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# Is There a Mother God?

In the fall of 2015 the LDS Church reaffirmed its doctrine of a Heavenly Mother, the wife of Heavenly Father, in its latest essay, *Mother in Heaven*. This article is said to complete the thirteen Gospel Topics essays dealing with controversial areas of Mormon doctrine and history.<sup>1</sup> While some of the Mormon teaching manuals refer to “Heavenly Parents” this is the clearest official statement about the doctrine of God’s wife.

The essay affirms that “all human beings, male and female, are beloved spirit children of heavenly parents, a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother.” Unlike the traditional Christian belief that the term “Heavenly Father” is a metaphor, LDS prophets not only teach that the designation is literal but that God has a wife (at least one). This was explained in the October 2015 *Ensign*:

**The Family in Premortal Life**

In our premortal life, each of us was born as “a beloved spirit son or daughter of **heavenly parents**.” As such, we were all brothers and sisters and lived as members of God’s family. Although all of us were part of this eternal family of God, the only ones who enjoyed the blessings of eternal marriage were our **heavenly parents**. Only they could have children and be called father and mother.<sup>2</sup>

This premortal family group would have included everyone who has or will be born on this earth, as well as our elder brothers Jesus and Lucifer, and one third of the spirits who chose to rebel and were cast out with Lucifer.

This relationship is discussed in the 1997 LDS Sunday School manual for children ages 8-11:

1 “New Essays Address Topics on Women, Priesthood, Mother in Heaven,” Mormon Newsroom, online at <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/new-church-essays-women-priesthood-mother-in-heaven>  
The number of essays has since been shortened to eleven, as the three dealing with polygamy have been grouped together.

2 Mark A. Mathews, “God’s Plan for Families,” *Ensign* (July 2015).



1. In the premortal life we were spirit children and lived with our **heavenly parents** (Hebrews 12:9).
2. Jesus was the firstborn spirit child of Heavenly Father (*D&C* 93:21) and is the older brother of our spirits.
3. Lucifer, who became Satan, was also a spirit child of Heavenly Father.<sup>3</sup>

This is all part of the LDS concept of eternal progression, and is often referred to as Heavenly Father’s Plan of Happiness. Not only are we on a journey to attain future godhood, Mormonism teaches that our Heavenly Father and Mother once traversed the same path. They were once mortals on another world, overseen by yet another eternal couple, where they experienced mortality, death and resurrection. The doctrine that God has a resurrected body was explained in *The Presidents of the Church: Teachers Manual*:

It is wonderful to know the truth—that **God the Eternal Father** and Jesus Christ are exalted, tangible beings, with **resurrected bodies** in whose image we are made, and that Jesus Christ is literally the Father’s Only Begotten Son in the flesh.<sup>4</sup>

Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church, taught that God had once been a mortal. In the 1997 manual *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, he is quoted as saying:

The great architect, manager and superintendent, controller and dictator [absolute ruler] who guides this work is out of sight to our natural eyes. He [God] lives on another world; he is in another state of existence; **he has passed the ordeals we are now passing**

3 *Primary 7: New Testament*, Lesson 2: “Jesus Christ Volunteered to Be Our Savior,” LDS Church (1997). <https://www.lds.org/manual/primary-7-new-testament/lesson-2-jesus-christ-volunteered-to-be-our-savior>

4 *The Presidents of the Church: Teacher’s Manual*, Lesson 6: “The Prophet Joseph Smith—A Light in the Darkness,” LDS Church (1996). <https://www.lds.org/manual/the-presidents-of-the-church-teachers-manual/lesson-6-the-prophet-joseph-smith-a-light-in-the-darkness>

**through**; he has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, **life and death of this mortality, for he has passed through the whole of it, and has received his crown and exaltation** and holds the keys and the power of this Kingdom; . . .<sup>5</sup>

On page 34 of the same manual we read:

The **doctrine that God was once a man and has progressed to become a God** is unique to this Church. How do you feel, knowing that God, **through His own experience**, “knows all that we know regarding the toils [and] sufferings” of mortality?<sup>6</sup>

The LDS Church continues to teach that God has not always been God, but achieved this status in the distant past. In their 2002 teaching manual, *Gospel Fundamentals*, we read:

It will help us to remember that our Father in Heaven was once a man who lived on an earth, the same as we do. **He became our Father in Heaven by overcoming problems**, just as we have to do on this earth.<sup>7</sup>

Notice that for our heavenly father to have once been a mortal it would require a god before him to oversee his mortality. Joseph Smith expounded on this idea in one of his last sermons in June of 1844. John G. Turner explained:

only eleven days before his murder, Smith said he would “preach the doctrine [of] there being a God above the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Fleshing out ideas introduced in the Book of Abraham, the prophet suggested that “there are gods many and Lords many . . . but to us there is but one God pertaining to us.” Smith reiterated his point: “if Jesus Christ was the Son of God and . . . God the Father of Jesus Christ had a father you may suppose that he had a Father also.” . . . Smith’s words hinted at a chain of divine beings who had “laid down” their lives and taken them up again: a possible infinite regression of gods and saviors. Drawing on an array of Old and New Testament passages, Smith also spoke of a single “head of the gods” presiding over a divine council of heavenly beings, one of whom became earth’s god. The universe contained a plurality, perhaps an infinitude of gods.<sup>8</sup>

Contrary to the Mormon view of a god among many, the Bible teaches that God is not only eternal but that there are no other deities.

<sup>5</sup> *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, (LDS Church, 1997), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> *Gospel Fundamentals*, Chapter 36, “Eternal Life,” LDS Church (2002), pp. 200-205; online at <https://www.lds.org/manual/gospel-fundamentals/chapter-36-eternal-life>

<sup>8</sup> John G. Turner, *The Mormon Jesus: A Biography*, (Harvard University, Belknap Press, 2016), p. 164.

*Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretches forth the heavens **alone**; that spreadeth abroad the earth **by myself**.* (Isaiah 44:24)

*Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.* (Psalm 90:2)

*To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? . . . for I am God, and there is **none else**; I am God, and there is none like me.* (Isaiah 46:5, 9)

These verses, along with other biblical passages, would also preclude a Heavenly Mother.

Once Joseph Smith developed the idea that God was literally our father it wasn’t long before the idea of a mother goddess was added. Linda Wilcox explained:

The Mother in Heaven concept was a logical and natural extension of a theology which posited both an anthropomorphic god, who had once been a man, and the possibility of eternal procreation of spirit children.<sup>9</sup>

According to LDS teachings, after the mortal death and resurrection of the couple who would eventually become our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother they advanced to the position of Gods and, after eons of procreation, sent their literal spirit born children to this earth to receive mortal bodies and for a time of testing to determine who would follow in their steps and progress to godhood. In a 1909 statement by the LDS Church First Presidency we read:

Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and **endowed with divine attributes**, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of **evolving into a God**.<sup>10</sup>

Mormonism teaches that gods and men are all the same species. Sterling W. Sill, of the First Quorum of the Seventy, explained:

It is helpful for us to remember that God, angels, spirits, and men are all of the same species in different stages of development and in various degrees of righteousness.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Linda P. Wilcox, “The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven,” *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> “The Origin of Man,” First Presidency statement, *Improvement Era*, (November 1909): pp. 75-81; reprinted in *Ensign* (February 2002); online at <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2002/02/the-origin-of-man>

<sup>11</sup> Sterling W. Sill, *LDS Conference Reports* (October 1969): p. 18.

The essay on Heavenly Mother explains that while there is limited knowledge about “a Mother in Heaven” members need to “appreciate the sacredness of this doctrine and to comprehend the **divine pattern** established for us **as children of heavenly parents** . . . As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, ‘Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be **like them**.’”<sup>12</sup>

Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the LDS Church, explained that the concept of being like God includes eternal procreation:

The Father has promised us that through our faithfulness we shall be blessed with the fulness of his kingdom. In other words we will have the privilege of **becoming like him**. To become like him we must have **all the powers of godhood; thus a man and his wife when glorified will have spirit children who eventually will go on an earth like this one we are on** and pass through the same kind of experiences, being subject to mortal conditions, and if faithful, then they also will receive the fulness of exaltation and partake of the same blessings. There is no end to this development; **it will go on forever. We will become gods and have jurisdiction over worlds, and these worlds will be peopled by our own offspring**. We will have an endless eternity for this.<sup>13</sup>

This pattern of couples advancing from spirit children to godhood is often referred to as the Plan of Salvation. In the LDS manual *Doctrines of the Gospel* we read:

God the Father provided the plan of salvation by which His spirit children could eventually become like Him.<sup>14</sup>

Because of the carefully worded promise of becoming “like Him” many do not realize how literally this is meant. For example the leadership obscures the doctrine of godhood in the different versions of the manual *Gospel Principles*.

1988—We can become **Gods** like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation.<sup>15</sup>

1997—We can become like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation.<sup>16</sup>

Even though the teaching is still the same, by dropping “Gods” from the 1997 manual, it might not be as obvious

to non-Mormons how literally the LDS Church teaches that they hope to become Gods.

Traditionally Christianity has seen God as our creator, not our literal parent. We are not the same species as God, but His creation. The Bible proclaims, *I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God* (Isaiah 45:5). In Psalm 95:6 we read: *Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker*.

## From One God to Many

Mormon theology did not start with the concept of “heavenly parents” but with the belief in one God. The LDS doctrine of God has undergone major revisions since Joseph Smith published his Book of Mormon in 1830. Time after time the book proclaims that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost “is one God.”<sup>17</sup> Even the testimony of the three witnesses at the front of the Book of Mormon affirms that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost “is one God.” Christians of the day did not criticize the Mormon view of God but the idea of modern day revelation and Smith’s claim of unearthing an additional book of scripture.

Kurt Widmer, of the University of Lethbridge, observed:

It was not that the Book of Mormon taught new truths about God which drew the early converts. Rather, the Book of Mormon presented a God who was active in the world. The God revealed through early Mormonism was a God who was more concerned with practicing what was believed, than with theorizing about what is to be believed.<sup>18</sup>

Early LDS literature contains no mention of Heavenly Father having a resurrected body. Mormons today assume that Joseph Smith’s 1820 vision, showing that the Father and Son are two distinct beings, was known by the early church. Yet that story has gone through radical changes. The first time Joseph committed his first vision to paper in 1832, he only mentioned “the Lord” as appearing, informing him that his sins were forgiven. In 1835 Joseph was telling a slightly expanded version of this vision, recounting that many angels appeared, but nothing is specifically said about God or Jesus being there as well. It wasn’t until 1842, twenty-two years after the purported event, that Smith officially printed the story known to most LDS today.<sup>19</sup>

12 “Mother in Heaven,” Gospel Topics, LDS Church, online at <https://www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven>

13 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, p. 48.

14 *Doctrines of the Gospel*, Chapter 6, “Our Premortal Life,” LDS Church (2000); online at <https://www.lds.org/manual/doctrines-of-the-gospel-student-manual/chapter-6-our-premortal-life>

15 *Gospel Principles*, LDS Church (1988), p. 290.

16 *Gospel Principles*, LDS Church (1997), p. 302.

17 Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 31:21; Mormon 7:7; Alma 11:27-39, 44; 3 Nephi 11:27; Testimony of the Three Witnesses.

18 Kurt Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God: A Theological Evolution, 1830-1915*, (McFarland & Co., 2000), p. 40.

19 “Grappling with the Past,” *Salt Lake Messenger*, no. 122 (May 2014); online at <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no122.htm>

In 1835, as part of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, a series of lectures were published as the Lectures on Faith. In Lecture 5 the Father and Son are discussed and differentiated—the father is described as a personage of “spirit” while the son is a personage of “tabernacle.”<sup>20</sup> This would be a strange description if Smith had been teaching for years that he had seen the Father and He had a physical body. Thus Mormonism moved from the one God of the Book of Mormon to two separate gods, where the father is a spirit and only the son has a physical body.

By the 1840s Smith was proclaiming that Heavenly Father had a beginning, that the Father and Son are two totally different people with resurrected bodies and that there is a plurality of gods. Preaching in 1844, Joseph Smith declared “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.”<sup>21</sup> Part of this sermon is also quoted in the 2004 LDS manual *Presidents of the Church Student Manual*:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, . . . 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.<sup>22</sup>

Contrary to Joseph Smith’s claim, the Bible explains that *God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent* (Numbers 23:19). Also God instructed Isaiah *I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. . . . Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any* (Isaiah 44:6, 8).

Since Mormonism teaches that we were literally born to Heavenly Parents in a pre-mortal existence they interpret Bible verses referring to us as children of God in a very literal way. Joseph Smith taught that “the inhabitants [of the world] are **begotten sons and daughters** unto God” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:24). Thus the LDS believe we were literally born to our Heavenly Parents as spirit beings in a prior existence, making us “begotten” children of God. Beyond this, according to the LDS teachings, Jesus is not only a begotten son from the pre-mortal life, he is the only literally begotten son in the flesh. Dr. Ron Rhodes observed:

<sup>20</sup> *The Joseph Smith Papers*, *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835), <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835#!/paperSummary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835&p=61>

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 6, (Deseret Book, 1975), pp. 302-317.

<sup>22</sup> *Presidents of the Church Student Manual*, Religion 345, LDS Church (2004), p. 89.

Another verse Mormons appeal to in support of the idea that Jesus is “begotten” of the Father is John 3:16, which in the King James Version 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” (emphasis added). The New International Version translates “only begotten” as “one and only,” and indeed, this is what the original Greek communicates. The Greek word *monogenes* means “unique” or “one of a kind.” It does not communicate procreation or derivation. Jesus is the unique or one and only “Son of God” in the sense that He has the same nature as the Father—a divine nature. . . . Hence, when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, His Jewish contemporaries fully understood that He was making a claim to be God in an unqualified sense (John 5:18). This is why, when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, the Jews insisted: “We have a law, and according to that law he [Christ] must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God (John 19:7). Recognizing that Jesus was identifying Himself as God, the Jews wanted to put Him to death for committing blasphemy.”<sup>23</sup>

The Bible speaks of God as our father in a figurative sense. In the New Testament we are told that we become children of God through faith, not a literal birth in a prior life. It is a spiritual adoption.

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

*So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.* (Galatians 3:26)

## Evolving Doctrine of God

Mormon scholar Melodie Moench Charles acknowledges that the LDS view of God has evolved from one God to many. She argues, in fact, that at least some of the teachings of the Book of Mormon regarding God go even beyond the orthodox Trinitarian doctrine in emphasizing the oneness of God:

Recently when I was teaching the Book of Mormon in an adult Sunday school class we discussed Mosiah 15. . . . I said that I saw no good way to reconcile Abinadi’s words with the current Mormon belief that God and his son Jesus Christ are separate and distinct beings. I suggested that perhaps Abinadi’s understanding was incomplete. . . .

When we explore what the Book of Mormon says, its christology or doctrines concerning Christ differ

<sup>23</sup> Ron Rhodes, “Christ,” *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism*, Francis J. Beckwith, Norman Geisler, Ron Rhodes, Phil Roberts, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, (Harvest House, 1998), p. 124.

from the christology of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since at least the 1840s. . . .

Book of Mormon people asserted that the Father and Christ (and the Holy Ghost) were one God. When Zeezrom asks Amulek, “Is there more than one God?” Amulek, who learned his information from an angel, answers, “No” (Alma 11:28-29). At least five times in 3 Nephi, Jesus says that he and the Father are one. Emphasizing that oneness with a singular verb, Nephi, Amulek, and Mormon refer to “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which is one God” (2 Ne. 31:21; Alma 11:44; Morm. 7:7, emphasis added). . . .

In isolation the Book of Mormon’s “which is one God” statements sound like orthodox trinitarianism, but in context they resemble a theology rejected by orthodoxy since at least 215 C.E., the heresy of modalism (also known as Sabellianism). Modalists believed that for God to have three separate identities or personalities compromised the oneness of God. Therefore, as Sabellius taught, “there is only one undivided Spirit; the Father is not one thing and the Son another, but . . . both are one and the same” (Lonergan 1976, 38). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three labels for the different functions which the one God performed. . . . The Book of Mormon often makes no distinction between Christ and God the Father. For example, Jesus in 3 Nephi talked about covenants which *his father* made with the Israelites, and yet beyond anything he claimed in the New Testament he also claimed that he was the God of Israel who gave them the law and covenanted with them . . .

The Book of Mormon melds together the identity and function of Christ and God. Because Book of Mormon authors saw Christ and his Father as one God who manifested himself in different ways, it made no difference whether they called their god the Father or the Son. They taught that Jesus Christ was not only the one who atoned for their sins but was also the god they were to worship. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God of Israel and the Book of Mormon people. . . .

Like the Book of Mormon, Mormonism before 1835 was largely modalistic, making no explicit distinction between the identities of the Father and the Son. Yet Mormonism gradually began to distinguish among different beings in the Godhead. This means the christology of the Book of Mormon differs significantly from the christology of the Mormon church after the 1840s. . . .

The current theology that most Mormons read back into the Book of Mormon is tritheism: belief in three Gods. Joseph Smith and the church only gradually came to understand the Godhead in this way. When he translated the Book of Mormon, Smith apparently envisioned God as modalists did: he accepted Christ and Christ’s father as one God. In his first written account

of his “first vision” in 1832 Smith told of seeing “the Lord”—one being. . . .

Later, in 1844, Smith said, “I have always declared God to be a distinct personage—Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and or Spirit, and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods”. . . . Mormon history does not support Smith’s claim about what he taught earlier. Documents from early Mormonism reflect that Smith went from belief in one god to belief in two and later three gods forming one godhead.<sup>24</sup>

LDS scholar Charles R. Harrell observed:

Joseph’s teachings regarding the members of the godhead appear to have progressed from essentially a trinitarian three-in-one God with a modalistic flavor, to a godhead consisting of “two personages” united by the indwelling Holy Spirit, to a godhead consisting of “three personages,” and finally to a godhead consisting of “three Gods.”<sup>25</sup>

However, the Mormon description of the godhead, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, fails to explain the role of Heavenly Mother. Some Mormons have tried to rectify this by speculating that when they speak of “God” it includes “Heavenly Mother.” But this would seem to relegate Heavenly Mother to a silent partner. Yet this is supposedly the role that all LDS women are to strive for.

## Earliest Accounts of Heavenly Mother

While Joseph Smith’s sermons and revelations are silent about God having a wife, the idea would seem to be a logical extension of his teaching that the term “Heavenly Father” is to be understood literally, which would seem to require a mother as well. The new essay cites, in footnote number four, the earliest printed reference to a mother god from a poem written by early LDS leader W. W. Phelps, and published in the church newspaper in January of 1845, six months after Smith’s death. The sixth stanza reads:

*Come to me; here’s the myst’ry that man hath not seen;  
Here’s our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen;  
Here are worlds that have been, and the worlds yet to be;  
Here’s eternity,—endless; amen: Come to me.*<sup>26</sup>

24 Melodie Moench Charles, “Book of Mormon Christology,” *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), pp. 82, 96-99, 103-104.

25 Charles R. Harrell, “*This is My Doctrine*,” *The Development of Mormon Theology*, (Greg Kofford Books, 2011), p. 114.

26 W. W. Phelps, “Come to Me,” *Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, (January 15, 1845), p. 783.

The essay concedes that “while there is no record of a formal revelation to Joseph Smith on this doctrine, some early Latter-day Saint women recalled that he personally taught them about a Mother in Heaven.” For example, Eliza R. Snow, one of Smith’s secret plural wives, published her poem “My Father in Heaven” in the *Times and Seasons* on November 15, 1845.<sup>27</sup> The poem was later set to music and today is a well-known hymn in Mormonism. Verse three refers to both Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother:

*I had learned to call thee Father,  
Thru thy Spirit from on high,  
But, until the key of knowledge  
Was restored, I knew not why.  
In the heav’ns are parents single?  
No, the thought makes reason stare!  
Truth is reason; truth eternal  
Tells me I’ve a mother there.*<sup>28</sup>

The essay continues “Subsequent Church leaders have affirmed the existence of a Mother in Heaven. In 1909, the First Presidency taught that ‘all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.’”

Keep in mind that when the LDS leaders speak of humans as “literally” being the children of Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother, they are referring to our spirit birth in a prior existence, where God and his wife, each having a physical resurrected body, literally copulated to produce each spirit child.

After these spirit children reached maturity in this heavenly realm, according to Mormonism, they were sent to earth to be born as mortals to another set of parents, who would actually be their spirit brother and sister from this prior life.

## Praying to Heavenly Mother?

If one believes that there is a heavenly mother as well as a heavenly father, it would seem logical that one would or could pray to her. Yet this is not condoned in Mormonism. In the 2002 LDS manual *Gospel Fundamentals* we read:

Father in Heaven: A perfect being who looks like a mortal man but has a **resurrected body** of flesh and bones. He is the Father of our spirits, **to whom we pray**.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> “Mother in Heaven,” Gospel Topics, Footnote 5, LDS.org, online at <https://www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven>

<sup>28</sup> “O My Father,” *LDS Hymnal*, online at <https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/o-my-father>

<sup>29</sup> *Gospel Fundamentals*, LDS Church (2002), p. 280.

Notice, there is no mention of a mother, only a father of our spirits. While the concept of a heavenly mother may seem to offer equality to both men and women in their quest for godhood, it appears that the woman would still be in a silent partnership, not part of the godhead and not prayed to. In the LDS essay on Heavenly Mother we read:

Latter-day Saints direct their worship to Heavenly Father, in the name of Christ, and **do not pray to Heavenly Mother**. In this, they follow the pattern set by Jesus Christ, who taught His disciples to “always pray unto the Father in my name.” Latter-day Saints are taught to pray to Heavenly Father, but as President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “The fact that we do not pray to our Mother in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her.” Indeed, as Elder Ruderger Clawson wrote, “We honor woman when we acknowledge **Godhood in her eternal Prototype**.”<sup>30</sup>

But is this “prototype” simply demonstrating that a woman’s role is eternal motherhood, giving birth to billions of spirit children, but then dropping from the scene? This issue was addressed by Peggy Stack, in the *Salt Lake Tribune*:

For her part, BYU-Idaho historian Andrea Radke-Moss raises questions about Heavenly Mother’s role.

“Is she truly a goddess and a priestess who enjoys priesthood power through the creation of worlds and spirits?” Radke-Moss asks. “Or is she like what women are expected to be on Earth—a submissive helpmeet to God the Father . . . —[or] a spiritual birthing/nurturing machine?”

Part of the problem, the historian says, is that “both gender roles are currently embodied only in God the Father—he is both priesthood leader and loving nurturer. She is absent from this gendered division of labor in families.”<sup>31</sup>

The tension of a Heavenly Mother who stands apart from the godhead was addressed by LDS scholars David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, in their 2011 article in *BYU Studies*:

The doctrine of a Heavenly Mother appears to be in tension with Mormonism’s trinitarian heritage. Overemphasizing the Trinity, or the Godhead, while underemphasizing a Heavenly Mother raises questions concerning the **equality of deified males and females** and the nature and importance of marriage. On the other hand, overemphasizing Heavenly Mother breaks with traditional Christian, and even Mormon, understandings

<sup>30</sup> “Mother in Heaven,” <https://www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven>

<sup>31</sup> Peggy Fletcher Stack, “A Mormon mystery returns: Who is Heavenly Mother?” *Salt Lake Tribune*, (May 16, 2013).

of the Trinity, but highlights the Church's own proclamation that the most important social unit in eternity is the family. It is no simple feat to understand how these two social relationships—the Trinity and the eternal family—can best be understood together.<sup>32</sup>

## More than One Heavenly Mother?

Some have speculated that one reason we are told not to pray to Heavenly Mother is that since God has multiple wives we wouldn't know who to pray to since each of us could have a different mother. Mormon blogger Joanna Brookes wrote:

One sometimes also hears in Mormon circles the hushed speculation that we don't talk about Heavenly Mother **because there are in fact plural Heavenly Mothers**. This is a bit of theological speculation we can trace to the nineteenth-century LDS theologian Orson Pratt's *The Seer*, which was in its own day disclaimed by LDS authorities as a speculative rather than a doctrinal text. I have also met contemporary polygamous Mormon fundamentalist women who do believe that Heavenly Father has many exalted wives—many Heavenly Mothers for the whole human family.<sup>33</sup>

One is left to wonder if this is why Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland recently referred to “a” Mother in Heaven rather than to “the” or “our” Mother in Heaven?:

To all of our mothers everywhere, past, present, or future, I say, “Thank you. Thank you for giving birth, for shaping souls, for forming character, and for demonstrating the pure love of Christ.” To Mother Eve, . . . to Mary of Nazareth, and **to a Mother in Heaven**, I say, “Thank you for your crucial role in fulfilling the purposes of eternity.”<sup>34</sup>

Historian Linda Wilcox raised a similar question:

A question to which there is no definitive answer—but much speculation—is whether there is more than one Mother in Heaven. The Mormon church's doctrinal commitment to celestial (plural) marriage as well as the exigencies of producing billions of spirit children suggests a probability of more than one mother in heaven. This problem is illustrated by an anecdote where

32 David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, “‘A Mother There’ A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven,” *BYU Studies*, 50, no. 1 (2011), p. 79.

33 Joanna Brookes, (June 19, 2012) “Ask Mormon Girl: Why do we not talk about Heavenly Mother?” <https://askmormongirl.wordpress.com/2012/06/19/ask-mormon-girl-why-do-we-not-talk-about-heavenly-mother/>

34 Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland, “Behold Thy Mother,” LDS Conference, October 2015, *Ensign* (November 2015); online at <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2015/11/saturday-afternoon-session/behold-thy-mother>

a wife asks her husband, “What do you think Heavenly Mother's attitudes are about polygamy, Frank?” to which the husband responds, “Which Heavenly Mother?”

Apostle John Taylor, writing in answer to a question reportedly raised by a woman in the church, said in 1857 in a newspaper he was publishing in New York City: “Knowest thou not that eternities ago thy spirit, pure and holy, dwelt in the Heavenly Father's bosom, and in his presence, and with **thy mother, one of the Queens of heaven**, surrounded by the brother and sister spirits in the spirit world, among the Gods?” He implied one Heavenly Father with many “Queens.”

An LDS Seminaries and Institutes student manual also **hints at the possibility of multiple heavenly mothers**. In a diagram entitled “Becoming a Spirit Child of Heavenly Parents,” an individual (male) is depicted with upward lines to his heavenly parents, the one parent labeled “Heavenly Father” (caps), the other labeled, “**a heavenly mother**” (lower case).<sup>35</sup>

## Is Mary One of God's Wives?

While the average Mormon would probably say that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus, LDS theology would lead to a different conclusion. Since Mormonism teaches that God has a physical resurrected body, it follows that if Jesus is literally his only begotten son in the flesh that Mary conceived through intercourse with God.<sup>36</sup>

The 2010 manual *Doctrines of the Gospel* quotes LDS Apostle James E. Talmage to establish that Jesus is literally the son of God the Father:

That Child to be born of Mary was **begotten of Elohim**, the Eternal Father, **not in violation of natural law** but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and **the offspring from that association** of supreme sanctity, **celestial Sireship**, and pure though mortal maternity, was of right to be called the “Son of the Highest.”<sup>37</sup>

The manual goes on to quote President Heber J. Grant to emphasize the literalness of Jesus' paternity:

35 Linda P. Wilcox, “The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven,” *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), pp. 11-12.

36 See LDS manual *Jesus Christ and the Everlasting Gospel Teacher Manual*, Lesson 7, LDS Church (2015); <https://www.lds.org/manual/jesus-christ-and-the-everlasting-gospel-teacher-manual/lesson-7-jesus-christ-gods-only-begotten-son-in-the-flesh>

37 James E. Talmage, as quoted in *Doctrines of the Gospel*, (2010), p. 9.

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“We believe absolutely that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, begotten of God, the first-born in the spirit and **the only begotten in the flesh**; that He is **the Son of God just as much as you and I are the sons of our fathers.**”<sup>38</sup>

Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth president of the LDS Church, wrote that Jesus’ mortal body was literally “sired” by God:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the **most literal sense**. The **body** in which He performed His mission in the flesh **was sired** by that same Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father.<sup>39</sup>

Brigham Young believed that God, as a physical resurrected being, had relations with Mary, thus making Jesus the literal son of the father:

The birth of the Saviour was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood—**was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers.**<sup>40</sup>

Because of this Apostle Orson Pratt concluded that God and Mary must have been husband and wife:

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 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**: we use the term Lawful Wife, because it would be blasphemous in the highest degree to say that He overshadowed her or begat the Savior unlawfully.<sup>41</sup>

Orson Pratt also taught that God was a polygamist:

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 [Mary] by whom He begat the tabernacle of Jesus**, as his only begotten in this world. We have also proved most clearly that the Son followed the example of his Father, and became the great Bridegroom to whom kings’ daughters and many honorable wives were to be married. We have also proved that **both God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ inherit their wives in eternity as well as in time**; . . . it would be so shocking to the modesty of the very pious ladies of Christendom to see Abraham and his wives, Jacob

and his wives, Jesus and his honorable wives, all eating occasionally at the same table, . . . If you do not want your morals corrupted, and your delicate ears shocked and your pious modesty put to the blush by the society of polygamists and their wives, do not venture near the New Earth; for polygamists will be honored there, and will be among the chief rulers in that Kingdom.<sup>42</sup>

However, the Bible paints no such picture. First, God is the creator of everything, there are no other deities.

*This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb; I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth **by myself**.* (Isaiah 44:24)

Second, the Bible does not promote the necessity of marriage, eternal or otherwise. When Jesus was asked about marriage he replied:

*You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, **but are like angels in heaven.*** (Matthew 22:29-30)

Third, Mary’s conception of Jesus is described as a miracle, not the act of a physical union.

*This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant **through the Holy Spirit.*** (Matthew 1:18)

## Achieving Godhood

Joseph Smith explained that before Heavenly Father became a god he was a savior on another world. After achieving exaltation He then sent his oldest spirit born son, Jesus, to this earth to complete his journey to godhood, as many gods had done before him:

There is much said about God and the Godhead. . . . If I were to testify that the Christian world were wrong on this point, my testimony would be true. . . . The Son doeth what He hath seen the Father do: then **the Father hath some day laid down His life and taken it again**; so He has a body of His own; . . .<sup>43</sup>

This is reminiscent of part of the LDS temple ceremony, where God and Lucifer exchange words in the garden of Eden after the fall. Heavenly Father asks Lucifer “what hast thou been doing here?” To which Lucifer replies, “I have been doing that which has been done in **other worlds.**” God curses Lucifer, who angrily responds

38 Heber J. Grant, as quoted in *Doctrines of the Gospel*, p. 9.

39 *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), p. 7.

40 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 8, p. 115.

41 Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 158.

42 Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 172.

43 Joseph Fielding Smith, comp. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), pp. 311-312.

“If thou cursest me for doing the same thing **which has been done in other worlds**, I will take the spirits that follow me, and they shall possess the bodies thou createst for Adam and Eve!”<sup>44</sup>

It should be noted that there is no Heavenly Mother in the LDS temple endowment ceremony where the creation story is reenacted. The play only portrays Heavenly Father, Jesus, and Michael (who will become Adam) as working together in the creation.

The concept of additional worlds beyond our own is also taught in the Book of Moses, part of the *Pearl of Great Price*, where God declares that our earth is not the first world he created:

And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose . . . But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man, but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.<sup>45</sup>

Thus the goal of the Mormon priesthood holder is to eventually create worlds without number for his posterity, as his Heavenly Father has done.

Mormonism is not saying that men will become gods independent of Heavenly Father, but it is like an escalator, as each man/god ascends the stairway of exaltation he is always behind his Father, and the man’s offspring are behind him. Thus Mormons believe they will always be subject to the god above them and their children who achieve godhood will follow behind them, making an unending chain of countless gods, each subordinate to the one ahead of him. Joseph Smith explained that Jesus followed the same path as his father in order to “inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation” as God:

Here, then, is eternal life . . . 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, . . . What did Jesus do? . . . 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. . . . When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation.<sup>46</sup>

Brigham Young, Joseph Smith’s successor, preached that our heavenly father “was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an exalted Being.” Young went on to explain “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>47</sup>

## Eternal Procreation

The LDS leaders continue to teach that the highest goal of an LDS couple is to achieve godhood, just as Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother did before them. Lorenzo Snow, fifth president of the LDS Church, taught:

### Women can become like our mother in heaven.

You sisters, I suppose, have read that poem which my sister [Eliza R. Snow] composed years ago, and which is sung quite frequently now in our meetings. It tells us that we not only have a Father in “that high and glorious place,” but that **we have a Mother too; and you will become as great as your Mother, if you are faithful.**<sup>48</sup>

Joseph Smith’s revelation regarding eternal life and polygamy includes the promise of godhood and eternal progeny to those who obey the tenants of Mormonism:

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, . . . Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and . . . inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions. . . . 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. Then shall they be gods**, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, . . . Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:19-20)

Notice, the promise of godhood for the couple includes the “continuation of the seeds forever.” The

44 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Evolution of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, 1842-1990*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 2005), pp. 118-119.

45 Moses 1:33-35, *Pearl of Great Price*, LDS Church (1981).

46 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 347-348.

47 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, (October 8, 1859), p. 333.

48 *Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), pp. 7-8.

concept of exalted couples governing their endless posterity is discussed in the 2000 LDS booklet, *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women*:

### The Blessings of Eternal Marriage

President Lorenzo Snow taught: “When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer **salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring, worlds without end**. And what offspring they do not have here, undoubtedly there will be opportunities to have them hereafter. What else could man wish? A man and a woman, in the other life, having celestial bodies, free from sickness and disease, glorified and beautified beyond description, standing in the midst of **their posterity**, governing and controlling them, **administering life, exaltation and glory worlds without end**.”<sup>49</sup>

When LDS leaders speak of a couple producing “offspring, worlds without end” and the “continuation of the seeds forever” they are referring to eternal sex. In his book, *Rational Theology*, Apostle John A. Widtsoe explained that intercourse will continue among couples who inherit the celestial kingdom:

**Sex Among the Gods.** Sex, which is indispensable on this earth for the perpetuation of the human race, is an **eternal quality** which has its equivalent everywhere. It is indestructible. The relationship between men and women is eternal and must continue eternally. In accordance with Gospel philosophy there are males and females in heaven. Since we have a Father, who is our God, we must also have a mother, who possesses the attributes of Godhood. [p. 69]

**Eternity of Sex.** It has already been said that **sex is an eternal principle**. . . . Since sex, then, represents an eternal condition, the **begetting of children** is coincidentally an eternal necessity. [p. 155]

**Celestial Marriage.** If sex is eternal, it follows of necessity that the marriage covenant may also be eternal. . . . one of the chief duties of men and women will be to **beget spiritual children**. These spirits, in turn, in the process of time, will come down upon an “earth,” . . . It is a reward of intelligent development, that we may become to other spiritual beings, what our God has been to us. [p. 157]<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *The Latter-day Saint Woman: Basic Manual for Women*, Part A, Lesson 10, LDS Church (2000).

<sup>50</sup> John A. Widtsoe, *Rational Theology*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1965), pp. 69, 155, 157.

must of a certainty include such continuous though invisible help.

**Sex Among the Gods.** Sex, which is indispensable on this earth for the perpetuation of the human race, is an eternal quality which has its equivalent everywhere. It is indestructible. The relationship between men and women is eternal and must continue eternally. In accordance with Gospel philosophy there are males and females in heaven. Since we have a Father, who is our God, we must also have a mother, who possesses the attributes of Godhood. This simply carries onward the logic of things earthly, and conforms with the doctrine that whatever is on this earth is simply a representation of spiritual conditions of deeper meaning than we can here fathom.

Photo of page 69, *Rational Theology*, 1965.

Eternal life in Mormonism is equated with exaltation, or godhood. Most of God’s children will only receive immortality in a lower part of heaven, but the faithful temple married couple hope for godhood in the highest level of heaven. Milton R. Hunter, of the First Council of Seventy, wrote:

The principal purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ultimate goal of eternal progression is to receive **eternal life**, i.e., **to become as God is**. It is thoroughly understood, however, that a vast majority of the human family will never **become gods**, because to do so they must accept the true [LDS] gospel, **receive all the ordinances—including celestial marriage**—and obey all of God’s commandments faithfully to the end.<sup>51</sup>

Here again we see LDS doctrine redefining standard Christian terms. Eternal life in the Bible is equated with individual salvation through Christ while Mormonism equates it with a couple’s eternal marriage. A single Mormon cannot achieve eternal life, it is offered only to those married in an LDS temple. On the other hand, the New Testament offers the gift of eternal life to each believer, not selectively to obedient couples (see John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).

John G. Turner explained Mormonism’s shift from preaching individual salvation to a couple’s quest for exaltation:

In the early 1840s, Smith expanded on what mortal men and women needed to do to progress from mortality to divinity. Exaltation hinged on the fulfillment of divine ordinances, and several of the ordinances Smith introduced in the early 1840s were for couples rather than individuals. Church members

<sup>51</sup> Milton R. Hunter, *Christ in Ancient America*, vol. 2, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959), p. 168.

needed an eternal companion to attain exaltation, and the exaltation of eternally sealed (i.e., bound together for eternity) families rather than the salvation of individuals became the primary end of Mormon doctrine and ritual. As families, the Saints would return to the presence of their heavenly Father and savior, and they would participate in the creative work of the gods. Marriage and procreation were the heart of exaltation. . . . To be exalted meant the eternal increase of progeny. Smith confirmed this meaning of exaltation when he dictated his revelation on eternal and plural marriage.<sup>52</sup>

While faithful Mormon women are promised godhood it seems to be tied to eternal motherhood and confined to giving birth to billions of spirit children. Her husband will be in charge of sending these spirit children to another earth to experience mortality, where they will only have contact with their Father, not the Mother. Melodie Moench Charles observed:

Our theology currently gives women no hope that their participation in priesthood will ever be great enough to allow them to create anything but children. Some women might be excited by the possibility of providing the womb through which a never-ending stream of children would be born but I am not.<sup>53</sup>

## The Brigham Young Era

Joseph Smith's successors continued to develop the idea of multiple gods and wives. In 1852, after the move to Utah territory, the LDS Church publicly admitted to the practice of plural marriage. This doctrine seemed to mesh well with their concept of multiple gods who form additional worlds. If a man is to produce enough spirits to populate a world it would seem logical that he would need more than one wife. Preaching in 1866, Brigham Young declared "The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy."<sup>54</sup>

LDS apostle Orson Pratt reasoned "If none but Gods will be permitted to multiply immortal children, it follows that each God must have one or more wives."<sup>55</sup> In another article, Orson Pratt explained:

It must be remembered, that seventy thousand million, however great the number may appear to us, are but two-thirds of the vast family of spirits who were begotten before the foundation of the world: . . . Add

to seventy thousand million, the third part [of God's spirit children] which fell, namely, thirty-five thousand million, and the sum amounts to one hundred and five thousand million which was the approximate number of the sons and daughters of God in Heaven . . .

If we admit that one personage was the **father** of all this great family, and that they were all born of the **same mother**, the period of time intervening between the birth of the oldest and the youngest spirit must have been immense. If we suppose, as an average, that only one year intervened between each birth, then it would have required **over one hundred thousand million of years** for the **same mother** to have given birth to this vast family . . .

If the **father** of these spirits, prior to his redemption, had secured to himself, through the everlasting covenant of marriage, **many wives**, . . . the period required to people a world would be shorter, . . . with a hundred wives, this period would be reduced to only one thousand million of years. . . . While the Patriarch with his hundred wives, would multiply worlds on worlds, . . . the other, who had only secured to himself one wife, would in the same period, just barely have peopled one world.<sup>56</sup>

Brigham Young even taught that Adam was a polygamist: "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>57</sup>

## Is Jesus Married?

If God is married and mortal couples must also have eternal mates to achieve godhood it follows that Jesus would also be required to marry. During the early years in Utah territory the leading authorities of the church not only taught that Jesus was married, but that he was also a polygamist. Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young, made these comments:

The grand reason of the burst of public sentiment in anathemas upon Christ and his disciples, causing his crucifixion, was evidently based on **polygamy**. . . . 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>58</sup>

On another occasion Brigham Young said: "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>59</sup>

52 Turner, *The Mormon Jesus*, pp. 161-162.

53 Melodie Moench Charles, "The Need for a New Mormon Heaven," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 21, no. 3, (Autumn 1988): p. 79.

54 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, (August 19, 1866), p. 269.

55 Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, (1854), p. 158.

56 Pratt, *The Seer*, pp. 38-39.

57 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, p. 50.

58 Jedediah Grant, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, pp. 345-346.

59 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 13, p. 309.

Apostle Orson Hyde asserted:

It will be borne in mind that once on a time, there was a **marriage in Cana of Galilee**; . . . no less a person than **Jesus Christ was married on that occasion**. If he was never married, his intimacy with Mary and Martha, and the other Mary also whom Jesus loved, must have been highly unbecoming and improper to say the least of it. . . . At this doctrine the long-faced hypocrite and the sanctimonious bigot will probably cry, blasphemy! . . . Object not, therefore, too strongly against the **marriage of Christ** . . .<sup>60</sup>

When the non-Mormons decried polygamy, claiming it was one of the “relics of barbarism,” Brigham Young replied: “Yes, one of the relics of Adam, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, David, Solomon, the Prophets, of Jesus, and his Apostles.”<sup>61</sup>

While the LDS Church today does not talk about Jesus being married, it would seem to be a necessity since God is married and they believe all of his children must do the same in order to progress to godhood.

## Ending Polygamy?

President Brigham Young was very emphatic in proclaiming that the church could never give up polygamy:

I heard the revelation on polygamy [from Joseph Smith], and I believed it with all my heart, and I know it is from God . . . “Do you think that we shall ever be admitted as a State into the Union without denying the principle of polygamy?” If we are not admitted until then, we shall never be admitted.<sup>62</sup>

However, as the United States government continued to press the church to give up the practice, new laws were enacted to force compliance. In 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker Bill was passed which, among other things, “declared that marriages not publicly recorded were felonies . . . The most serious stipulation of the bill, however, was the threat to dissolve the legal entity of the [LDS] church corporation and to confiscate all church property in excess of \$50,000.”<sup>63</sup>

According to historian B. Carmon Hardy, “Then, on September 24, 1890, President Woodruff produced his famous Manifesto, advising church members to obey the laws of the land as they related to polygamy.”<sup>64</sup> Part of the 1890 Manifesto reads:

60 Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pp. 259-260.

61 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, p. 328.

62 *Deseret News* (October 10, 1866).

63 Richard Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), p. 133.

64 B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 130.

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.<sup>65</sup>

Without further clarification, many Mormons were left to wonder if this statement was to be considered a revelation or just an admonition. Did it mean all Mormons were to discontinue living with their plural families, refrain from having more children born to these unions, or just that they were not to take any additional wives? There seemed to be one policy for the public and another in private. In the appendix to his book, Professor Hardy lists the names of 220 LDS men, including apostles, stake presidents and bishops, who continued to take plural wives after the Manifesto.<sup>66</sup>

## Polygamy in Heaven?

Some may dismiss plural marriage as a thing of the past. Yet LDS men have continued to be sealed in the temple to additional women when the man has outlived his first wife. This would necessitate polygamy in heaven. Writing in 1897 LDS Apostle Charles W. Penrose stated:

In the case of a man marrying a wife in the everlasting covenant who dies while he continues in the flesh and marries another by the same divine law, each wife will come forth in her order and enter with him into his glory.<sup>67</sup>

This doctrine was reaffirmed in October of 2007 at the funeral for the second wife of President Howard W. Hunter, the fourteenth President of the LDS Church. The *Deseret News* reported:

**President Hinckley affirmed the eternal nature of the marriage between Sister [Inis] Hunter and the former church president**, whose first wife, Claire Jeffs, died after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease and is now buried beside him in the Salt Lake Cemetery.

Inis Hunter “will now be laid to rest on the other side,” he said. “**They were sealed under the authority of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood for time and for all eternity**,” he said, recalling the marriage ceremony he performed for them in the Salt Lake Temple in April 1990.<sup>68</sup>

65 *Doctrine and Covenants*, Official Proclamation 1. <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1>

66 Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II.

67 Charles W. Penrose, “Mormon” *Doctrine Plain and Simple, or Leaves from the Tree of Life*, (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1897), p. 66.

68 “Sister Hunter’s humor and cheerfulness remembered as she is laid to rest,” *Deseret News* (October 22, 2007).

See Digital (PDF) Books on Page 19

Another example of plural sealings is Apostle Russell M. Nelson's marriage in 2006 to a BYU professor. The *BYU NewsNet* for April 7, 2006, announced the temple marriage of Apostle Nelson, age 81, to Wendy Watson. His first wife died in February of 2005 and this was the first marriage for his new wife. This would mean, according to LDS beliefs, that Nelson has two wives sealed to him for eternity.

Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the LDS Church, remarried twice after the death of his first wife, and in his book, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 67, he remarked: “. . . **my wives will be mine in eternity.**”

Harold B. Lee, the eleventh president of the church, also was sealed to another woman after his wife's death and was looking forward to a polygamous relationship in heaven. He, in fact, wrote a poem in which he reflected that his second wife, Joan, would join his first wife, Fern, as his eternal wives:

*My lovely Joan was sent to me: So Joan joins Fern  
That three might be, more fitted for eternity.  
“O Heavenly Father, my thanks to thee.”*<sup>69</sup>

After being widowed, Apostle Dallin Oaks remarried in the temple and, according to Mormonism, will be married eternally to both women. In 2002 he commented on his second sealing:

When I was 66, my wife June died of cancer. Two years later—a year and a half ago—I married [in the LDS temple] Kristen McMain, **the eternal companion** who now stands at my side.<sup>70</sup>

Given these plural sealings, many women are left today with the uneasy knowledge that if they precede their husbands in death they may have to accept plural wives in the afterlife. They may be sealed to only one Heavenly Father but will they end up being one of several Heavenly Mothers?

Since the LDS Church maintains that all the women sealed in marriage to a man will be his in eternity, then obviously most of the LDS past prophets will live polygamy. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young alone were sealed in marriage to dozens of women during their lifetime and many more women were sealed to them after their deaths.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> *Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac*, p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> Dallin Oaks, “Timing,” speech delivered at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, (January 29, 2002).

<sup>71</sup> George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008).

## Conclusion

Some LDS women may find comfort in the idea of a Heavenly Mother but have they fully realized the implications of such a doctrine? The Mormon heaven is filled with multiple gods, with dozens of wives giving birth to billions of spirit children as each god creates another world.

In 1988 LDS scholar, Melodie Moench Charles, urged the LDS Church leaders to “rethink our theology of heaven. The nineteenth-century Mormon men who fleshed out the theological skeleton provided by scriptures and revelation fleshed it out according to their own cultural prejudices . . . It is time to reject those aspects of Mormon heaven that are uninspired, unreasonable, unfair, damaging, and serve no virtuous end.”<sup>72</sup> Sadly, the LDS leaders have now more firmly established the heretical doctrine of a Heavenly Mother, as well as the goal for Mormons to aspire to godhood.

Rob Bowman of the Institute for Religious Research concluded:

One lesson to be learned from the development of the Mormon doctrine of Heavenly Mother is that false doctrine tends to grow and to get worse over time. At first Joseph Smith taught that God had a spirit body that looked like ours but was not flesh and bones. He affirmed that there was only one God and that all things were created by God alone. But Joseph's theology changed. Human beings went from created physical beings to created spiritual beings and then to uncreated spiritual intelligences. The Father went from a personage of spirit to a personage of flesh and bones to an exalted Man. God the Father went from being God from all eternity to being a mortal man who attained Godhood by his exaltation. The number of Gods went from one to two, from two to three, and at the end of Joseph's life to an uncountable number of Gods, including Gods before Heavenly Father.

The Mormon doctrine of a Heavenly Mother is simply one result of that doctrinal development. Once God the Father had been conceptualized as a male human being with a flesh-and-bone body like ours with his own divine Father, and humans had been conceptualized as the Father's children in heaven, it was a natural next step to conclude that our spirits had a Mother in heaven. Joseph Smith's logic by which a father who has a son must also himself have a father led to the conclusion that where there is a father there must also be a mother. The doctrine of a Heavenly Mother is false, but the real problem lies in the Mormon

<sup>72</sup> Melodie Moench Charles, “The Need for a Heavenly Mother,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, (Autumn, 1988): p. 86; [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V21N03\\_75.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V21N03_75.pdf)

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doctrine of God. Having made the Gods in man's image as literally beings of the same kind, Mormonism was bound to make the Gods male and female.<sup>73</sup>

In recent years a few Christian leaders have been encouraged through dialogue with various LDS scholars that the LDS Church is moving, however slowly, toward Christian orthodoxy. They point to the increased emphasis on Jesus and the decreasing emphasis on God once being a mortal. Others see this as more a matter of simplifying the message for the public without actually changing their doctrine.<sup>74</sup>

With the issuing of the LDS essay on Heavenly Mother the LDS Church has reaffirmed its doctrine of a progressive God and his wife who are "the divine pattern established for us as children of heavenly parents." The 2012 LDS manual *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* declares that "As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be."<sup>75</sup>

Thus we see that the LDS Church still teaches the following:

1. God has not always been God, but achieved this position after years of self-effort.
2. Heavenly Father and his wife, Heavenly Mother, were once mortals on another world, ruled by yet a different "god."
3. Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother are resurrected mortals who have achieved godhood.
4. The goal of the LDS couple is to achieve godhood and become a Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother to their posterity.
5. God, men and angels are the same species, just in different levels of achievement.

In other words, Mormonism is still a heretical offshoot of Christianity. ■

73 Robert M. Bowman, Jr., "Heavenly Mother: False Doctrine 'Begets' More False Doctrine," Institute for Religious Research, <http://mit.irr.org/heavenly-mother-origin-of-mormon-doctrine-of-mother-in-heaven>

74 Richard J. Mouw, First Things, "Mormons Approaching Orthodoxy," (May 2016), see online at <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/05/mormons-approaching-orthodoxy>. Also see response by Brent Kunkle, Stand to Reason, "Are Mormons Approaching Orthodoxy?" (April 16, 2016), online at <http://www.str.org/blog/are-mormons-approaching-orthodoxy#.VyJeEfkfJD9>

75 *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*, LDS Church (2012), p. 83.

***Gospel Principles 2009 as a Significant  
Perpetuation of Traditional Mormon Theology***

By Aaron Shafovaloff

*Salt Lake City Messenger* No. 115  
<http://utlm.org/newsletters/no115.htm#gp>

## Excerpts from Letters and Emails

**September 2015:** I have watched your interviews and I am shocked that more Mormons haven't figured this out already. I know that now there are more leaving than ever before. . . . I am LDS but not active . . . One day I want to tell my husband of my finding and feelings but I am going to have to have solid facts and understanding to do that.

Searching for truth . . .

**October 2015:** Being raised LDS I was taught not to just be skeptical of any non-lds material but to flat out reject it because anything that would make "the church" look bad was an obvious lie. It has been through your hard work and dedication that i was able to find so much damaging information through lds sources. I left the LDS church last year and have been running after Christ ever since. Thank you for all you do! God bless.

**October 2015:** Thank you Miss Sandra for speaking with me today. It is my birthday. You answering the phone was one of the best gifts ever.

I have been obsessively watching anything on YouTube with you in it for the past few months. Thank you for your gracious forgiveness for me thinking evil of you and your ministry for all these years.

I actually tempted the LORD when I dialed the number posted on your site and bet I could never get to talk to The Sandra Tanner. Your accessibility must be exhausting but it meant much. . . .

I have been going off and on to a very small non-denominational church for a while. The strange thing is my former stake president and another former bishopric member . . . are attending on the sly sporadically. . . . These guys are prominent, dept heads in the university of the city's ward. This church is about 25 miles out.

It was surreal to see them in attendance. This would be HUGE if discovered, but I have assured them it won't happen because of me. . . . There seems to be serendipitous moments going in and exiting out of Mormonism. It is so difficult to remove the scales off the eyes and unstop the ears. So easy a task, but hard. . . . God bless you.

**October 2015:** I wanted to first thank you for what you are doing. I am a recent convert and have since been questioning my decision.

**October 2015:** I'm not sure if this letter will get to Sandra Tanner, but I wanted to send it to thank you.

You see, I wasn't born into mormonism; but it affected my life because it influenced me at a vulnerable young age. I was born a Lutheran, as a kid I was more interested in the Baptist beliefs, but at 18 I converted to mormonism when 2 sister missionaries knocked on my door when I was in a very vulnerable time. I joined in innocent ignorance. I have been a seeker all my life. As a result, I've been swept up by the many deceptions that are out there. . . .

Well, I went on a mission, which was disastrous and the beginning of my long exit out. I got married in a temple. But the whole time there was something inside me that told me to flee mormonism. It took me awhile.

In 1992 I finally left Mormonism, but I didn't know any of the 'truths' and deceptions.

Then in 2003 I was looking for ex-eastern websites, because I was being lured into eastern beliefs. . . . I was concerned because mormonism was already one strange system that I had released from, and I didn't want another. So when I looked for ex-eastern forums I noticed an exmormon forum: the recovery for mormonism forum. . . .

Well, I was in shock as I read information. I had no idea that I had been lied to and that it was a complete fraud. I had to go back and re-sort the information that I now knew was deception. . . . I learned of your website and that it was greatly respected for the pioneering work you and your husband had done . . . Now I was suspicious of beliefs again. . . . I never like to use the word God, but I thought there was an energy that created. . . . I thought there was an energy that had been split in two and showed up as good/bad, light/dark. Beyond that I was rather lost. I also had no idea how to stay in the 'good' side of this. Everything appeared so deceptive to me. . . .

In fall of 2013 my marriage was at an all-time low. I won't go into detail, but Satan planned to destroy us through a marriage crisis but God used that to get us back to him. Because we had been so involved in so many beliefs, from new age research, to channelling to you name it, we had become an open receptor and had no way of discerning God's ways from imposters (except for mormonism, that we knew was a fraud.) Still, leaving mormonism was based on God's truths. . . .

I still could not connect to God and Jesus in a way I did as a baptist kid, nor as a mormon for that matter. I couldn't read the bible because I still experienced it with repulsion and distrust. I still had trouble with the name God and really couldn't use the name Jesus. I couldn't accept the bible either.

But in april of 2015 everything changed for us. My husband and I, who both work for the same company, got in a work crisis. This crisis involved a serious litigation, as we had been deceived by a co-worker to help her. . . .

We have a history of being entangled with liars (mormonism being the first one) to the point that I became suicidal and didn't want to live in this world anymore, as I am too innocent and get manipulated. I decided that I didn't like this world and could no longer live on it. That it wasn't for me.

But God had other plans. God used this to bring us to our knees and lead us out of the valley. He used it to bring us back to an understanding of God, . . . I also wanted to let you know how much you've helped me, as I think that God has pronounced you as a blessing in the exmormon community . . . May I ask you to pray for my husband and I . . . We are newly rescued as of a few months and are getting stronger and stronger with every day, through God's mercy and guidance.

And that's where I get a little fear show up, because I've been deceived so many times by religious beliefs, I'm concerned to get decieved again so I haven't found a church

to go to. . . . This new found feeling in God and Jesus is so much different than what I experienced in Mormonism. It seems simplified and cleaned up. . . . Let us thank and praise God's Holy name.

**November 2015:** You are more than a ministry. You are more than a bookstore. You are a light to the world. You provide not only perspective, but also hard facts. What has impressed me since I learned of your ministry, is that you have had a focus on showing first hand documents. People, if they want to see the truth, can open their eyes, and see the facts for themselves.

You cannot change someone's mind, but you can show them the difference between a shadow and reality.

Thank you for everything that you do. Keep up the ministry of truth.

**November 2015:** I read the Gospel Topics essays on plural marriage with interest, and believe that they are intended to deceive the faithful who cling to their family legacy and what they've been taught since birth (in most cases). With the availability of information on the Internet, Mormon leaders probably felt pushed into a corner to respond in some way. Sure there are admissions in these essays, but they are couched in carefully crafted rhetoric. Presenting Helen Mar Kimball's age as "several months before her 15th birthday" (rather than the 14-year-old that she was) was an obvious example of these manipulative disclosures (which are not easily accessed on the church website). Dieter Uchtdorf's acknowledgement that some Mormon leaders may have "said or done things that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine" is somewhat ridiculous given that it was Joseph Smith, their founder, who was a chief perpetrator of these "mistakes." As a history major at BYU in the early 1970's, I studied and had access to many primary sources containing Mormon History. If the Mormon leaders truly want to honor the truth and respect the integrity of their members, these primary sources should be fully disclosed. Let the people decide for themselves.

**December 2015:** I was sucked into the LDS life when my world was upside down. Been out since Nov 19, 2013.

**January 2016:** I've watched so many of your videos and many that others have posted with you in them. I have just become so fascinated with Joseph Smith and Mormonism. I am a born again Christian that attends a Baptist church. I watch a family on YouTube that it turns out are Mormon and I began to wonder what they believe. . . . I just love your videos and the way you explain things makes so much sense to me. I just wanted to tell you how smart and brave I think you are to break away from Mormonism and try to tell people the truth. I really think the head people of the Mormon church use mind games to keep their people in a protected bubble.

**January 2016:** Sandra Tanner, I owe you an apology. Years ago, I fancied myself an amateur Mormon apologist. I found a cool thing on the Internet newsgroups. . . . I spent hours each day there and thought I was smart enough to defend Mormonism.

During that time, you were often the foil for our apologetics. We lumped you into a derogatory group known as “The Tanners”—you know, those apostate anti-mormons who twist and turn everything. . . .

But my naive focus back then was focusing on arguing miniscule doctrine and things like: does Jesus being born “at Jerusalem” (BOM) really mean “in Bethlehem?” Does “My house has many mansions” refer to the three Mormon kingdoms? There were never any real answers to those questions.

I don’t remember exactly what I knew about you back then—other than that I knew you must be evil and in Satan’s power. I never really read any of your stuff because I knew it would just be rubbish. If I had painted a picture of you, it would have been dark—you as an evil demon sucking peoples souls.

Last year, I heard your interview with John Dehlin on Mormon Stories. To my surprise, you were nothing like my caricature. You were kind, articulate and caring. You were intelligent. You were thoughtful. . . . And you were right.

My journey out of Mormonism has allowed me to open my eyes and my heart to many new things. And I want to thank you for being a pioneer in post-mormonism.

I humbly admit that I am a child among men when it comes to Mormon history. I knew nothing about the real history of the church and its foundations. All I knew was the Pablum I had been taught. The more I learn now, the more I realize how little I knew then.

So, I want to apologize for what I thought of you. I want to apologize because I would have shunned and avoided you at all costs if I had been in the same room. I would have told others that you were full of lies and deceit. I’m sorry that you have had to live with people like me thinking bad things about you.

I was wrong.

Thank you for being true to yourself. I hope that someday I can meet you and thank you in person. I would like to hug you and, tell you that you have a loving spirit and that you are a beautiful child of God.

Someday, I’d like to call you my friend.

**January 2016:** Dear Sir, allow me the presumptuous assertion of your lack of understanding about the subject of “prophecy.” Also, allow me a few moments of your time to try and educate you, if only merely superficially regarding prophecy. I shall be as brief as possible.

I propose the spirit of prophecy is subject to the true prophets. Implying, generally it takes the spirit of prophecy and being a prophet (i.e. the actual/factual testimony of Jesus) to gain understanding from any prophecy. That there is really no personal interpretation of prophecy, but only truth as it is given by the spirit of God. The spirit of God giving knowledge of things past, present, and future in the correct context for the individual(s). . . .

Don’t be too quick to judge the concept of prophecy in light of your own limited understanding. It takes deep philosophy to truly understand it, only imparted by the Spirit of God to His Latter Day Saints. In your chapter you utilized argumentative constructs to “prove” the Great Seer Joseph

Smith was a false prophet. However, by your same reasoning Jesus Christ must have been a false prophet (See Mark 9:1). Now, you may utilize some fancy argument that “explains” away why that verse is being misunderstood by me. But then again I can utilize even more intelligent argument to show why you misunderstand the prophecies of Joseph Smith.

But in the end, the only way to KNOW of the truth is by doing the works laid out by Jesus. Hence, you should repent in humility, call for those young unlearned Mormon missionaries to teach and baptize you, then have hands laid upon your head, and the Holy Ghost will teach you about old Joe Smith and his prophecies. If not, you will spend up your time and energy wasted on that which will never satisfy. The Mormon religion is here to stay! It is the Kingdom of God on earth. Intelligent and educated people (like myself) will always flock toward it. It is the most intelligent religion on the planet.

**January 2016:** Sister Tanner, over a year ago I made an anonymous account and I was incredibly rude and disrespectful towards you. I wish I could convey how sorry I am. I am sorry. I was doubting and afraid.

**January 2016:** You don’t know me but you have blessed my life so much!!!! I once believed all of the things I was told about you and a great blessing to me has been to realize I was a brainless, fed, Stepford, shallow, judgmental woman.

I now understand what grace means so I am not saying this in a condemning way over myself but a freeing way of thank God I now know more, better, understand the pain those who faced rejection and being lied about so that people like me can be freed and live in this BEAUTIFUL life after the church (which I was taught by the church, would be torment. I receive spiritual experiences though I was taught the Holy Spirit (Ghost) would be sucked out of me and I understand how to really love people without judging them (which I see now as a form of loathing people) and I have learned to be compassionate with myself and others and to meet myself and others where we are in this journey and just love. Work in progress and working a lifetime of false-teaching (which I believed whole-heartedly until I was 40) and I am sure it will take a long time to get it all out but I am finally through the grief stages and it is coming out beautifully.

Thank you for being you, for being strong, for facing control I don’t think I would have had the guts to face, for being such a great example of meeting people and loving them where they are at on this journey. So much love and gratitude to you! I am SO thankful you were born!!!

**January 2016:** Sandra. It was yours and Jerald’s writings that kept me from returning to the Mormon Church after I first came out. So many times I was “this” close to going back. Your devotion and dedication will never be forgotten.

**January 2016:** I recently finished “Mormonism, Magic, and Masonry,” and . . . it . . . was . . . AWESOME. Those kooky Mormon Glass Lookers. I’m an ex-Mo and I can’t believe I went on a mission to preach about this bat-sh\*\* crazy dude.

Looking back on my mission I laugh now at the memories of those people I ran into that called Joseph Smith, Joe Smith, or John Smith. At any rate . . . I loved M, M, and M by the Tanners, very good. I loved all of it but Abrac was hilarious. Thank you for your hard work in telling the truth about ole' Joe Smith.

**February 2016:** Dear Sandra—I have recently been listening to your lectures and interviews on YouTube and want to thank you for what you and your late husband, Jerald, have done in exposing the deceit, corruption and evil of the Mormon religion. I am so impressed by your courage, scholarship and integrity in investigating and how you have stood for the truth of the Biblical gospel.

I've always known Mormonism to be fraudulent, but recently have been doing a more thorough investigation because our oldest granddaughter began dating a Mormon and has in fact been baptized into the M. church a few months ago. She was raised in a Bible-believing church and family and yet Satan has been able (thus far) to blind her eyes. We are all heart broken and praying for her salvation and for the young man as well. We have shared loads of Scripture with her and all kinds of links to ministries that are revealing the false teachings of the Mormons. If she were seeking truth, it is everywhere for her to see, but at this point I think she's so into the guy that she just wants Mormonism to be true. We pray for the Lord to open her eyes, snatch her from the fire.

I especially appreciated your explanation of all the temple rituals. I would think that if [our granddaughter] knew some of this creepy stuff it would give her pause. Maybe the Lord will give me an opportunity to let her in on some of this. I think she's only hearing the "palatable" stuff at their weekly meetings. Also, from your interviews, I realized how central polygamy is to the teaching of the church. I doubt if [our granddaughter] has any idea of that and probably only thinks that polygamy is part of the history (not current doctrine) and/or connected with the fundamentalist strains of Mormonism—when in fact, it's part of the teaching of the mainstream church.

Your teaching also helped me reconcile how intelligent, educated people (Mitt Romney, my husband's dermatologist, etc.) can hold to Mormonism. I'm seeing now that they may even know it's false and still cling to it because of the culture, the family ties, etc. So sad that people are willing to value these things before truth!

I'm so happy to learn that many Mormons are coming to Christ! . . . And thank you so much for being one who values and stands for truth. I'm amazed how well you are able to articulate all that you have learned and thank the Lord for your scholarship and clear mind! To me, you and the record of your work are a real treasure.

**February 2016:** I just finished watching the documentary . . . [*The Mormons: Who They are, What They Believe*] and wanted to reach out and thank you for the brutal honesty by all of the past members who appeared in the documentary (Sandra especially!!).

**February 2016:** Sandra,

I have watched and read anything and everything that has your name on it. I have learned so much from your videos, Conference talks, your fireside talks, research on Joseph Smith and your interview with Bishop Earl on the ex Mormon files (and many more). . . .

I am 38 years old and came out of Mormonism around the age of 30. I know more about Mormonism now than I did when I was in it. I also realized that I was in a cult all the years I was in Mormonism. I had my Mormon goggles on and pressure from my Bishop dad keeping me in when I knew it was not right. My Mormon temple ceremony was horrible. By the time we were in the second room and chanting everything in me was screaming "this is a cult!!!" The Holy Spirit was telling me that it was not right.

I left the celestial room as fast as I could and ran to the bathroom and cried. When I turned to my Mormon escort through the temple and told her that I felt horrible about what just happened and that it felt cultish she brushed me off with no words of encouragement or explanation. My husband at the time was only a member for one year before we went to the temple. The only part that did not feel like a cult was when we were sealed to our three beautiful children. But my poor husband had to watch me, a member of this church my whole life, cry all the way home from [one state] back to our home in [another state]. I can only imagine what was going through his head. Two months after going to the temple he had an affair and we shortly thereafter divorced.

Since then I have finally opened my eyes and started thinking for myself and reading everything about Mormonism that I can get my hands and eyes and ears on. I am now a Christian who believes that Jesus Christ is my savior and gave me the gift of grace. Grace is not a word to hear in Mormonism. I just felt like I needed to reach out to you and tell you how much you have helped me in my journey to better understand that Mormonism is not Christian. And the things about Joseph Smith that are so true that the church hides from the members. What a horrible horrible man he was. Again I thank you for all the research and information that you give people and I'll pass it on to everyone that I now witness to. You and your husband truly have done the work that God will be proud of.

**March 2016:** I am a member of the Church of Latter Day Saints. I am so sorry that I had never heard of the Tanner's before now. Unbelievable I know.

Anyway, I have been contemplating leaving the church ever since the announcement came about the children of Gay couples. . . .

So I began doing research on the church. I came across a nice young man called Jeremy Runnels. It is through him that I heard of Sandra Tanner.

I have found all of the information about the church history fascinating. But what I really found so awesome was the information about Jesus being all we really need for our salvation.

As I am sure you know, Mormons have a very different view of being “saved” We are taught to suspect anyone who uses that term. lol.

I bought a bunch of Bibles because I wanted to “start fresh” as it were and not have all of the commentary and footnotes that I have in my quad.

I bought a KJV Bible, a NIV Bible and a big nice fancy leather bound one for my front room so that when the visiting teachers come over we can read from the Bible instead of from the *Ensign*.

I have not “officially” left yet. My husband is totally done with the Church at this point and he is being incredibly supportive and patient as I go at my own pace.

I thing after this Easter Sunday I will try to find a non-denominational church around where I live.

I watched your “fireside” just recently. I can’t believe I never heard of you. :)

**March 2016:** Thank you Sandra. So much information you’ve shared here. I really appreciate your time. I’ve studied probably 20 hours and learned probably more than most Mormons know about their religion at this point. The problem is, my [19 year old] son [with a Mormon girlfriend] will not listen to any of it, will not look at anything on the internet, does not want to talk to anyone about it. He says it’s between him and God and he will pray whether or not it’s true. (I’m sure you know where that idea came from). I’ve encouraged him to talk to his pastor about it as he had just been baptized the week before he was given the BOM by a non-denominational pastor. He hasn’t done that either. He’s afraid he will be influenced by outside resources and he believes this needs to come from the Holy Spirit.

I never in my wildest dreams thought about this type of thing happening to him. He’s been raised in a Christian home his whole life and all of our extended family are Christians, all grandparents, etc.

**March 2016:** [From granddaughter of longtime friend] Thank you for praying for my salvation before I was born. Thank you for loving me and my family. I will be forever grateful for you. Would appreciate your continued prayers for the Lord to save the rest of them. Blessed Resurrection Sunday! I thank the Lord for you and your ministry.

**April 2016:** Oh yeah of little faith..... convert to Islam please.

**April 2016:** I am a fairly young college student, . . . I did not know anything about Mormonism until about 2 and a half years ago when many of my LDS friends left for their missions. A few of them shared their beliefs with me before they left. Ever since, missionaries have been showing up at my door constantly. I was later introduced to some friends from church that use their home in Utah to evangelize during the Manti Pageant. This has become an annual mission trip for me, and this past year I had the pleasure of visiting the Utah Lighthouse Ministry and meeting Sandra Tanner. I learned so much just from visiting, and from the books I have purchased

since. I’d like to make sure that those involved with this ministry know that people are thankful for them and their work.

Additionally, I want those involved in this ministry to know that it is making a difference. One of my closest friends, who is LDS, revealed to me, and me alone so far, his questioning of the Book of Mormon, particularly why it seems to support the Trinity. I know that the past two and a half years of us discussing Mormonism and Christianity have influenced his doubts. I have this ministry, and others like Mormonism Research Ministry to thank for equipping me for this kind of ministry, and God of course.

**April 2016:** Hi, over there!

I’m just a little curious. I am (was) a mormon untill a couple of weeks ago. I am a convert who joined the church here in Norway when I was in my teens. All the candy flossed information that is surrounding an every day mormon is fine to live with until you get to know what is really going on.

I really felt, when I was looking into the internet on other information about the church, that I was doing something terribly wrong. Everybody within the church is saying that we must stay away from all that kind of info since it is anti-mormon. NOBODY has ever told me about the church essay’s. Feel like I have been played for a fool by those who have red them. Is there a lot who knows but don’t have the courage to speak out about it or are they just really well flossed with all the easy going things?

It is incredible how this organization is able to endure with all this evidence that the church is way of track. And they have been that way ever since Joseph Smith found out he could write a book and make money on it. He should have continued with his moneydigging and we would have been spared for all this trouble.

There is a lot that could have been said but I am wondering if there is other norwegians that have made contact and are curious on what’s going on? There is about 2000 active members in Norway. But I think more and more will be informed with the dreadful things of what they have believed in.

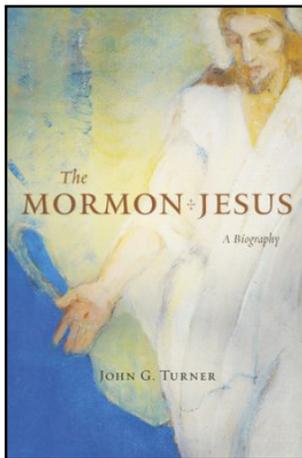
I want to thank you, Sandra, for your steadfastness in the truth. You and Jerald are giants. You have made it possible for us to go deeper into the material. When I first found out, I wanted to know everything, and sat up late at night to watch your interview with John Dehlin. It was great. And I also listened to Lee Baker. I have now bought Shadow or reality on PDF and look forward to increase my knowledge. . . .

Though it must be said it is probably easier to leave church here in Norway then it would be in the LDS capitol. Luckily, but the feeling of betrayal is ever present.

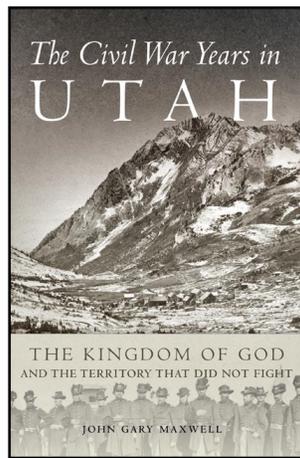
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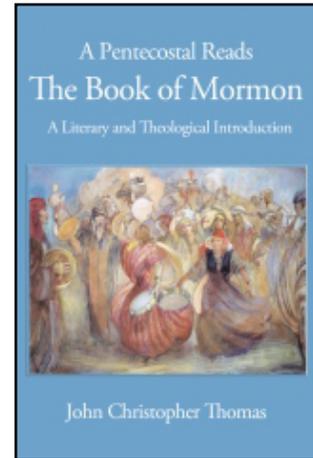
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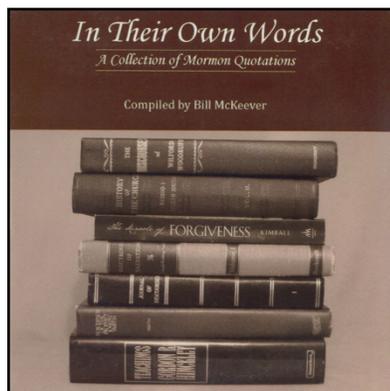
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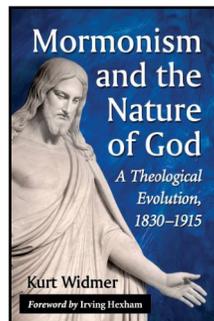


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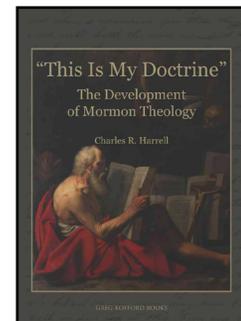


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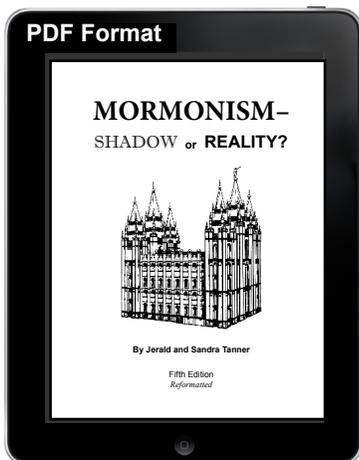


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### *The New Mormon History* - Excerpt from Chapter 11

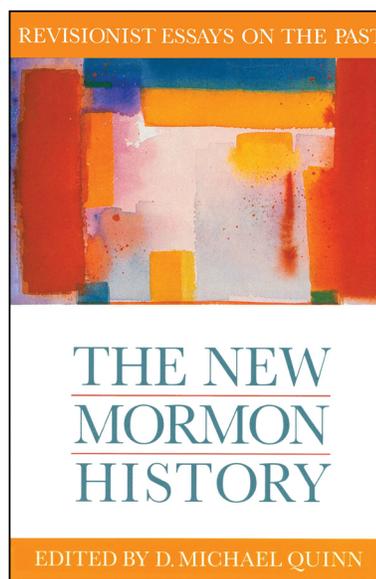
“Divorce among Mormon Polygamists: Extent and Explanations”  
Eugene E. Campbell and Bruce L. Campbell

Studies of Mormon polygamy have tended to emphasize the origin and motivation for the practice, courtship techniques, inter-family relationships, economic adjustments, housing arrangements, and legal difficulties, but very little has been written concerning divorce. . . . Nevertheless recent studies have revealed that 1,645 divorces were granted by Brigham Young during the period of his presidency and that many of these were obtained by prominent pioneer leaders involved in the practice of plural marriage. . . . First, many prominent men known to be polygamists are listed on these records of divorce. The names of many general authorities of the LDS church as well as stake and ward leaders are included. Second, several cases reveal that two or more wives were divorced from one man on the same day. The most unusual case is that of George D. Grant who was divorced from three wives on the same day and from a fourth wife within five weeks. More conclusive evidence is the fact that Brigham Young did not have authority to grant civil divorces terminating monogamous marriages, but as president of the church he alone had the right to sever polygamous relationships. Polygamous marriages were always extralegal, and in the Mormon system only the president had the right to authorize marriages and divorces. The incoming and outgoing correspondence of the pioneer leader is replete with requests for permission to take extra wives as well as to be divorced from them. . . .

Evidence from D. Michael Quinn’s prosopographical study of early LDS church leaders tends to bear out these

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assumptions. He discovered that of the seventy-two general authorities who entered plural marriage, thirty-nine were involved in broken marriages, including fifty-four divorces, twenty-six separations, and one annulment. (*The New Mormon History*, pp. 181-182)