He did not use the title Elohim at all in this early stage and used Jehovah only rarely as the name of the "one" God.

2. The 1835 Lectures on Faith and Smith's official 1838 account of his First Vision both emphasized the complete separateness of the Father and the Son. The Lectures on Faith did not consider the Holy Ghost to be a personage at all, but rather defined it to be the mind of God: "There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things. . . . the Father and the Son — the Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power, possessing all perfection and fullness, the Son . . . a personage

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of tabernacle . . . possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one . . .” (Lundwall, 48). The names Elohim and Jehovah were both used in association with God the Father, who was also considered to be the God of the Old Testament (Kirkland 1984, 37).

3. Between 1838 and 1844, Joseph Smith introduced the concept of an infinite lineal hierarchy of Gods. The book of Abraham describes the creation as being performed by “the Gods” (4:1), and the King Follett Discourse further describes these Gods as a council presided over by a “head God” clearly a patriarchal superior to God the Father (Larson 1978, 202–03; Hale 1978, 212–18; Kirkland 1984, 38). Elohim was used variously as the name of God the Father, the name of a “Head God” who directed the Father in the creation of the world, and as a plural representing the Council of the Gods. The name Jehovah was also still associated with the Father, not with Jesus. The Holy Ghost was now generally referred to by Joseph Smith as being a personage.

4. In the 1854 general conference of the Church and on many other occasions throughout his life, Brigham Young taught that God the Father was also known as Michael. After creating the earth under the direction of Elohim and Jehovah, his patriarchal superiors in the Council of the Gods, Michael descended from his exalted, immortal status to become Adam, the first man, to provide his spiritual progeny with physical tabernacles. While in this fallen condition, his Father Elohim, the “grandfather” of mankind, presided over the earth in his stead. Following his “death,” Adam returned to his exalted status and presided over Israel using both titles, Elohim and Jehovah. Jesus was begotten by this personage both spiritually and in the flesh (Kirkland 1984, 38–40; Buerger 1982, 14–58).

5. Between Brigham Young’s death and the turn of the century, a mixture of all of the previously discussed theological positions circulated within the Church causing much conflict and confusion. To achieve some semblance of harmony between these widely varying ideas, as well as to quell external attacks from anti-Mormon critics at the “Adam-God” doctrine, Mormon leaders carefully reformulated Mormon theology around the turn of the century and articulated it in 1916 (Kirkland 1984, 39–41). These adjustments remain as the current doctrine of the Church today. As a result, much of the original meaning and context of the various godhead references in earlier Mormon scripture and teachings were lost as they were redefined or discarded during this harmonizing process. The Bible was used only as a secondary “prooftext” source for this reformulation of theology, as Mormon sources (regardless of their own extreme diversities) were considered to be more doctrinally sound and pure.

Just as the Mormon historical record demonstrates that its leaders have varied in their perceptions of God, modern biblical scholarship has shown that the Bible’s own authors had varying perceptions of God (Anderson 2:427–28; 411–14; 654–56 Moule 2:430–36; Terrien 1982, 1150–52; Rankin 1962, 90–99). Prior to the Exodus, a multiplicity of gods were understood to exist, each having his own realm of influence on earthly affairs. Israel’s earliest beliefs were monaltrous, i.e., other gods were acknowledged to exist but they were

all subject to the God of Israel who reigned over them in the divine "council of the gods" (Anderson 1981, 427–28; Rankin 1962, 92–93; Robinson 1944, 151–57). This belief was eventually modified into extreme monotheism, or the belief in only one God. At this stage, the one true God was granted many of the divine appellations associated with the other previously recognized deities, and earlier biblical records were edited to more closely conform with this monotheistic point of view. Monotheism achieved its apex in the writings of Isaiah and is carried on through the end of the Old Testament. The New Testament continues with the monotheistic theme by teaching the supremacy of one true God, now called the Father, but it also introduces two additional subordinate divine personalities: Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Holy Ghost or spirit of God.

Since theological evolution and diversity characterize both biblical and Mormon history, it would be unusual for current Mormon definitions of the divine names Elohim and Jehovah to coincide with the Bible's usage of those names. This essay examines how Elohim and Jehovah are used in the Bible and compares this with the current Mormon definitions and position that the pre-existent Jesus Christ was Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament.

Most Latter-day Saints do not realize how often the names Elohim and Jehovah¹ appear in the Old Testament because they have been translated from Hebrew into English. *Elohim* occurs 2,570 times and is closely related to *El*, which occurs some 238 times. Jehovah is by far the most frequently used Hebrew name for God in the Old Testament, occurring some 6,823 times. King James translators translated Elohim and *El* as "God" and Jehovah as "LORD," (all caps) and used "Lord" for the Hebrew *Adonai*, which Hebrew biblical editors often substituted for Jehovah in the prophetic books out of respect for the divine name (Stone 1944, 10, 18; Anderson 2:409–14, 3:150; Roberts 1976, 256–58; Rankin 1962, 96).

While Elohim and Jehovah appear very frequently in the Old Testament, these divine names do not designate two different gods with a Father-Son relationship as they do in Mormonism. Depending upon the intentions of the author, God may be referred to as Elohim, Jehovah, or Jehovah-Elohim. Elohim has the Hebrew masculine plural ending, *im*, and can designate gods generally, the gods of Israel's neighbors, one of these gods (despite its technical plurality), or Israel's God. Jehovah is the personal name of Israel's God as revealed to Moses (Ex. 6:2–3) and hence is never used in a plural sense or ever designates anyone but Israel's God. Jehovah is used in combination with, parallel to, and as a synonym for *El* or Elohim (Anderson 1981, 409–14;

¹ A more proper expression of the divine name is Yahweh, but I will use Jehovah, the more common term in Mormonism. The origin of "Jehovah" is, according to Rankin: "In the sixteenth century (1520) Christian theologians — not without the protest of certain scholars — combining the vowels of *Adhonai* with the consonants JHVH, produced the form Jehovah, a purely fictitious name which has become hallowed by four centuries of use. But the evidence of the pronunciation of the divine name as *Jahweh* is particularly good, for it is founded on the tradition handed down by Theodoret that the Samaritans pronounced the name as *Iabe* and upon Clement of Alexandria, who wrote "the mystic name of four letters' as *Iaoue*" (1962, 96).

Rankin 1962, 94–95; Roberts 1976, 257). The author of the second account of creation in Genesis 2 intentionally combined the two names Jehovah-Elohim (LORD God) to “Affirm that Jehovah is Elohim, the God of all times” (Anderson 1981, 414). Reading several passages containing the original Hebrew names instead of the King James translations shows the effort being made by the biblical authors to identify Elohim (or El) and Jehovah as being the same God:

For Jehovah your Elohim is Elohim of Elohim(s), and Adonai of Adonais, the great El, mighty and terrible” (Deut. 10:17).

I am Jehovah, the Elohim of Abraham thy father, and the Elohim of Isaac” (Gen. 28:13).

Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you . . . Jehovah, the Elohim of your fathers . . . of Abraham . . . of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath sent me unto you” (Ex. 3:14–15).

Jehovah is El of the Gods! Jehovah is El of the Gods! He knows, and let Israel itself know” (Josh. 22:22).

For Jehovah is the Great El, the Great King over all the gods” (Ps. 95:3) (Roberts 1976, 257).

This intermixing of the names for God may be best understood by noting that El, or Elohim, was favored by the northern kingdom of Israel while Judah, or the southern kingdom, preferred Jehovah (Miller and Miller 1973, 154). Thus, biblical scholars have been able to trace two main sources of thought in the Old Testament: the “J” or Jehovistic source, and the “E” or Elohistic source (Anderson 2:409; Fretheim 1976, 260; Brueggemann 1976, 971). According to the J source, Jehovah was known among the patriarchs prior to the time of Moses (Gen. 4:26; 12:8; 26:25); but according to the E source, the patriarchs worshipped El (Gen. 33:20) and the name of Jehovah was not revealed until Moses’ time (Ex. 3:13–16; 6:2–3). The Bible contains two accounts of creation, the first attributed to Elohim, the second to Jehovah; two accounts of the flood story interwoven in Genesis 6–7; and many Psalms which favor one name or the other. For example, Elohim is used four times as often for God as Jehovah in Psalms 42–83 while the rest of the Psalms use Jehovah twenty times as often as Elohim (Miller and Miller 1973, 155).

The Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek approximately 280 B.C. This version, the Septuagint, was the Bible of New Testament Christians. The New Testament was also written in Greek. In Greek, Jehovah and Adonai become *Kyrios*. Elohim becomes *theos* when speaking of gods generally, and *ho theos* when speaking of the one true God (Rankin 1962, 96; Anderson 2:414; Barclay 1980, 21–37, 413; Kittel 3:90, 104–5). The New Testament uses both *ho theos* and *Kyrios* to designate God the Father. Jesus is also called *Kyrios*, is only rarely called *theos*, and only once (during Thomas’ confession in John 20:28) called *ho theos*.² The fact that *ho theos* is used in

² By the second century A.D., Christians like Ignatius unhesitatingly called Jesus God. Some second-century writers, like Justin Martyr, also began describing him as the God of the Old Testament. The New Testament, however, contains very few references to Jesus as God. As Barclay has noted: “On almost every occasion in the New Testament on which Jesus seems to be called God there is a problem either of textual criticism or of translation. In

the New Testament almost exclusively of the Father indicates that the Christians equated the Father (not the Son) with the God of Israel.

Adding further confusion to sorting out the biblical usage of these words, the Hebrew word *adon* also becomes *kyrios* in Greek. *Adon* is used in the Old Testament and *kyrios* is used in the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament to designate men who are in a superior position to others (kings, commanders, slave owners, teachers, etc.); it is also often used as an address of courtesy and respect (Barclay 1980, 409–14; Campbell 1962, 130–31). Thus, when “Lord” appears in English translations, we may not automatically assume connotations of divinity. The context must be considered as well as whether the translated word is *kyrios*, *adon*, Jehovah, or *Adonai*. For example, scholars have noted a difference between the application of Lord to Jesus during mortality and following his resurrection. They generally concur that during his lifetime, *Kyrios* nearly always means “sir” or “master,” while after his resurrection, *Kyrios* becomes a divine appellation, a title of God which he bestows upon Jesus (Barclay 1980, 414–16; Cullman 1963, 180, 203–18).

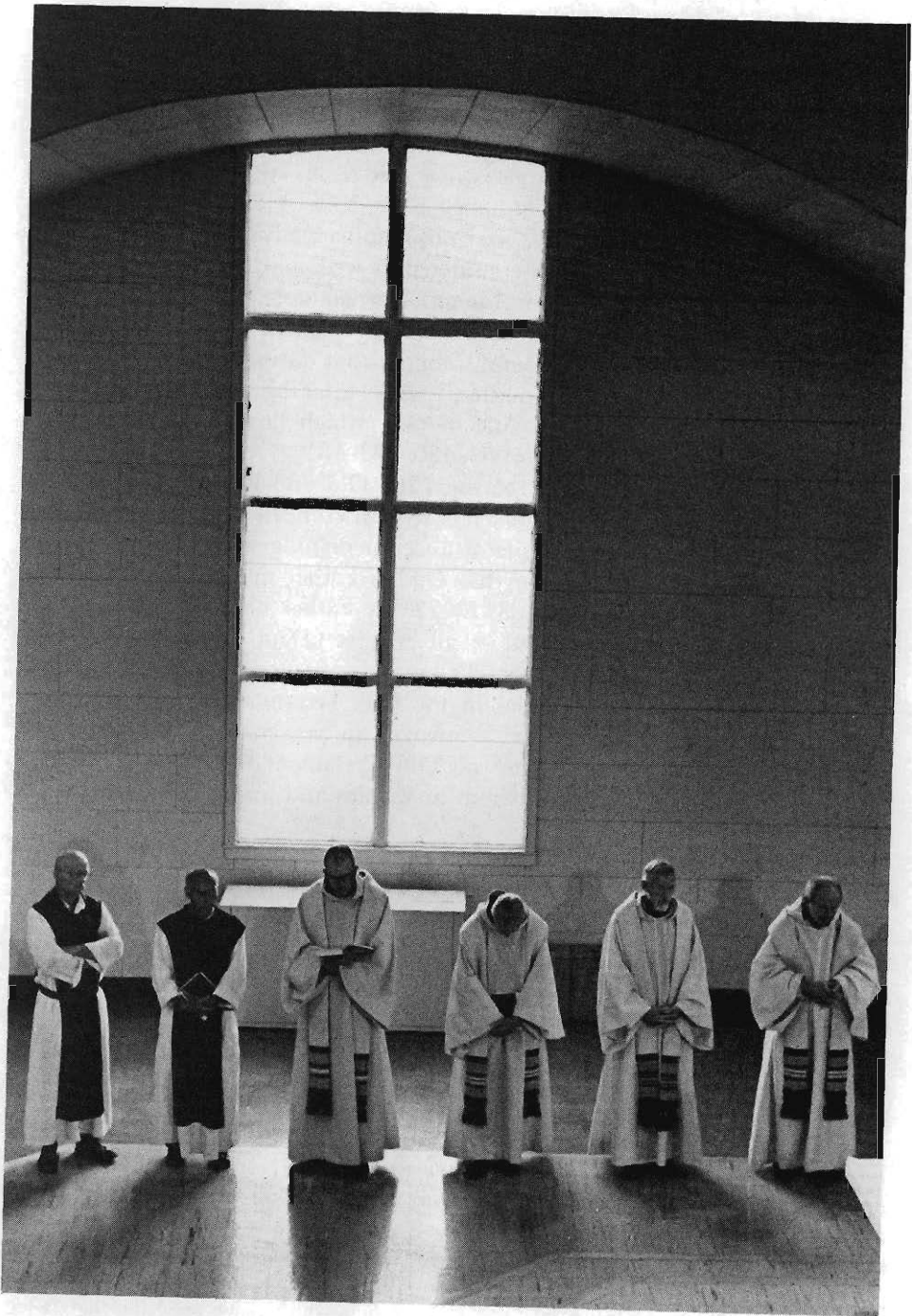
There is a dramatic contrast between the Old and New Testament concepts of God as Father. God is spoken of as Father in the Old Testament only fifteen times and never in the sense of ancestor or progenitor of mankind, an idea common in Near Eastern myths. God is Father in the sense of creator (Deut. 32:6; Mal. 2:10; Ps. 103:13–22; as Father of Israel (God’s first-born), the nation he adopted out of all peoples (Deut. 14:1–2; Ex. 4:22; Jer. 31:9); and also as having Israel’s kings as adopted sons (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7). There are no examples in the Old Testament of God (whether Elohim or Jehovah) being explicitly invoked in prayer as Father (Jeremias 1979, 23–29). There are likewise no Old Testament references to God as Father of a divine Son through whom he creates and makes contact with the world.

In the New Testament, however, the four Gospels alone quote Jesus calling God Father some 170 times. Jesus also apparently introduced the idea of calling God *Abba* (Mark 14:36), an intimate Aramaic equivalent of “Daddy” or “Dad.” There are no precedents from the entire literature of Jewish prayer prior to the New Testament for God being so addressed, for the Jews would have considered it disrespectful. Thus, Jesus’ use of the term indicates an extremely close relationship with God. Within the first century, *Abba* became the favorite Christian name for God and Paul explains its significance in Galatians 4:4–7 and Romans 8:14–17 (Jeremias 1979, 29–35, 58, 62–63).

Early Christians reserved “Father” for God alone (Matt. 23:9). Jesus bears witness of the name of the Father (John 5:43; 17:6), but he is never called Father himself in the Bible.³ The name of God bestowed upon Jesus

almost every case we have to discuss which of two readings is to be accepted or which of two possible translations is to be accepted” (1980, 21; 1975, 56–57; 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28; 3:23).

³ The only possible exception might be Isaiah 9:6, in which Isaiah proclaims that “a boy has been born for us, a son given to us . . . and he shall be called in purpose wonderful, in battle God-like, Father for all time, Prince of peace” (New English). However, it is not certain that Isaiah meant Jesus. None of the New Testament authors cite the passage with applica-



after his resurrection as a result of his obedience was "Lord" in the full divine sense of the term (Phil. 2:9-11; Acts 2:36). As Paul explained: "To us there is but one God, the Father . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:6).

The monotheistic theology of the Old Testament designated its God by either Elohim or Jehovah, although Jehovah predominates. Jehovah was not known as one member of a divine triad — either as Father or Son. Although comparisons might be made between Jehovah and the various divine paternal pantheons worshipped by Israel's neighbors, Israel itself did not seem to consider Jehovah subject to any other god, paternal or otherwise. Indeed, Israel considered Jehovah superior to all other gods worshipped by her neighbors.⁴ All the hosts of heaven were subject to him; he was sole creator of heaven, earth, and humans, including the spirit of human beings. No other god directed him in these creative acts (Gen. 14:22; Isa. 42:5; 44:24; 45:18; Jonah 1:9; Zech. 12:1; Num. 27:16; 16:22). The Israelites were thus commanded:

I am Jehovah thy Elohim, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt . . . Thou shalt have no other Elohim before me (Ex. 20:2-3).

Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah; and thou shalt love Jehovah thy Elohim with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 22:37).

Is there an Elohim beside me? Yea, there is no Elohim; I know not any. . . . I am Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no Elohim beside me (Isa. 44:8; 45:5-6; 42:8; 43:15; 44:6, 7; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Chron. 29:10-11, 18).

These passages exclude the possibility that the Israelites considered Jehovah to be the Son of some other supreme being or felt they could worship any other being. Instead they offered him sacrifices, built altars to him, burned incense for him in the temple, and addressed prayers directly to him:⁵

Give ear to my words, O Jehovah, consider my meditation. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee I will pray. My voice shalt

tion to Jesus. The Septuagint translation omits the reference to the promised child as being God-like or a Father. When interpreted in context, this verse most likely applies to a contemporary royal child, an heir to the throne of David, and was part of a dynastic oracle always uttered on the occasion of the anointing of a new king (Buttrick, 1956, 5:217-20; 230-34; Beegle 1978, 36-46, 71-73; Smith 1983, 39-42). The Book of Mormon's numerous references to Jesus as the Father is an anomaly when compared with the Bible (Kirkland 1984, 37, 42, 43, notes 6, 7, 8).

⁴ Mullen noted that just as "El alone sat as king and judge over the younger gods, his children" in the Near Eastern myths, in Israelite theology, "Yahweh, like El, is the supreme judge who issues the final decree of the [divine] Council." He particularly takes issue with the idea that the Hebrews ever considered El to be superior to Yahweh in the divine council of the gods as some have interpreted Deuteronomy 32:8-9. Here it appears that the god *Elyon* is head of the divine council who apportions the nations among the other gods, making Israel Yahweh's portion. Mullen argues, "The better interpretation to be in the view that *Elyon* and Yahweh are to be identified in vv. 8-9. . . . It is clear that within biblical tradition *Elyon* was regarded as a suitable appellation for Yahweh"; thus, "Yahweh/*Elyon* distributed the nations among the members of his council . . . preserving Israel as his own portion" (1980, 4-5, 202-5, 230-31, 237-38).

⁵ Gen. 4:3-5, 8:20-21; Ex. 12:24-27, 29:18; Lev. 4:3-4, 17:5; Num. 15:3; Ps. 54:6; Gen. 8:20-21, 12:7, 13:4, 26:24-25; Ex. 17:15, 20:24-25, 30:7-8, 34-38; Lev. 4:7, 16:12-13; Deut. 33:10; Gen. 4:26, 12:8; Ps. 54:2, 6; 69:13, 16; Isa. 26:13, 16; 55:6-7; Dan. 2:23; Jonah 2:1, 2, 9; 4:2.

thou hear in the morning. O Jehovah, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee (Ps. 5:1-3).

Jehovah hath heard my supplication; Jehovah will receive my prayer (Ps. 6:9).

Jehovah promises his people who pass through the refining fire: "Then they will invoke me by name, and I myself will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they shall say, 'Jehovah is our God.'" (Zech. 13:9, New English).

The New Testament likewise does not mention any god superior to Jehovah. Its overall message seems to be that the God of the Old Testament sent Jesus as his son into the world to redeem it. For example, Peter tells the Israelites: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up" (Acts 3:13; cf. 25-26; 5:30; 22:14; Heb. 1:1-4).

Evidence suggests that Jesus himself accepted Jewish monotheism, and considered Jehovah to be his father. The New Testament contains no evidence that he ever taught his disciples of a God superior to Jehovah, the God of Israel. In light of Jesus' desire to bear witness of the Father, and to advocate his true worship (John 4:23; 17:3), it would seem peculiar that he did not instruct the Jews to worship a God superior to Jehovah if he considered himself to be, in fact, Jehovah. On the contrary, he consistently advocated the worship of the God of Israel by citing the Old Testament commandment: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God (Jehovah thy Elohim), and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10; cf. Deut. 10:20).

As a Jewish male, Jesus would have been taught from his youth to recite the *Shema* at least twice daily. This liturgical creed was understood to be a confession of monotheism, that is, there is no other God than Jehovah (Jeremias 1979, 67-69). Jesus answered a scribe's question concerning the greatest commandment by citing a portion of it: "Hear, O Israel; Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah, and thou shalt love Jehovah thy Elohim with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:28-30).

The scribe affirmed that there was "one God; and there is none other but he," to which Jesus responded: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God" (vs. 32, 34). This one God, according to Jesus, was the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob (vs. 26). In John 8:54, Jesus identified the God of Israel as his Father, saying to the Jews: "It is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God." Of course, Jesus knew that the God of the Jews was Jehovah.

Jesus' pattern of worship and prayer followed the Jewish practices current in his day. He considered the temple which the Israelites had built for Jehovah, to be his Father's house (John 2:16). He was familiar with and probably practiced the three daily times of formal prayer, all of which were addressed to Jehovah. According to Jeremias (1979, 72-78), the *Tephilla*, or afternoon prayer, contained the following "two striking solemn invocations of God": "Blessed be thou, Lord (our God and the God of our fathers), the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (God great, mighty and fearful), most high God, master of heaven and earth. . . ." Jeremias com-

ments: "When Jesus speaks of God as the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (Mark 12:26) and when he, ordinarily so sparing in the use of divine names, calls God 'Lord of heaven and earth' in Matt. 11:25, this twofold coincidence with the wording of the first benediction of the *Tephilla* indicates Jesus' familiarity with it."

Beyond these three traditional Jewish prayers, Jesus prayed more personally, addressing God as Father. The only scriptural example of Jesus calling upon God by invoking a divine name is his cry from the cross: "My God, my God, (*Eloi, Eloi*) why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46), a quotation of Psalms 22:1, a chapter which influenced the crucifixion narrative at several points (Matt. 27:35, 39, 43; Ps. 22:18, 7, 8).

The uncompromising monotheism of the *Shema* was equally fundamental to the Christians. Paul essentially Christianized the *Shema* when he wrote, "There is none other God but one To us there is but one God" (1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Bruce 1980, 80; Morris 1981, 126). In all of his letters, Paul consistently identified this one God as the Father, and on at least two occasions specifically identified him as being "the God of my fathers" (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7; Eph. 1:2; Col. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Philem. 3; Acts 24:14; 2 Tim. 1:3). He never equated Jesus and God but saw Jesus as subordinate to God the Father (1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28; 3:23; Barclay 1975, 56-57).

For Paul, Jesus was not the god of the Old Testament come to earth. He was rather the Son of God, who, by virtue of his total obedience to the Father in submitting himself to death on the cross, was "highly exalted" after resurrection by God and given "a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:5-10; Rom. 1:4; Acts 2:36). The name above every name was the name of God the Father himself: Lord or *Kyrios*, the Greek equivalent of Jehovah (Phil. 2:11; Cullman 1963, 174, 180, 204, 216-18). In transferring the title "Lord" from the Father to Christ, the early Christians perceived Christ as performing in the role of God (Houlden 1977, 78; Martin 1981, 104-5). Christ's authority became cosmic in scope, although he occupied his exalted status "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11). The Christians preserved monotheism by speaking of Jesus' throne as no rival to the Father's throne (Rev. 3:21).

At this stage of New Testament Christology, Christians accustomed to calling Christ *Kyrios* would sometimes apply to him Old Testament passages originally referring to the God of Israel.⁶ F. F. Bruce explained:

For Greek-speaking Christians to whom Jesus was the *Kyrios* or Lord *par excellence* it was an easy matter to understand *Kyrios* in the Greek Old Testament to refer to

⁶ Mark 1:2-3/Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3; Rom. 10:13/Joel 2:32; Phil. 2:9-11/Isa. 45:23; 1 Cor. 10:4/Deut. 32:15 & Psalm 78:35; Jude 5/Ex. 12:51 & Num. 14:20-29. Paul's allusion to Christ as the Rock that followed the children of Israel in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:1-4) is perhaps best explained by his rabbinic interpretation of the Old Testament: "According to the traditions of the Rabbis the rock from which the children of Israel received water in their wilderness journeyings actually followed them throughout their journeyings ever after. That is a miracle story which is not part of the Old Testament narrative. It was one of the Rabbinic traditions and Paul knew it and used it" (Barclay 1975, 17; Anderson 2:415; Cullman 1963, 234-37).

Him. If again, actions ascribed to Yahweh in the Exodus wilderness narratives are elsewhere ascribed to His angel — the one of whom he said ‘my name is in him’ (Ex. 23:20f; cf. 14–19; 32:34; 33:2, 14ff) — then the interpretation of this special angel in terms of the Son of God before His incarnation presented no difficulty (1969, 35–36; 1979, 89–91).

Jesus, however, never quoted Old Testament passages about *Kyrios* with reference to himself, but always with reference to God the Father. Cullman summarized the effect of Jesus’ receiving the name “Lord” this way: “The designation of Jesus as *Kyrios* has the further consequence that actually all the titles of honour for God himself (with the exception of ‘Father’) may be transferred to Jesus. Once he was given the ‘name which is above every name,’ God’s own name (‘Lord’, *Adonai*, *Kyrios*), then no limitations at all could be set for the transfer of divine attributes to him (1963, 234, 236–37).

Thus both the Father and the Son are ascribed the roles and titles of Lord, Savior, Redeemer, Creator, Judge, I Am, Alpha and Omega, etc., in the New Testament.⁷ Interestingly, most passages referring to Jesus as Savior also designate God the Father as Savior in the Old Testament sense of the word which have no connotation of atonement but instead refer to rescue from pain, trouble, or enemies (1 Tim. 1:1, 2:3, 4:10; Titus 1:3, 2:10, 3:4; Luke 1:47; Jude 25; Cullman 1963, 241–42; Barclay 1980, 217).

John’s gospel, written late in the first century, goes far beyond the synoptic gospels in attributing divinity to Jesus and perhaps comes closest to identifying Jesus with the God of the Old Testament by having Jesus refer to himself in John 8:58 and other verses (8:16, 24, 28) as *ego eimi* (I Am). Since Jehovah gave his name to Moses as “I Am” (Ex. 3:14–15), many have concluded that Jesus was attempting to identify himself as the God of Israel. Harner interprets John’s intent, not as identifying Jesus as the same “I Am” who revealed himself to Moses, but rather as implying that Jesus was also divine and shared the divine nature of the Father, John’s theme throughout his gospel (“the word was with God [*ho theos*], and the word was god [*theos*]” 1:1). He attributes John’s “I Am” to the septuagint translation of *ani hu* and ‘anoki’ *anoki hu* (I am He) in monotheistic Isaiah (41:4; 43:10, 13, 25; 45:18; 46:4; 51:12; 52:6) rather than to Exodus and stresses John’s emphasis of subordinate and obedient relationship of the Son to the Father whenever he had Jesus saying *ego eimi* (1970, 6–15, 38–48, 51–58, 60–62; Barrett 1982, 19–34).

Many biblical scholars have noted the important role of Psalm 110:1 in influencing early Christians to apply “Lord” to Christ (Houlden 1977, 78; Cullman 1963, 222–26; Hay 1973, 15, 42, 104–8): “The LORD (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (*adoni*), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

⁷ On the Father as Lord, see Luke 1:15, 16, 32, 46, 68; 2:9, 26, 29; Acts 2:34, etc.; on the Father as Savior, see Luke 1:47; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4–7; Jude 25; on the Father as Redeemer see Luke 1:68; on the Father as creator see Acts 17:24; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2; on the Father as judge see Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 3:6; Heb. 12:23–24; 1 Thess. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:23; on the Father as Alpha and Omega see Rev. 1:8; 21:6.

In the Septuagint, "Jehovah" and *adoni* were translated *Kyrios* (Cullman 1963, 131). The New Testament ascribes to Jesus the role of the second *kyrios* (*adoni*) who was invited to sit at God's (Jehovah's) right hand. New Testament authors quote or allude to Psalm 110:1 more than any other Old Testament passage (some thirty-three times) with references to Jesus (Hay 1973, 15; Cullman 1963, 223). In Phillipians 2:9-11, all powers in heaven, earth, and under the earth become subject to Christ when God grants him the name "Lord" (*Kyrios*), just as in Psalms 110:1 the "Lord" is master of all enemies when Jehovah invites him to sit at his right hand. Acts 2:36 caps an argument that Jesus is both *Kyrios* and Christ based on his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 (vs. 32-35). Clearly, then, the new Testament Christians identified the first *Kyrios* (Jehovah) spoken of in this psalm with God the Father.

Jesus himself cited this psalm: "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22:41-46).

The New Testament portrays Jesus as consciously identifying his mission with the suffering servant of Jehovah discussed in Isaiah who would reestablish the covenant between God and Israel: "Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter . . . Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin . . ." (53:5-7, 10/Acts 8:32-35; Isa. 53:4/Matt. 8:17; Isa. 42:1-4/Matt. 12:14-21; Isa. 53:12/Luke 23:37; Isa. 53:1/John 12:38; Isa. 53:6-9/2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:6-7/1 Pet. 1:19 & 2:22-25; Cullman 1963, 51, 60-68).

In the Gospels, Jesus obviously rejects the traditional Jewish expectations of a militant, political king descended from David, and describes his role in terms similar to Isaiah's suffering servant: "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected . . . and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31; Luke 17:25; Cullman 1963, 51, 60-69, 120-27). The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39) demonstrates early Christian belief that Jesus was the servant of Jehovah described in Isaiah 53 for Philip reads this passage to the eunuch and explains that it refers to Jesus.⁸ Hence, the New Testament Christians who equated Jesus with the suffering servant of Jehovah would not have considered him to be Jehovah himself come to earth.

Further, Jesus specifically cited his appointment from Jehovah by reading Isaiah 61:1: "The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me, because he hath anointed

⁸ Biblical scholars have shown many valid reasons for questioning a messianic interpretation of Isaiah's suffering servant passages, regardless of the New Testament Christians' hindsight application of these passages to Jesus following his resurrection (Cullman 1963, 52-79; Barclay 1980, 163-86; Smith 1983, 43-45; Ackroyd 1982, 363-64).

me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" etc. (Luke 4:18–21/Isa. 11:1–2).

The Jews expected their messiah to be "the anointed one of Jehovah," following the designation of Israel's kings by that title (1 Sam. 9:16; 24:6; 2 Sam. 7:12–14). As Jehovah's anointed, the Messiah would turn all nations to the worship of Jehovah, the true God (Jer. 30:8–9; Ps. 2; Ezek. 37:21–28; Cullman 1963, 113–15; Jenni 3:365; Barclay 1980, 95–112). Micah thus predicted:

But you, O Bethlehem Ephratha, who are little to be among the class of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days. . . . And he shall stand and feed his flock in this strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be a man of peace" (Micah 5:2–5, Revised Standard).

Thus, neither the Old Testament's messianic prophecies, nor its discussions of a suffering servant which the New Testament authors applied to Jesus support the idea of Jehovah coming to earth himself to enact these roles.⁹ Instead they portray Jehovah, God, as sending the Messiah, his servant, into the world.

Thus, the current Mormon definitions of Elohim and Jehovah, with Jesus identified as the God of Israel, differ from the biblical record. Efforts of Mormon expositors to harmonize these definitions with the Bible have led to much misunderstanding and manipulation of the scriptures. For example, biblical passages which refer to Jehovah in the context of being the Father have been

⁹ The thought that Jehovah himself could suffer and die would have been inconceivable to the Jews. Often Mormon writers have quoted Isaiah 26:4, 19 and Zechariah 12:10 as evidence that Jehovah himself had prophesied to Israel: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise," and "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him," etc. For example, see Bruce R. McConkie 1969, 392; 1978, 525, 535; and B. H. Roberts 1932, 16, 17, 23–29, 32, 34, 50–52. Unfortunately, both of these passages have problems in the original Hebrew texts, which have made accurate translations very difficult, if not impossible and it is the poor King James translations of these passages which have led to these erroneous expositions. Although Roberts defended his exposition of Isaiah 26:19 when the inadequacies of the King James translation were pointed out to him, his arguments are unconvincing, and he relied most heavily on Book of Mormon prophecies to support his thesis (1932, 23–34). This passage in Hebrew literally reads, "Thy dead ones shall live; my corpse, they shall arise," and is obviously garbled in the original. The Septuagint tried to resolve it by deleting "my corpse." The New English Bible renders Isaiah 26:19 more accurately than the King James: "But thy dead live, their bodies will rise again."

Hebrew Zechariah 12:10 literally reads: "When they shall look unto me, he whom they pierced, they shall mourn because of him." *Biblia Hebraica* proposes that the accusative particle (not translatable in English) be amended by one letter to read "dead one" and that the vowels of the word translated "unto me" be changed to make it the poetic "unto." This would give us: "When they shall look unto the dead one whom they pierce, they shall mourn because of him." Borsch translates Zechariah 12:10 as "when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him," and notes that "If the Hebrew is correct to read me instead of him, the reference is probably to Yahweh: i.e., "They shall look unto me on account of the one whom they have pierced . . ." (Borsch 1967, 130). (I would like to thank John A. Tvedtnes for much of the information in this footnote.)

mistranslated to make them refer to Elohim.¹⁰ Scriptural prayers addressed to Jehovah have been diluted with the interpretation that they are merely spontaneous manifestations of joy, worship, and adoration of our Savior rather than true prayers addressed to God the Father.¹¹ This interpretation has been made necessary by the Mormon belief that all true worship and prayer should be directed to God the Father, and not to the Son (McConkie 1982, 5, 19–20). If Jesus were literally Jehovah, the God of Israel, then the Israelites were indeed worshipping and praying to the Son to the exclusion of the Father. Lowell L. Bennion, commenting on this dilemma, observed that: “When Christ was on the earth he taught his disciples to worship the Father. It doesn’t seem logical to me that Christ would ask in the Old Testament to be worshipped, and not have the Father worshipped as in other scriptures, in other dispensations. . . . Jews and their Old Testament ancestors considered Elohim and Jehovah to be two names for God which both refer to a single deity in monotheism” (1980, 40).

Further, biblical Messianic prophecies in which the Messiah is obviously described as the servant of Jehovah have been misunderstood or reinterpreted.¹² Titles of Jehovah such as “Savior,” “Redeemer of Israel,” etc., have been removed from their Old Testament context and meaning, and paralleled with these same titles of Jesus in the New Testament to promote the Jehovah/Christ

¹⁰ Bruce R. McConkie 1978, 101–2, and Sept. 1980, 386, where he mistranslates Psalms 110:1 as: “Elohim said unto Jehovah, sit thou on my right hand,” rather than giving its correct translation of “Jehovah said unto *adonai*.” Also see *The Old Testament Part Two, Gospel Doctrine Teachers Supplement*, p. 110, where Isaiah 53:10 is clarified with bracketed comments to have LORD refer to the Father instead of Jesus because of the context: “Yet it pleased the LORD [here Elohim, the Father] to bruise him; he [the Father] hath put him [the Son] to grief.” Ironically, just the previous lesson in this Sunday School manual had explained that “LORD” was the English translation of Jehovah, who was Jesus Christ (p. 102)!

¹¹ McConkie 1978, 335–37, 561–62. Elder McConkie forcefully emphasized the inappropriateness of Church members either worshipping Christ or praying directly to Him to the exclusion of the Father in his 2 March 1982 BYU devotional address, “Our Relationship with the Lord.” In this address he acknowledged: “I know perfectly well what the scriptures say about worshipping Christ and Jehovah, but they are speaking in an entirely different sense—the sense of standing in awe and being reverentially grateful to Him who has redeemed us” (p. 5). This distinction between “reverential awe” being directed to Jehovah and all other worship being directed to some other God superior to Jehovah is nowhere apparent in the Old Testament. Ironically, in *The Millennial Messiah*, Elder McConkie emphasizes that “true religion consists in worshipping the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Ghost,” and then three sentences later explains “that Israel was scattered” because they stopped worshipping Jehovah [Jesus] and began to worship “false gods” (p. 196; see also pp. 662, 670–71).

¹² *Old Testament, Part Two*, (op. cit.), pp. 102–11 applies many of Isaiah’s suffering servant passages to Jesus but studiously avoids pointing out that this servant was subject to Jehovah. McConkie, (Feb. 1980) *The Mortal Messiah, Book 2*, p. 15, turns Micah 5:2–5 into an identification of the Messiah as “the Lord Omnipotent, the eternal God,” as opposed to its original meaning of the Messiah coming “in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God.” On pages 21–24 of this same book, he is careful not to point out that the messianic prophesy Jesus applied to himself in Luke 4:16–22 from Isaiah 61 originally meant: “The Spirit of the Lord [Jehovah] is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.” Here Elder McConkie interprets the Lord as having reference to the Father, rather than to Jehovah, as it originally read in the Hebrew.

identification (McConkie 1978, 107–10; Petersen n.d. 2–10; *Old Testament* 1980, 47). The “divine investiture” harmonizing concept (where the Son speaks and acts in the first person as if he were the Father) has been invoked whenever the scriptures report that God makes appearances and gives revelations to human beings. This has been made necessary because of the current Mormon concept that all revelation since the fall of Adam has come through the Son (“Christ” 1979–80, 92–97; Smith 1:27–30). Interestingly, however, these same scriptural passages are often cited in Mormonism as evidence of the Father’s physical, anthropomorphic nature. Although B. H. Roberts argued persuasively that Jesus was Jehovah in *Rasha — the Jew* (1932), his earlier work, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, (1903, reprint ed. by Horizon publishers, Bountiful, Utah, n.d.) argues (perhaps only for the sake of polemics?) that the anthropomorphic references to God in the Old Testament are evidence of the true nature of God the Father (see pp. 21, 22, 79, 80, 83, 90, 156–9).

Whatever argument is possible for the current LDS definitions of Elohim and Jehovah from Mormon sources, it must be admitted that these definitions do not accord with the biblical usage of those terms. Apologists aware of this problem have been forced to conclude that the entire biblical record as we now have it has been so systematically corrupted and edited through the centuries, that all indications of a theology more in conformity with current Mormon definitions have been obliterated.¹³ Modern textual criticism and comparisons of the many available ancient manuscripts of the Bible do not lend much support to such a radical thesis, however. Likewise, efforts to show parallels between Mormonism and the polytheism of the patriarchal era also seem misdirected (Seaich 1983, 12–28). This approach is similar to the “parallelo-mania” which intrigued many Church members during the late ’60s and ’70s with the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi gnostic texts. Although parallels between Mormonism and these documents seem to exist, their significance greatly diminishes when these passages are returned to their original historical and literary context. The vast majority of the theology and religious practices of the groups which produced them would shock and confound most Mormons. The same may be said of the early Near Eastern polytheistic mythology.

Although we might hope it would be otherwise, religious history clearly demonstrates that perfect doctrinal harmony cannot be found within the Bible, within Mormonism, or in a comparison of the two. Although God may be infallible, human beings are not. Even inspired men in their canonized writ-

¹³ Mormon authors attempting to find scriptural evidence supporting the identification of Jesus with Jehovah inevitably lament the paucity of information in the Bible, and generally cite the Book of Mormon as the major source for that conclusion. See Roberts 1932, 28–29, 32–34; Smith 1979, 1:13–21; Talmage 1963, 32–41. Seaich, however, bases most of his arguments for the Jehovah/Christ doctrine on the premise that the vast majority of the God-head theology of the Old and New Testaments is unreliable, and turns to extra-biblical writings for his arguments (1983, III-V, 7–22).

ings demonstrably vary greatly in their perceptions of God. Perhaps Brigham Young said it best when he explained:

even the best of the Latter-day Saints have but a faint idea of the attributes of the Deity. Were the former and Latter-day Saints, with their Apostles, Prophets, Seers, and Revelators collected together to discuss this matter, I am led to think there would be found a great variety in their views and feelings upon this subject, without direct revelation from the Lord. It is as much my right to differ from other men, as it is theirs to differ from me, in points of doctrine and principle, when our minds cannot at once arrive at the same conclusion (JD 2:123).

We should be more cognizant and tolerant of this doctrinal diversity if we are interested in an accurate perception of our religious heritage and the significance of current beliefs. Recognizing doctrinal ambiguity perhaps does not produce the security of orthodox absolutes, but rather requires us to acknowledge, as did Paul, that we must be content to "see through a glass darkly" until the day when "that which is perfect is come" (1 Cor. 13:9-12).

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