

GOD AND THE TRINITY ©

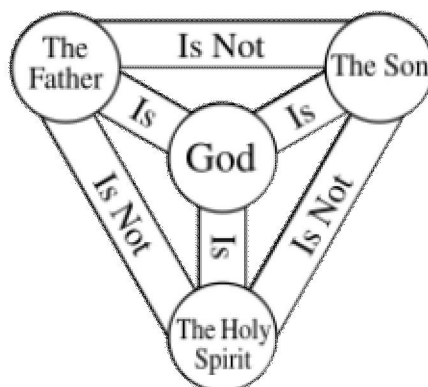
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The Shield of the Trinity - "Scutum Fidei"¹

*“And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God
and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”
(Jn 17:3)*

The Trinity is a topic I’ve wanted to address for some time. It is definitely challenging, considering that theologians admit that the concept of three persons in one God is “baffling.” Certainly, the Book of Job expressed it well:

Can’st thou by searching find out God? Can’st thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? (*Job 11:7*)

But what theologians mean by “baffling” is this: The Trinity, in its pure, unadulterated, infinite, spiritual and eternal reality is unfathomable to the human mind. Nevertheless, with that said, we are not totally void of information. The scriptures reveal enough to give us the essentials.

Nevertheless, for some that isn’t enough. They clamor for more. They want to be able to picture in their mind’s-eye the ultimate naked reality of the three-in-one God in His spiritual form as He existed in eternity past—even to the point of scientific explanation.

This kind of curiosity, however, does not pose a problem for most Christians—they simply don’t worry about it. They just take on faith what scripture and the Nicene Creed (*the document establishing Christian beliefs*) tells them, and their inquisitiveness goes no further. They accept as fact that God, knowing that humans would never be able to understand the mystery of an

invisible God, condescended to come to earth in human form and reveal what was necessary. This makes Jesus God. So, when they pray, they simply picture Jesus. No problem.

However, not all have been able to comfortably settle into this. Therefore, this article will be geared for the following:

- Those who desperately want more detail, Christians or otherwise.
- Christians who, while accepting Jesus as God, feel that their denomination's creed is written in such indistinct terms, that they need to have it spelled out more explicitly.
- Christians who privately admit they picture the Trinity as three separate Gods (as Mormons do).
- Those who don't claim any particular denomination, but would like to know more on the subject.
- Those who have wrestled with so many interpretations in different churches over the years, that they're not sure what to believe.
- Christian ex-Mormons who find themselves vacillating between the Christian and Mormon view of God, and
- Mormons (*yes, they do read these articles*), who believe in three separate Gods, with Elohim the Father being a resurrected man from a previous world.

Therefore, in view of the concerns and confusion about the Trinity people have, I felt that readers would appreciate an article that pulls it all together. Some Christians may find parts of it elementary; but, on the other hand, they may catch new insights, as well as find their testimony about the Trinity and Jesus' deity strengthened.

While it would be interesting to cover the complexities of all the ear-tickling theories floating around "out there," this is not my intent. The article will focus on presenting the Biblical facts on God and the Trinity from an evangelical perspective (*see endnote for definition*).² Some of you may not agree on all points, and that is fine; but at least you'll broaden your horizons by seeing what someone else has to say on such a fascinating subject.

As an added bonus, this article will offer a unique analogy from the field of Quantum physics (*made simple*) that will show how the reality of a three-in-one God is scientifically possible. Once you comprehend that, you will have no problem understanding how the three Personages in the Trinity can be "One" God, how Jesus can be God, and also be able to picture it! And in saying this, I'm not implying that the Trinity can be technically and scientifically analyzed, but a good metaphor or analogy often helps.

The article is admittedly lengthy because I will be covering such a variety of intriguing questions people have asked over the years, a few of which are:

- Is God a person or a cosmic force?
- Could He possibly be a man?
- What is meant by God's essence and attributes? Did he acquire them?
- Did God have a beginning?
- Are there three separate Gods in the Trinity?
- Or...are they three beings in one being...or three persons in one being?
- Could the plural word "Elohim" suggest a plurality of Gods?
- Is God like a schizophrenic who has three different personalities?

My hope is that the reader will:

- (1) Gain deeper insight into who and what God is—also, what he is *not*.
- (2) Formulate a better “mind-picture” of the Trinity through the special analogy presented.
- (3) Understand how Jesus can be God, and
- (4) Be able to discern the difference between Biblical and unbiblical views of the Godhead.

Major headings will be as follows:

- I. Is God like a Pitcher of Lemonade?
- II. The Hologram— a new analogy for the Trinity
- III. The Biblical perspective of God
- IV. The Christian Trinity
- V. The Logos (the Word) and the begetting of the second Person of the Trinity into humanity
- VI. The Mormon perspective of God and the Trinity

I. IS GOD LIKE A PITCHER OF LEMONADE?

Many years ago, I lived in the small desert town of Wendover, Utah. My neighbor (a Church of Christ pastor) and I were talking over the backyard fence about the three-in-one concept of the Trinity, and Jesus being God. Because I was a Mormon at the time, thus a Tritheist (*belief in three separate Gods*), I posed this question to him:

“The New Testament shows God the Father in heaven and Jesus on earth. Now, how could you possibly believe that Jesus is also God?”

To illustrate his answer, he held one hand high above his head as if holding on to the handle of something, and then said:

“Visualize God as a pitcher of lemonade, pouring out a little part of Himself down onto earth. The part of the lemonade that lands on earth is Jesus, while the lemonade that remains in heaven is God. Therefore, because the substance [*material*] of both Jesus and God come from the same lemonade, they are both God.” (He added that the Holy Spirit consisted of the same lemonade.)

I know that he was trying hard to help me understand his view of the Trinity with that analogy—and I’m not belittling his attempt, for now, as a Bible-believing Christian I can see that there is a kind of truth in it—yet, somehow the comparison seemed a little, say, irreligious or disrespectful, even somewhat humorous, since his description suddenly whet my appetite for an ice-cold glass of lemonade (*it was a hot day*).

Regardless, I decided I needed to come up with a better depiction of the Trinity than a pitcher of lemonade—and I do believe I have come up with a unique analogy—in fact, I think it is quite good. It not only illustrates, but also scientifically proves how a three-in-one reality is possible. So, here it is:

Drum roll please . . .

II. THE HOLOGRAM! A NEW ANALOGY FOR THE TRINITY

In years past, the usual analogies illustrating how three Personages can be one God have been the tri-fold natures of:

- (1) Water (*liquid, ice, vapor*)
- (2) Egg (*white, yoke, shell*)
- (3) Fire (*light, particle and wave*)

However, I am proposing a new analogy.

Most of us are already familiar with the terms, “holistic” and “holism” in today’s approach to health and medicine, meaning that all aspects of people’s needs, physical, psychological, social and mental, should be taken into account and considered having a significant influence on the whole person. But a term that may not be so familiar is the hologram.

But, before we get into the definition of a hologram, you need to know that in connection with the word “hologram” I will also be using the terms “holistic” and “holism.” When using these three terms, I am not talking about three different subjects—they mean the same thing:

- Holism: the view that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Holistic: the nature of holism, e.g., “Holism is holistic in nature.”
- Hologram: a special kind of lensless photography that embraces holism and is, therefore, holistic.

Now, to holograms: They are already being used in industry, aeronautics and in supermarkets, where holographic discs and laser beams read bar codes. They can also be used in three-dimensional holographic laser-photography, and you may recall the illustration of the hologram used in the movie Star Wars, where Princess Leia called for help by sending a three-dimensional moving image of herself on film to Obi-Wann-Kenobi. Hologram laser-photography is what I will focus on because it proves to be an excellent illustration for the oneness and “*unitedness*” of the Trinity. (*I know, there’s no such word.*)

What exactly is hologram laser photography? Ken Wilbur, editor of *The Holographic Paradigm and other paradoxes*, gives the definition:

. . . a method of lensless photography in which the wave field of light scattered by an object is recorded on a plate as an interference pattern. When the photographic record – the hologram—is placed in a coherent light beam like a laser, the **original** wave pattern is **regenerated**. A three-dimensional image appears. Because there is no focusing lens, the plate appears as a meaningless pattern of swirls [but] *any piece of the hologram will reconstruct the **entire image***.³

Here is how Wilbur illustrates the above:

If you were to take a holographic photograph of a horse and cut out one section of it, say its head, and then enlarge that picture of the head it to its original size, you will get, not a big head, but a picture of the *whole horse*. Do the same with the tail and you'll get the same result—the *whole horse*. Even if you keep cutting out smaller and smaller pieces of the horse, when you enlarge each piece, the original image of the whole horse will be displayed instead of only the part you cut out. The image of the complete horse is in the head, and the image of the complete horse is in the tail. Wilbur emphasizes that, “*Each part contains the whole [and] the part has access to the whole.*”⁴

Now, if you could step into eternity and take a holographic photograph of the three-in-one God, cut one of the three personages out, say God the Son (*if this were possible*), and enlarge only that piece of God the Son, you would see, not the Son by Himself, but God in his whole and complete triune reality! Do the same with the Holy Spirit—cut Him out and you would see the complete image of God. Thus, the whole image of God is contained in the Son, whether he is still in heaven as the second Person in the Godhead, or on earth in human form. It is the perfect hologram. Therefore, holographically speaking, Jesus contains the whole image of God, so Jesus is also God. This applies to any of the three members of the Trinity, who are holographic in nature and essence.

The hologram helps to clarify the statement in Col. 2:9, “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (*Discussed later.*)

God’s Omnipresence and Omniscience explained by holism

“Omnipresence” (*everywhere present*), and “Omniscience” (*all-knowing*), are two of God’s attributes, and while not explicitly labeled as such in the scriptures they are, nevertheless, implicit as in Jer. 23:24:

Omnipresence: “Do not I fill heaven and earth? Saith the Lord.”

The holistic principle explains how God is able to be everywhere at once, permeating all of creation (*this is not suggesting pantheism.*) If this principle of holism were not contained in God’s spiritual essence (substance), none of the theologians could make the statement as they do, that “*Spiritual substance . . . is a complete whole at every point*”⁵

Omniscience: “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Saith the Lord.”

This holistic attribute is infused into every part of the universe, including man, and it accounts for God’s *all-knowing* capability which enables Him to receive immediate and instant knowledge of whatever is taking place.

These two attributes are only possible with a God who is a spirit. If God were a man, as Mormons believe, even a resurrected and exalted one, He would not be capable of this.

We’ll now touch on science a little, for it would appear that God created a holistic universe. The following section will show that scientists acknowledge the principle of holism in the creation because of their observation of the interrelatedness of subatomic particles. They act as if, as many have said, they are part of something greater—as if the universe is a giant hologram, where each part has access to some whole. Physicists continue searching for that “Fundamental Something” that they believe supports everything—an underlying ground that ties everything together that is greater than the individual parts of our universe.

Holistic consensus

Men of the past, such as Max Planck and Einstein, stated that they believed that the universe itself could be a hologram; that is, every so-called individual part is in some mysterious manner connected to and contains the whole. In fact, Einstein said this is how he formulated his theory of relativity. In his passionate search for a fundamental, underlying ground that would tie together the four forces of nature, the strong and weak nuclear forces, electromagnetism and gravity, called the “Grand Unifying Theory,”⁶ he said it would be impossible without regarding the total physical system of the universe as an “organic, functional whole.”

Dr. Ernest Nagel, in the *Structure of Science* defines functional wholes:

Organic or functional wholes are systems where the behavior of the individual elements are not determined of themselves, but determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole, and the parts of this whole are so related that any alteration in one of them causes a change in all the other parts.⁷

This definition makes itself evident in Quantum physics and subatomic particles.

In 1982, Alain Aspect, a physicist at the University of Paris, found that under certain circumstances subatomic particles such as electrons were able to communicate instantaneously with each other regardless of the distance separating them, whether they were 10 feet or 10 billion miles apart. Each particle always seemed to know what the other was doing at such speed that it violated Einstein’s claim that communication could not travel faster than the speed of light. Aspect also added that, “at some deeper level of reality such particles are not individual entities, but are actually extensions of the same fundamental something.”⁸

David Bohm, University of London physicist, said that Quantum field findings indicate the universe is like a gigantic hologram—a kind of ‘whole in every part’ structure, where each part or element of the universe contains all the information contained in every other part. He also stated that there is “*a deeper level of reality we are not privy to—a more underlying unity that is*

holographic and indivisible.”⁹ Physicists are still continuing to search for this holographic, underlying fundamental something.

Thus, the scientific view that has emerged is that the parts of any whole cannot exist and be understood *except* in their relationship to the whole. Dr. Fritjof Capra, theoretical physicist, elaborates:

The basic oneness of the universe is . . . one of the most important revelations of modern physics. It becomes apparent at the atomic level and manifests itself more and more as one penetrates deeper into matter, down into the realm of subatomic particles. . . . subatomic particles . . . the constituents of matter and the basic phenomena involving them are all interconnected, interrelated and interdependent . . . they cannot be understood as isolated entities, but only as integrated parts of the whole.¹⁰

The described scientific concept of the hologram, in which the whole is in the parts and the parts are in and have access to the whole, should facilitate a clearer picture of how the three Personages in the Trinitarian God, including Jesus while He was on earth, contain the whole complete image of God. (*Remember the hologram and the parts containing the horse’s whole image.*) You can’t consider the three Persons individually, for they are one God, and contain the full essence and attributes of God. Therefore, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. Like the organic, indivisible functional whole that underlies the universe that physicists are looking for, so an organic and indivisible God underlies the Trinity.

I found the comparison between the subatomic universe and the Christian perspective of the Trinity somewhat captivating:

Subatomic universe

There is a deeper underlying level of the universe, a functional whole that is organic and indivisible.

The behavior of the individual elements of the universe are not determined of themselves, but by the intrinsic nature of the whole.

At the deeper level of reality, particles are not individual entities, but extensions of the same fundamental something.

The parts of any whole cannot exist and be understood except in their relationship to the whole.

Each part or element of the universe contains information contained in every other part, like a gigantic hologram.

Christian Trinity

The deeper underlying level of the universe, the organic functional whole, is God who consists of Father Son and Holy Spirit, all of whom are indivisible.

The behavior of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not determined of themselves, but by the intrinsic nature of God.

At the deeper level of the reality of God, the three personages are not individual entities, but extensions of God.

The three Personages of Father, Son and Holy Spirit cannot exist and be understood except in their relationship to God.

The three personage contain all the all the information contained God and in each other, and function like a gigantic hologram.

In a hologram, the parts have access to and are in the whole, and the whole is also in the parts.

The Personage of the Father is in God.
The Personage of the Son is in God; the Personage of the Holy Spirit is in God. All three Personages contain and have access to the whole image of God, and the whole image of God exists in the three Personages.

And with that under our belt, we'll now move on to the "Biblical Perspective of God," and then to the Trinity. (*Quotes will be from the KJV unless otherwise noted.*)

III. THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF GOD

These following questions will be considered:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Instead of a person, could God be a cosmic force, or an immense blob of spiritual energy? 2) How can an invisible God be a person? 3) What is meant by God's essence and attributes? Did he acquire them? 4) Did God have a beginning? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) What is God's name? 6) Does God say anything about his own existence? 7) Could He possibly be a man? 8) Could there be other Gods? 9) Could the word "Elohim" suggest a plurality of Gods? |
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Instead of a person, could God be a cosmic force—an immense blob of spiritual energy?

Ask yourself this: Can a cosmic force, spiritual blob, or something that is *not* a person, have the following attributes?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love? • A voice? • Center of consciousness? • Awareness? • Independence and autonomy? • Hearing? • Ability to bless? • Intellect, knowledge, emotion will and intentions? • Thoughts, feelings, desires, and beliefs? • Feelings of both anger and love? • Plan and create the earth? • Make man in his own image? (mind, free will, emotion, intellect, ability to communicate) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire relationships? • Act as judge? • Exhibit jealousy and indignation? • Refer to us as his children and Himself as a Father? • Heal us? • Provide for us? • Be faithful and true? • Provide salvation? • Provide a plan to redeem believers? • Comfort us in time of trouble? • Reward those who seek him? • Continually be there for us? • Do things with a purpose? |
|---|---|

A cosmic globule cannot exhibit the above capacities; neither can an impersonal spiritual energy, divine principle, creative urge, unseen force, or mathematical necessity. Only a Person. Therefore, all the characteristics of God shout loud and clear that He is a Person—a loving One who speaks, hears, blesses and saves via His distinctions as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And because the whole is in the parts, and God is a person, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are persons as well. (*See an excellent article on God's character and attributes at: http://www.saintsalive.com/general/character_of_god.ht*)

How can an invisible God be a person?

A “person” has intellect, mind, can think, reflect, reason, has freedom, and can consider itself as itself (a self-consciousness being). These invisible attributes are what make God a person. He does not have to have a physical body to be a person. Theologians continually state that we are met with problems when we try to transfer our mortal definition of “person,” to the realm of the eternal, because we have a tendency to picture individual, mortal-like persons in bodies.

With humans, the physical body only houses the *person*. We are persons because we are self-conscious, capable of thinking, reasoning, and exercising free will. This is how we are in the image of God. If God did not have these invisible attributes, he would not be a person, and would be on a lower level than man.

We also know that God is a person because He used personal pronouns in the scriptures when referring to Himself (*He, Him, I, Me*); so did Jesus when speaking of Him.

What is meant by God's attributes? Did He acquire them?

One cannot acquire attributes. Both words, *attributes* and *essence* mean the same. They refer to the composition of whatever it is that makes something what it is. It makes humans what they are, and makes God what He is. According to Webster, essence and attributes are adjectives used to describe an intrinsic property, quality or characteristic. The word “intrinsic” means that which is built-in; the fundamental nature of a thing which is inseparable from that nature. Here is an example:

I have a particular essence and set of attributes that go to make up my what-ness. They are what decides that I am human. My cat has the essence and attributes that go to make up its “cat-ness.” A bird has the essence and attributes that go to make up its “bird-ness.” God has the essence and attributes which make up His “God-ness.” Therefore, no one can learn or acquire attributes or essence. You are what you are.

What are the intrinsic attributes of God?

Omnipotence (*all powerful*)

Omniscience (*all knowing*)

Omnipresence (*His infinitude in relation to space*)

Self-existent (*eternal*)

Immutable (*unchangeable*)

Spiritual (*a quality opposed to material*)

Infinity (*unlimited existence, capacity, energy and perfection*)

Eternal (*the Infinitude of God in relation to duration*)

Self-sufficiency (*in need of nothing*)

Perfection (*no possibility of defect*)

Holiness (*moral perfection; absence of evil*)

Freedom (*a self-determining agent; a free personal being who acts on his own perfections.*)

Just (*righteousness in judging*)

Truth (*being above all that is true, real and reliable; constant, permanent, faithful, reliable.*)

Love (*highest characteristic of God consisting of feeling and affection*)

Mercy (*A ministry of love for the relief of those suffering or in need, whether ill-deserving.*)

Grace (*what God is free to do. Distinguished from mercy and love*)

Did God have a beginning?

While this is an intriguing question, this would be impossible. It would suggest that if God had a beginning there had to have been a time when He did *not* exist. If he did not exist, then prior to his coming into being one of two conditions had to exist: (1) absolutely nothing existed at all, or (2) an outside source existed that brought God into being. If an outside source brought God into being, that source would have to be greater than God (another God). This would naturally bring up the following question: “*Well, then who created Him?*”

If one answers, “*yet another God,*” and keeps going back, genealogically speaking, God after God after God, ad infinitum, then this not only creates a plurality of Gods which Jehovah God denounces in the scriptures, but when arriving at the original God who supposedly is the cause of all these other Gods, the question still remains: “*Did this original God have a beginning?*” It all leads to an obvious dead-end. The logical answer and the most scripturally satisfactory is that God did not have a beginning. There is only one, infinite and eternal Being who is the “Uncaused First Cause.” Joseph Smith’s declaration that the original God came from a “Sea of Intelligence” to which God was, and still is, subject, would demote God and is in total disagreement to what God declared about His preeminent nature. (*Discussed in section on Mormonism.*)

If the original God is the Uncaused First Cause, the next question usually asked is:

What is His Name?

In eternity past, before the universe was created, when the only thing that existed was the Trinitarian God, there was probably no need for a name, since names are only used when one is required to identify oneself to someone else. After God created the world and began communicating with man, He had a name to offer, but never revealed it right away—not even to Abraham (Ex. 6:3)—but maybe this was because he never asked. As we’ll see below, Moses found out it was YHWH because he asked. But first, a little academic stuff.

The name of God is referred to as the “Tetragrammaton,” which means “four letters.” Since there are no vowels in Hebrew, only consonants, the four letters are YHWH (Yahweh). The Jews, to avoid pronouncing the sacred name of God, used “Adonai,” which means “My Lord,” “Lord,” or “Master,”¹¹ and Yahweh is a hybrid word combining the vowels of “Adonai” with the consonants of the Tetragrammaton.” Therefore, YHWH was revised into English as JHVH, then to Jehovah. (*See endnote on how Bible translators designate the difference between Elohim, Jehovah, and Lord on the printed page.*)

We now know His name because God gave it to Moses. When Moses approached the burning bush and is told he is to deliver the children of Israel from bondage, Moses asked:

Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?" (Exodus 3:13)

God's response, and the only one He could possibly give as an eternal, Uncaused First Cause, was "*Ehyth asher ehyehl*:"

I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. (v. 14)

God was saying, "*I am Who I am!*" or, "*I will be that which I now am.*" With a certain verb inflection of *hiph'il* of the root word it can also mean something like, "*he who causes to exist,*" or "*who gives life.*" As a *qal* (basic stem) verb inflection, it could mean "*he who is, who exists*"¹² The Greek translation (*Septuagint*) renders it as: "*I am He who is.*" Both the word "am" and "is" indicates an ever-present existence. God was literally declaring to Moses that He is "*the absolute I, the self-existent one*—a statement of his timeless, eternal nature that has no beginning or end.¹³ He also added, "*This is my name forever.*" This means that going backwards forever, or going forward forever, He eternally exists as the *only* great I AM, Who forever IS.

Could God possibly be a man?

God has unequivocally said "No!" In fact, He said there is absolutely *nothing* or *anyone* to compare Him to:

To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One' (Isa. 40:25).

To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?' (Isa. 40:18).

To whom will ye liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be alike?' (Isa. 46:5).

Certainly, if God were a man, or could even be compared to a man, He would have said so—especially since he was relaying this crucial information to a man (Isaiah). In fact, God continually warned those who would corrupt His nature and change it into a man or something He was not:

... do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol [*physical or mental*], an image of any shape, whether formed like a *man* or a *woman*, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshipping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven. (Deut. 4:16–19 NIV 1984)

So, what is God? The Apostle John spells it out: *God is a Spirit*. (Jn. 4:24).

This was also verified by the Psalmist:

Whither shall I go Where can I go from *your Spirit*? Where can I flee from *your* presence? If I go up to the heavens, *you* are there; if I make my bed in the depths, *you* are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there *your* hand will guide me, *your* right hand will hold me fast. (Ps. 139:7-10. RSV)

Jeremiah also confirmed God’s spiritual make-up, at the same time, necessarily including His attributes of Omnipresence and Omniscience:

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? Saith the Lord.” (Jer. 23:24) [*Omnipresence*]

Furthermore, God emphasized to Moses that he definitely has no form:

Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. (Deut. 4:12 RSV)

You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. (Deut. 4:15)

God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. (Num. 23:19. NLT)

That God is a Spirit is evidenced when Jesus, after His bodily resurrection, made a point to establish the difference between a Spirit and a man. He said to his disciples (who thought they were seeing a spirit): “*A Spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.*” (Luke 24:39) God does not have flesh and bones, although the incarnated Jesus did.

Over and over again, the scriptures reiterate that not only is God not a man. He is much *more* than we can conceive of—in fact so much more that we are unable (*at the peril of our lives*) to stand in His presence as a mortal and see Him in His full glory. This is why God had to hold this privilege back when Moses asked to see Him:

Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. . . . thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.” (Ex. 33:20, 23)

The term, “face” is a metaphor. God does not have a human face like ours (except for Christ). We need to recognize when metaphors are metaphors, for if we were to take them literally, then God would be a gigantic bird with wings and feathers, and Jesus would actually be a loaf of bread or a door. The only literal “face” God would ever provide mortals was the face of Jesus. It was God’s only way to reveal His invisible self to finite humans. (Col. 1:15-16; 1 Ti. 1:17; Heb. 11:27) While some Old Testament writers wrote that they saw God “face to face,” upon examination it will show that their experiences were mainly Theophanies, a limited kind of appearance.

Could there be other Gods?

Some insist on debating this question. Why, I don’t know. But, what would be the warranted need for others? None that I can see. Jehovah makes clear, in Isa. 44:6 and 3:10, that there have been no other Gods in the past, nor will there be in the future:

“I am the first, I am the last; besides me, there is no God.”

“. . . 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. (This eliminates Mormons becoming Gods.)

Jesus also confirmed only one God:

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord . . . And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is *one God*; and there is *none other but he*. (Mk 12:29-34) [*See endnotes for 26 more scriptures.*] ¹⁴

Could the plural word “Elohim” used in the creation suggest a plurality of Gods?”

The word Elohim can denote singular or plural depending upon the grammar and context, but in Genesis One the singular word rendered in English as “God” is specifically translated from the plural noun, “Elohim—not from “Eloah,” the singular form for God.¹⁵ This was not a mistake. When Moses wrote the book of Genesis, he was already familiar with Eloah, and could have used it. (Deut. 32:15), but Moses obviously had some Divine imperative that compelled him to employ such a term; otherwise he would never have opened Genesis with such a disturbing form.

The plural name of God is reiterated elsewhere:

Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” [*Note the followed use of the singular “his” . . .*] So God [*Elohim/plural*] created man in *his* [*singular*] own image, in the image of God [*Elohim/plural*] created he him . . (Gen. 1:26-27)

Behold, the man has become like one of *us*, knowing good and evil. (Gen. 11:7 NASB)

Come, Let *us* go down, and there confound their language . . .” (Gen. 11:7, Tower of Babel).

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*.” (Isa. 6:8 NASB)

“Remember now thy Creator.” (Eccl 12:1)

Accurate rendering: “Remember thy *Creators*”

“Thus saith God the LORD He that created the heavens, and stretched them out.” (Isa. 42:5)

Accurate rendering: “Thus saith God the LORD, He that created . . . and they that stretched them out.”

Who were included in this plural name, considering that during Old Testament times the Israelites knew nothing about any Trinitarian aspect of God. (This wasn’t made known until Jesus Christ came and revealed the truth.)

While many have conjectured that the plural rendering of God’s name, Elohim, is a form of majesty in which a King sometimes refers to himself as “we” or “us,” not all are of that opinion. Some believe it is a reference to the three Persons of the Trinity, which I go along with. Taking

the Old Testament and New Testament together, only the Trinity can explain all the plural usages of Elohim; plus, John 1 appears to verify this as well (*discussed later*).¹⁶ While there may be three persons in the one God, they are not three separate Gods, but one holographic God.

Belief in one-God-only, despite the use of the plural Elohim, is found throughout Israel's long history—in fact, it is remarkably significant considering that Israel recognized a God with at least two major names: *Elohim* and *Yahwey*—yet the Israelites were never confused into believing that these two represented separate Gods. They were one and the same. Whatever name God used in the Old Testament, or any appellation the Israelites chose to designate Him by, whether it be Elohim or Yahwey, He was *One*, and this fact was continually declared in Israel's "Shema," even though the name of God indicates both plural and singular.¹⁷

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”
(Deut 6:4-KJV)

Literal Hebrew translation:

“Hear, O Israel: The Yahwey (*singular*) our Elohim (*plural*) is one Yahwey.”

Israelites also declared:

“The LORD, he is God.”
(Deut. 4:35 KJV)

Literal Hebrew translation:

“Jehovah (*singular*), he is Elohim (*plural*).”

Accolades also need to be given to Jesus' Jewish followers who fully accepted the pronouncement delivered by the angel who told Mary that her son would be called “Immanuel, God with us.” (Isa 7:14 and Matt.1:23), and were able to include Jesus into their one God concept without any confusion.

God states over and over again, that despite the plurality implicit in His name of Elohim, there are NO other Gods:

I am the LORD, and there is NO other; apart from me there is NO God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is NONE besides me. I am the LORD, and there is NO OTHER.” (Isa. 45:5-6. RSV)

Is there a God beside Me? Yea, there is NO God; I know not ANY. (Isa. 44:8).

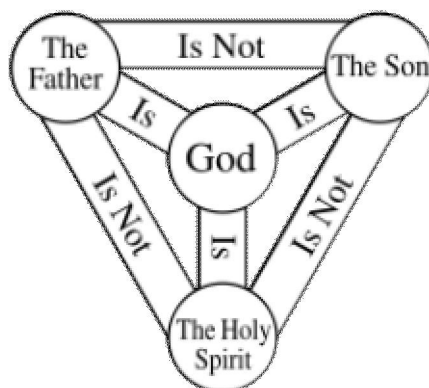
I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is NO saviour. (Isa. 43:11)

There is NO God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is NONE beside me. (Isa 45:21)

As our mothers used to say, waving a finger at us, “What part of ‘NO,’ don’t you understand?”

IV. THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY

One of the most important components to the spiritual life is to understand who and what God is—and knowing who God is necessarily means the Trinity.



The Elohim (*plural*) is One God.

The triune God . . .

“is not the Father. He is the one God, consisting of Father, Son and Holy Ghost; neither is He the Son. He is the one God, consisting of Father, Son and Holy Ghost;
neither is He the Holy Ghost. He is the one God, consisting of Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”¹⁸

Within God’s inner, implicate Being there are three personages, or distinctions, who are members of an undivided and indivisible whole.

We do not baptize in the “nameS” of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but in the “name” of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

There are not three beings within one being.
There are not three persons within one person.
There are three persons in one Being.

#

There is no greater example of a hologram than the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (*same as Holy Ghost*) are holistic in nature, wherein the three Personages contain the whole (of God). All three function in specific roles as an extension of the one God.

The word “trinity” does not appear in the Bible, but the concept behind the word is in harmony with scripture, Jesus’ baptism in Matt. 3:16-17 being the most vivid example. The fact that the term came into being long after the last apostle died does not negate a Trinitarian God. Things can exist before they are discovered and then named. For example, the planet Uranus existed

long before it was discovered and given a name. Quarks existed in the atom long before they were discovered. And the twenty-seven moons found by the Voyager spacecrafts existed long before their discovery. Similarly, the Trinity existed prior to when it was acknowledged and named. Therefore, the term Trinity was rightly coined.

As mentioned earlier, to *fully* comprehend the totality of the Trinity in its ultimate form is impossible because God is so far above us, let alone invisible, and the scriptures don't give details. Scholars Dr. William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton state: . . . as to its mode [it] is *inscrutable* and *incomprehensible*, because *unexplained* (Matt. 11:25-27; 28:19; Luke 1:35; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Jn 1:3-4).¹⁹ Even if an angel tried to explain it to us fully, we'd probably end up with a blank look on our face—like a first grader trying to understand calculus.

God said, “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*” (Isa. 55:9) So, we must settle for some limitations. Nevertheless, we do find enough on God, as Henry C. Thiesen points out below in his *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, through the active *manifestations* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

The only way fire can be comprehended is in its manifestation of three-fold nature of light, wave and particle, and the only way God can be comprehended is by acting in his manifestation of his three-fold nature, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.²⁰

The urge to disengage members of the Trinity

Because of the complexity in understanding the Trinity, there are some Christians who have admitted that they picture the Trinity as three different Gods, similar to Mormons. But the Godhead does not contain three separate “individuals.” If this were so, it would mean God could be divided into parts and He would no longer be One. The Father would have two other Gods co-eternal with him, which would then raise the debate as to which one of the three is superior.

In this article, I will sometimes use the term “part(s)” when referring to the members of the Trinity. My use of the word is simply because I can't think of another term to use. However, dividing something into parts, while characteristic of human thinking, cannot be considered in God. It would incorrectly suggest that a part of God separated from God (as did the Son as Redeemer, or the Holy Spirit as Comforter), leaving God devoid of a part of Himself.

So, in spite of my poor choice of word, remember that each of the three Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, fully partake of the one undivided nature of God, and all three are completely and literally God Himself. They cooperate simultaneously in the inner implicate Being of God. (Take another look at the Shield of the Trinity.) The three Personages are not separate, but distinct—distinctive Personages who have their own function while at the same time sharing the same Deity together and having the same essence, substance and attributes. Think of the hologram. As any part of a hologram will reconstruct the entire image, so any one of the three Personages will reconstruct the entire image of God.

- *The Father contains the whole image of God*
- *The Son contains the whole image of God.*
- *The Holy Spirit contains the whole image of God.*
- *The whole image of God contains Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

Below is a summarization of the Creeds that define the Christian the Trinity. I have condensed them into composite and paraphrased statements to cut down on length. They are taken from the *Athanasian* and *Nicene Creeds*, and from the book, *Bible Doctrines* by Menzies and Horton, plus a brief quote from James White.²¹ Note how the terms, “Tritheism,” and “three Gods” are shunned—purposely avoided because both the Old Testament and the New Testament confirm only One God, despite the plural name of Elohim and understanding of the Trinity.

- There is one true God, eternally self-existent, the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. (Deut. 6:4; Isa 43:10-11; Matt 28:19; Luke 3:22)
- There is only one God, one divine, tripersonal nature and being. These three are joint partakers of the same nature and majesty of God.
- “Because these three persons in the Godhead are in a state of [literal] unity, there is but one Lord God Almighty and His name is one.”²²
- God is one Being of three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He does *not* consist of parts nor can he be divided into parts.
- Within the Trinity, “there is THAT in the Son which constitutes Him the Son and not the Father; and there is THAT in the Holy Ghost which constitutes Him The Holy Spirit and not either the Father or the Son.”²³
- None of the three are greater or lesser than another, but all three Persons are co-eternal and co-equal together.
- God’s being is simple, numerically one, free from composition. The Father is God as a person, the Son is God as a person, and the Holy Spirit is God as a person; but *not* three gods. (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Jn 14:16-17) The three distinct personalities are “each wholly deity, yet so harmoniously interrelated that they are one essence.”²⁴
- There are *not* three beings within one being, or three persons within one person. There are three persons in one being. That one being is shared fully and completely by three persons. “One *what*, three *who*’s.”²⁵
- None of them were brought into being by a greater God. The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, and the Holy Spirit is uncreated. They have always existed eternally.
- God the Father *creates the plan*. He is principally credited with creation.
- God the Son *implements the plan*. He is the principal agent in the creation, applies the work of redemption to humanity, implemented His plan in the Old Testament as Jehovah, and incarnated into humanity as Jesus the Redeemer.
- God the Holy Spirit *administers the plan and transforms lives*. He hovered over the waters during creation to energize and bring life to it. He also gives new life to believers, and is the deposit, or first installment, guaranteeing believers’ future inheritance.”²⁶

The Holy “Spirit” and Holy “Ghost”—is there a difference?

In Christian theology there is no difference between the two terms. *Spirit* and *Ghost* are synonymous. The difference in usage pertains to language, not theology. Pastor Walter Snyder explains how the shift in language went from Holy Ghost to Holy Spirit:

Ghost came from the Old English ‘gast,’ related to the German ‘geist.’
 “Gast sneaks into modern English in "aghast" (be shocked, terrified, rendered breathless) and "flabbergast." The German “Zeitgeist” directly entered English; it means "the spirit of the times."²⁷

He further explains that over a period of 300 years, language and its meanings slowly changed. In King James and Shakespeare’s day, “Ghost” eventually came to mean a demonic apparition or the appearing of a dead person, and Spirit became the term for life or living essence.

Because of this change in language, Bible translators replaced “Ghost” with “Spirit,” although it was still a difficult translation. The Hebrew word for both ghost and spirit comes from a single word in the Hebrew, “ruach.” Besides meaning the appearance of a dead person, it could also mean, wind, breath, spirit or mind. Translators further had to contend with the Greek word, “pneuma” and its meanings, and the Latin word, “spiritus.” Nevertheless, despite these problems, whichever word the translators used for the Holy Spirit, they made it clear that it meant the third Person of the Trinity.

Is the Holy Spirit a person or a cosmic force?

The Holy Spirit is the immediate source of all life, physically and intellectually, and even of the universe. This is shown when He hovered over the waters of creation in Genesis One and brought life at God’s command, “Let there be . . .” But, is the Holy Spirit a Person?

Since God is a person and has the three-fold nature of three personages within Him and all three are holistically God, all three of the Trinity must also be called persons.

A.W. Tozer, in “The Counselor,” says:

Spell this out in capital letters: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON. He is not enthusiasm. He is not courage. He is not energy. He is not the personification of all good qualities like Jack Frost is the personification of cold weather. Actually, the Holy Spirit is not the personification of anything . . . He has individuality. He is one being and not another. He has will and intelligence. He has hearing. He has knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think. He can hear, speak, desire, grieve and rejoice. He is a Person.²⁸

Neither is he an ethereal life force, or a symbol. A symbol would not be able to:

- communicate (speak-Acts 13:2),
- intercede (act on behalf of someone-(Rom 8:26),
- testify (John 15:26)
- guide (John 16:13)
- command (Acts 16:6,7)
- appoint (Acts 20:28)
- lead (Romans 8:14)
- reveal to someone how wrong, foolish, or sinful he/she is (John 16:8)
- seal God's promise in believers' hearts (Ephesians 1:13-14)
- shape the life of each person and community to Christ (Romans 8:1-17)²⁹

The Holy Spirit is the power of God in action, for in the scriptures God identifies the Holy Spirit as “MY spirit.” (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:27-29). The Holy Spirit is the same Person as the Holy “Ghost” in the KJV who gives special gifts to believers in I Cor. 12:3-11. The passage emphasizes that all the gifts are given by the “*same spirit, same Lord, same God.*” The Holy Spirit shares the same Deity, but functions differently.

The Holy Spirit is intrinsically composed of the same attributes as God. He has:

- Intellect, emotions and will. (I Cor. 2:11) “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (I Cor. 2:11)
- Emotion and capacity to love. “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” (Rom. 15:30)
- Is eternal. (Heb. 9:14)
- Is omniscient (all-knowing). (I Cor. 2:11)
- Is everywhere (omnipresent). (Ps. 139)
- Has passions and can be grieved. (Eph. 4:30)
- Is also God. (Acts 5:3-4) In the case of Annanias and Saphira’s deceit, Peter says they lied to the *Holy Spirit*, and in the same breath says it is the same as lying to God.

The Holy Spirit is equal in every way with God the Father and God the Son. According to the ESV (Easy Standard Version), “*Anything that is necessarily true of God is true of Father, Son, and Spirit. They are equal in essence yet distinct in function.*”³⁰

What is God’s purpose in sending His Holy Spirit?

- He guides, and is a revelator. “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come.” (Jn. 16:13)
- A Counselor, comforter and teacher. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (Jn. 14:26)
- Lives inside believers to establish a relationship between men and God. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the *Spirit of God* dwelleth in you?” (I Cor. 3:16)
- Empowers us. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” (Acts 1:8)
- Directs us. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14)
- Helps us in prayer and in our weaknesses. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Rom. 8:26)³¹

The Trinity is admittedly something one has to chew on for a while, and for more on the Holy Spirit I recommend the “Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry” site at: <http://carm.org/holy-spirit>. There, you will find an excellent article by Matt Slick. He includes well-organized charts outlining the Holy Spirit’s names, symbols, attributes, sins against Him, and more. Because of copyright restrictions I could not reproduce it here.

Now, we come to the most momentous event in all of eternity—God’s plan to reveal Himself to the world and redeem mankind from the Fall!

V. THE LOGOS (THE WORD) AND THE BEGETTING OF THE SECOND PERSON OF THE TRINITY INTO HUMANITY

Jesus is God manifested in the flesh. He is not another God.
(I Tim. 3:16)

#

In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . . (Jn 1:1-3, 14)

The apostle John begins with the Greek word “Logos” (*Word*) and nails it down to not only mean something said, but a personal title for a “He”—which turns out to be the second Person in the Godhead, the pre-mortal Jesus.

Why does John call Jesus the “Word”? Because the role of the second Person in the Trinity is, and ever has been, to eternally express the mind of God. As a member of the Trinitarian Elohim, the pre-mortal Jesus expressed the mind of God in the creation, as Jehovah in the Old Testament, and as the incarnated Jesus in the New Testament.

John begins by explaining that:

- The “Word” (which later became flesh) already existed WITH God in the beginning (v.1) He was the second Person in the Trinity.
In Koine Greek the preposition “with” is *pros* (short for *prosopon pros prosopon*) meaning “face and person.” Therefore, according to The Apologists’ Bible Commentary, a face-to-face kind of phrasing was intended to show intimacy and personal relationship. Thus, for John to say the Word was “with” God, meant that the Word was “face to face with God,” or the Word had intimate fellowship with God³² (which is an apt description for any of the three personages).³³ (See Jewish sources in this endnote showing their interesting distinction between the Word and God.)
- The “Word” WAS God. (v.1)
The Greek word for “was” signifies the Word’s position and existence as God, indicating his having the same equality, identity and association with God. He was not a subordinate being or second in command. The Word was the eternal Jehovah and the pre-mortal Jesus. (Ex. 3:15)

- The “Word” is called by a personal pronoun—HIM (because the totality of God is a personal being.” (v.3)
- All things were made by Him, and creation came into being via the preexistent Jesus speaking the “Word” of the Elohim God. (v.3)
The definition of “Logos” in Strong’s Concordance is: “*Something said, including the thought.*” Therefore, we are speaking of the Word that resides within the thoughts of the Trinitarian God, utilized and expressed by Jehovah, the preexistent Jesus. The Apologists Bible Commentary defines Logos as an expression of “*personality in communication.*” But, communication with whom? . . . all members of the Trinitarian Godhead. Jesus could do nothing unless the Father and the Holy Spirit were in 100 percent total agreement.

The universe came into being *ex-nihilo*, not *ex-materia*.

Creation did not come out of eternally pre-existent matter, *ex-materia*, for if matter existed apart from God it would be co-eternal and possibly co-equal with God. This would demote God’s sovereignty, and in view of His declarations about Himself in the scriptures, make Him a liar. When He spoke, His word had power to bring things into existence. Creation came *ex-nihilo*, out of nothing.

The Psalmist verifies that all God had to do was speak:

The Lord merely *spoke* and the heavens were created. He breathed the *word*, and all the stars were born . . . For when he *spoke*, the world began! It appeared at his command. (Ps. 33:6-9. NLT)

And from the early Bible that Christians used (the Greek Septuagint):

I implore you, my child, observe heaven and earth, consider all that is in them, and acknowledge that God *made them out of what did not exist*, and that mankind comes into being in the *same* way. (*2 Maccabees 7:27-19.*³⁴ *See also Heb. 11:3*).

So God the Logos, the Word, the second Person in the Trinity, the pre-mortal Jesus, performed His distinctive function of creation for and in behalf of all three members of the Triune God by merely speaking. In the Genesis account, this tri-cooperative act was represented by the use of the plural name of Elohim, even though the pre-mortal Jesus was doing the speaking

And God (Elohim/plural) *said*, Let there be light: and there was light. (Gen. 1:3)

And God (Elohim/plural) *said*, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. (v. 6) etc.

And God (Elohim/plural) *said*, Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness . . . (v. 26) [“*image*,” meaning the invisible aspects of mind, free will, emotion, intellect, ability to communicate, etc.]

- The “Word” later *became flesh* in the form of *Jesus*. (v.14)
If the Elohim could bring the universe, planets, stars, oceans, mountains, flora, fauna and humans into existence, then it should require no stretch of the imagination to believe that the Elohim could beget (*project or extend*) that part of Himself, the second

personage from His “bosom” (Jn 1:18) into Mary’s womb that was prepared by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit as the power of God in action overshadowed her and brought life into her womb the same as He did when He hovered and overshadowed the waters of creation in Genesis 1:2.

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest (*meaning the Holy Ghost that proceeds from the throne of God*) shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

The purpose of the Word becoming flesh was to reveal God to the people at a level they could relate to, to act as savior and mediator, redeem mankind from the Fall and provide eternal life instead of spiritual death. (I Tim 2:5) Who else could possibly reveal God to the people except God Himself, or a Person who was actually within the heart, and bosom of God? (Jn. 1:18)

Prior to creation, the “Word” in eternity was not the man Jesus, but the second distinction or Personage in the Trinity (*God the Word/God the Son/God the Logos*). The Old Testament prophet Micah recognized that the ruler of Israel who would eventually come forth had his origin in eternity:

But thou, Bethlehem . . . out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old *from everlasting*.” (Micah 5:2)

Therefore, to Mary, the angel rightly called him “Immanuel,” God with us. Jesus the man was not separated from God in essence or attributes, even though, so to speak, in a different geographical location during His incarnation. He did not lose his identity as God or the second Person in the Trinity. He continued to maintain a holistic union with the whole nature, essence and image of God.

Also, the incarnation didn’t mean that the Trinity was now devoid of one part of itself. Jesus holistically continued to contain the whole image of God (*as with the hologram*). In his incarnation dwelt a fully divine nature and a fully human nature; “two natures unconfused resid[ing] in one Person.”³⁵ Menzies and Horton explain:

[Jesus] was not part God and part man. He was and is 100 percent God and at the same time 100 percent human. That is, He held a full set of divine qualities and a full set of human qualities in the same Person in such a way that they did not interfere with each other. (*See Acts 1:11*)³⁶

This holistic nature of the Trinity accounts for the statement in Col. 2:9 that says “in Him resided the whole Godhead bodily.” Thus, Jesus became the visible image of the invisible God. (Heb. 1:1-2), and the mystery of God up to that time became resolved in the physicality of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 2:5-11) He did not lose his God status, which is why Gabriel could announce to Mary that her baby would be “Immanuel, God with us” (*Isa 7:14 and Matt. 1:23*). His divine and human nature was acknowledged by the disciples (Mt. 16:16; Jn 20:28), by the people (Mt. 2:2,11; 14:33; 28:9) and more importantly, by Jesus Himself (Jn 14:9).

That Jesus declared Himself God is substantiated by the scriptures. He definitely knew where He came from, and who He was—God—which is why the Jews wanted to stone him.

... Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be *equal* with God. (Phil. 2:5-6)

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (Jn 8:58-59) [*I am=Jehovah God*]

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. (Jn 5:18)

Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, *makest thyself God*. (Jn 10:32-33)

Some struggle with this question: “How, if Jesus were God, could Jesus when He was in the garden, pray to his Father in heaven? Was He praying to Himself?” No, he was not praying to himself. He was praying in his humanity (*also his divinity*) to God, because remember that the nature of all three Personages, even in eternity past, has been *relationship and communication* with each other. In other instances, as in John 17, is that Jesus also took occasion to illustrate the proper mode of praying to His disciples (Matt. 6:10-14)

#

To briefly summarize all the foregoing, we have seen that the Bible declares who God is (*the only God who had n beginning or end*), what He is (*spirit*), what He is not (*a man*), that Jesus is God who holistically projected Himself into humanity and retained His deity, that the Triune nature of God consists of three distinctions, or Personages—not three separate Gods floating around inside a kind of God-cocoon. Being co-eternal and co-equal, they are “one” in essence, nature and deity. While our finite minds are not able to grasp every aspect of the Trinity, the scriptures have provided the essentials.

For myself, and hopefully for you, the analogy of the hologram, where the parts are in, and have access to, the whole, and the whole is in the parts, offers an excellent illustration of how the three can be one, and helps to picture how when the second Personage in the Trinity projected Himself into humanity, he could still retain the whole image and essence of God. It also helps us to understand the following:

- Why Micah prophesied that the baby to be born in Bethlehem had his origin in eternity and was “from everlasting.” (Micah 5:2)
- John’s statement that Jesus preexisted “in the Father’s bosom.” (Jn 1:18)
- Why the scriptures say Jesus was the Logos (Word) who created the universe. (Jn 1:14)
- How Jesus could be Jehovah God of the Old Testament.
- Why Jesus said: “Before Abraham was, I AM.” (*scriptures about his divinity in this endnote*)³⁷
- Why the angel in Matthew 1:23 said that Jesus would be called “Immanuel, God with us.”
- How Jesus could maintain both his divine nature and human nature at the same time.

- Jesus' statement to his disciples that He and his Father were one and that if they have seen him they have seen the Father. (Jn 14:9)
- The reference in Col. 2:9, that the *fullness* of the Father was in Jesus, and that in him resided the *fullness* of the Godhead *bodily*.

All in all, having a better comprehension of the Biblical God and His Trinitarian nature will enable us to more clearly detect anything that contradicts it.

VI. THE MORMON PERSPECTIVE OF GOD AND THE TRINITY

Mormons admittedly share many values and qualities with evangelical Christians, but their concept of God and the Trinity is at extreme odds with what is revealed in the Bible. Mormons, of course, already acknowledge this divergence, but feel vindicated believing that God called Joseph Smith as His latter-day prophet to restore truths missing from the Bible, especially about the Godhead. To members, whatever Joseph Smith declared is “gospel.”

Today, the LDS Church is trying very hard to appear Christian in its public statements. While their Christianeaze sounds good on the surface, there is much underlying those statements—deeper doctrines that they are careful not to denounce.

On the other hand, could the church legitimately trying to make itself Christian? I invite you to read my article, “*Is the Mormon Church Turning Christian?*” found in the newsletter archives, which offers a perspective on this possibility.

In this section on Mormonism I had planned to keep it short by only stating in one sentence, each of the various beliefs with one or two references after it. However, I changed my mind. This is because I know Mormons read my articles, and realizing that many do not know their own church's deeper theology and who will insist that the stated belief is not what they believe, I decided to give the full quotes. They will be those of modern-day leaders and also of early LDS leaders, including Joseph Smith. I quote them because the beliefs they state are what the Mormon Church was *founded* upon, which is really what one should consider, and none of what is going to be quoted has, to my knowledge, been officially denied by today's Presidency except the Adam-God doctrine and polygamy (*although, they still believe they will practice polygamy during the Millennium and in heaven*).

Key to references:

D&C = *Doctrine and Covenants*;

TPJS = *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*

MD = *Mormon Doctrine by Bruce R. McConkie*

AF = *Articles of Faith by Apostle James Talmage*

MAN AND ELEMENTS CO-ETERNAL WITH GOD

In eternity, before the world was created, all primal elements, whether of heaven, earth, man or God, existed eternally before the first God began to rule.

Joseph Smith taught in the D&C 93:29, 30, 22:

Man was also in the beginning with God. [*as spirit element, called "Intelligence"*] Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself [*free will*], as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. . . . For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy. (D&C 93:29, 30, 22) *Note: This eternal Intelligence is sometimes referred to as the "Sea of Intelligence. [Brackets are mine]*

Joseph Smith reiterates about man:

The first principles of man are self-existent with God [co-eternal] (TPJS, 354, *The Deseret News Press, Second Edition 1940; President Joseph Fielding Smith, compiler.*)

CREATION

Because matter is eternal, creation was ex-materia.

Bruce R. McConkie, spokesman for church doctrine, emphasized the eternal nature of all matter in his mention of creation:

. . . matter or element is self-existent and eternal in nature, creation being merely the organization and reorganization of that substance which "was not created or made, neither indeed can be. (D&C 93:29) (MD, Bruce R. McConkie. *Bookcraft*, 1966, 589.)

It is an utterly false and uninspired notion to believe that the world or any other thing was created out of nothing or that any created thing can be destroyed in the sense of annihilation. "*The elements are eternal.*" D. & C. 93:33. (Bruce R. McConkie, MD, 169)

In view of the eternal nature of matter (or the elements), Mormons believe that the creation of the universe could not possibly have been *ex-nihilo*. Therefore, contrary to the Bible, God "organized" matter rather than created it:

Joseph Smith said:

God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he [*God*] had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and reorganized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end. (TPJS, pp. 350-352. Cited in MD by Bruce R. McConkie, p. 169) [*brackets mine*]

EMERGING OF THE FIRST GOD

God suddenly “found” himself in the sea of eternal Intelligence and elements, and recognized he was more intelligent than the rest.

In the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, he states:

God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory [*Intelligences and eternal matter*], because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself.” (*President Joseph Fielding Smith, compiler. TPJS, 354, The Deseret News Press, Second Edition 1940.*) [*brackets mine*]

God is subject to the Intelligences and can be unseated as God.

Section 93 of the D&C states that because free agency is an intrinsic principle of heaven, all of these intelligences act freely and independently in their respective spheres. These Intelligences obey God because they want to; not because they have to. (D&C 93:30) Therefore, as W. Cleon Skousen explains, God is dependent upon their sustaining influence and honor to accomplish His purposes:

Through modern revelation we learn that the universe is filled with vast numbers of intelligences, and we further learn that Elohim is God simply because all of these intelligences honor and sustain Him as such. In other words, as God extended His power and influence throughout His great kingdom, He did so by obtaining the voluntary cooperation and support of vast concourses of intelligences. . . . But since God 'acquired' the honor and sustaining influence of 'all things' it follows as a corollary that if He should ever do anything to violate the confidence or sense of 'justice' of these intelligences, they would promptly withdraw their support, and the 'power' of God would disintegrate... 'He would cease to be God.' . . . Our Heavenly Father can do only those things which the intelligences under Him are voluntarily willing to support Him in accomplishing (W. Cleon Skousen, *The First 2000 Years*, pp. 355-356.) [*Underlining mine*].

GOD WAS ONCE A MAN

God progressed and was once a man; therefore, man may also progress to Godhood.

The Apostle, James E. Talmage stated:

We believe in a God who is Himself progressive, whose majesty is intelligence; whose perfection consists in eternal advancement - a Being who has attained His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow, whose glory it is their heritage to share. In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct charges of blasphemy, the church proclaims the eternal truth: 'As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.'" (*Apostle James Talmage, AF, p. 430.*) [*underlining mine*]

Joseph Smith taught:

First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves, that is the great secret . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity God himself; the Father of us

all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did, . . . You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves . . . No man can learn you more than what I have told you." (Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 5, pp. 613-614.) [underlining mine]

Heb. 13:8, on the other hand, says that, "God is the same yesterday, today and forever." So, if He didn't start out as a man, how could he change to become one if He never changes? Unbiblical doctrines such as this always manage to find their way into the sects, and knowing this, Jesus stressed in John 17:3, "This is life eternal, that ye may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent;" then as James was inspired to point out, there will no chance of being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

One's definition of God determines whether one thinks he or she can be a God or not. Thus, if Mormons believe God was once a man, then they naturally assume it is possible. If Christians believe the Biblical definition of God, then they naturally assume it is not possible.

The begetting of the Gods

Joseph Smith reasoned that it was only natural that all Gods procreate to produce future Gods:

If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered that God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father, you may suppose that He had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son? . . . Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not believe that He had a Father also? I despise the idea of being scared to death at such a doctrine, for the Bible is full of it. . . . I have got all the truth which the Christian world possessed, and an independent revelation in the bargain, and God will bear me off triumphant. (Joseph Smith's *Sermon on Plurality of Gods*, June 16, 1844, *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 473-479)

Mormons today continue to strive for Godhood, and anticipate the perpetuation of their marriage and in producing offspring in heaven. All they have to do is follow the laws and ordinances of the church, obey leaders without question, pay tithes and offerings, keep the Word of Wisdom, stay morally clean, receive the temple endowment, and marry in the temple.

However, the Book of Revelation (1:8) says that He is the *first* and the *last*; and the *beginning* and the *end*; therefore, that means there were no Gods before him, and there will be no more gods after him—even Mormon gods.

This article will not cover the Adam-God doctrine, as it is quite lengthy; therefore, I refer you to www.utlm.org. Click on "Topical Index" and then "Adam-God doctrine." Also, you will also find the following of interest:

[Http://blogs.standard.net/the-political-surf/2010/12/21/The-Adam-God-Debate_or_how_an_apostle-bested-a-prophet/](http://blogs.standard.net/the-political-surf/2010/12/21/The-Adam-God-Debate_or_how_an_apostle-bested-a-prophet/).

JESUS CHRIST

The late LDS Prophet, Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley, when asked if Latter-day Saints believe in the traditional Christ, answered:

No, I don't. The traditional Christ of whom they [the Christians] speak is not the Christ of whom I speak. (*Church News, June 20, 1998, p. 7*)

This becomes apparent when we see how the church views the conception of Christ:

His conception: The church believes that God, a resurrected man from a previous world, came down to Mary and literally sired Jesus in the same way any man begets children. This was stated as an *official doctrine to the church* in 1916 by the First Presidency as follows:

Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and bodily offspring; that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh . . . ³⁸ (*Underlining mine. See endnote for full quote*)

Jesus Christ is the literal first-born spirit-child of God the Father (*Elohim*) and one of his wives. Jesus, as Elohim's first-born, became the second God in Elohim's Trinity. He was also the Jehovah of the Old Testament and later incarnated into humanity.

From the Journal of Discourses:

God the Father is a perfected, glorified, holy Man, an immortal Personage. And Christ was born into the world as the literal Son of this Holy Being; he was born in the same personal, real, and literal sense that any mortal son is born to a mortal father. There is nothing figurative about his paternity; he was begotten, conceived and born in the normal and natural course of events, for he is the Son of God, and that designation means what it says. (*cited in MD, by Bruce McConkie, p. 742*) [*underlining mine*]

Bruce R. McConkie elaborates:

[The] name-titles [*of Christ being the "only begotten" of the father*] all signify that our Lord is the only Son of the Father in the flesh. Each of the words is to be understood literally. Only means *only*; Begotten means *begotten*; and Son means *son*. *Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers.*" (*MD, p. 546-547.*) [*brackets and underlining mine*]

For Mormons reading this, remember this doctrine was issued as "official" by the First Presidency and cannot be rescinded. For more quotes on the literal conception of Christ, see this endnote.³⁹ See also, <http://www.utlm.org/onlineresources/ldsleadersconceptofjesus.htm>.

The Mormon view of salvation also illustrates Pres. Hinckley's statement that they do not believe in the traditional Christ:

Salvation: The LDS Church believes that Jesus' atonement paid for the effects of Adam's sin, mainly permanent, physical and spiritual death, so thanks to Jesus death on the cross, everyone will be resurrected and gain some level of salvation except the Sons of Perdition. The church calls this "*unconditional salvation.*" "*Conditional Individual*" however, has to be earned.

The two levels are explained by Bruce R. McConkie in his book, *Mormon Doctrine*, paraphrased as follows:

- (1) “*Unconditional*” salvation means universal resurrection and immortality through the grace of Christ. They will be judged and placed in one of the two lower kingdoms, the Terrestrial or Telestial (except the Sons of Perdition),
- (2) “*Conditional*” salvation (or individual) is conditional, achieved only after adhering to all the rules, ordinances and principles of the LDS Church. This conditional salvation means “exaltation” (*being a God*) and “eternal life” (*saved in lesser degree of the Celestial Kingdom, although both terms apply to those who become Gods*). Faithful members will be placed in one of the three degrees within the Celestial Kingdom. Those who never married will only gain “exaltation” (*lower degrees within the Celestial Kingdom*), but not “eternal life” (Godhood) in the highest degree, which is reserved for those who married in the temple. There, they will be gods and goddesses, create new worlds, and produce the spirit-children to people those worlds.⁴⁰

McConkie adds that “conditional” salvation (individual) is only possible through Joseph Smith and by being a member of the LDS Church:

Without the atonement, the gospel [Mormon gospel], the priesthood, and the sealing power, there would be no salvation. . . . If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (*McConkie, MD, p. 670. He refers to Doctrines of Salvation by Pres. Joseph Fielding Smith, vol. 2, pp. 1-350*). [brackets and underlining mine]

By contrast, the Bible equates salvation with eternal life and states that it is a *present* possession (Luke 18:9-14, John 3:16, 5:24, Romans 4:16, I John 5:13, Eph. 2:8) But for Mormons it is a future hope. (II Nephi 25:23) Therefore, while Mormons *work* to get saved (into heaven); Christians work because they are *already* saved.

A Gospel Doctrine Sunday School lesson booklet states:

Quite different from most Christian denominations, Latter-day Saints cannot at any time during their lives boast that they have been saved. Salvation comes not from a mere compliance with Church rituals. A confession of Jesus will not bring it.⁴¹

A council in heaven decided between Jesus’ plan for salvation, or Lucifer’s plan. In their “Book of Abraham” Joseph Smith said that a council was held prior to creation where Jesus and Lucifer, as the spirit-children of God (*they are brothers*) proposed a salvation plan for humankind. Jesus’ plan was accepted because it allowed free will and He would give the glory to God. Lucifer’s was rejected because he wanted to force everyone to be saved and he be given the glory. (*Ab. 3:27-28*)

Early LDS church leaders taught that in Jesus' mortal life, he had wives. Mary Magdalene was one of them. Although no longer taught openly, this makes sense to many Mormons who know about this teaching, as Jesus would not be able to advance to Godhood without at least three wives or more.

Prior to the institution of the LDS Church, Jesus and God the Father, as two separate, glorified men, supposedly appeared to Joseph Smith in about 1820 and told him that all of Christendom was an abomination and that he (Joseph) would be God's latter-day prophet.

The LDS Church also believes that Jesus' blood is not enough to cover all sins, specifically adultery and murder.⁴² (See *endnote for details*.) The Bible, while it says in I Jn 3:15 "no murderer hath eternal life abiding within him" and Rev. 21:8 says "murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers, etc., will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone," the tense in the original language refers to those who continually "abide" in these things and persist by their own choice in the activity as a life-style. According to the Bible, if they repent, they can be forgiven. Never does Jesus say that a murderer cannot be forgiven.

THE TRINITY

God the Father

God the Father is a glorified and perfected Man, a Personage of flesh and bones (D. & C. 130:22) in which tangible body an eternal spirit is housed. It is in this sense that God is a Spirit. (*McConkie, MD, 319*)

. . . Each God in the Godhead is a personage, separate and distinct from each of the others . . . they all think, act, speak, and are alike in all things; and yet they are three separate and distinct entities. Each occupies space and is and can be in but one place at one time, . . . Perhaps no better statement defining the Godhead . . . [is] that given by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the *Lectures on Faith*. . . . "The Father being a personage of spirit [meaning that he has a spiritual body which by revealed definition is a resurrected body of flesh and bones (I Cor. 15:44-45; D. & C. 88:27)] . . . (*MD, 319-320*) (*brackets are McConkie's*)

THE "HOLY SPIRIT" AND "HOLY GHOST"

The "Holy Spirit" and the "Holy Ghost" in Mormon theology are two different entities, and the Holy Ghost, as we will see below is a bodiless "man," waiting to take on a mortal body some day.

The Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit, distinct from the Holy Ghost, is not a man, but an it. It is the essence, or spiritual energy which proceeds from throne of God and diffused throughout the universe.

It "permeates all nature, [and] lighteth every man [who is born] and fills the immensity of space. . . . It enlightens "the wicked as well as the good. It may be said to constitute man's consciousness" (*McConkie MD, p. 752-753*)"

It is omnipresent and contains and controls all the forces of nature, e.g., electricity, etc., and gives life and light to mankind. It is the spiritual energy that co-existed with the first God in the Sea of Intelligence, as Parley P. Pratt notes:

[The Holy Spirit's] substance, like all others, is one of the elements of [eternal] material . . . and therefore subject to the necessary laws which govern all matter, as before enumerated. . . . This Holy Spirit, under the control of the Great Eloheim, is the grand moving cause of all intelligences, and by which they act. This is the great, positive, controlling element of all other elements. It is omnipresent by reason of the infinitude of its particles, and it comprehends all things. (*"The Holy Spirit" by Parley P. Pratt, cited in Discourses on the Holy Ghost, compiled by N.B. Lundwall. Bookcraft, 1959, p. 75.*)
[brackets mine]

The Holy Spirit is utilized by God and the Holy Ghost (*see below*) to exact their will and influence upon men. Because God is a man and incapable of being omnipresent, He needs this Holy Spirit. (*McConkie, MD p. 753*)

The Holy Ghost

The Holy "Ghost" is the third member of the Trinity, a spirit man, and is separate and distinct from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

He is a personage of Spirit, a Spirit Person, a Spirit Man, a Spirit Entity. (*Bruce R. McConkie, MD, p. 359.*)

Orson Pratt, says:

The absurdity of supposing the Holy[Ghost] to be a mere property or influence of the Father, instead of being an intelligent agent of himself, is so great, that we do not feel disposed to bring any further evidence or proof to establish the distinct identity of the two. (*"The Holy Spirit; the Holy Ghost," by Orson Pratt; approved by Dr. John A. Widtsoe; cited in Discourses on the Holy Ghost, compiled by N.B. Lundwall. Bookcraft, 1959, p. 79.*)

The Holy "Ghost," in contrast to the Holy "Spirit," cannot be omnipresent states McConkie:

The Holy Ghost, contrary to the Holy Spirit, can no more be omnipresent in person than can the Father or the Son, but by his intelligence, his knowledge, his power and influence, over and through the laws of nature [utilized by the Holy Spirit], he is and can be omnipresent throughout all the works of God. (*McConkie, MD, p. 752*) [brackets mine]

[The Holy Ghost] can be in only one place at one time, and he does not and cannot transform himself into any other form or image than that of the Man whom he is, though

his power and influence can be manifest at one and the same time through all immensity [through the medium of the Holy Spirit]. (*Bruce R. McConkie. MD, p. 359; also in James E. Talmage's article, "The Holy Ghost," cited in Discourses on the Holy Ghost, compiled by N.B. Lundwall, Bookcraft, 1959.*) [brackets mine]

The Holy Ghost may one day take on a mortal body.

Joseph Smith taught that one day the Holy Ghost, because He's a spirit man, will have the privilege of becoming mortal. Certainly, new converts to the church are unaware of this teaching:

But the Holy Ghost is yet a spiritual body and waiting to take to himself a body as the Saviour did or as God did or the gods before them took bodies. (*Joseph Smith, "The Father, Son and Holy Ghost," April 6, 1843; cited in Discourses on the Holy Ghost, compiled by N.B. Lundwall, Bookcraft, 1959.*)

Pre-mortal leaders of earthly dispensations acted as Holy Ghosts—even Joseph Smith

The modern church does not teach this, but Mormon Fundamentalists, those groups that have separated from the mainline church to adhere to the teachings of the early church, believe that the mortal leader of each dispensation, prior to their birth into mortality, served in the role of a Holy Ghost. The first Holy Ghost was the pre-mortal Enoch, then Abraham, Noah, and Peter. The next was Joseph Smith. Joseph's following statement contained in Apostle Orson F. Whitney's book is interpreted by Fundamentalists as implying this:

Had not Joseph said many times--are not men now living who heard him say: "Would to God, brethren, I could tell you who I am! Would to God I could tell you what I know! But you would call it blasphemy, and there are men upon this stand who would want to take my life." (*Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball, Ch.46, p.321-3 Salt Lake City, The Kimball Family, Printed at the Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888.*)

The LDS Church today would deny the above if asked outright, mainly because it is too shocking for the public, members, and because there is no evidence that it was accepted as an official doctrine of the church by the First Presidency. Modern-day leaders will avoid these controversial teachings by saying, ". . . a single leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, but is not meant to be officially binding for the whole Church." (But at the same time, they are careful not to denounce them.)

Reception of the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands

Mormons believe that the Holy Ghost can only be received by the laying on of hands by those holding the proper Priesthood in the Mormon Church. (This, however, discounts the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost fell upon many with no laying on of hands.) This ordination gives members the right to the "constant" companionship of the Holy Ghost, whereas non-members may periodically have that presence now and then, mainly with the objective of leading them to the LDS Church.

SUMMARY OF MORMON PERSPECTIVE OF GOD AND THE TRINITY.

In eternity:

- All primal elements, matter in a more refined state, and the core intelligence of man were co-eternal with God.
- The very first God (The Great Elohim) found himself in the midst of the Sea of Intelligence and became God because he saw he was more intelligent than the rest.
- He became subject to the Intelligences and their eternal laws and principles.
- Because the Intelligences were co-eternal with God, if He should ever do anything to violate the laws and principles of these Intelligences, they would withdraw their support and God would cease to be God.

Our universe:

- God our Father (*a lesser Elohim begotten in the line of the Gods*) is a resurrected man from a previous world who earned his Godhood, along with his plural wives.
- Elohim and his plural wives literally produced spirit-children who were later born into mortality on this world.
- Elohim's firstborn spirit-child was Jehovah/Jesus Christ; another child was Lucifer/Satan.
- A God's firstborn spirit-child always become the Savior Jesus Christ of that world.
- Jehovah organized this world *ex-materia*; that is, from eternal elements.
- Elohim, as an exalted man, visited Mary, impregnated her, and his son, Jehovah's spirit body, inhabited her baby.
- Faithful Mormons may also achieve Godhood. The *Salt Lake City Mormon History Examiner* cites Lorenzo Snow, the fifth prophet of the church with the following couplet, which he said was confirmed by Pres. Brigham Young: "*As man is God once was; as God is, man may become.*"⁴³
- Men will eventually become an Elohim God over their own planet and people their newly created worlds through their plural wives.
- Elohim and Jesus appeared to Joseph Smith about 1823, selected him as His prophet, and declared Christendom an abomination.

Fascinating stuff, but where did Joseph Smith get all his doctrines? (*See endnote*)⁴⁴ Certainly not from the Bible, as the following comparison clearly shows:

Mormonism teaches:

God the Father is an exalted man with a resurrected body.

God is a man, so cannot be omnipresent. Only The Holy Spirit is omnipresent.

God the Father had a beginning and is subject to the co-eternal Intelligences, and can be dethroned by them.

More Gods are literally begotten.

Christianity teaches:

God the Father is not a man; He is a Spirit. (*Numbers 23:19; Isaiah 31:3; John 4:24*)

God is a spirit, therefore can be omnipresent. (*Ps. 139; Jn 4:24*)

God the Father is eternally pre-eminent. (*Isaiah 43:13*)

There are no Gods before or after

God the Father has parents and grandparents.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are polygamists.

There are a plurality of Gods.

God “organized” the universe from eternal matter; *ex-materia*.

Jesus Christ was the literal offspring of God and Mary.

Jesus became an exalted God after His resurrection.

Satan is a literal offspring of God and one of God’s wives

Men can become Gods.

The spirits of all men are already the children of God when they are born.

There is salvation after death.

There is salvation only through LDS Church works and the approval of Joseph Smith.

Jesus blood does not forgive all sins repented of, specifically murder and adultery.

The Holy Ghost is a spirit man, waiting to take on a body, while the Holy Spirit is an energy proceeding from the throne of God.

Jehovah. (Isa. 44:6 and 3:10)

God has no parents. (*Isaiah 43:13*)

God is not married; neither was Jesus. His only bride is the church. (*Mark 12:28-30; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9*)

There is only one God. (*Deut. 6:4; Isaiah 43:10;*)

God “created” the universe ex-nihilo, out of nothing. (*Gen 1:1; John 1:1; Heb. 11:3*)

Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-35*)

Jesus has always been God (*John 1:1-18; Colossians 2:9*)

Satan is a created being. (*Isaiah 14:12-15; Rev. 12:9*)

Men are lower than the angels (*Heb. 2:6-7; Ps. 8:4*)

Men can only become children of God through adoption and faith. (*John 1:12;*)

There is no salvation after death (*Hebrews 9:27*)

There is salvation only in Jesus Christ (*Jn 14:6; Jn 3:16; Eph 2:8-9*)

Jesus said all sins will be forgiven cept the sin against the Holy Ghost. (*Mark 3:28*) Whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins. (*Acts 10:36*). Jesus forgives all trespasses. (*Col. 2:13*); and remembers them no more. (*Heb. 8:12*)

The Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit are synonymous; neither are spirit-men. (*Heb. 9:14; Ps. 139*)

Reliability of the Bible

The scriptures are the inspired Word of God, a revelation from God to man. Menzies and Horton note that:

The Greek word most nearly equivalent to our word “inspiration” is found in 2 Timothy 3:16. It is *theopneustos*. It means, literally, “God-breathed.” By divine breath and power the Holy Spirit moved the (human) authors of the Bible with such precision that the product accurately reflects the intention of God himself.⁴⁵

The Bible is reliable, despite what the LDS Church claims, and needs no additional writings, such as the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants or Pearl of Great Price to clarify meanings or add to. The Bible is being confirmed every day by archaeological findings and early manuscripts. The preservation of its accuracy over the centuries can be seen in the fact that 95% of the words from the Isaiah scroll (*in the Dead Sea Scrolls*) are identical with the Hebrew text in our present King James Bible. (*The other 5% consist of minor slips of the pen and variations in spelling.*)

Biblical conclusion

- God is not subject to any co-eternal sea of Intelligence. He is, by Himself, eternally preeminent from everlasting to everlasting.
- God is not a man, and there are no other Gods before Him, or will there be after him.
- The Elohim created the world *ex-nihilo* through the spoken Word (Logos) the second Person in the Trinity, who later projected Himself to the Israelites in the Old Testament as Jehovah and in other Theophanies and Christophanies.
- Jehovah later took on flesh in the form of Jesus (*Jn 1:18*) and the angel testified that he should be called, “Immanuel, God with us.”
- The pre-mortal Jesus entered mortality to save the world from the Fall, sacrifice Himself for the sins of the world, offer eternal life to believers instead of spiritual death, and reveal the mystery of the invisible God. Only someone directly from God’s bosom could do this.
- The Trinity is One God, consisting of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all of whom are distinctions of Persons within God. They are not three separate Gods. All three personalities are wholly deity and so holistically interrelated that they are one in essence and attributes.

The example of the hologram, in which any part cut from a holographic photograph still contains the whole image, provides an exceptional understanding of the holistic nature of the Trinity and how Jesus can be God. We can now see the importance of following the imperative of Jesus to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, which will then enable us to more clearly detect any theology that contradicts it. Paul understood this . . . so much so, that he repeated the warning twice:

But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we [the apostles] have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (*Gal. 1:8-9*)

Until next time!

ENDNOTES

¹ Also called, "Scutum Fidei." <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity>. See also, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shield-Trinity-Scutum-Fidei-variations.svg>

² "Evangelical," in this article, will mean Protestant Christian theology. Evangelicals do not belong to a specific denomination. They are found in all churches—non-denominational, independent, Baptist, Methodist, evangelical Bible churches, and others. While they may vary on a few points, basically, they all share the following: (1) a conservative view of the Bible [*Biblical authority and verbally inspired*] (2) believe in one eternal God who, through a single essence, exists in three equal persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost/Spirit (3) God the Son became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ who was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, and (4) all will be resurrected to enjoy either life with God or eternal suffering.

³ Ken Wilber, Ed., *The Holographic Paradigm and other paradoxes: Exploring the leading edge of science* (Boulder, CO: Shambhalka Pub. 1982) p. 6.) [*Italics are the author's. Underlining mine.*]

⁴ Ken Wilber, Op. cit, p. 2. [*Italics are the author's; underlining is mine.*]

⁵ Henry C. Thiessen. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Dec. 1980), p. 78.

⁶ The search for an underlying and unifying ground led to the speculative "String theory," which theorizes that the nuclear forces are one-dimensional "strings" that vibrate at different resonances, producing the fundamental particles that make up the physical universe. However, for string theory to make sense mathematically, there has to be more dimensions to our universe than we perceive—ten. M-theory resulted from this, which calls for an eleventh dimension revealing objects called "membranes ("branes" for short). For a video explaining String Theory, go to http://www.ted.com/talks/brian_green_e_on_string_theory.html.

⁷ Dr. Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961) 28. [*Underlining mine*]

⁸ The following link is not the one I originally read to obtain this information, but it still covers the same material. <http://www.crystalinks.com/holographic.html>. [*Underlining, mine*]

⁹ Ibid. [*Italics mine.*]

¹⁰ *The Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra (Bantam Book 1980), 117-118. Note: In his book, the author compares scientific discoveries with insights within Taoism and Buddhism. Quoting this author does not mean I embrace the Eastern religions, only that the book contains pertinent information on the subatomic world. Dr. Capra also has a book, *Belonging to the Universe*, that explores parallels between science and Christian theology.

¹¹ In the Old Testament Bible translators make the following designations. (*newer versions may vary slightly from this*):

The word, "LORD" all in caps means Yahwey or Jehovah.

The word, "Lord" (*capital L and rest of word in lower case*), means Adonai, Lord or Master.

The word, "God" (*capital G and rest of word in lower case*), means Elohim.

The word, "GOD" (*all caps*), means Jehovah. (In instances were Adonai is used as a compound with Jehovah, the latter term is spelled GOD, so that the compound name "Lord GOD" designates

the Hebrew, "Adonai Jehovah."

¹² Wikipedia.com. See also, <http://www.tetragrammaton.org/tetrastudy.html>.

¹³ Unger's Bible Dictionary, Merrill F. Unger (Moody Press, 1980) 510.

¹⁴ Deut. 4:35, 39; Deut. 6:4; Deut. 32:39; 2 Sam. 7:22; I Kings 8:60; 2 Kings 5:15; 2 Kings 19:15; I Chron. 17:20; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 18:31; Ps. 86:10; Isa. 37:16, 20; Isa. 43:10, 11; Isa. 44: 6, 8; Isa. 45:21; Isa. 46:9; Hosea 13:4; Joel 2:27; Zech. 14:9; Mk 12:29-34; Jn 17:3; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 1:17; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19.

¹⁵ Scriptures using plural pronouns when God refers to Himself: Gen. 1:27; cf Gen. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8. When the angel of the Lord appears representing Yahweh who has same attributes and actions as God: Gen. 16:7, 10-11, 13; 18:1-33; Ex. 3:1-4:31; 32:20-22; Num. 22:35, 38; Judg. 2:1-2; 6:11-18. References to two Gods, the second recognized as Christ in the New Testament: Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; 45:7; Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:8, 13; Matt. 22:41-46; Prov. 8:22-31; 30:4; Dan. 7:13-14.

¹⁶ Is it unusual to combine both plural and singular? No. There is evidence in other cultures that a plural noun for God can be used to indicate a singular God. Michael S. Heiser, Doctor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Semitic Languages, notes examples from Akkadian texts where the plural Akkadian word *'ilanu*, for "gods" actually has reference to a singular god. He also adds that there are over a hundred instances in the political correspondence of that time where *'ilanu* was used to refer to Pharaoh, and there was only one Pharaoh. <http://www.sitchiniswrong.com/Elohim/Elohim.htm>

¹⁷ Other names of God: El-Elyon (*The Most High God*; Gen. 14:17-20; Isa. 14:13-14); or El-Roi (*The Strong One Who Sees*; Gen. 16:13); El-Shaddai (*God of the Mountains/God Almighty*; Gen. 17:1, Ps 91:1); El-Olam (*The Everlasting God* Isa. 40:28-31). There are more. See <http://www.smilegodlovesyou.org/names.html> and <http://ldolphin.org/Names.html>.

¹⁸ "The Doctrine of the Trinity" by Charles H. Welch, quoting a "Dr. Chalmers," Ch. 7, p. 22. Published by The Berean Publishing Trust. (*Emphasis mine*) See also: www.bibleunderstanding.com/Is%20God%20a%20Person.PDF.

¹⁹ *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton (Logion Press, Springfield, MO, 1994) 44.

²⁰ Thiesen, Op. cit. Page unknown. [*Brackets mine.*]

²¹ Menzies and Horton, Op. cit., 44-45.

²² Menzies and Horton, Op. cit. 45.

²³ Menzies and Horton, Op. cit., 44-45.

²⁴ Menzies and Horton, Op. cit., 54.

²⁵ "A Brief Definition of the Trinity" by James White. <http://vintage.aomin.org/trinitydef.html>.

²⁶ Menzies and Horton, Op. cit, 54 (*bulleted formatting and parentheses are mine; plus, I have inserted words of my own*)

²⁷ “Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost? A Spirited Comparison” by Pastor Walter Snyder.

http://www.adishakti.org/_holy_spirit_or_holy_ghost.htm and
<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081023111755AAMdSiO>

²⁸ The Counselor” Straight Talk about the Holy Spirit, A.W. Tozer. (Wingspread, Nov. 18, 2009.) Cited at <http://www.spirithome.com/spirpers.html>.

²⁹ <http://www.spirithome.com/spirpers.html>

³⁰ “Is the Trinity Biblical?” ESV Study Bible commentary at [Www.Jesus.org](http://www.Jesus.org).

³¹ Reformatted and paraphrased from commentary given at <http://www.allaboutgod.com/holy-spirit.htm>.

³² [Www.thriceholy.net](http://www.thriceholy.net).

³³ And the Word was God. In John 1, he speaks of the Word as a distinct person from God the Father. So do the Targums (Aramaic paraphrasing of the Old Testament for the common people), and Chaldee paraphrases, as in Ps. 110:1, making a distinction between God and the Word, with both still being “God.” In the creation, the Jerusalem Targum of Johathan ben Uziel renders Bereshit 1:27 [Gen. 1:27] as follows: “*And the Word [Memra] of the Lord created man in His likeness, in the likeness of the Lord, the Lord created, male and female created He them.*” Another example is: “*Ye have made the word of the Lord King over you this day, that He may be your God.*” (Deut. 26:17). In one Targum, Hosea 1:7, it says: “I will redeem them by the word of the Lord their God.” Gen. 28:20 in the Onkelos Targum reads: “If ‘the Word of the Lord’ will be my help, and will keep me, etc.,. . then “the Word of the Lord” shall be “my God.” Also, in the Jonathan Ben Uzziel Targum, Lev. 26:12: “I will cause the glory of my shekinah to dwell among you, and my word shall be your God, the Redeemer.” Other Targums: Deut. 2:17. “The Truth of the Trinity” at www.doxa.ws/Trinity/More_memra.html; also, Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible at <http://bible.cc/john/1-1.htm>.

³⁴ Cited at <http://www.religioustolerance.org/crebegin.htm>.

³⁵ Menzies and Horton, Op. cit. 63.

³⁶ Menzies and Horton, Op. cit. 63.

³⁷ Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (KJV)
 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM (NLT)
 Before Abraham was even born, I have always been alive (NLT; footnote alternate)
 See also: Jn 8:58, Jn 17:5; Jn 6:62; Jn 3:13; Jn 6:46; Jn 8:14; Jn 16:28.

³⁸ “*Father*” as *Literal Parent* ... God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title “Elohim,” is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race. Elohim is the Father in every sense in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits. ... Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and bodily offspring; that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh, and which body died on the cross and was afterward taken up by the process of resurrection, and is now the immortalized tabernacle of the eternal spirit of our Lord and Savior.” (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 4, pp. 1670-1671)

³⁹ “Mary, his mother, “was carried away in the Spirit” (1 Ne. 11:13-21), was “overshadowed” by the Holy Ghost, and the conception which took place “by the power of the Holy Ghost” resulted in the bringing forth of the literal and personal Son of God the Father. (Alma 7:10; 2 Ne. 17:14; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). Christ is not the Son of the Holy Ghost, but of the Father. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, pp. 18-20).” (See also *McConkie p. 822*)

When the time came that His first-born, the Saviour, should come into the world and take a tabernacle, the Father came Himself and favoured that spirit [Mary] with a tabernacle instead of letting any other man do it. The Saviour was begotten by the Father of His spirit, by the same Being who is the Father of our spirits, and that is all the organic difference between Jesus Christ and you and me. And a difference there is between our Father and us consists in that He has gained His exaltation, and has obtained eternal lives. The principle of eternal lives is an eternal existence, eternal duration, eternal exaltation. Endless are His kingdoms, endless His thrones and His dominions, and endless are His posterity; they never will cease to multiply from this time henceforth and forever. (*Journal of Discourses, Vol. 4, pp. 217-218*)

Apostle James E. Talmage wrote:

That Child to be born of Mary was begotten of Elohim, the Eternal Father, not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and, the offspring from that association of supreme sanctity, celestial Sireship, and pure though mortal maternity, was of right to be called the "Son of the Highest." In His nature would be combined the powers of Godhood with the capacity and possibilities of mortality; and this through the ordinary operation of the fundamental law of heredity, declared of God, demonstrated by science, and admitted by philosophy, that living beings shall propagate—after their kind. The Child Jesus was to inherit the physical, mental, and Spiritual traits, tendencies, and powers that characterized His parents—one immortal and glorified—God, the other human—woman.” (*Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, p. 81*)

In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, under the heading JESUS CHRIST we read:

He was able to accomplish his unique ministry—a ministry of reconciliation and salvation—because of who and what he was. President Ezra Taft Benson stated, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the most literal sense. The body in which He performed His mission in the flesh was fathered by that same Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, nor was He begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father!" ... From Mary, a mortal woman, Jesus inherited mortality, including the capacity to die. From his exalted Father he inherited immortality, the capacity to live forever. (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism, vol. 2, pp. 724-725*)

“For Latter-day Saints, the paternity of Jesus is not obscure. He was the literal, biological son of an immortal, tangible Father and Mary, a mortal woman (see Virgin Birth). Jesus is the only person born who deserves the title "the Only Begotten Son of God" ... He was not the son of the Holy Ghost; it was only through the Holy Ghost that the power of the Highest overshadowed Mary (Luke 1:35; 1 Ne. 11:19).” (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism, vol. 2, p. 729*)

Apostle McConkie explained that there was nothing figurative about Mary’s conception:

And so it is with the Eternal Father and the mortal birth of the Eternal Son. The Father is a Father is a Father; he is not a spirit essence or nothingness to which the name Father is

figuratively applied. And the Son is a Son is a Son; he is not some transient emanation from a divine essence, but a literal, living offspring of an actual Father_ ... There is nothing figurative or hidden or beyond comprehension in our Lord's coming into mortality. He is the Son of God in the same sense and way that we are the sons of mortal fathers. (*The Promised Messiah*, pp. 468-469)

19 Aug, 1866 - Brigham Young preached from the pulpit on Aug. 19, 1866:

"Mary, the wife of Joseph, had another husband. On this account infidels have called the Savior a bastard... he was begotten by God our Heavenly Father." She was a polyandrist, like the women he authorized in 1857." (*Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 11:268*)

⁴⁰ *Mormon Doctrine*, by Bruce R. McConkie, second edition (Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1979), 669-670.

⁴¹ Gospel Doctrine Sunday School Lesson booklet, 1931, p.107.

⁴² (1) a man may be saved in the Celestial Kingdom if, after committing adultery, but before accepting Mormonism, repents. (*McConkie, MD*, 24.)

(2) If a Mormon, before going through the temple, commits adultery and repents, he or she will be forgiven; but, the *second* time, shall be cast out/excommunicated. Jesus' blood will not cover him or her. (*D & C*, 42:24-26; *MD*, 24-25.)

(3) If a Mormon commits adultery after being sealed in the temple and has had his or her calling and election made sure (*has had the Lord personally appear and assure him of his exaltation* (See *Mormon Doctrine*, 109-110), he can never be saved in the Celestial Kingdom. (*Ibid.* 24-25.)

Biblical view: The Bible says in I Jn 3:15 "no murderer hath eternal life abiding within him" and Rev. 21:8 says "murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers, etc., will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone," but this is referring to those who "ABIDE" in these things and persist by their own choice in the activity as a life-style. According to the Bible, if they repent, they can be forgiven. Never does Jesus say that a murderer cannot be forgiven.

⁴³ *Salt Lake City Mormon History Examiner*, Dec. 13, 2009 by Clair Barrus. See <http://www.examiner.com/x-19393-Salt-Lake-City-Mormon-History-Examiner~y2009m12d13-Origin-of-famous-Mormon-couplet-discovered>.

⁴⁴ See Chapter Six of the author's book, *The Mormon Missionaries: An inside look*, where sources for Joseph Smith's doctrines and teachings are listed.

⁴⁵ Menzies and Horton, Op. cit. 21.