

This book argues that Mormonism is wrong to teach that Christ has only one nature.

The One Natured Jesus of Meandering Mormonism

Bill Grover, Th.D.

THE ONE NATURED JESUS OF MEANDERING MORMONISM

by Bill Grover, M.A., Th. M., Th. D.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This book concerns the teachings of the Utah branch of Mormonism of The Latter- Day Saints, not the Missouri Reorganized Church of Latter- Day Saints which in theology considerably differs from the Utah church. It is asserted by Russell Ralston, a member of the Reorganized Church, that the book of Mormon and the Doctrines and Covenants in fact teach that there is only one God, that God is unchangeable and, therefore, that God never was a man. The Utah church instead, states Ralston, falsely teaches that there are many Gods and that men become Gods (1960: 18, 31, 59).

I find it interesting that both divisions of Mormonism, though subscribing to the supposed revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith and the latter “scriptures” it is said he translated, arrive at far different and opposing views about the important, central doctrines of the natures of God and man. But this book is concerned only with the doctrines of the Latter-Day Saints of the Utah branch of Mormonism and how these teachings compare with evangelical understandings.

I am hoping to be gracious and scholarly in this effort. I will remember that I have known some very good people who are Mormons, and that as an evangelical, I share parts of some beliefs with LDS theology. By that I mean, for example, that as do Mormons I believe in Christ, though Mormons certainly would not concur with my understanding of Jesus. However, I confess that at

times I have found Mormon teachings to be so outrageous that I have allowed my feelings to be exposed. To Mormons and anyone else offended by that I apologize.

As a courtesy to any Mormon readers, unless otherwise noted, all Biblical quotations will be from the Mormon missionary edition of the King James Version which is especially bound for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- Day Saints and distributed by the Deseret Book Company of Salt Lake, Utah. The reader will note that I frequently take only germane excerpts from larger texts and occasionally put in bold what I see as most relevant to the discussion. I agree with Mormons that the KJV is a valuable translation.

Sources in my little book are referenced within the text. Normally the reference will look like Erickson 2013: 670 - (i.e., last name of source, date published: page(s). Full publishing details are included in the Works Referenced.

My purpose is to focus on and attempt a refutation of what I perceive to be an error regarding the nature of the Person of Christ and to show that while the Mormon position on Christ is consistent with and corollary to a number of other teachings in LDS theology, those teachings are mistaken. That specific error is that Christ is only of one nature not of two distinct natures. As Robinson in the first volume of the Encyclopedia of Mormonism succinctly states,

Latter-Day saints are monophysite in their CHRISTOLOGY; that is, they believe that Christ has only one nature which is simultaneously both human and divine. This is possible because the human and divine are not mutually exclusive in LDS thought (Robinson 1992: 401)

I will argue that false Mormon doctrines on Revelation, the Bible, man, exaltation, God, and, of course, on Christ provide unbiblical bases for the teaching that in Christ is just one nature.

2. MY MORMON SOURCES

In order to assist me in understanding Mormon theology, I have purchased a number of LDS books, and I am grateful for the help they provide. These sources include:

Talmage, The Articles of Faith.

Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine.

Joseph F. Smith, Doctrines of Salvation (3 Vols).

Gospel Principles.

Ridges, Mormon Beliefs and Doctrines Made Easier.

Robinson, Are Mormons Christian?

Robinson, How Wide the Divide?

Millett, Getting at the Truth.

Joseph F. Smith, The Way to Perfection.

Smith, New Translation of the Bible.

Millett, and others, LDS Beliefs.

Young, Discourses.

Hopkins, How Greek Philosophy Corrupted the Christian Concept of God.

Millett, A Different Jesus?

The Book of Mormon, Doctrines and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.

Millett, Claiming Christ.

Talmage, Jesus the Christ.

Ludlow, editor, Brigham, Encyclopedia of Mormonism, vol 1.

Missionary LDS Bible.

McConkie, Mormon Doctrine;

Smith, Lectures on Faith (actually by Rigdon?).

Gunn, Mormonism, Challenge and Defense.

Millet, Claiming Christ

Hopkins, Biblical Mormonism: Responding to Evangelical Criticism of LDS Theology

Pratt, The Seer.

Ludlow, Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

I admit that I have not read these sources in their entirety but have focused instead on their contributions to the issues I have chosen to discuss in this book. I also understand that only a few of these sources are normative for Mormon theology. But I hope that by accessing the writings of these Mormon theologians, apologists,

presidents, and apostles I will be prevented from mispresenting LDS teachings on the subjects that I cover.

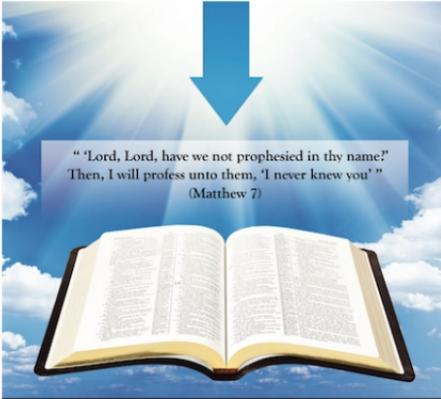
I proceed on the opinion that if one is a Mormon theologian, apologist, Bible teacher, apostle or president, then what he teaches should be taken as being believed by at least some Mormons. I observe that such writers frequently support their opinions with standard LDS normative scripture, and I think, therefore, that the doctrine as defined by them is more likely to be in concert with LDS norms. Furthermore, I generally cite more than one Mormon source to support my interpretations of LDS tenets. I have tried to be fair, and my purpose is only to interact with Mormon theology, not Mormon ethics.

In my opinion, the Mormon doctrines of man, exaltation, God, and, of course, of Christ, himself, are corollary to the LDS view that Christ is only one-natured. If these tenets are shown to be unbiblical, a one-natured Jesus as espoused by Mormon Christology becomes suspect in my opinion. An understanding of the Mormon view on revelation and the Bible is to be considered as well as it is the basis for Mormon Christology. Further, unless I explain the evangelical teaching on these doctrines, an uninformed reader might not see the profound differences between the two systems of theology.

3. A LIMITED DEFINITION OF AN “EVANGELICAL”

Regarding only issues related to topics discussed in this book, an evangelical subscribes to (1) the inspiration and inerrancy of the autographa (originals) of the 66 books of the Protestant Bible, that the original wording the New Testament can be determined, and that this Scripture alone is the final authority over doctrine and practice not ancient creeds or supposed modern revelation, (2) that the one unchangeable and infinite God , who is not corporeal, eternally and ontologically exists, as God, in three equal subsistences often called Persons, (3) that Jesus Christ , after his Incarnation eternally exists in two complete natures in one Person, true God and true man, which natures remain distinct , one from the other, and are not mingled, (4) that the one and only omnipresent, unchangeable, and eternal God never was a man, and (5) that man , who is of a different nature than God, is not eternal and can never become a God.

Mormonism rejects all of these tenets.



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