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TRUTH AND HONESTY IN EVALUATING THE CHURCH OF JESUS  
CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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By James White<sup>1</sup>

Christian leaders have been lamenting the decline of discernment in the ranks of the church for decades, and if indeed even inside the fellowship of faith fuzzy thinking prevails, how much more so in the broader spectrum of Western society, that conglomeration of cultures bound together, it seems, by an insatiable desire to suppress the truth of God by every possible mechanism? It is hardly surprising that when attention is directed to Christian theology in the context of Western society today, ignorance and irrationality reign supreme. Throw in a secular media with all its quirkiness, place the resultant mixture in the context of American politics, and you are certain to get a noxious mixture of spin and falsehood.

Mitt Romney, former governor of Massachusetts, is a member in good standing of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In fact, the Romney name is well known in the leadership of the Church at its highest levels. Romney's run for the White House has inevitably raised the issue of Mormonism, its teachings, and its relationship to Christianity. The resultant discussions have only shown that even when it comes to groups that have historically been identified as "cults," far outside even the most pliable definitions of orthodoxy, almost anything is fair game today. The discernment level in the media is not surprising. "Well, they say they believe in Jesus, and that is all that matters" makes sense coming from people who have never read more than two paragraphs of the Scriptures.

But it is the response of men within what was once broadly known as "evangelicalism" that makes the serious minded believer cringe in surprise. Clearly, the average conservative Christian today has little firsthand knowledge of Mormon theology and belief, and when that is combined with a functional non-Trinitarianism in many churches (that is, few today place a high value on theology proper, the doctrine of God, and a large portion of those attending services in churches in America today could not provide you with an orthodox definition of the Christian God's Triune nature), the resultant confusion is understandable. But when Christian leaders who *should* value the truth of God's self-revealed nature and who *should* recognize the importance of God's honor that is so completely denigrated by Mormon teachings and theology are the very ones placing "friendship" and "ecumenism" above God's truth.

If the official teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are directly contradictory to the most basic, historic, definitional teachings of the Christian faith, then all the post-modern wiggling men may wish to do is of no consequence. But can we really *know* what Mormonism teaches? I believe we most assuredly can. In the nearly one hundred and eighty years of existence of the LDS Church one thing has marked them off from others: they are a people of words. They write. They publish. They keep records. Extensive records. Full records. And they

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likewise tell their people, and anyone willing to listen, who their official representatives are. They have a President, the Prophet, and a First Presidency (made up of the Prophet and his two counselors). They have a Council of the Twelve. All fifteen of these men are properly styled “apostles” as well. And they have the Quorum of the Seventy. These are the “General Authorities” of the LDS Church, and anyone with a television or a radio can listen to these General Authorities teaching and preaching regularly the first weekend in April and the first weekend in October at the General Conference of the LDS Church. There, the gathered leadership gives special and direct instruction to the Mormon faithful, and they do not do this in secret. They are quite open about their activities and their beliefs, at least on the subject of their view of God. Further, the LDS Church has a long history of publishing materials for the instruction of their people through their educational systems. Materials published under the copyright of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can be logically assumed to be representative of the actual theology and teachings of the LDS Church. In fact, one can create a hierarchy of authoritative statements, beginning with LDS Scripture, moving through the words of Joseph Smith Jr., the founding prophet, into the statements of the General Authorities preached in the General Conference, and the teachings to be found in the official publications of the Church. The materials and quotations presented in this article all come from these kinds of LDS sources, and taken together, give a coherent, accurate, consistent representation of the LDS viewpoint on the doctrine of God.

#### QUOTES FROM THE LDS SCRIPTURES

Most would assume that the scriptures of the Mormon church would be the primary source for finding any binding, authoritative statements concerning LDS theology. But this would only show one’s ignorance of the nature of Mormonism, for while conservative Christians may revel in their acceptance of *sola scriptura* and hence embrace a closed, consistent body of revelation, Mormonism’s roots lie deep in the soil of ecstatic prophecy and continuing revelation. “Latter-day revelation,” as they refer to it, carries just as much weight as any static scripture, at least, it did with Mormons up until recent days. A few almost “*sola scriptura*” type Mormons have come on the scene over the past few decades, but their kind find it hard to get traction in the history of the LDS faith.

Though the LDS Scriptures contain explicit references to the “final” LDS doctrine of God, it must be remembered that when Joseph Smith Jr. first began receiving “revelation,” he did not believe in the theories that would be most closely connected to him when he died fourteen years later. In fact, his theology was changing so rapidly toward the end of his life that had he not been murdered in the Carthage jail in 1844 I truly believe there would be no “Mormonism” as we know it today. His “martyrdom” (as Mormons call it; history shows Smith was firing back at his attackers with a gun, and few definitions of “martyr” fit participants in a gunfight) stopped the trajectory of his development and allowed the development of the LDS faith we observe this day. Because of this, it should be remembered that the earlier writings of Smith know nothing of a plurality of Gods, of men becoming gods, etc. Instead, Smith was clearly attempting to present even a Trinitarian viewpoint in his earliest writings, though, even here, he slipped into the common error of modalism in his expressions. But this is beyond our scope here. For the moment, those Scriptural texts that give rise to the modern LDS view need to be read into the record.

## THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

Few books take a greater toll on Joseph Smith's claim to prophethood than the *Book of Abraham*, a book produced almost solely to substantiate not only his status as a prophet, but to provide "scriptural" foundation for his evolving view of God. Allegedly the translation of the actual writings of Abraham written on Egyptian papyri, this work is the single most embarrassing piece of documentation demonstrating that Smith had no supernatural capacity to translate ancient, unknown languages.<sup>1</sup> But it is also one of the clearest statements of rank polytheism on Smith's part as well. Note these words from the fourth chapter of the *Book of Abraham*.

1 AND then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth. 2 And the earth, after it was formed, was empty and desolate, because they had not formed anything but the earth; and darkness reigned upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of the Gods was brooding upon the face of the waters. 3 And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light. 4 And they (the Gods) comprehended the light, for it was bright; and they divided the light, or caused it to be divided, from the darkness. 5 And the Gods called the light Day, and the darkness they called Night. And it came to pass that from the evening until morning they called night; and from the morning until the evening they called day; and this was the first, or the beginning, of that which they called day and night. 6 And the Gods also said: Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and it shall divide the waters from the waters.

The chapter continues in this vein, but there is no reason to repeat it over and over again. More than forty times in this work "the Gods" are referred to in LDS Scripture.

The view of man as an exalted being seemed to be what drove Smith's eventual denigration of God down to the level of the creature. In an earlier revelation, Smith had written,

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be (*Doctrine and Covenants 93:29*)

Years later the process was complete, as Smith taught that God himself has a physical body:

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

But how can men become gods? This is answered in probably the most famous portion of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132. This portion, put to paper on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1843, speaks directly to the issue by introducing the "covenant of eternal marriage." This concept is vitally important to Mormons, and while plural marriage (which was intimately connected with the eternal covenant of marriage) is not currently practiced in official Mormonism, it is still central to understanding the means by which the LDS Church teaches men can be called "gods." Here is the key passage, verses 19-20:

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

20 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.

But as noted before, it is not the LDS Scriptures that express the LDS doctrine of God with the greatest clarity. No, that honor goes to a sermon delivered by Joseph Smith Jr. shortly before his death in 1844.

#### THE KING FOLLETT FUNERAL DISCOURSE: KEY TO LDS THEOLOGY PROPER

The King Follett Funeral Discourse,<sup>2</sup> delivered at the Conference of the LDS Church, is the fullest, most foundational expression of the LDS theology of God to be found anywhere. Though it is not a part of LDS Scripture, the frequency with which it has been repeated by the leaders of the LDS faith in their sermons, their books, and in the instructional materials they publish for their own members, places it at the very pinnacle of authority. The founding prophet of Mormonism expounded fully on the final form of his ever-evolving view of God, and the resultant sermon has become the very definition of the unique theology he preached. While some have hoped to see Mormonism abandon the concepts enunciated in this sermon, one thing is clear: a denial of these teachings would be the end of Mormonism in any serious sense. This is Mormonism, pure and simple.

In the first place, I wish to go back to the beginning—to the morn of creation. There is the starting point for us to look to, in order to understand and be fully acquainted with the mind, purposes and decrees of the Great Elohim, who sits in yonder heavens as he did at the creation of this world. It is necessary for us to have an understanding of God himself in the beginning. If we start right, it is easy to go right all the time; but if we start wrong, we may go wrong, and it be a hard matter to get right. . . . If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves. I want to go back to the beginning, and so lift your minds into a more lofty sphere and a more exalted understanding than what the human mind generally aspires to.

Smith begins, as Prophet of the LDS Church, at the beginning: the nature of God. And we have to agree with his assertion that if you start wrong on the nature of God, you will end up wrong in everything. And it is just here that Mormonism differs so fundamentally from biblical Christianity.

I will go back to the beginning before the world was, to show what kind of being God is. What sort of a being was God in the beginning? Open your ears and hear, all ye ends of the earth, for I am going to prove it to you by the Bible, and to tell you the designs of God in relation to the human race, and why He interferes with the affairs of man.

*God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its 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 from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another.*

These words are not metaphorical, symbolic, or in any way meant to be taken in any other way than their natural meaning would suggest. Smith is directly teaching that God and men are of the same species. That God was once a man who lived on another planet, a mortal, like you and I, but has now progressed to the exalted status of godhood. And not only was God once a man, but He still is. He still has a body of flesh and bone, as the LDS Scriptures teach.

In order to understand the subject of the dead, for consolation of those who mourn for the loss of their friends, it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how he came to be so; for 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 that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.

Please note the vital point here. Smith speaks of how God came to be God. This demands that God was once something other than God before obtaining that position or status. I believe that when Smith uttered the words, “We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see,” he forever separated anyone who would follow him in his teaching from biblical Christianity, for there is no Christianity without the confession of absolute monotheism, and the confession of the eternity of God. As the Psalmist said, “Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalm 90:2).

These are incomprehensible ideas to some, but they are simple. *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.*

Smith is not talking about some esoteric, unnecessary expansion of his beliefs, but he is, instead, speaking of his doctrine as *the first principle of the Gospel*. This means what he is teaching is definitional to Mormonism. It is not mere “speculation.” But it is likewise an assertion that is completely outside anything that could be identified as Christian. While Christianity has always affirmed that God became a man in Jesus Christ, no one who called themselves a Christian had ever taught that God the Father had once existed as a man on another planet and had been exalted to godhood. Ever. As this remains the LDS belief to this day, this teaching provides the single strongest reason for the exclusion of Mormonism from the definition of anything “Christian.”

The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. Do we believe it? If you do not believe it, you do not believe the Bible. The Scriptures say it, and I defy all the learning and wisdom and all the combined powers of earth and hell together to refute it.

This is followed by another striking proclamation:

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. And I want you to know that God, in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming his name, is not trifling with you or me.

Godhood, then, for the followers of Joseph Smith, is something “learned,” and it has been “learned” by all those who have already trodden the path to godhood (resulting, then, in a belief not only in a plurality of Gods with reference to this world, but in some sense a form of polytheism that is so extreme that some learned LDS have asserted that there is an *unlimited* number of Gods, an infinite number, making Mormonism surely one of the most polytheistic religions known to man).

. . . they shall rise again to dwell in everlasting burnings in immortal glory, not to sorrow, suffer, or die any more; but they shall be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. 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. What did Jesus do? Why; I do the things I saw my Father do when worlds come rolling into existence. My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my

Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children. It is plain beyond disputation, and you thus learn some of the first principles of the Gospel, about which so much hath been said.

It seems the “train on a track” type of exaltation presented here, which requires the exaltation of others before you receive your own, was the initial impetus behind the LDS fascination with genealogy and baptism for the dead. And while that fascination continues, few LDS view their own exaltation as in any way hindered by whether their immediate progenitors are, or are not, exalted.

In the brief time left to Smith after the King Follett Discourse, he continued to preach his doctrine of a plurality of gods and exaltation to godhood. In one such sermon he chose as his text Revelation 1:6, KJV, “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever.” The reader will note that Smith latches onto an ambiguity in the KJV rendering and uses this as a basis for preaching the plurality of gods:

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 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>3</sup>

The fact is, Smith’s doctrine at this point had begun to develop only in the mid 1830s, and it is simply a falsehood to say he had preached the plurality of Gods for “fifteen years.” The Book of Mormon is clearly monotheistic, and the First Vision story does not become polytheistic until the versions found after the mid-1830s. Smith continues,

Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God. I say that is a strange God anyhow—three in one, and one in three! It is a curious organization. “Father, I pray not for the world, but I pray for them which thou hast given me.” “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom thou has given me, that they may be one as we are.” All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God—he would be a giant or a monster.

The Christian God, as best as Smith was able to describe the blessed Trinity, he likened to a “monster.” Much as with Muhammad himself, Smith shows little evidence of ever having had an

accurate, sound knowledge of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. And surely the alternative he proposed is far removed from anything that can be remotely identified as Christian.

#### LORENZO SNOW'S COUPLET

Many years ago I recall sitting with my uncle, a retired minister, who has since gone on to be with the Lord, watching a television program. It was one of the original *Battlestar Galatica* programs. In this particular episode Apollo, son of the leader of humans, Adama, was captured by glowing beings. They said to him, "As you are, we once were; as we are, you may become." I remember being just slightly irked that my uncle started quoting Scripture at the television, "Before Me there was no God formed, and there shall be none after Me" (Isaiah 43:10). It was years later that I learned that the program's writers were returned Mormon missionaries, and that this particular episode was presenting one of the more obvious promotions of LDS theology in its plotline. My uncle was wiser than I, to be sure.

Along with the King Follett Discourse, another saying has gained quasi-canonical status in Mormonism. It comes from President Lorenzo Snow.

President Lorenzo Snow recorded this experience that occurred when he was still a young elder: "The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noon-day, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man." Elder Snow expressed this new found understanding in these words: "As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be." Later the Prophet Joseph Smith assured him: "Brother Snow, that is true gospel doctrine, and it is a revelation from God to you."<sup>4</sup>

The Lorenzo Snow couplet has become one of the most succinct statements of Mormon theology. It affirms the key issue, that being that God and men are of the same species, and that through exaltation man may attain the status of a god.

#### HOW GOD BECAME GOD IN MORMONISM

But does Mormonism still teach this doctrine? The better question would be, "How could Mormonism possibly ever *cease* teaching the very doctrine that defines its most unique elements?" Without this view of God, you no longer have Mormonism.

But there is truly no justifiable reason to question that the leadership of the LDS Church continues to teach this doctrine, publicly and privately. A review of the literature published by the First Presidency of the LDS Church, specifically for distribution to the members of the church, bears this out. One of the clearest examples is found in the manual published by the LDS Church for use by those who are preparing for temple marriage in the church. It was published in 1992 and was used by the church for approximately ten years. The work begins with the following discussion of the nature of God. It is not found buried in the back of the book. It is the first portion of the manual's presentation. This is foundational to all else in the manual. And what does it say? It begins:

God was once a man who, by obedience, advanced to his present state of perfection; through obedience and celestial marriage we may progress to the point where we become like God.

Proclaiming the divine potential within man, John Taylor once wrote, “Knowest thou not that thou art a spark of Deity, struck from the fire of His eternal blaze, and brought forth in the midst of everlasting burnings.” (The Mormon, 29 Aug. 1857). Elder B.H. Roberts stated, “Man has descended from God; in fact, he is the same race as the Gods. His descent has not been from a lower form of life, but from the Highest Form of Life; in other words, man is, in the most literal sense, a Child of God. This is not only true of the spirit of man, but of his body also.” (Course of Study for Priests, 1910, p. 35).

Can you see the implications of these two statements as they relate to you and to your eternal destiny? Elder James E. Talmage did. He declared, “...in his mortal condition man is God in embryo. However...any individual now a mortal being may attain the rank and sanctity of godship...” (Articles of Faith, p. 529). How is this possible? What course of action will bring this potential to fruition? As you study this lesson, look for the answers to these questions.

Note this modern LDS source’s affirmation that God became a god by obedience, and that we can become gods in the same fashion. It continues with a dialogue between an older, more mature Mormon, and a younger Mormon. It begins with a sub-title, “God Became God by Obedience to Law”:

#### POINTS TO PONDER

##### God Became God by Obedience to Law

It was late afternoon as we sat in my office, but I felt the time had been well spent. He sat silently now, obviously contemplating the ramifications of the things we had been discussing. We had talked of God, of how he had become God, and of what that meant in terms of our own exaltation. Finally he spoke.

"What is this law of exaltation of which you keep speaking?"

"Well, it involves the whole of the gospel law. Everything required of us by God is associated with this law, but the major crowning point of the law which man must obey is eternal marriage. Therein lies the keys of eternal life, or, as the Doctrine and Covenants puts it, 'eternal lives.' In other words, an eternal increase of posterity."

"Then what you're saying is that God became God by obedience to the gospel program, which culminates in eternal marriage."

It is hard for orthodox Christians to “hear” such language as “God became God by obedience,” but this is LDS theology. God is more of a position than a personal identification, and the number of those who have, in all the universes of Mormon thought, obtained that status, is beyond number. And if the faithful Mormon will be “obedient” to “the gospel program,” and in particular, to celestial marriage (“temple marriage”), he, too, can obtain this status.

The next portion of this LDS publication contains one of the most striking claims I have read in LDS literature:

THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO LAW WE CAN BECOME LIKE OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

"Yes. Do you realize the implications of this doctrine as far as you are concerned?"

"I think so. If God became God by obedience to all of the gospel law with the crowning point being the celestial law of marriage, then that's the only way I can become a god."

"Right. And it is the law that assists us in reaching that potential. It tells us what we must do to gain the ultimate freedom. In fact, it is by obedience to law that we have progressed to our present position."

"You mean we have always been governed by law?"

"Always. You are an eternal being. You were never created and you cannot be destroyed, but you can advance, progress, and develop by obedience."

I consider this last portion amazing in light of just how far from the Christian faith it places the Mormon religion. In Christianity, God is the only truly eternal being. Man is His creature. In Mormonism, God and men are both eternal, and man “was never created” and “cannot be destroyed.” This is the negation of so many biblical statements, such as “fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28) and especially, “You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, “He did not make me”; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, “He has no understanding” (Isaiah 29:16, ESV). The imaginary conversation continues:

"Then Hamlet's question 'to be or not to be?' is not the question?"

"Right, not in the ultimate sense, at least. Order means law, and that law is the law of the celestial kingdom. Any who come unto that kingdom must obey that law. (See D&C 88:24-29.)"

"But I thought godhood meant freedom. If I have to do things to become God, am I really free?"

"You have got it wrong. It was the Savior who said, 'If ye continue in my word,' that is, obey the law, 'ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' (John 8:31,32.)"

So by obedience to law, we learn truths by which we become free -- but not free from the law. Can you see that?"

"I think so. I can be a god only if I act like God."

"Exactly right. Can you imagine the state of the universe if imperfect gods were allowed to spawn their imperfections throughout space, if beings who did not have law under their subjection were free to create worlds?"

"I guess that would be pretty disastrous. But I'm not sure I see why celestial marriage becomes the crowning apex of this progression. Marriage doesn't seem directly related to the creation of the universes."

"Oh, but don't be limited by your mortal perspective. God himself has declared his own reasons for existing. Remember, he said, 'For this is my work and my glory....' "

"I see his purpose is 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.' " (Moses 1:39).

"Which involves giving birth to spirit children and setting them on the road to exaltation. And if that is to be done, you must have an exalted man and..."

"An exalted woman."

"Exactly, an exalted man and woman who have been joined together in an eternal marriage. If this man and woman were obedient to all gospel laws except celestial marriage, what would be the result?"

"They still could not be gods. Now I understand. Celestial marriage is the crowning ordinance of the gospel."

"Right," I said with a smile. "And with that comment I think we can end the discussion."

Celestial marriage, then, becomes the key by which men can become gods, and therefore, the "crowning ordinance of the gospel," in Mormonism. The gospel itself is a means to an end: the exaltation of man to the status of a god.

With the review of this modern example of LDS theology, we can conclude our brief examination of the subject with the firm conclusion that Mormonism, unique as an American religion and interesting as it might be in a cultural context, is a religion far removed from Christianity, despite its use of Christian terminology. At its heart, Mormonism is a polytheistic religion that denies the Creator/creation distinction. It has the wrong God, the wrong Christ, the wrong Spirit, the wrong creation, and the wrong gospel. Despite the resistance of many today, we must continue to call Mormons to repentance and faith in the one true and living God.

FOOTNOTES

1 A very useful examination of the Book of Abraham is found at <http://www.bookofabraham.info/> 2 The text of the King Follett Discourse is found in a number of sources. My citations are from *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* edited by Joseph Fielding Smith, Deseret Book, 1976, pp. 342f.

3 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 370.

4 Quoted by LeRoi C. Snow, in “Devotion to Divine Inspiration,” *Improvement Era*, June 1919, pp. 651-56