

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Is Mormonism Christian?

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1



### QUESTION

*Does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Believe and Teach Historic Christian Doctrine?*

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is founded upon the belief that it is not simply a Christian denomination, but is, rather, the restoration of true Christianity. This belief is based upon the claim by Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, that God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him in bodily form in 1820 in what Mormons refer to as the First Vision where they had some rather shocking words regarding traditional Christianity:

I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said,

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# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

pointing to the other—“This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for **they were all wrong**; and the Personage who addressed me said that all **their creeds were an abomination in his sight**; that **those professors were all corrupt**; that: **“they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”** He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time.<sup>1</sup>

Darrell Boan accurately observes, “In its short 180-year life, the Mormon Church has had a curious relationship with traditional Christianity. A quick look through Mormon history will demonstrate that the LDS Church has a long history of degrading Christian teachings. As a result, it is somewhat odd to find modern day LDS leaders referring to their church as a Christian denomination, for their desire to be denominated among groups they believe to be in utter error seems illogical.”<sup>2</sup>

As we consider the following fifteen contrasts between the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Historic Biblical Christianity one will readily understand that Mormonism is in reality another gospel—one far different from what is revealed in Holy Scripture. It is astonishingly different!

The Apostle Paul put it this way in his letter to the Galatians:

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Smith—History 1:17b-20a (emphasis added).

<sup>2</sup> Darrell Boan, “Do Mormons Believe the God of the Bible?” © The John Ankerberg Show, August 16, 2013. Retrieved July 20, 2023. <https://jashow.org/articles/do-mormons-worship-the-god-of-the-bible/>

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 1:6-9 NIV.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

### ☞ *Mormonism Teaches: The Existence of Many Gods*

**Joseph Smith:** “It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God . . .”<sup>4</sup>

**Joseph Smith:** “I will preach on the plurality of Gods. I have selected this text for that express purpose. I wish to declare I have always and in all congregations when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached by the Elders for fifteen years. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit, and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. If this is in accordance with the New Testament, lo and behold! we have three Gods anyhow, and they are plural: and who can contradict it?”<sup>5</sup>

**Apostle Orson Pratt**<sup>6</sup> said: If we should take a million of worlds like this and number their particles, we should find that there are more Gods than there are particles of matter in those worlds.<sup>7</sup>

### Do Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Believe in the Trinity?

The LDS Church affirms on their website: “Like many Christians, we [Mormons] believe in God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. *However, we don't believe in the traditional concept of the Trinity. We believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three separate beings who are one in purpose*” (Emphasis added).

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<sup>4</sup> Smith, Joseph, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* 7 vols., introduction and notes, B.H. Roberts, 2d rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: The Deseret Book Company, 1978), 6:305.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, Joseph. *History of the Church*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1950), 6:344.

<sup>6</sup> Orson Pratt Sr. (September 19, 1811 – October 3, 1881) was an American religious leader and mathematician who was an original member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the [Church of Christ \(Latter Day Saints\)](#). He became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) (LDS Church) and was a leading Mormon theologian and writer until his death.

<sup>7</sup> *Journal of Discourses* 2:345. A Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt, Delivered in the open air, on the Temple Block, Great Salt Lake City, February 18, 1855.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The LDS Church's first Article of Faith states, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." *We believe They are three distinct personages, not one singular being. We call Them the Godhead* (Emphasis added).

## *Mormonism teaches that the Godhead has unique roles:*

### \* **God**

*God is our loving Heavenly Father. He is the father of our spirits. We communicate with Him through prayer, as Jesus Christ Himself did. Heavenly Father always listens to our prayers. He authored the plan of salvation, a plan to help all of His children return to live with Him. As Latter-day Saints, we love and worship Him.*

### \* **Jesus Christ**

*Jesus Christ is Heavenly Father's Son. He is our Savior and Redeemer. He was God's Only Begotten Son, born of Mary. He lived on earth and taught his Father's gospel. He was rejected by the world and crucified on the cross. Because of His perfect, sinless life and ultimate sacrifice, we all have the hope of returning to live with Him and our Heavenly Father again. John 3:16 reads, "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."*

### \* **The Holy Ghost**

*The Holy Ghost is the messenger and revealer of the Father and the Son. A personage of spirit, He helps us learn and recognize the truth of all things, including the gospel. It is through the Holy Ghost that God and Jesus Christ communicate their love, comfort, and peace to us.*

### \* **One Purpose**

*Though the Godhead is made up of three distinct divine beings with certain different roles and characteristics, They are perfectly united in purpose. They work in harmony to help us come to know God, live righteously, be forgiven, and ultimately return to live with Them again. Together, They work "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> © The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Retrieved July 21, 2023.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/comeuntochrist/article/do-latter-day-saints-believe-in-the-trinity>

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

## ☞ Christianity Teaches: There is only One God

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” (Deuteronomy 6:4 ESV)*

*“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. (Isaiah 43:10 ESV)*

*“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.” (Isaiah 44:6 ESV)*

*“Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.” (Isaiah 44:8 ESV)*

*“I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me.” (Isaiah 45:5 ESV)*

## Understanding the Biblical Christian Concept of God

**Francis J. Beckwith** writes: In order to compare and contrast the Mormon concept of God with the biblical/Christian concept of God, we must first fully understand what we mean by the biblical/Christian concept. Though there are numerous aspects to God’s nature that we could examine (such as that He is a Trinity), for our present purposes it is sufficient to say that the God of biblical Christianity is at least (1) personal and incorporeal (without physical parts), (2) the Creator and sustainer of everything else that exists, (3) omnipotent (all-powerful), (4) omniscient (all-knowing), (5) omnipresent (everywhere present), (6) immutable (unchanging) and eternal, and (7) necessary and the only God that exists. Let us now briefly look at each of these attributes.

**1. God Is Personal and Incorporeal.** According to the Bible, God is a personal being who has all the attributes that we may expect from a perfect Person: self-consciousness, the ability to reason, know, love, communicate, and so forth. This is clearly how God is described in the Scriptures (see Gen. 17:11; Ex. 3:14; Jer. 29:11). God is also incorporeal. Unlike humans, God is not uniquely associated with one physical entity (i.e., a body). This is why the Bible refers to God as spirit (see John 4:24).

**2. God Is the Creator and Sustainer of Everything Else that Exists.** All reality has come into existence and continues to exist because of God. Unlike a god who forms the universe out of preexistent matter, the God of the Bible created the universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). Consequently, it is on God alone that everything in the universe, indeed, the universe itself, depends for its existence (see Acts 17:25; Rom. 11:36; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11).

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

**3. God Is Omnipotent.** Omnipotence literally means “all-powerful.” When we speak of God as omnipotent, this should be understood to mean that God can do anything that is consistent with being a personal, incorporeal, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, wholly good, and necessary Creator. That is to say, since God is perfect, He cannot sin; because He is personal, He is incapable of making Himself impersonal; because He is omniscient, He cannot forget. This is supported by the Bible when its writers assert that God cannot sin (see Mark 10:18; Heb.6:18), cease to exist (see Ex. 3:14; Mal. 3:6), or fail to know something (see Job 28:24; Ps. 139:17-18; Isa. 46:10). Since God is a perfect being, He is incapable of acting in a less than perfect way—which would include sinning, ceasing to exist, and being ignorant. None of this counts against God’s omnipotence (or “ability to do everything”), since, as St. Augustine points out, “[n]either do we lessen [God’s] power when we say He cannot die or be deceived. This is the kind of inability which, if removed, would make God less powerful than He is . . . It is precisely because He is omnipotent that for Him some things are impossible.”<sup>2</sup>

**4. God Is Omniscient.** God is all-knowing and His all-knowingness encompasses the past, present, and future. He has absolute and total knowledge. Concerning God’s unfathomable knowledge, the psalmist writes: “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you” (Ps. 139:17-18). Elsewhere, he writes, “Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit” (Ps. 147:5). The author of Job writes of God: “For he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens” (Job 28:24).

Scripture also teaches that God has total knowledge of the past (see Isa. 41:22). Concerning the future, God says: “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please” (Isa. 46:10). Elsewhere, Isaiah quotes God as saying that knowledge of the future is essential for deity (see Isa. 41:21-24), something that distinguished God from the many false gods of Isaiah’s day.

**5. God Is Omnipresent.** Logically following from God’s omniscience, incorporeality, omnipotence, and role as Creator and sustainer of the universe is His omnipresence. Since God is not limited by a spatiotemporal body, knows everything immediately without benefit of sensory organs, and sustains the existence of all that exists, it follows that He is in some sense present everywhere. Certainly, it is the Bible’s explicit teaching that God is omnipresent (see Ps. 139:7- 12; Jer. 23:23-24).

**6. God Is Immutable and Eternal.** When a Christian says that God is immutable and eternal, he or she is saying that God is unchanging (see Isa. 46:10; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:17) and has always existed as God throughout all eternity (see Ps. 90:2; Isa. 40:28; 43:12-13; 57:15;

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Rom. 1:20; 1 Tim. 1:17). There never was a time when God was not God. Although God certainly seems to change in response to how His creatures behave—such as in the case of the repenting Ninevites—His nature remains the same. A God who is responsive to His creatures is certainly consistent with, and seems to be entailed by, an unchanging nature that is necessarily personal. Although all biblical Christians agree that God is eternally God, they dispute whether He exists in time (i.e., the temporal eternity view) or out of time (i.e., the timeless eternity view).<sup>3</sup>

**7. God is Necessary and the Only God that Exists.** The Bible teaches that although humans at times worship some beings as if these beings were really gods (see 1 Cor. 8:4-6), there is only one true and living God by nature (see Isa. 43:10; 44:6,8; 45:5,21, 18-22; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Gal. 4:8; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:5). Moreover, since everything that exists depends on God, and God is unchanging and eternal, it follows that God cannot not exist. In other words, He is a necessary being, whereas everything else is contingent (or dependent on God for its existence).<sup>9</sup>

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## THE NATURE OF GOD

### ∞ *Mormonism Teaches: God the Father is an Exalted Man*

**Joseph Smith** said, “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret.”<sup>10</sup>

**Joseph Smith:** “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world its in [sic] orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible—I say, if you were to see him today you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction

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<sup>9</sup> Beckwith, Francis J, “The Mormon Concept of God.” © North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, <https://www.namb.net/apologetics/resource/the-mormon-concept-of-god/> (Retrieved July 20, 2023.)

<sup>10</sup> Smith, Joseph Fielding, *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1938, page 345.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another."<sup>14</sup>

**Doctrine & Covenants:** "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute this idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. . . It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another, and that He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did; and I will show it from the Bible . . . Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. The Father has a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's. . . ." <sup>11</sup>

**Apostle Orson Hyde:** Remember that God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement; has moved forward and overcome, until He has arrived at the point where He now is.<sup>12</sup>

**Brigham Young:** He is our Father—the Father of our spirits, and was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an exalted Being. How many Gods there are, I do not know. But there never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds, and when men were not passing through the same ordeals that we are now passing through.<sup>13</sup>

**Apostle Heber C. Kimball:** God is a natural man... Where did he get his knowledge from? From his Father, just as we get knowledge from our earthly parents.<sup>14</sup>

**B.H. Roberts<sup>15</sup>:** But if God the Father was not always God, but came to his present exalted position by degrees of progress as indicated in the teachings of the prophet, how has there

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Smith Jr., "How God Came to Be God," in *Joseph Smith: Selected Sermons and Writings*, ed. Robert L. Millet (New York: Paulist, 1989), 131–32. Cited in Travis Kerns (2018), *The Saints of Zion: An Introduction to Mormon Theology* (p. 29). B&H Academic.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, Joseph Fielding, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1976), 345.

<sup>12</sup> *Journal of Discourses* 1:123.

<sup>13</sup> *Journal of Discourses* 7:333.

<sup>14</sup> *Journal of Discourses* 8:211.

<sup>15</sup> B.H. Roberts was a Mormon Seventy and LDS church historian.



# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

been a God from all eternity? The answer is that there has been and there now exists an endless line of Gods, stretching back into the eternities.<sup>16</sup>

**“As man is now, God once was; as God is now, man may be.”**

Former LDS Church president Lorenzo Snow offered what has become an oft-quoted and likely one of the most recognized statements concerning the LDS understanding of the nature of God, a statement usually referred to as the Lorenzo Snow couplet. Recalling his patriarchal blessing given him by Joseph Smith Sr., Snow wrote:

[Smith, Sr.] told me another thing that greatly surprised me. He said, “You will be great, and as great as you want to be, as great as God Himself, and you will not wish to be greater.” I could not understand this, but years after in Nauvoo while talking upon a principle of the gospel, the Spirit of God rested powerfully upon me and showed me more clearly than I can now see your faces a certain principle and its glory, and it came to me summarized in this brief sentence: “As man is now, God once was; as God is now man may be.” The Spirit of God was on me in a marvelous manner all that day, and I stored that great truth away in my mind. I felt that I had learnt something that I ought not to communicate to others.<sup>17</sup>

Of the couplet and the impact of this understanding of God on the life and ministry of Lorenzo Snow, his son wrote, “We cannot emphasize the fact too strongly that this revealed truth impressed Lorenzo Snow more than perhaps all else; it sank so deeply into his soul that it became the inspiration of his life and gave him his broad vision of his own great future and mighty mission and work of the Church.”<sup>18</sup> Although Lorenzo Snow is given the primary credit for this couplet, Snow’s son offers a more complete perspective. He wrote, “Let us understand clearly that while Lorenzo Snow, through a revelation from God, was the author of the above couplet expression, the Lord had revealed this great truth to [Joseph Smith] and to Father Smith, long before it was made known to Lorenzo Snow. In fact, it was the remarkable promise given to him in the Kirtland temple, in 1836, by the Patriarch, that first awakened the thought in his mind, and its expression in the frequently quoted couplet was not revealed to President Snow until the spring of 1840.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> B.H. Roberts, *New Witness for God* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, 1895) 1:476.

<sup>17</sup> Lorenzo Snow, *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 2. Though some contemporary LDS scholars argue the couplet is no longer valid, it has yet to be refuted by LDS leadership during a general conference.

<sup>18</sup> LeRoi C. Snow, “Devotion to a Divine Inspiration,” in *God the Father*, comp. Gordon Allred, 185.

<sup>19</sup> LeRoi C. Snow, 185.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Interestingly, President Snow, while visiting Brigham Young University, also offered insight into the deification of humans.<sup>20</sup> While touring Brigham Young University, Snow noticed children playing with clay, forming spheres out of the clay. Commenting to the president of Brigham Young University, President Snow said, “President Brimhall, these children are now at play, making mud worlds, the time will come when some of these boys, through their faithfulness to the gospel, will progress and develop in knowledge, intelligence, and power, in future eternities, until they shall be able to go out into space where there is unorganized matter and call together the necessary elements, and through their knowledge of and control over the laws and powers of nature, to organize matter into worlds on which their posterity may dwell, and over which they shall rule as gods.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, Snow may be said to have believed indirectly that God was once a human child, playing in a room with other children, in a sense, training to become the God he currently is.<sup>22</sup>

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## ☞ *Christianity Teaches: God the Father is Not a Man*

*“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” (Numbers 23:19 ESV)*

*“For these Egyptians are mere humans, not God! Their horses are puny flesh, not mighty spirits! When the LORD raises his fist against them, those who help will stumble, and those being helped will fall. They will all fall down and die together.” (Isaiah 31:3 NLT)*

*“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24 ESV)*

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<sup>20</sup> Although the quote that follows does not deal directly with the LDS understanding of God, but with the LDS understanding of man, it is included here because the statement offers insight into Snow’s understanding of God’s nature before becoming God.

<sup>21</sup> LeRoi C. Snow, “Devotion to a Divine Inspiration,” 188–89.

<sup>22</sup> Kerns, T. (2018). *The Saints of Zion: An Introduction to Mormon Theology* (pp. 30–32). B&H Academic.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## THE SUBSTANCE OF GOD

### ✧ *Mormonism Teaches: God the Father has a Physical Body*

**Doctrine & Covenants:** “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.”<sup>23</sup>

**Joseph Smith:** “God himself ... is an exalted Man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. ... if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves, in all the person, image, and very form as a man.”<sup>24</sup>

**Heber C. Kimball** (First presidency councilor): “We shall go back to our Father and God, who is connected with one who is still farther back; and this Father is connected with one still further back, and so on.”<sup>25</sup>

**Joseph Fielding Smith** (Mormonism's 10th president-prophet): “God is an exalted man ... The Prophet taught that our Father had a Father and so on.”<sup>26</sup>

**Bruce McConkie:** “God is an organized being just as we are who are now in the flesh”<sup>27</sup>

**Carfred Broderick:** “God is a procreating personage of flesh and bone.”<sup>28</sup>

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### ✧ *Christianity Teaches: God the Father is Spirit*

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24 ESV)

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<sup>23</sup> Doctrine & Covenants 130:22.

<sup>24</sup> “Character and Being of God—Creation—Salvation of the Dead—The Unpardonable Sin—Resurrection—Baptism of the Spirit, Etc.” A Discourse by President Joseph Smith, Delivered at the Conference held near the Temple, in Nauvoo, April 6, 1844. *Journal of Discourses*, 6:3-4.

<sup>25</sup> “Temple and Endowments—Raising Grain and Building Storehouses—Dedication Remarks by President Heber C. Kimball, Delivered in the Bowery, Great Salt Lake City, April 6, 1857. *Journal of Discourses* 5:19.

<sup>26</sup> McConkie, Bruce, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:10,12.

<sup>27</sup> McConkie, *Gospel Doctrine* (1966) 64.

<sup>28</sup> *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Autumn, 1967), 100-101.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

"God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?" (Numbers 23:19 NLT)

**Note:** Some question why the Bible sometimes speaks of God as if He has a body. For example, Isaiah 59:1 mentions God's "hand" and "ear." Second Chronicles 16:9 speaks of God's "eyes." Matthew 4:4 puts words in God's "mouth." In Deuteronomy 33:27 God has "arms." All of these verses are examples of anthropomorphism—a way of describing God with anatomical or emotional terms so that humans can better understand Him. The use of anthropomorphism, a form of figurative language, does not imply that God has an actual body.

To say that God is spirit is to say that God the Father is invisible. Colossians 1:15 calls God the "invisible God." First Timothy 1:17 praises God, saying, "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever."

Even though God is spirit, He is also a living, personal being. As such, we can know Him personally. Joshua 3:10 speaks of God in this way, saying, "You will know that the living God is among you." Psalm 84:2 declares, "My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God" (ESV). Philosophically, God must be a spirit in order to be infinite. Also, if God was limited to a physical body, He could not be omnipresent (in all places at once). God the Father is not limited to the dimensional restrictions of created things but can exist in all places at one time. God is the uncreated First Cause that is the power behind all other beings.<sup>29</sup>

**Stephen Charnock** said: If God be a Spirit, he can only be the true satisfaction of our spirits: spirit can only be filled with spirit: content flows from likeness and suitableness. As we have a resemblance to God in regard of the spiritual nature of our soul, so we can have no satisfaction but in him.<sup>30</sup>

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## THE ETERNALITY OF GOD

### ☞ *Mormonism Teaches: God the Father had a Beginning*

**Apostle Orson Pratt** taught, "We were begotten by our Father in Heaven, the person of our Father in Heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by His Father; and

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<sup>29</sup> Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered*. Logos Bible Software.

<sup>30</sup> Charnock, S. (1853). *The existence and attributes of God* (1:202). Robert Carter & Brothers.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

again, He was begotten by a still more ancient Father and so on, from generation to generation, from one heavenly world to another still more ancient..." (*The Seer*, 132)<sup>31</sup>

**Lowell K. Bennion**, former director of the Institute of Religion for the LDS Church, wrote:

In the teachings of the gospel, God is not an absent ideal or idea; he is not law, force, matter, or nature; he is not simply the great Unknown. He is a living God, a conscious, sentient, intelligent being, a person with whom we associate the highest attributes of personality—intelligence, creativeness, goodness, and love—in their fullest development. All the prophets, in speaking of God, no matter what the occasion, make us feel that he is a real, objective personality in his own right, that he knows, loves, creates, and acts.<sup>32</sup>

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So, like President Snow, Bennion understood God's very nature to be that of a glorified person.

This understanding of God's nature continues to be held in the present Church. LDS layman Bruce E. Dana wrote, "From all these inspired teachings, we are correctly taught that the Father's plan of salvation is an eternal plan; the same identical plan that allowed our Father to gain exaltation and become our Heavenly Father."<sup>33</sup> Dana continued:

Thus, the divine patriarchal order of eternity, for those who become a God, is clearly set forth. We are most thankful that our Father, as a mortal man, proved faithful to the eternal plan of salvation that was operational by his Heavenly Father; the same identical plan used by all the Fathers before him. We are especially thankful that this eternal plan of salvation allows each of us the same opportunity, based on our faithfulness, to become like Heavenly Father!<sup>34</sup>

The conclusion may be drawn, then, that the understanding of the Latter-day Saint God is simply that he was once a human being, a mortal, who lived on a planet like Earth.<sup>35</sup> The question then becomes, if God the Father was once a man, does this impact his knowledge of things, specifically, his omniscience and foreknowledge? If God the Father

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<sup>31</sup> Pratt, Orson, *The Seer*, Washington, D.C., September 1853, Vol. I, No. 9, page 132.

<sup>32</sup> Bennion, Lowell L., *The Religion of the Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1940), p. 28.

<sup>33</sup> Dana, Bruce E., *The Eternal Father and His Son*, (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2004) p.22.

<sup>34</sup> Dana, 22.

<sup>35</sup> There is some speculation among scholars that mentions of Kolob in Abraham 3:1–16 in the Pearl of Great Price are discussions of the home planet of God the Father. Bruce McConkie, quoting from the book of Abraham explanation of Facsimile 2 in the Pearl of Great Price, argued Kolob is "nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God." See McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 306.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

was once a man and became God through a process of growth and learning, does God continue to grow and learn?<sup>36</sup>

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## ☞ Christianity Teaches: God the Father is Eternal

14

*“Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?” (Isaiah 43:13 NASB1995)*

**James Orr** describes the eternality of God thusly: The unchangeableness or immutability of God is that divine attribute which expresses the truth that in His nature and perfections, in His knowledge, will and purpose, He always remains the same in the fullness of His infinite and perfect Being; infinitely exalted above change, becoming and development, which are the specific characteristics of all finite existence. This is one of what theologians have called the incommunicable attributes of God, that is, one of those specific characteristics of the divine nature which make God to be God in distinction from all that is finite. These attributes have also been called negative attributes. By calling them negative, however, it is not meant that they express the nature of God in so far as He is unknowable and incomprehensible by the finite mind, while the positive attributes, such as love and righteousness, express God’s nature as revealed and known. Both kinds of attributes can be known only in so far as God reveals Himself, and furthermore the so-called negative attributes involve a positive idea, while the positive ones in turn imply the negation of all finite limitations. Moreover, since the finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite God, back of all that God has revealed of Himself, back even of His absoluteness, eternity and unchangeability, lies the fullness of His infinite Being, unsearchable, unknowable, and incomprehensible alike in His nature and attributes (Ps 145:3; 147:5; Job 11:7-9; Isa 40:28).

It is these incommunicable attributes, including unchangeableness, which make God to be God, and mark the specific difference between Him and all finite existence. Unchangeableness is, therefore, the characteristic of God’s entire nature and of all His attributes. It cannot be limited to His ethical nature or to His love, and, while it is true that these incommunicable attributes are revealed with especial richness in God’s saving activity, they cannot be limited to marks of God’s saving action or purpose. It is true that God is unchangeable in His love and grace and power to save, but that is only because it is the love and grace and power of the absolute, infinite and immutable God.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Kerns, T. (2018). *The Saints of Zion: An Introduction to Mormon Theology*, pp. 32–33).

<sup>37</sup> Orr, J., ed. (1999). In *The International standard Bible encyclopedia: 1915 edition*. Ages Software.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

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## THE CREATION OF GOD

### ∞ *Mormonism Teaches: God the Father has Parents*

**Apostle Orson Pratt** taught, "We were begotten by our Father in Heaven, the person of our Father in Heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by His Father; and again, He was begotten by a still more ancient Father and so on, from generation to generation, from one heavenly world to another still more ancient..." (*The Seer*, 132)<sup>38</sup>

**President Brigham Young**, speaking at the Tabernacle in Great Salt Lake City on February 23, 1862, said: "I have a few words to say touching our present existence, and in reference to the remarks made today by brother Kimball pertaining to the body. Our mortal bodies are all important to us; without them we never can be glorified in the eternities that will be. We are in this state of being for the express purpose of obtaining habitations for our spirits to dwell in, that they may become personages of tabernacle. Our former religious traditions have taught us that our Father in heaven has no tabernacle, that his center is everywhere and his circumference nowhere. Yet we read that, 'God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran.' 'Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.' 'And the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool.' 'Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?' 'And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face thou shalt not see.' 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.' **The idea that the Lord our God is not a personage of tabernacle is entirely a mistaken notion. He was once a man.**

"Brother Kimball quoted a saying of Joseph the Prophet, that **he would not worship a God who had not a Father; and I do not know that he would if he had not a mother; the one would be as absurd as the other.** If he had a Father, he was made in his likeness. And if he is our Father we are made after his image and likeness. He once possessed a body, as we now do; and our bodies are as much to us, as his body to him. Every iota of this organization is necessary to secure for us an exaltation with the Gods. Our mortal tabernacles decline. The spirit is inseparably connected with the body until death, and it is so designed; but when we get through with our worship in this Tabernacle or building for worship, we dispense with it until we wish to meet again. We are not inseparably connected with it; it may be consumed by the element of fire and pass away forever. But

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<sup>38</sup> Pratt, Orson, *The Seer*, Washington, D.C., September 1853, Vol. I, No. 9, page 132.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

it is not so with our bodies; if we willfully loose these, we loose everything that God has provided for the faithful." (emphasis added).<sup>39</sup>

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## ☞ *Christianity Teaches: God the Father has No Parents*

*"Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?" (Isaiah 43:13 NASB1995)*

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## THE WIFE OF GOD

### ☞ *Mormonism Teaches: God the Father is a Polygamist*

**Apostle Orson Pratt** taught, "We have now clearly shown that God the Father had a plurality of wives, one or more being in eternity, by whom He begat our spirits as well as the spirit of Jesus His First Born, and another being upon the earth by whom He begat the tabernacle of Jesus, as His Only Begotten in this world." (*The Seer*, 172)<sup>40</sup>

**Brigham Young:** "When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives with him."<sup>41</sup>

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### ☞ *Christianity Teaches: God the Father is Not Married*

*One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: "Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength." (Mark 12:28-30 NLT)*

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<sup>39</sup> "True Character of God—Erroneous Ideas Entertained Towards Him", remarks by President Brigham Young, made in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, February 23, 1862. *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9, p. 286.

<sup>40</sup> Pratt, Orson, *The Seer*, Washington, D.C., November 1853, Vol. I, No. 11, page 172.

<sup>41</sup> *Journal of Discourses* 1:50.



# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## THE CREATIVITY OF GOD

### ☞ *Mormonism Teaches: God only Organized the Universe*

**Bruce McConkie** wrote, “That 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.’ (Doctrine & Covenants 93:29.)”<sup>42</sup>

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### **Mormonism Rejects the Doctrine of Creation *Ex Nihilo*.**

Mormonism rejects the doctrine of creation out of nothing, or *ex nihilo*, affirming that what the Bible calls creation was simply a reorganization of matter which had always existed. Note the following statement from *Doctrine and Covenants*: “For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy ...” (93:33). The word *elements* here means material elements, as the following quotation from Smith’s King Follett Discourse will reveal:

You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing; and they will answer, “Doesn’t the Bible say he *created* the world?” And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been made out of nothing. Now, the word create came from the word *baurau*, which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence we infer that 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 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.<sup>43</sup>

Present-day Mormon writers are committed to this view.<sup>44</sup>

**Bruce McConkie** says, “To *create* is to *organize*. It is an utterly false and uninspired notion to believe that the world or any other thing was created out of nothing....”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> McConkie, Bruce, *Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City, Bookcraft, 1966, page 589.

<sup>43</sup> *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 350–52.

<sup>44</sup> Hoekema, A. A. (1963). *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism* (pp. 42–43). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

<sup>45</sup> *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 156.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

**John A. Widtsoe** puts it this way: "God, the supreme Power, cannot conceivably originate matter; he can only organize matter. Neither can he destroy matter; he can only disorganize it."<sup>46</sup>

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## ☞ *Christianity Teaches: God Created the Universe*

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1 ESV)

*"The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. He assigned the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs. Let the whole world fear the LORD, and let everyone stand in awe of him. For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command."* (Psalm 33:6-9 NLT)

*"Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing."* (Isaiah 40:26 ESV)

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* (John 1:1 ESV)

*"By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."* (Hebrews 11:3 ESV)

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## THE NATURE OF JESUS

### ☞ *Mormonism Teaches: Jesus is the Physical Son of God*

**Bruce McConkie**<sup>47</sup> says that "Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers."<sup>48</sup>

**McConkie** also states that the conception and birth of Jesus was completely natural. "And Christ was born into the world as the literal Son of this Holy Being; he was born in the

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<sup>46</sup> John A. Widtsoe, *A Rational Theology*, 6th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1952), p.12. Cf. his *Evidences and Reconciliations*, (3 vols. in 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), p.150.

<sup>47</sup> NOTE: Bruce McConkie was a member of the First Council of the Seventy, a very high and important position.

<sup>48</sup> Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City, Bookcraft, 1966, pages 546-547.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

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, ... Christ is the Son of Man, meaning that his Father (the Eternal God!) is a Holy Man."<sup>49</sup>

**McConkie:** "As far as this life is concerned, [Jesus] was born of Mary and of Elohim; he came here as an offspring of that Holy Man who is literally our Father in heaven. He was born in mortality in the literal and full sense as the Son of God. He is the Son of his Father in the same sense that all mortals are the sons and daughters of their fathers."<sup>50</sup>

**McConkie:** "The Father had a Son, a natural Son, his own literal Seed, the Offspring of his body."<sup>51</sup>

**Joseph F. Smith** says God the Father is the father of Jesus' body. "Now, we are told in scriptures that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God in the flesh. Well, now for the benefit of the older ones, how are children begotten? I answer just as Jesus Christ was begotten of his father ... Jesus is the only person who had our Heavenly Father as the father of his body."<sup>52</sup>

**Joseph F. Smith:** "Christ Not Begotten of Holy Ghost ... Christ was begotten of God. He was not born without the aid of Man, and that Man was God!"<sup>53</sup>

**The First Presidency** says God is the father of the body of Christ. "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..."<sup>54</sup>

**The Articles of Faith** say God is the father of the body of Jesus. "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..."<sup>55</sup>

**Orson Pratt** said, "The fleshly body of Jesus required a Mother as well as a Father. Therefore, the Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been

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<sup>49</sup> Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 742.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:330.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 355.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph F. Smith, *Family Home Evening Manual*, 1972, pp. 125-126.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph F. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1954, 1:18.

<sup>54</sup> *First Presidency and Council of the Twelve*, 1916, "God the Father," compiled by Gordon Allred, p. 150.

<sup>55</sup> James Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, pp. 466-467.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

associated together in the capacity of Husband and Wife; hence the Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father.<sup>56</sup>

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## ☞ *Christianity Teaches: Jesus Begotten by the Holy Spirit*

20

*“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.’ ” (Matthew 1:18-23 ESV)*

*“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be borne will be called holy—the Son of God.’ ” (Luke 1:26-35 ESV)*

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<sup>56</sup> Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, 1853, p. 158. NOTE: *The Seer* is often regarded by Mormons as untrustworthy though it was published by Pratt who was a Mormon apostle. Its purpose was to “illucidate [sic] the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,” *The Seer*, Vol. 1, Jan. 1853, No. 1. Nevertheless, Brigham Young said in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:268, “The man Joseph, the husband of Mary, did not, that we know of, have more than one wife, but Mary the wife of Joseph had another husband.”

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## THE DEITY OF JESUS

### ☞ *Mormonism Teaches: Jesus Became a God*

**Milton R. Hunter** taught: “Jesus became a God and reached His great state of understanding through consistent effort and continuous obedience to all the Gospel truths and universal laws.”<sup>57</sup>

**Bruce McConkie** states that God became a God by being saved by obedience to laws. “The Father is a glorified, perfected, resurrected, exalted man who worked out his salvation by obedience to the same laws he has given to us so that we may do the same.”<sup>58</sup>

**McConkie:** “Man and God are of the same race, and it is within the power of righteous man to become like his Father, that is to become a holy Man, a Man of Holiness.”<sup>59</sup>

**McConkie:** “This Holy Man, the Father of us all, who reigns supreme and is a saved being, ordained and established a plan of salvation so that his Firstborn and all his spirit children might advance and progress, become like him, have all power, know all things, live in the family unit, having eternal increase of their own or in other words, that they might gain for themselves immortality and eternal life.”<sup>60</sup>

**Wilford Woodruff**, the fourth President, said God was increasing in knowledge. “If there were a point where a man in his progression could not proceed any further, the very idea would throw a gloom over every intelligent and reflecting mind. God himself is increasing in knowledge, power and dominion, and will do so, worlds without end. It is just so with us.”<sup>61</sup>

**Corey Miller**<sup>62</sup> writes: “As is well known, in his *King Follett Sermon*, Joseph Smith taught that god was once a man who lived on an earth and was later exalted, the same as all gods have done in the past, representing the evolutionary divinity in Mormonism.<sup>63</sup> While polytheism and the progression toward godhood is foreign to the *Book of Mormon*,

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<sup>57</sup> Hunter, Milton R., *The Gospel Through the Ages*, (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc, 1945), p. 51.

<sup>58</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1985, p. 64.

<sup>59</sup> McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 465-466.

<sup>60</sup> McConkie, *A New Witness*, p. 704.

<sup>61</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 6:120.

<sup>62</sup> Corey Miller is a former Mormon. This paragraph is cited from his excellent article, “The Jesus of Mormonism: Differences That Make a Difference” at <https://www.equip.org/articles/the-jesus-of-mormonism-differences-that-make-a-difference/> (Retrieved July 21, 2023).

<sup>63</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 342–62.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

it is certainly part of Smith's theology and is grounded in other Mormon scriptures where the divinized-humanity or humanized-divinity occurs along the evolutionary spectrum (cf. the Book of Abraham in *The Pearl of Great Price* and Doctrine and Covenants section 132). When challenged, [Robert L.] Millet makes a surprisingly implicit concession in his question, 'To what extent does it truly matter whether Jesus was always God or at a certain point in the pre-mortal realm he became God. ... What difference does it really make whether he was not always God?' Continuing with personal confession, he says, 'When he was God, he was God. ... My adoration or worship of him is not dependent on when or how or under what circumstances he became God.'<sup>64</sup> Aside from the fact that Millet worships what are in Mormon theology two separate deities (Jesus and the Father), Jesus' nature is clearly a radical departure from the Jesus known in the biblical Christian tradition."

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## ☞ *Christianity Teaches: Jesus has Always been God*

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

*"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me."') For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses;*

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<sup>64</sup> Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 61.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (John 1:1-18 ESV)

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." (Colossians 2:9 NASB 1995)

"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." (John 5:26 ESV),

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**Gordon J. Keddie** writes concerning John 5:26: "Just as the Father is self-existent, self-sufficient and inherently and essentially possessed of eternal life—'infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being ...', as the *Shorter Catechism* so lucidly expresses it (Answer to Question 4)—so the Son likewise possesses such life. This is said to be '**granted**' by the Father, not because Jesus was given 'life in himself' after his incarnation, but because in eternity, and in terms of the inter-trinitarian relationship (what theologians call 'the eternal generation of the Son'), it is the Father who gives and the Son who receives. Jesus possesses, says John, 'that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us' (1 John 1:2).<sup>65</sup> This is why 'those who hear will live' (5:25). Jesus has life to give, in virtue of his being the divine Son of his divine Father."<sup>66</sup>

**Wolfhart Pannenberg** writes: "The issue in the question of the deity of Jesus Christ is the deity of the man Jesus. We are not dealing, then, with the divine nature considered in isolation. We must discover the contours of the divine sonship of Jesus in his human reality, which as eternal sonship precedes his historical existence on earth and must be regarded as the creative basis of his human existence. If the human history of Jesus is the revelation of his eternal sonship, we must be able to perceive the latter in the reality of the human life. The deity is not an addition to this reality. It is the reflection that the human relation of Jesus to God the Father casts on his existence, even as it also illumines the eternal being of God. Conversely, the assuming of human existence by the eternal Son is not to be seen as the adding of a nature that is alien to his deity. It is the self-created medium of his extreme self-actualization in consequence of his free self-distinction from the Father, i.e., a way of fulfilling his eternal sonship. It is this precisely because in it he has left the sphere of deity in order that in the medium of creaturely existence, he might

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<sup>65</sup> Hutcheson has a fine comment that remains unsurpassed in the three and a half centuries since he penned it: 'This property of life is common to each person of the blessed Trinity, to the Father and to the Son; yet the Father is first in order of having it, and doth communicate it to the Son; for of both it is said, he "hath life in himself", and that the Father "hath given" it to the Son, which is to be understood of his communicating it, in communicating his nature with him, by eternal generation; and as for the human nature [of Christ], this [life] is only gifted to it, in this respect, that by the grace of the personal union the human nature is assumed into the unity of the person with him, who hath this life by eternal generation' (*Exposition of John*, p.84).

<sup>66</sup> Keddie, G. J. (2001). *A Study Commentary on John: John 1–12* (Vol. 1, p. 230). Evangelical Press.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

be bound to the Father as the one God in his self-distinction from him, and that he thus might fulfill our human destiny as creatures and deliver us from the confusion of sin.”<sup>67</sup>

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## THE ORIGIN OF SATAN

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### ☞ *Mormonism Teaches: Jesus and Satan are Brothers*

**Milton R. Hunter** taught, “The appointment of Jesus to be the Savior of the world was contested by one of the other sons of God. He was called Lucifer, son of the morning.”<sup>68</sup>

### Are Jesus and Satan Brothers?

No, Jesus and Satan are not brothers. Jesus is God, and Satan is one of His creations. Not only are Jesus and Satan not brothers, they are as different as night is from day. Jesus is God incarnate—eternal, all-knowing, and all-powerful, while Satan is a fallen angel that was created by God for God’s purposes. The teaching that Jesus and Satan are “spirit brothers” is one of the many false teachings of the Mormons (Latter-Day Saints) and, to some degree, also the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Both of these groups are properly labeled as cults because they deny essential Christian doctrine. While they use Christian terms such as Jesus, God, and salvation, they have heretical views and teachings on the most basic and essential Christian doctrines. (Please note that most Mormons today will vehemently deny that they believe Jesus and Satan are brothers. However, this teaching was most definitely a belief of the early Mormons.)

The teaching that Jesus and Satan are “spirit brothers” is born out of the Mormons’ misunderstanding and distortion of Scripture as well as some of the extra-biblical teachings they consider to be authoritative. Simply put, there is no way you can read the Bible using any type of sound hermeneutical principles and come away with the idea that Jesus and Satan are “spiritual brothers.” The Scriptures are very clear that Jesus is fully God, not some type of lesser god as the Mormons and other cults believe. The Scriptures are also very clear that God is transcendent above His creation, which simply means that there is no comparison between Christ the Creator and Satan His creation.

Mormons believe that Jesus Christ was the first “spirit child” born to God the Heavenly Father with one of his many wives. Instead of acknowledging Jesus as the one true God, they believe He became God, just as they will one day become gods. According to

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<sup>67</sup> Pannenberg, W. (1991–1998). *Systematic theology* (Vol. 2, pp. 324–325). Eerdmans.

<sup>68</sup> Hunter, Milton R., *The Gospel Through the Ages*, (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc, 1945), p. 15.



# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

Mormon doctrine, as the first of the “spirit children” of God, Jesus had preeminence over Satan or Lucifer, who was the second “son of God” and the “spirit brother” of Jesus. It is ironic that they will use Colossians 1:15 as one of their “proof texts,” because it says that “[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” Yet they ignore verse 16, where we see that “By [Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth. Visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. ALL THINGS were created through Him and for Him.” All things—thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers—includes Satan and his demons.

In order to believe that Satan and Jesus are “spiritual brothers,” one must deny the clear teaching of Scripture. Scripture says that it was Jesus Christ who created all things and that, as the second Person of the triune Godhead, Christ is fully and uniquely God. Jesus claimed to be God in many passages of Scripture. In John 10:30 Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.” Jesus was not claiming to be another, lesser god. He was declaring that He was fully God. In John 1:1–5 it is clear that Jesus was not a created being and that He Himself created all things. “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3). How much clearer can it get? “All things” means what it says, and it includes Satan, who as an angel was himself a created being just like the other angels and demons are. Scripture reveals Satan to be a fallen angel who rebelled against God and Jesus to be God. The only relationship that exists between Satan and Jesus is that of creation and Creator; of the sinful created being, Satan, and the righteous Judge, Jesus Christ.

Like the Mormons, the Jehovah’s Witnesses also teach that Jesus and Satan are spiritual brothers. While some Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses might sometimes try to sidestep this teaching because it is so antithetical to what the Bible actually says, it is nevertheless what these organizations believe and is part of their official doctrine.

Mormons believe that, not only were Jesus and Lucifer “spirit children of Elohim,” but that humans are spiritual children, as well. In other words, they believe that “God, angels, and men are all of the same species, one race, one great family.” This is why they believe that they themselves will one day become as much of a god as Jesus or even God the Father. Rather than seeing the clear distinction in Scripture between God and His creation, they believe that one day they will be gods themselves. Of course, this is the same old lie Satan has been telling us since the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). Apparently, the desire to usurp the throne of God is endemic in the hearts of men.

In Matthew 16:15 Jesus asked the important question: “But who do you say that I am?” This is a question that is essential to salvation and one that the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses get wrong. Their answer that Jesus is the spirit brother of Satan is the wrong one. Jesus is God the Son, and in Him the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

(Colossians 2:9). He created Satan, and one day He will cast Satan into the lake of fire as the just punishment for his rebellion against God. Sadly, on that Day of Judgment those who fall for Satan's lies will also be cast into the lake of fire with Satan and His demons. The god of the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses is not the God who revealed Himself in Scripture. Unless these groups repent and come to understand and worship the one true God, they have no hope of salvation.<sup>69</sup>

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## Christianity Teaches: Satan is only a Created Being

*"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit." (Isaiah 14:12-15 ESV)*

*"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." (Revelation 12:9 ESV)*

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## THE BRIDE OF JESUS

### Mormonism Teaches: Jesus was a Polygamist

**Brigham Young:** "The Scripture says that He, the Lord, came walking in the Temple, with His train; I do not know who they were, unless His wives and children..."<sup>70</sup>

**B.H. Roberts:** "As to the doctrine of Deity, the 'Address' declares: 'We believe in the God-head, comprising the three individual personages, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.' As this declaration stands here, it will not perhaps suggest Tritheism or Materialism to Christians unfamiliar with Mormon theological terms. But when the full doctrine of the Deity, as taught in Mormon congregations, is known, it will at once be seen that no Christian can accept it. In fact, the Mormon Church teaches that God the Father has a material body of flesh and bone's; that Adam is the God of the human race; that this Adam-God was physically begotten by another God; that the Gods were once as we are now; that there is

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-Satan-brothers.html> (Retrieved July 21, 2023.)

<sup>70</sup> *Journal of Discourses* 13:309.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

a great multiplicity of Gods; that Jesus Christ was physically begotten by the Heavenly Father of Mary, His wife; that, as we have a Heavenly Father, so also we have a Heavenly Mother; that Jesus Himself was married, and was probably a polygamist—at least so it has been printed in their publications and taught among their people; and that the Holy Spirit is of material substance, capable of actual transmission from one person to another.”<sup>71</sup>

**Apostle Orson Hyde:** “Now there was actually a marriage; and if Jesus was not the bridegroom on that occasion, please tell who was. If any man can show this, and prove that it was not the Savior of the world, then I will acknowledge I am in error. We say it was Jesus Christ who was married, to be brought into the relation whereby he could see his seed, before he was crucified.”<sup>72</sup>

**Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt** agreed with his contemporary when he wrote: “One thing is certain, that there were several holy women that greatly loved Jesus — such as Mary, and Martha her sister, and Mary Magdalene; and Jesus greatly loved them, and associated with them much; and when He arose from the dead, instead of showing Himself to His chosen witnesses, the Apostles, He appeared first to these women, or at least to one of them — namely, Mary Magdalene. Now it would be natural for a husband in the resurrection to appear first to his own dear wives, and afterwards show himself to his other friends. If all the acts of Jesus were written, we no doubt should learn that these beloved women were His wives.”<sup>73</sup>

**Apostle Jedediah M. Grant**<sup>74</sup> stated, “A belief in the doctrine of a plurality of wives caused the persecution of Jesus and his followers. We might almost think they were “Mormons.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907), 2:268.

<sup>72</sup> Proclaimed in General Conference on October 6, 1854. *Journal of Discourses* 2:82.

<sup>73</sup> *The Seer*, p.159.

<sup>74</sup> Jedediah Morgan Grant (February 21, 1816 – December 1, 1856) was a leader and an apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). He was member of the First Council of the Seventy from 1845 to 1854 and served in the First Presidency under church president Brigham Young from 1854 to 1856. He is known for his fiery speeches during the Reformation of 1856, earning the nickname "Brigham's Sledgehammer". Grant is the father of Heber J. Grant, who later served as President of the Church.

<sup>75</sup> Grant, Jedediah M., *Journal of Discourses*, ed. George D. Watt, et al. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, et al., 1854-1886), 1:345-346, LDSCL. A Discourse by Elder Jedediah M. Grant, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, Aug. 7, 1853.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## ∞ Christianity Teaches: Jesus has One Bride: The Church

*"Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure'—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God.' "* (Revelation 19:6-9 ESV)

*"Then one of the seven angels with the seven bowls full of the seven final plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' "* (Revelation 21:9 ESV)

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## THE FUTURE OF MANKIND

### ∞ Mormonism Teaches: Men can Become Gods

**Joseph Smith:** "Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power... What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a god, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before."<sup>76</sup>

**Doctrine & Covenants:** "Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> King Follett Sermon, *Ensign*, April 1971.

<sup>77</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 132:20-21.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

**Lorenzo Snow** is remembered for his couplet “As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be.” These words came by revelation to Lorenzo when he was a young man in Nauvoo.<sup>78</sup>

**Orson Pratt:** “We believe in the revelation given through Joseph Smith, which says there are many Gods, and that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are Gods, and that all good men in this Church shall become Gods.”<sup>79</sup>

**Bruce McConkie:** “Man and God are of the same race, and it is within the power of righteous man to become like his Father, that is to become a holy Man, a Man of Holiness.”<sup>80</sup>

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## ∞ *Christianity Teaches: Men can become Children of God*

*“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”* (John 1:12 ESV)

*“And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.”* (Romans 8:23 NLT)

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## THE TIME OF SALVATION

### ∞ *Mormonism Teaches: There is Salvation after Death*

**Church News:** “They will have to suffer the torments of the damned until they do, and through that suffering they will be brought to repentance and to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Redeemer and the Son of God. Every knee must bow and every tongue confess, no matter which kingdom the inhabitants of the earth enter.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Snow, Lorenzo, *Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, compiled by Clyde J. Williams, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), p. viii.

<sup>79</sup> Pratt, Orson, *Journal of Discourses*, ed. George D. Watt, et al. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, et al., 1854-1886), 2:345, LDSCL.

<sup>80</sup> McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 465-466.

<sup>81</sup> *Church News*, Feb. 1, 1936. p. 5; D. & C. 76:109-112

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

**Joseph Fielding Smith:** "All who have been filthy and who would not receive the truth and have not had the testimony of Jesus Christ, must suffer the torments of the damned until they are purged from their iniquity, for the blood of Jesus Christ will not cleanse them from their sins without their own individual suffering."<sup>82</sup>

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✧ *Christianity Teaches: There is No Salvation after Death*

"... it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment." (Hebrews 9:27 ESV)

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## THE LOCATION OF SALVATION

✧ *Mormonism Teaches: There is Salvation only in the LDS Church*

**President Joseph Fielding Smith:** "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."<sup>83</sup>

### The Mormon Plan of Salvation<sup>84</sup>

**Phil Roberts** writes: "But they use words just like ours-gospel, savior, atonement, virgin birth. In fact, don't they also baptize by immersion, send out missionaries, and talk about the gospel? It seems that their view of salvation is just like Baptists and other evangelicals! Isn't that the case?"

This is often the response to Mormonism and the practices of the Mormon church. On the surface, much of what Mormons do seems similar to Bible-based Christian denominations. What they believe, however, is not at all in correspondence to the Bible. Nowhere is this fact more evident than when

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<sup>82</sup> McConkie, Bruce, ed., *Doctrines of Salvation*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956), page 1:233.

<sup>83</sup> McConkie, Bruce, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons & Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956), 2:1-350, quoted in Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), page 670.

<sup>84</sup> Adapted from Phil Roberts, "Mormon Plan of Salvation," © North American Mission Board, SBC, March 30, 2016. Retrieved July 21, 2023. <https://www.namb.net/apologetics/resource/mormon-plan-of-salvation/>.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

the question “What must I do to be saved?” is asked. The Bible gives a very clear and simple answer to that inquiry: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). ...

Let’s break that concept down into four parts:

**First**, salvation is of God-the one and only God of this and all other possible universes. He is uncreated, without a beginning, and by whom all things are created. He loved the world and sent His son, God the Word, to die for our sins (see John 3:16 and 2 Cor. 5:18-19). Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary. He was born, lived a sinless life, was crucified for the sins of the world, and was raised victorious on the third day.

**Second**, the biblical and Christian concept of Jesus is that He existed eternally in heaven as God the Word. He is uncreated as the second person of the Triune God. There is no biblical material to substantiate, neither have Christians ever believed, that He was born a spirit child to “Heavenly Father” in a preexistent realm as the Mormons teach. He is not our nor Lucifer’s “elder brother.”

**Third**, because humankind is sinful and fallen, all of us stand in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ for all of our sins and not just Adam’s original sin. God’s forgiveness and transforming power are available to all who put their trust in Christ (see John 1:11-13; John 3:16-36).

**Fourth**, we must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, as we repent of all sin. John 1:12 states, “But as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” Works, denominational identity, or good intentions have nothing to do with one’s saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Faith, trust, and belief in Jesus’ saving death on the cross when He took the sins of the world on Himself and suffered for them, is the only basis for redemption (see 1 John 5:13; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9).

How does Mormonism compare with the above plan? It is quite different and involves for the fullest sense of salvation at least twelve steps for the

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

male member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mormons believe that everyone will experience salvation in some way. While the Bible affirms only the presence of heaven or hell, Mormonism maintains that there is perdition, or hell, which is reserved for murderers, apostates from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Devil and his angels.

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Mormon theology also maintains the existence of three heavens, all of them superior to this life—the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms. The celestial kingdom is of the highest order where the Mormon will achieve exaltation or godhood.<sup>85</sup>

The following steps explain the Mormon's plan to acquire the celestial kingdom. The celestial kingdom is, for the Mormon, what they call "eternal life."

## Step One: Faith

The Mormon faith is different from biblical faith because it has a different Jesus. As described above, The Jesus of Mormonism is our spiritual brother from heaven, who, like us, was born a spirit child of God. He is the first born child of the Heavenly Father. Bruce R. McConkie, a Mormon theologian, warned that people who speak of a "special relationship with [this] Christ" are guilty of "excessive zeal" and "pure sectarian nonsense."<sup>86</sup> Faith for the Mormon is never spoken of as directed towards the deity of Christ and His full atonement on the cross for the sins of the world. Rather faith is seen as a response to whatever Christ commands, not as a trust in His complete ability to save.<sup>87</sup> This kind of faith never results in a personal relationship with Him.

## Step Two: Repentance

The Bible makes clear that repentance for salvation is always from sin or sins and toward God. For the Mormon repentance involves confessing and

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<sup>85</sup> See the Apologetics and Interfaith Evangelism publication "[Mormon Concept of God](#)" for more information.

<sup>86</sup> "Who Answers Prayers?" *Sunstone Review* (April 1982), 13.

<sup>87</sup> See *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995), pp. 117-121 for more information.



# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

abandoning sin as well as restoring or resolving all damage done by one's sin. This definition sounds biblical. But the further condition is added that the repentant person must "spend the balance of your lives trying to live the commandments of the Lord so he can eventually pardon you and cleanse you."<sup>88</sup> Repentance is a work, and only a prelude to the process of acquiring salvation by obedience to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Little, if anything, is said of repentance leading to Jesus Christ. If that is the Mormon understanding of repentance, then it is clear why the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints goes on to add the steps listed below.

## **Step Three: Baptism by Immersion in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

It is here where the clear stamp of Mormonism is unmistakable. The Mormon Church claims to be the only true Church thus all other Churches and their practices and forms of baptism are false. Baptism by immersion through a "duly commissioned servant or representative of the Savior" (a Melchizedek priesthood holder or a priest in the Aaronic priesthood) is required.<sup>89</sup> Therefore this baptism must take place in the Mormon Church and is "the gateway through which we enter the celestial kingdom."<sup>90</sup>

## **Step Four: Laying on of Hands by a Member of the Melchizedek Priesthood in Order to Receive the Holy Ghost**

The presence of the Holy Spirit is not promised for the Mormon as a result of faith and belief. It comes instead mechanically when a baptized Mormon is prayed for by a member of that priestly class in the Church: "The authority to bestow the Holy Ghost belongs to the Melchizedek Priesthood . . . the elder . . . says 'Receive the Holy Ghost,' and 'I confirm you a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.'"<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>89</sup> James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1976), p. 137.

<sup>90</sup> *Gospel Principles*, p. 131.

<sup>91</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 167.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Step Five: Ordination as a Melchizedek Priest (for males only)

When one receives the laying on of hands by a priest of this order, then exaltation and salvation becomes possible in that one also becomes a priest in the same order: "This higher priesthood is designed to enable men to gain exaltation in the highest heaven in eternity . . . Perfection can be gained only in and through and because of their priesthood."<sup>92</sup> As well, Mormons believe the Holy Ghost will come to a person only when he is faithful and desires help from this Church official.<sup>93</sup>

## Step Six: Receiving the Temple Endowments

Upon ordination to the priesthood, the designated person is then led through a ceremony of anointing and other similar rites—none of which have biblical sanction. Women may also receive these rites. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains, however, that "through them [the rituals] the recipients are endowed with power from on high. They receive an education relative to the Lord's purposes and plans . . . and are taught the things that must be done by man in order to gain exaltation in the world to come."<sup>94</sup> The approximately 106 temples of the Mormon Church serve as the only place where these rites can be carried out and are therefore viewed as sacred by Mormons themselves.<sup>95</sup>

## Step Seven: Celestial Marriage

Doctrine and Covenants, part of Mormon canonized scripture, states that "celestial marriage is the gate to an exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial world."<sup>96</sup> As a part of temple endowments these members of the Mormon Church are married for "time and eternity" to their spouses in a Mormon temple. Such marriages are essential so that once worthy Mormons

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<sup>92</sup> Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 167.

<sup>93</sup> *Gospel Principles*, p. 139.

<sup>94</sup> McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 227.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), 132:34-40, 61-62.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

are resurrected and possibly progress to godhood they may have their spouse with them to produce and procreate children for their world and universe.

## Step Eight: Observing the Word of Wisdom

Joseph Smith taught that the use of strong drinks- alcoholic beverages-or hot drinks-referring probably to coffee and tea, both containing caffeine-would demonstrate unworthiness for exaltation.<sup>97</sup> The Church also teaches, “For observing the word of wisdom the reward is life, not only prolonged mortal life, but life eternal.”<sup>98</sup> As well, without obedience to the Word of Wisdom, entrance to Mormon temples will not be granted. Without that allowance, a Mormon would not be able to enter the celestial kingdom.

## Step Nine: Sustain the Prophet

As each Prophet/President of the Church is believed to be the sole revelator and representative of God to his Church, it is required of every worthy Mormon to support or sustain him as a prophet, seer, and revelator. “To reject the word of the Lord [the message of the Prophet] is to reject the Lord himself,” and hence to be unworthy of the celestial kingdom.<sup>99</sup>

## Step Ten: Tithing

“One tenth of the interest or increase of each member of the Church is payable as tithing funds of the Church each year.”<sup>100</sup> And “payment of an honest tithing is essential to the attainment of those great blessings which the Lord has in store for his faithful saints. Members of the Church who fail or neglect to pay an honest tithing are thereby denying themselves of the receipt of these rich blessings.”<sup>101</sup> Doctrine and Covenants is even more explicit saying, “For he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.”<sup>102</sup> In

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>98</sup> *Gospel Principles*, p. 195.

<sup>99</sup> McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 150.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 796.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 798.

<sup>102</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants*, 64:23.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

other words, tithing is a part of the plan of salvation to escape censor at the second-coming of Christ.

## Step Eleven: Sacrament Meetings

A sacrament meeting is the weekly Sunday gathering of local Latter-day Saints when they meet to sing, testify, and share the sacrament of bread and water. To participate regularly in this occasion is essential for staying in the close fellowship of the Church. It serves as the basis for renewing one's covenant vows begun at baptism: "By partaking of the sacrament, worthy saints renew the covenant previously made by them in the water of baptism."<sup>103</sup> By keeping the covenant in the observance of the sacraments, the Mormon believes that "we will always have the Lord's spirit to be with us and that by following this pattern, believing on his name, we will gain a remission of our sins."<sup>104</sup>

## Step Twelve: Obedience

Obedience to the Church, its teachings, and the prophet is essential for the Mormon to gain exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom. Obedience is the first law of heaven, the cornerstone upon which all righteousness and progression rest. Remember that perdition or hell is reserved for apostates—those who leave the Mormon Church and resign their membership in it. There is no salvation apart from total obedience of all laws and ordinances of the Church.<sup>105</sup>

Outer darkness is reserved for apostate members of the Mormon Church. There will be no salvation or forgiveness for these "sons of perdition" who "will suffer the wrath of God and partake of the second death."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 660.

<sup>104</sup> *Gospel Principles*, p. 155.

<sup>105</sup> McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 539.

<sup>106</sup> *Doctrines of the Gospel, Student Manual*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints, 1986), p. 91 and *Doctrine and Covenants* 76:31-48.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Conclusion

The plan of salvation according to the “gospel” of Mormonism is not just a gospel of works-it is a gospel of obedience and obligation to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In *Gospel Principles*, an official publication of that Church, a parable describing the Mormon plan of salvation is told. A debtor begs his creditor for mercy as his debts are large and long overdue. Just as the cruel creditor is about to cast the man in prison a friend intervenes and pays the debt. He then says to the debtor, “You will pay the debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible.”<sup>107</sup> The friend who intervened, not with a free gift, but with a loan to be repaid, is symbolic of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Each devout saint therefore is now working hard to pay off his or her debt to the Church. The Mormon gospel (good news) is no gospel. It is not the gospel of freedom through Christ, it is a gospel of servitude and obligation to a religious organization.

In Matthew 18:21-35, however, Jesus told the story of a certain king who forgave his servants their debts to him. One of the servants turned afterwards and demanded payment from a fellow servant of a hundred denarii debt. Unable to pay, the second servant was thrown into prison. Jesus illustrated the point that we should forgive one another just as God has forgiven us, those who believe in Him, from all our transgressions against God’s law. This thought echoes the teaching of the Lord’s prayer-“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12).

The biblical gospel of Jesus Christ is that no debts remain to be paid. Jesus Christ suffered for our sins sufficiently on the cross so that each one who believes in Him may be forgiven of all wrongs-past, present, and future. If you have yet to receive His gift of eternal life, you may do so by believing that God loves you in spite of your sin, that Jesus suffered and paid the cost of your sin, and that salvation is His free gift to you. As the Bible says “with

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<sup>107</sup> *Gospel Principles*, p. 77.

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10).

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## ☞ *Christianity Teaches: There is Salvation only in Jesus Christ*

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6 ESV)

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 ESV)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 ESV)

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17b ESV)

I, the Lord, speak only what is true and declare only what is right. (Isaiah 45:19b NLT)

Truth is in Jesus. (Ephesians 4:21b (NASB)

It is impossible for God to lie. (Hebrews 6:18b NLT)

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4 ESV)

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## THE PROVIDER OF SALVATION

### ☞ *Mormonism Teaches: Salvation is through Jesus and Joseph Smith*

**Doctrine & Covenants 135:3a:** “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”

**Brigham Young:** “From the day that the Priesthood was taken from the earth to the winding-up scene of all things, every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith, junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansion where God and Christ are—

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

I with you and you with me. I cannot go there without his consent. He holds the keys of that kingdom for the last dispensation."<sup>108</sup>

**Apostle Orson Hyde:** "I tell you, Joseph holds the keys, and none of us can get into the celestial kingdom without passing by him... If brother Joseph is satisfied with you, you may pass. If it is all right with him, it is all right with me."<sup>109</sup>

**Joseph Young:** "Believe in God, believe in Jesus, and believe in Joseph his Prophet, and in Brigham his successor. And I add, 'If you will believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph was a Prophet, and that Brigham was his successor, you shall be saved in the kingdom of God,' which I pray, in the name of Jesus, may be the case. Amen."<sup>110</sup>

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## ☞ *Christianity Teaches: Salvation is only through Jesus*

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NASB 1995)*

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6 NASB)*

*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12 ESV)*

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 ESV)*

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10 ESV)*

*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35b NIV)*

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<sup>108</sup> Young, Brigham, *Journal of Discourses*, ed. George D. Watt, et al. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, et al., 1854-1886), 7:289, LDSCL. Remarks by President Brigham Young, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, October 9, 1859.

<sup>109</sup> *Journal of Discourses* 6:154-155

<sup>110</sup> Joseph Young was a Mormon Seventy. *Journal of Discourses* 6:229

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

*I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies. (John 11:25 NASB)*

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## CONCLUSION

40

**Mormon Prophet Gordon B. Hinckley** said: “As a Church, we have critics, many of them. They say we do not believe in the traditional Christ of Christianity. There is some substance to what they say. Our faith, our knowledge is not based on ancient traditions, the creeds which came of a finite understanding and out of the almost infinite discussions of men trying to arrive at a definition of the risen Christ. Our faith, our knowledge comes of the witness of a prophet in this dispensation who saw before him the great God of the universe and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>111</sup>

**Gordon B. Hinckley:** “We acknowledge without hesitation that there are differences between us. Were this not so there would have been no need for a restoration of the gospel. President Gordon B. Hinckley, ‘Church is restoration of that instituted by Savior.’”<sup>112</sup>

**Gordon B. Hinckley:** In bearing testimony of Jesus Christ President Hinckley spoke of those outside the Church who say Latter-day Saints “do not believe in the traditional Christ.” “No, I don’t. The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak.”<sup>113</sup>

## Does Mormonism Sound Christian to You?

When all is said and done, Christians are forced to say one thing: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is *not* Christian in that it has its own distinctive and divergent beliefs, separate from historic, orthodox Christianity, many of which have been bluntly declared heretical and unbiblical for thousands of years.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, General Conference Message, April 2, 2002. Cited in *Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley*, 2:171-172.

<sup>112</sup> *Church News Archives*, 11 April 1998.

<sup>113</sup> *Church News*, June 20, 1998, p.7.

<sup>114</sup> Adapted from *The Saints of Zion: An Introduction to Mormon Theology* by Travis S. Kerns. © 2018, B&H Publishing Group.