

My Testimony of Christ by Edward Hess

I would like to share my testimony about how I came to grips with the Jesus I now have versus what I supposedly had before I became a Mormon. In my view they are one and the same personage because I never really bought into the Trilogy doctrine. I realize that non-Mormons take exception to that, but I think the scriptures make it pretty clear who Jesus was, and who he came to represent. He clearly testified that “the Father was greater than I” (John 14:28), but more importantly he declared: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

John’s writings are probably the most clear about this than any of the other writings, although other disciples testified on numerous occasions in their letters concerning Jesus’ individuality as being separate and distinct from that of the Father when they declared that Jesus sits or stands on the right hand of God (see Mark 16:19; Acts 2:32-33; 5:31; Romans 8:34; 2 Corinthians 6:7; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 10:12; 12:2; and 1 Peter 3:22).

Stephen also made this same declaration at his martyrdom when he “looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,” (Acts 7:54-56). In my estimation, it is kind of difficult for someone to stand or sit beside someone else and still be considered as the same person. Even Jesus himself said, “Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God” (Luke 22:69).

If Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father were in effect “one and the same personage,” you would think that Jesus or some of his disciples would have declared these things. As far as I am concerned, the scriptures are very clear who Jesus was, starting with John 3:16-18, which says:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Latter-day Saints believe that after the death of the apostles there began to be a falling away from the true gospel of Jesus Christ, except for a very few who did not hold the keys of the priesthood to perpetuate the priesthood or to keep the ordinances of the gospel alive. These early disciples knew that there would be a falling away just as Paul predicted there would be when he wrote his epistle to the Thessalonians, when he said:

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

The apostasy is a whole different subject so I will try to stick with the original question “why a different Jesus,” but essentially these two subject are co-related.

In Jesus’ day, the religious rulers claimed that they believed in God, but they rejected His only begotten Son, and thought it was blasphemy for Jesus to say that he was the Son of God. Apparently his followers

did not have any problem with him preaching to them “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14); but when he talked about the living bread, which was symbolic of the sacrifice that he was about to make on our behalf, many of his disciples heard this and declared, “This is an hard saying, who can hear it?” (John 6:60)

Christ turned to them and said unto them, “Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” (John 6:61-62) Apparently some of his disciples were skeptics, because “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” (John 6:66) Later Jesus said, “. . . ye believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1).

Throughout his ministry Jesus said time after time, “. . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34). “. . . The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the son quickeneth whom he will” (John 5:19-21).

There are dozens of examples especially in John’s gospel where Jesus declared his relationship with his Father, as son to Sire, and student to Teacher. He apparently received personal instruction and revelations from God the Eternal Father on many occasions, even at an early age when he was 12 years old, because he informed his parents that he must be about his “Father’s business” (Luke 2:49). He did the works that he saw his Father do. He said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38) I will not quote all these scriptures because they are too numerous to mention, but there is sufficient proof that Jesus and Heavenly Father are not one an the same personage.

I understand that the scriptures declare them to be one (John 10:30), but they are “one in harmony or agreement with one another, not as one in personage.” Jesus was the executor of the Father. He lived with God, just as we all lived with God prior to our earthly existence. The Father chose him to be the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. As our Savior he was also the Creator, and as John declared “the same was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by him, and without him were not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of man.” (John 1:1-3)

Jesus attained the status of godhood in the preexistence, but God the Eternal Father is the “Father of spirits” as Paul declared in his letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 12:9), as well as the Romans that we are his children (Romans 8:16). Christ was the firstborn in the spirit world, and he is the firstborn of the resurrection. As Creator, he speaks for our Heavenly Father and carries out the works of our Father, and they are assisted by the Holy Ghost in this work whose mission it is to bear testimony of both the Father and the Son.

Jesus is referred to as the Father because he is the Father of all those who accept him as their Lord and Savior. Because of him, we shall be “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ” (Romans 8:14-17), if so be that we submit ourselves to his will, and are obedient to his laws, ordinances, and commandments.

From the very beginning, any time the Lord spoke to man, it was through Jehovah, who we believe and are taught was also Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords, King of Kings, and Savior of the world. Because he was God, Isaiah could declare, “I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6).

Isaiah also declared, “Ye [are] my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I [am] he: before me

there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, [even] I, [am] the LORD; and beside me [there is] no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when [there was] no strange [god] among you: therefore ye [are] my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I [am] God.” (Isaiah 43:10-12)

Jesus was different than any other man who ever walked the earth. He was both mortal and immortal. Through his mother’s genes he inherited the curse of mortality, and through his Heavenly Father’s genes he inherited immortality and eternal life. He had both the power to lay down his life, and he had the power to take it up again. (John 10:15-18) He is the only spirit child of our Heavenly Father who was able to be the Savior of the world, and there were no other gods or Saviors before him, and there are no other gods or saviors who will take his place. That is why Isaiah could declare, “beside me there is no savior.”

Many do not believe that prophets of the Old Testament knew who Jesus Christ was, but Jesus debunked that notion when he declared, “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” (John 5:46-47)

Likewise, Peter said, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, [that] every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.” (Acts 3:22-24)

Essentially Latter-day Saints believe that with the passing of the apostles was followed by the rapid development of a universal apostasy as I previously stated. Among the disintegrating forces acting from without, the most effective was the persistent persecution to which the saints were subjected, incident to both Judaistic and pagan opposition. Judaism was the earliest oppressor of Christianity, and became the instigator and abettor of the succeeding atrocities incident to pagan persecution.

Open and vigorous hostility of the Roman powers against the Christian Church became general during the reign of Nero, beginning about 64 A.D., and continued with occasional respites of a few months or even years at a time to the close of Diocletian’s reign (about 305 A.D.). By the time Constantine came into power whatever vestige of genuine Christianity was left was buried beyond the sight of man by the abuses that followed the elevation of the churchly organization to secular favor through the decree of Constantine. The emperor, even though unbaptized, made himself the head of the church, and a priestly office was more sought after than military rank or state preferment.

Not only were important doctrines changed, but so was the order of priesthood, and the various offices of the priesthood. Bishops were installed, and changed the name of their office to Pope. Many of the early popes were often corrupt, and nothing more than political lackeys for the emperors of Rome, and some were even assassinated or forced into exile. Occasionally, there was more than one pope who claimed to be the head of the church.

In 325 A.D. the Council of Nicea, with help of the Roman Emperor, declared the “fathomless mystery” as the Trinity of Persons. I now quote from a book entitled, “*Handbook for Today’s Catholic, Beliefs, Practices, and Prayers,*” originally published in 1946, and republished in 1973. Quote:

“The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church. In the New Testament there is frequent mention of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A careful reading of these scriptural passages leads

to one unmistakable conclusion: each of these Persons is presented as having the qualities that can belong only to God. But if there is only one God, how can this be?

“The Church studied this mystery with great care and after four centuries of clarification, decided to state the doctrine in this way: In the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, truly distinct one from another. Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: “The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three gods but one God.”

That is basically the doctrine that has been handed down from the Roman Catholic Church, and a doctrine which is believed and adhered to by most Christians. It is not in keeping with the teachings of Christ, nor is it in keeping with the testimony of his disciples. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, separate and distinct from his Father.

Jesus testified, “. . . Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.” (John 5:37) Furthermore he said, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” (John 5:26) John the Baptist heard the voice of God declare: “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17; 2 Peter 1:17) Likewise, so did Peter, James, and John testify that they heard the Father’s voice (see Matthew 17:1-5). If it was not the Father’s voice then Jesus must have been a ventriloquist. I cannot accept that explanation.

If God has a voice, then He must also have a shape and a body. Some say that God is a Spirit, and he can only be worshipped as a Spirit. If it was necessary for Jesus to take on a body of flesh and bone, and to be tried and tested in the flesh the same as his brethren, and if he is the first fruits of the resurrection, having obtained a physical body of flesh and bone, then it stands to reason if his body has been glorified, then so also must the Father have a glorified body of flesh and bone, otherwise, Jesus would be greater than the Father, but he personally testified, “The Father is greater than I.” (John 14:28) In fact, Jesus testified that not only is the Father greater than him, but he said, “. . . the Father is greater than all.” (John 10:29)

No place in the scriptures does it say that after his ascension into heaven did he become a spirit. Quite the contrary, when Jesus appeared unto his disciples in the upper room when the doors were closed, “Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace [be] unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” (Luke 24:36-39)

So likewise at his ascension, the scriptures say, “And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:10-11)

It stands to reason if he went into heaven, or as we call it the spirit world, with a resurrected body of flesh and bone, he will likewise return with the same resurrected body of flesh and bone when he returns.

Latter-day Saints do not apologize for not believing in monotheism because we did not create that problem. It was the Council of Nicea that created this so called mystery of the godhead, or the “three in one God.” The scriptures in my opinion are abundantly clear that God the Father and his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, are two separate and distinct personages, and both are Gods in their own right, but God the Father is the Most High God, and he is the one that we are to supposed to worship. He is the one who Jesus came to represent. Jesus on the other hand is our Savior, and we are required to acknowledge him

as such. Because of him, “every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he began by saying, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.”

When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene at the sepulcher, she supposing him to be a gardener and afterwards recognized him when he called her by name, said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and my God, and your God." (John 20:15-17) It is obvious from this statement that he was resurrected, but not yet glorified, nor had he yet been with his Father, not only his Father, but our Father; his God, and our God. This is just one more example in the scriptures where Jesus revealed that he and his Father are two separate and distinct personages. Here he was, physically with Mary Magdalene, but his Father was elsewhere, presumably where he reigns in his kingdom of glory.

Furthermore, John testified, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into [your] house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 1:7-11) [Emphasis added.]

The problem with people in his day is that they did not recognize Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, or as the only begotten Son of God. In his day Jesus told them, “. . . ye believe in God, believe also in me.” (John 14:1) But instead, they crucified him. Prior to his crucifixion, he said unto Pilate: “. . . To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” (John 18:37) The truth is, in our day many of our Christians friends claim to believe in Christ, but do they really believe in God if they consider Him to be a triune or "three-in-one" God, somehow separate and distinct, but yet one personage of Spirit, known as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

Today people believe in Jesus Christ, and they say they recognize him as their Lord and Savior, but they forget that in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3)

Jesus came to represent the Father. He was chosen in the preexistence to be our Savior, to atone for our sins, to recover us from the fall of Adam, and to make it possible for us to return to our Heavenly Father. It was all part of the plan of salvation (see attachment). Lucifer and one-third of the host of heaven rebelled and were cast out, but the rest of us kept our first estate because we chose to follow Christ. For now a veil has been placed between us and our pre-earth life, and we must live by faith. We are free to choose whether we still want to follow Christ or to follow Satan, and if we make wrong choices we will have to pay for the consequences of those decisions.

However, Heavenly Father has not left us to wander endlessly or aimlessly in darkness. That is why he has provided prophets, men who are called of God to teach correct doctrines, and to show us the way back to our Heavenly Father. We are to accept Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, and to follow him and his teachings, as he has followed the teachings of his Father.

“But I have greater witness than [that] of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” (John 5:36-40)

The reason I believe the things I do concerning Christ are stated above. I think the scriptures are abundantly clear, and any reasonable person should be able to come to the same conclusions, and realize that the Council of Nicea was wrong in declaring a “three-in-one” but monolithic God.

The Prophet Joseph Smith received the following revelation, and I will conclude my letter with this, he said:

“The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22)

God bless, Ed

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