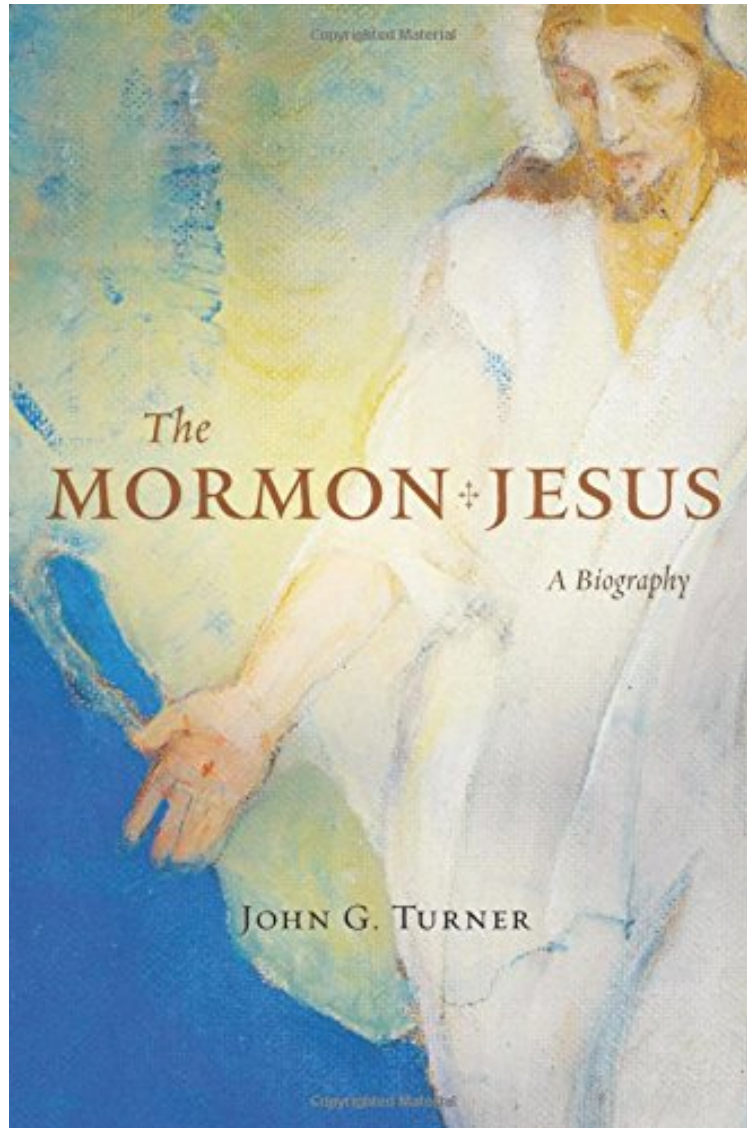


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The Mormon Jesus: A Biography

John G. Turner

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John G. Turner : The Mormon Jesus: A Biography before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mormon Jesus: A Biography:

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Great Academic Book about my Jesus! By CougaNova For the second time in 3 years, a non-LDS scholar makes the case that Mormonism is Christian. Like the late Stephen Webb's philosophical Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn from the Latter-Day Saints, Turner focuses on the centrality of Jesus Christ in LDS worship. Turner combines his knowledge of modern Christianity with extensive

research using materials on Mormonism. Turner discards definitions of Christianity grounded on the Nicene Creed, and instead points out that Mormons did not start following another character (like Christians did with Jesus replacing Moses), so it cannot be considered a new religious tradition. Webb's argument is basically that Mormonism is Christianity on steroids. Turner's depiction of the Mormonism Jesus is that it falls within the Christian tradition in every regard. Unlike Webb, who did not even address the Nicene-centered definition of Christianity, Turner did, and he also addressed the more redneck "different Jesus" argument. When I met him in person, he said that evangelicals make the "Mormon Jesus is Lucifer's brother argument," saying that they do so without thinking, because there is plenty in Jewish and Christian tradition about Lucifer being a fallen angel and a son of God. The chapter on the Book of Mormon and "Jesus meets Genesis," was well done. Showed how both the BOM and the Pearl of Great Price read Jesus into the Old Testament. Today, Mormons are encouraged to pray to receive a witness of the Book of Mormon through the Holy Spirit. In the early days of the Church, Mormons were encouraged to see the face of Jesus! Today, not even apostles, "special witnesses of Christ," would share about that. Turner is very generous towards Mormons. When Mormons do something embarrassing, like linking dark skin with the curse of Cain, he reminds us that other Christians have done so too. He contextualizes a lot of Mormon thought within the broader Christian tradition. He also treats areas in which Mormonism goes against the grain, like how early Mormons believed in a married Jesus when other Christians were trending the opposite direction. Surprisingly, the art history chapter, "The Great White God," was quite interesting. I didn't know that President David O'McKay disapproved of Arnold Friberg's painting a muscular Jesus in the Book of Mormon. Resurrected Jesus wasn't a "bodybuilder," Turner said. Also, Mark Peterson was afraid that housing a Christus statue at the SL visitor's center would cause Catholics to genuflect in front of it. Funny stuff! The whole book is breathtaking and faith-promoting. Thank you John Turner, for writing a book about my Jesus!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Whom say ye that I am? By David Evans

John Turner's latest book -- Mormon Jesus: A Biography -- is wonderful. The book opens with Jesus' question to his apostles, as recorded in Mark 8:29, "But whom say ye that I am?" Over the next nine chapters, Turner explores how members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have answered that question over time. By themes, Turner constructs a rich historical narrative of the evolution of Mormon belief. Along the way, he places Mormon views in the context of broader Christianity: Joseph Smith revised the Bible? So did Thomas Jefferson and others, but in very different ways. This anchoring of LDS views in their time and place doesn't make Mormonism's brand of Christianity the same as other groups; rather, it serves to highlight what is actually distinctive. Furthermore, Turner illustrates each theme with well-told illustrations, such as ordinary members of the Church who saw visions and reacted to revelations. Turner weaves a lush tapestry of a faith that has learned and evolved over the last 200 years. I highly recommend you take it in. Here is his conclusion: "Mormonism is a vibrant new branch of Christianity, one in which temples, ordinances, and prophets have taken their place alongside a Jesus who is both utterly Christian and distinctively Mormon." In case you need more to draw you in, here's a little taste from each chapter.

1. How do Mormons see Jesus in the Book of Mormon? "Any church that gives sustained attention to the Book of Mormon as an inspired scripture would be hard pressed to drift away from the divinity of Jesus Christ and his centrality for human salvation."
2. How do Mormons see Jesus in the Bible? Turner demonstrates that Joseph Smith was far from alone in editing the Bible in his time. But unlike others, who updated the language or eliminated miracles, Joseph made the Bible more Christian: "What was missing from major portions of the Bible was Jesus Christ. Smith fused the Christian Old Testament with the New. Moses, Adam, and Enoch all learn about Gods 'only begotten' son. They hear his words. Adam is baptized. Enoch sees the Crucifixion and millennia before Jesus's first advent the Second Coming. In Smith's revised Bible, Jesus Christ is the fulcrum of creation and salvation throughout all scripture."
3. How do Mormons see Jesus in visions? Turner contextualizes Joseph's first vision: "Influenced by the account of Paul's conversion in the Book of Acts, many Protestants had visions of light 'above the brightness of the sun' followed by visions of God the Father, Jesus, or both." He then takes us from Joseph's vision of the Savior, to those of many other Mormons, and to a shift in teaching away from actively seeking visions of the Savior. "These trends mirrored the trajectories of other American churches."
4. How do Mormons hear Jesus through modern revelation? After characterizing Joseph's revelatory process and people's reactions thereto, Turner follows revelation through Church history. Who knew that John Taylor also had published (but not canonized) revelations? Not I.
5. How do Mormons think about the second coming of the Savior? Turner contextualizes Mormon evolution on this topic -- from belief in an imminent coming (with specific timelines predicted by presidents like Lorenzo Snow) to a more uncertain deadline -- within the history of Christianity: "As Christians came to rule on earth, they displayed less interest in Jesus Christ's future reign."
6. How do Mormons see the relationship between the Savior, God the Father, the Holy Ghost, and the human family? "Given Mormonism's blanket rejection of all existing churches, Latter-day Saint leaders did not feel beholden to ancient creeds or long-held dogmas. Instead, they approached the Bible and other sources of inspiration with striking openness and creativity. The result was an understanding of God and the cosmos foreign to most other forms of nineteenth-century Christianity."
7. How do Mormons worship Jesus through the temple rites? "Latter-day Saints from an early age learn to love Jesus Christ and prepare themselves to come to the temple. For active Mormons, these are not separate endeavors, but inextricably connected." And "Joseph Smith had Mormonized Masonic rites; Brigham Young democratized Smith's endowment."
- 8.

Do Mormons believe that Jesus was married? Polygamous? With children? "The Mormon Jesus did not remain married, however. Once the church abandoned polygamy, Latter-day Saint leaders publicly distanced themselves from the idea of a married savior." Here, Turner traces the idea of a married Jesus from early Christianity to the Da Vinci Code.⁹ How do Mormons envision the Savior? In the 20th century, Protestants had a "chorus of complaint over medieval depictions of a mournful and pale man of sorrows." "Mormons were latecomers to the muscular Christianity movement," and "when Parson submitted a series of sketches for feedback, church leaders recommended a more masculine rendering of the savior." Other reviews: * Matt B, Juvenile Instructor: "Turner's net is capacious enough to snare the fundamentalist Ogden Kraut and Primary songbooks as well as James Talmage and Joseph Smith. ... Many of these chapters are loaded with insight." * Sam Brunson, By Common Consent: Turner "is interested in looking at how we see Jesus, how we saw him, and how our vision of Jesus has evolved over the years. And he has accomplished that in spades." ... "You need to read this book." * M. Haycock, Patheos: "I knew Turner to be a careful, charitable observer of Mormonism, sensitive to the latest developments in Mormon. ... Each topic is presented with ample context and, as I have come to expect from Turner, warranted nuance." * Doug Gibson, Standard-Examiner: "'The Mormon Jesus' is an example of excellent Mormon scholarship that can be found from authors outside the faith." * Jerry Earl Johnston, Deseret News: "You should know this book is driven by information, not flair. ... Some of Turners findings, in fact, can be bracing and even startling. Hes a thorough scholar who sweeps out the corners. So, would I recommend such a book? Yes." 30 of 31 people found the following review helpful. The Mormon Understanding of Christ: The First 186 Years By Eric F. Facer Professor Turners Mormon Jesus is an excellent overview of the evolution of Mormon doctrine, practices and beliefs regarding the nature of Christ and His relationship with the human race. Turner persuasively demonstrates that early Mormonism had much in common with established Christian beliefs. For example, it initially embraced a form of Trinitarianism that was not appreciably different from that of most Protestant churches. Further, the keystone of the Mormon faith the Book of Mormon gives little reason to question accepted Christian teachings regarding the relationships among God, Jesus and human beings. Indeed, while early evangelical leaders were quite critical of certain aspects of the Book of Mormon, none took issue with its descriptions of the Trinity. (p. 35) But all of this was about to change. In the years following the publication of the Book of Mormon, the churchs founding prophet, Joseph Smith, introduced Old Testament polygamy, implemented unique temple rituals that borrowed heavily from Freemasonry an organization that was viewed with considerable suspicion during the 19th century and placed the Mormon church at the epicenter of the millennium, the arrival of which, according to Smith and his immediate successors, was imminent. This compelled the church to reimagine Christ, prompting several church leaders, for example, to re-interpret the New Testament to support the notion that Jesus was not only married but had multiple wives. Turner notes in several places that Mormons, like the devout of virtually all other religions, sought to create God and His Son in their own image. When the church was forced by the United States to abandon its theocracy in Utah and disavow plural marriage, it had to reinvent itself. And, in the process, it found it necessary to redefine its understanding of the Savior. As the Mormon Scholar Jan Shipp (who Turner quotes) once observed, the gathering of Israel, the restoration of polygamy, the institution of a theocratic government and a communal economy had enveloped and obscured the Christian core at the center of the Mormon faith. (p. 293) That effort at reinvention and assimilation with American society, which began shortly after the turn of the 20th century, acquired greater urgency in the face of repeated allegations that Mormonism was not a Christian religion. Turner does a commendable job of illustrating how, throughout this process, the Mormon Church was influenced by American culture and the beliefs and practices of other faiths. But while the Mormon church strove for greater acceptance, it did not apologize for those doctrines such as its teaching that Christ and His Father are two separate beings, each with a physical, albeit perfect, body that set it apart from other religions. Turner does all of this with prose that is both readable and scholarly, and he employs a tone that is fair and balanced, as is beautifully illustrated by the last sentence of his book: Mormonism is a vibrant new branch of Christianity, one in which temples, ordinances, and prophets have taken their place alongside a Jesus who is both utterly Christian and distinctly Mormon. I only have two quibbles with the good professors opus. First, I wish the endnotes had been more substantive and that there had been more of them. Second, I was hoping Turner, in his final chapter, would speculate on the next stage in the churchs evolving conception of Jesus Christ as it wrestles with questions of gender equality, new ideas regarding the meaning of "marriage" and "family," and a generation that increasingly questions the need for organized religion. But perhaps that was a bridge too far.

The nineteenth-century Mormon prophet Joseph Smith published a new scripture dominated by the figure of Jesus Christ, dictated revelations presented as the words of the Christian savior, spoke of encountering Jesus in visions, and told his followers that their messiah and king would soon return to the earth. From the author of the definitive life of Brigham Young comes a biography of the Mormon Jesus that revises and enriches our understanding of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Over the past two hundred years, Jesus has connected the Latter-day Saints to broader currents of Christianity, even while particular Mormon beliefs and practices have been points of differentiation and conflict. The Latter-day Saints came to understand Jesus Christ as the literal son of his father, the exalted brother of

Gods other spirit children, who should aspire to become like him. They gave new meaning to many titles for Jesus Christ: Father, Son of God, Lord, Savior, Firstborn, Elder Brother, Bridegroom, and Jehovah. While some early beliefs became canonized and others were discarded, Jesus Christ remains central to Latter-day Saint scripture, doctrine, and religious experience. Contemporary Mormon leaders miss no opportunity to proclaim their church's devotion to the Christian savior, in part because evangelical Protestants denounce Mormonism as a non-Christian cult. This tension between Mormonism's distinctive claims and the church's desire to be accepted as Christian, John G. Turner argues, continues to shape Mormon identity and attract new members to the church.

The Mormon Jesus is an example of excellent Mormon scholarship that can be found from authors outside the faith. A worthy look at the LDS faith. (Doug Gibson Standard-Examiner 2016-04-22) The Mormon Jesus is much more than a treatise on Christology. It is a lively cultural history of how Mormons have thought of Christ from the Book of Mormon to the Hill Cumorah Pageant. Scriptural translations, visions and revelations, temple ceremonies, songs, Sunday school lessons, paintings, sculpture, and poetry all figure in the story of Mormonism's distinctive Jesus. (Richard Lyman Bushman, author of Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling) The Mormon understanding of Jesus has never been static. This excellent and perceptive history traces the development of Mormon ideas about the Savior through nearly two centuries of history and theology, with those beliefs sometimes coinciding with and sometimes diverging sharply from broader currents of Christian thinking. (Jana Riess, senior columnist for Religion News Service and coeditor of Mormonism and American Politics) Richly researched and beautifully written, The Mormon Jesus moves far beyond biography to survey the entirety of Mormon history through a focus on the ways that believers see, hear, pray to, and depict Jesus. This groundbreaking new book renders Mormonism as both quintessentially Christian and utterly distinctive. (Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, author of Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories) Mormon Jesus is an excellent treatise on the Mormon Christology in its development and current form. It provides a breathtaking overview of Christ in Mormon thought from the pre-Book of Mormon era to the present. Regardless of whether one agrees with Turner's conclusion that Mormonism is a non-peculiar, albeit new and unique, branch of Christianity, he provides the field of Mormon studies with a valuable resource that should prove useful for years to come. (Kyle Beshears H-Net 2016-12-01) About the Author: John G. Turner is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at George Mason University.