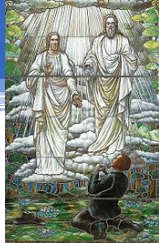


What is the Mormon Church really?

The Mormon view of god, in contrast with the Christian view of God, part one

AND Critical thinking, as an important skill for a disciple of Jesus

Teacher, Yvon Prehn



Our Plan today

- We looked at foundational books
 - Book of Mormon
 - Doctrine and Covenants
 - Pearl of Great Price
 - Book of Abraham here
- The Bible, insofar as correctly translated
- Now a study of specific Mormon teachings: God, Jesus, Salvation, Sin
- Contrast them with Biblical truth
- FIRST, a lesson in critical thinking and in the vital importance of examining why you believe what you believe

Why Critical thinking is important

- **More than a list of facts to win an argument**
- **Learn how to approach any topic**
 - Know your content
 - Know implications from critical thought
 - Share with quiet confidence
- Not simply negative, from GK: κριτικός **kritikos**, which means *discerning judgment*
- **Critical thinking** (do for yourself also)
 - Examines assumptions
 - Discerns hidden values
 - Evaluates evidence
 - Assesses conclusions.

Thought-provoking quotes

- *We think so because other people all think so; or because – or because – after all we do think so; or because we were told so, and think we must think so; or because we once thought so, and think we still think so; or because, having thought so, we think we will think so...*
Henry Sidgwick
- *To every complex question there is a simple answer and it is wrong...*
H.L. Mencken
- *The great masses of the people...will more easily fall victims to a big lie than to a small one.*
Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, 1933

First, let's look at an example from:



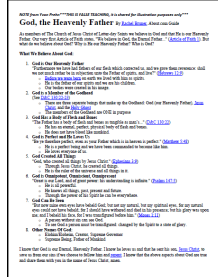
- **Rachel Bruner** has been the About.com Guide to the topic about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since 2002. She has always been an active member of the Church and served an LDS mission to the Panama, Panama City Mission from 1997-1999.
- **Education:** She graduated from the LDS Church's Seminary and Institute of Religion programs.
- **My greatest passions in life** are the gospel of Jesus Christ and my family. I feel the Internet is a wonderful resource where we can learn more about the principles and teaching of Christ and hopefully can work together to make this world a better place.
- **From:** http://lds.about.com/od/basicsgospelprinciples/a/abb_god.htm
- **Let's look at what she says about God**

God, the Heavenly Father

- As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we believe in God and that He is our Heavenly Father. Our very first Article of Faith states, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father..." (Article of Faith 1). But what do we believe about God? Why is He our Heavenly Father? Who is God?
- **What We Believe About God: God is Our Heavenly Father**
"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (**Hebrews 12:9**)
 - **Before we were born** on earth we lived with him as spirits.
 - He is the father of our spirits and we are his children.
 - Our bodies were created in his image.

See the rest of her entry

- Let's look at this with critical thinking:
- The first section, a key issue about God
- *****What they mean by "Our Heavenly Father is tied to "Premortal Existence"**
- A key presupposition for much of their theology



Scriptural Basis for Premortal existence?

- Heb. 12:9 *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh (sarx) which corrected [us], and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits (pneuma), and live?*
- Check commentaries, check key words, e.g. <http://www.blueletterbible.org>--Results:
 - Context a passage about discipline.
 - Contrast between human fathers and God
 - Just because God is the Creator of our spirits does not (from this passage or anywhere else) imply we had a premortal existence

If you click on "Premortal Existence"

- **We Lived Before We Were Born:**
- Before we were born on the earth we existed as spirits and lived in a spirit world in the presence of God, our Eternal Father. We developed talents and gained knowledge. We created friendships and made promises. We also had our agency to choose.
- **First We Were Spirit Children of God:**
- Latter-day revelation teaches the eternal nature of spirits, that all things (including us) were first created spiritually, before physically: "For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth...."

continues

- And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them" (Moses 3:5.) Not only were we spirits before we were born on Earth, but our spirits are the literal offspring of God. He is the father of our spirits, which is why we call Him our Heavenly Father.
- **All Spirit is Matter:**
- Latter-day prophets have also revealed that all spirit is made of matter: "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter" (D&C 131:7-8.)

Critical analysis

- Looking at assumptions
 - Conclusion first: Premortal spirits
 - *****Be aware of the "backstory" the foundational assumptions of *any system***
 - It becomes a filter for all else
- Then supporting citations
 - Bible verse out of context and distorted
 - No where does the Bible teach pre-existence of souls or eternal nature of spirit/matter—only God is eternal
 - Later Mormon documents quoted correctly
 - *****Which foundational documents are true?**
 - **Constantly check, remind yourself why you believe what you believe**

Summary: First Mormon idea about God

- God as Father
 - Human centric: Father, but in so much as his job was to bring spirits to earth (and so they can get bodies and later become gods)
 - Importance of Premortal existence of souls
 - Nothing in common with Biblical Christianity.
 - Much in common with Hindu, gnostic, Greek thought and other deviations in world religions
 - ****But a basis for many other Mormon Doctrines**
- Next we'll look at "God as Member of Godhead"