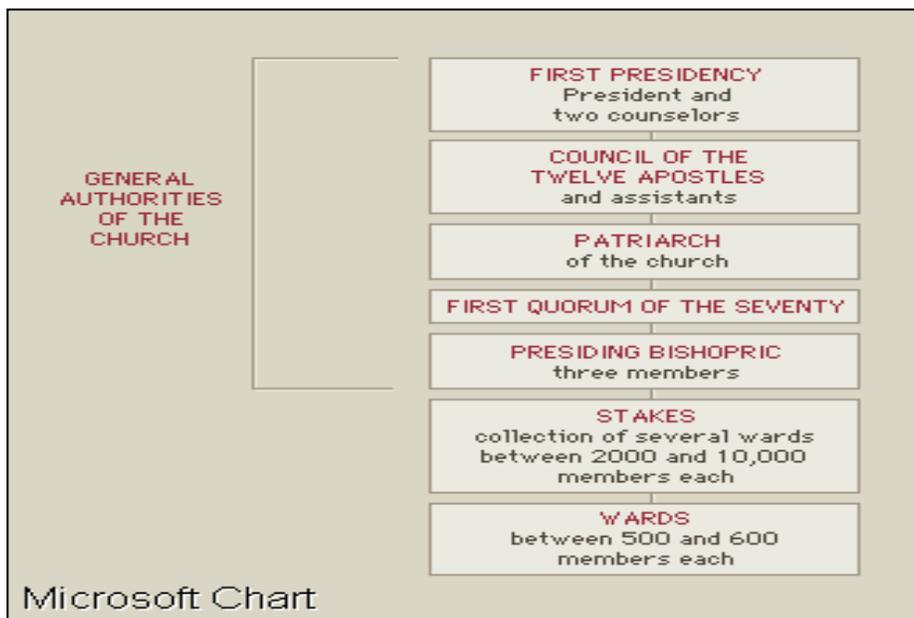


# Mormonism

## I. About the Mormons

- A. Official Name: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
(Headquarters: Salt Lake City, Utah)
- B. Present Membership: 6.5 million (1989 estimate). From 1970 to 1985, the Mormon church grew 62%, making it the fastest growing religious body in the United States.
- C. Organization:

### Mormon Hierarchy

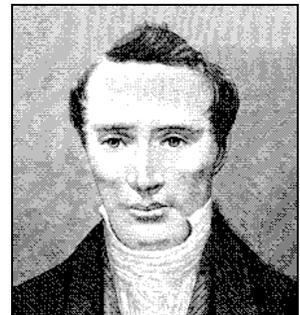


The Mormon church has no professional clergy. A hierarchy of officials, as shown in the chart, oversees the operations of the church. Those who serve as bishops or council members, for example, continue to work in their lay jobs and are not paid for the work they perform for the church. The church dictates that the primary role of women is in the home; however, women can serve in the Relief Society, a women's organization that parallels the priesthood in the hierarchy.

## II. Brief History

The founder of Mormonism was Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-44). Born in Vermont, he spent his teenage years in Palmyra, NY. During his adolescence, there was much religious fervor in the country. Most of his family joined the Presbyterian Church, but Joseph was undecided. So he decided to ask God which church to join. Accordingly, Smith retired to the woods and prayed. He tells of the incident:

Suddenly two personages appeared. One of them pointed to the other and said, "This is my Beloved Son. Hear Him!" In answer to the question as to which of the "sects" was right, the one personage who



Joseph Smith

had addressed me said that I was to join none of them, since they were all wrong and since all their creeds were an abomination in his sight. Moreover, all those professing faith in such sects were all corrupt and hypocritical. *Pearl of Great Price*, p. 47).

Smith was only 14 years old at the time of this first vision. The second vision occurred when he was 17. It is the so-called vision of the angel Moroni. The angel supposedly told Smith that there was a book written on golden plates containing the "fullness of the everlasting Gospel" as delivered to the ancient inhabitants of the Americas. He was to translate the plates, supposedly written in Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics, by means of Urim and Thummim -- two stones in silver bows. When Smith looked at the golden plates through the stones, he was now able to read the ancient language in English. This translation became what is today the Book of Mormon.

Following the translation, Mormonism grew. Its growth took Smith and his followers to Nauvoo, Illinois, where Joseph was killed. His successor, Brigham Young, led the faithful to relocate in what is now Salt Lake city.

### **III. Sources of Authority for the Mormons**

#### A. The Bible

The Mormons regard the Bible as a sacred book, but it is not, for them, the final authority. Notice what Mormons say regarding the Holy Scriptures:

"We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." (A Study of the Articles of Faith, Art. 8)

"Mormons fortunately, however, are not forced to rely solely on the testimony of prophets and apostles of Old and New Testament

<p>"I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and that a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." . . . . Joseph Smith</p>
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times and lands. They have latter-day revelation, given through prophets of modern times, and also an inspired record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the American continent." ("What Mormons Think of Christ," 1976)

"Who knows that even one verse of the whole Bible has escaped pollution . . . [i.e., the pollution of translation error]." (Orsan Pratt, early Mormon apostle).

Mormons, as it turns out, accept only the King James Version of the Bible as being the Word of God--and this only insofar as it is correctly translated.

## B. The Book of Mormon

James E. Talmage, one of the most authoritative writers on Mormon doctrines notes:

"It is noticeable that we have no reservation respecting the Book of Mormon on the ground of incorrect translation. To do so would be to ignore attested facts as to the bringing forth of that book. Joseph Smith the prophet, seer, and revelator, through whom the ancient record has been translated into our modern tongue, expressly avers that the translation was effected through the gift and power of God, and is in no sense the product of linguistic scholarship." (*The Vitality of Mormonism*, [Boston: Gorham Press, 1919], p. 127).

Notice also what the book of Mormon implies about itself with respect to the Bible:

"Thou fool, they shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible . . . And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another . . . Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written." (II Nephi 29:6,9,10).



**Brigham Young**  
1801-1877

Finally, note what Joseph Smith himself says:

"I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and that a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed Joseph F. Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.], p. 194).

## C. Doctrines and Covenants

The first edition of this volume was written in 1876. It contains 136 sections each of which is divided into verses. These sections all contain revelations alleged to have been given through Joseph Smith, except for Section 136, which was a revelation given through President Brigham Young. The current version also includes the Manifesto prohibiting polygamy issued by President Wilford Woodruff in 1890.

D. The Pearl of Great Price

Contains miscellaneous writings covering historical and theological subjects.

E. Revelations given to the reigning President.

In Doctrines and Covenants 107, the office of president of the church is described as follows:

And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses -- Behold, here is wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church.

**IV. Problems with the Book of Mormon**

A. Though the Book of Mormon (golden plates) was allegedly buried in A.D. 428 and subsequently revealed only to Joseph Smith in 1827, nevertheless, huge sections of the Book of Mormon agree verbatim with the 1611 King James Version of the Bible. In fact, over 25,000 words are lifted right out of the KJV.

B. Over 2000 "corrections" of the original Book of Mormon (1830) translated by prophet Smith with the aid of the Urim and Thummim have been introduced into later editions. How is this fact to be reconciled with the assertion of Smith that his translation was effected "through the gift and power of God, and is in no sense the product of linguistic scholarship"?

"As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."  
... Mormon Doctrine

C. The golden plates from which the Book of Mormon came were supposed written in Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics. No such language exists or has ever existed. Why would God write in an unknown language if, as in all previous revelations, He has revealed Himself in the common languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek?

D. The Book of Mormon is full of historical and factual errors. It claims that the American Indians, for example, are of Semitic descent when it is well known that they are of Mongoloid ancestry. Furthermore, there is no archaeological evidence to support the claim that there were vast Semitic civilizations in the Americas at roughly the time of the biblical patriarch Abraham, 2200 B.C.



- E. Only Joseph Smith and a handful of other witnesses have ever made the claim to have seen the primary revelation that undergirds all of Mormonism. The alleged golden plates cannot be investigated now or studied now. In contradistinction to this, however, the primary documents of the Christian religion, the texts of the Old and New Testaments, are available to anyone who wants to study them.

## V. The Theology of Mormonism

### A. The Doctrine of God

Mormons are polytheists. That is, they believe that there are many gods. They also believe that God has a physical body of flesh and bones like human beings (God's carnality). For Mormons, God is nothing more than an exalted man. Mormons believe: "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."

#### 1. Polytheism

##### a. Mormon teaching

Joseph Smith writes, "The doctrine of a plurality of Gods is prominent in the Bible. The heads of the Gods appointed our God for us." (*Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 370-72).

##### b. Biblical refutation

- You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other. Deut. 4:35
- Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Deut. 6:4.
- This is what the LORD says--Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Isaiah 44:6
- For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. 1 Tim. 2:5.

#### 2. God's carnality

##### a. Mormon teaching

"The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's." (*Doctrines and Covenants* 130:zz).

##### b. Biblical refutation

- Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. Luke 24:39.
- God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. John 4:24
- He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Colossians 1:15

3. As man is God once was; as God is man may become.

a. Mormon teaching

"God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . If you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form . . . He was once a man like us . . ." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 345-46).

"Here, then, is eternal life -- to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace; from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 346-47).

"... and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourself."  
  
... Mormon Doctrine

b. Biblical refutation

God is not an exalted man.

- Genesis 1 and 2 (Man is a creation of God).
- This is what the LORD says--Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Isaiah 44:6

Man cannot become gods

The origin of this false doctrine is Genesis 3:5, where it is written:

- For God knows that when you eat of it [the forbidden fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Genesis 3:5

## B. Doctrine of Jesus Christ

### 1. Jesus is only "a god".

#### a. Mormon Doctrine

By obedience and devotion He attained to the pinnacle of intelligence which ranked him as a God, even in his pre-existent state." (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 192).

#### b. Biblical refutation

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1, 14.
- God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14). . . . "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I Am!" (John 8:58).
- [Jesus said] "I and the Father are one." - John 10:30
- For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. - Col. 2:9
- But about the Son he [God] says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. - Hebrews 1:8

### 2. Jesus was the spirit-brother of Lucifer (Satan) and came to earth because he, not Lucifer, had a better plan to save the world. Jesus had many wives and children as well.

### 3. Christ did not atone for all sins.

#### a. Mormon Doctrine

"There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it." (Brigham Young).

#### b. Biblical refutation

- For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time. 1 Tim. 2:5-6.
- But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus,

his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:7, 9

- He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:2

## C. The Doctrine of Salvation

### 1. Mormon Doctrine

Mormons believe in salvation according to the following formula: Salvation = faith + baptism + works. Note the following: "The first principles and ordinances of the gospel are: Faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; repentance; baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost." ("Articles of Faith", 4).

### 2. Biblical refutation:

- Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. Galatians 2:16
- For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

## D. The doctrine of Blood Atonement

### 1. Mormon teaching



This doctrine was defined by Brigham Young. Essentially, it involved executing individuals and spilling their blood so it would atone for the sins they had committed. He maintained that Christ's blood could not accomplish this. Brigham Young said:

If you want to know what to do with a thief that you may find stealing, I say kill him on the spot, and never suffer him to commit another iniquity." (J. of Discourses 1:108). "Suppose that he [any person] is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, 'shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?'

All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed . . .

I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins ... This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it." (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 4:219,220).

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Suppose that he [any person ] is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of his blood, . . . and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, 'shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?

... **Brigham Young**

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## 2. Biblical refutation

- In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.  
Eph. 1:7
- And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.  
Col. 1:20
- Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.  
Hebrews 9:25-28
- Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.  
Hebrews 10:11-12
- For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.  
1 Peter 1:18-19

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

## **E. The virgin birth of Christ**

### 1. Mormon teaching

Mormon theology, much to the chagrin of many in their midst today, has officially taught that Jesus was the product of the sexual union of Mary and Adam-God. Brigham Young wrote:

When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness . . . And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family [Adam]." ... Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, 1:50).

Recently, however, the Mormon Church officially rejected the Adam-God doctrine of Brigham Young and his later followers. But they declined to admit that Young ever taught such a doctrine. But one wonders how Young, being an inspired prophet (as Mormon theology claims for all its presidents) could possibly be in error on this point.

### 2. Biblical refutation

- Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 1:18,20

- And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Luke 1:35

## **F. The doctrine of creation.**

1. Mormon teaching. Mormons do not believe that God created the universe out of nothing by His divine decree. They believe that matter was pre-existent, and that God merely organized that matter into its diverse forms. Their beliefs on this are very clear from the following:

For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy ... (*Doctrines and Covenants* 93:33).

You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing: and they will answer, "Doesn't the Bible say he created the world?" And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been made out of nothing. Now, the word created came from the [Hebrew] word *baurau*, which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos -- chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. . . . The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and reorganized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 350-52).

## 2. Biblical refutation

From the above, it is clear that Mormons do not regard God as the Creator, but only as the Organizer. But Scripture does not speak of God in this way.

Brown, Driver, and Briggs' *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* is the authoritative work on biblical Hebrew. Concerning the Hebrew word *barah* [*baurau*], it should be noted that none of the meanings given even approximate the Mormon view that *barah* means "to organize". The primary meanings listed are: "to create" and "to shape". The New Testament clearly identifies God as the Creator as the following passages show.

- They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen. Romans 1:25
- Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. 1 Cor. 8:6
- In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. Hebrews 1:1-2

## G. The doctrine of man's pre-existence.

### 1. Mormon teaching

Mormon theology teaches that all human beings were pre-existent spirits, i.e., that all people existed in eternity as disembodied souls. In addition Mormonism teaches that the reason for the discrimination between the races is due to the

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**“All men and women are in the similitude of the eternal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity, as spirits they were the offspring of celestial parentage.”**

**Joseph Smith**

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conduct of spirits in the pre-existent state. Brigham Young wrote:

Our Father in Heaven begat all the spirits that ever were, or ever will be, upon this earth; and they were born spirits in the eternal world." (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 34).

Note also the following teaching of Joseph Smith, that a divine mother was likewise involved in the origin of the spirits.

"All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity"; as spirits they were the `offspring of celestial parentage.'" (Joseph F. Smith, *Man: His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 351, 355).

Regarding the discrimination of the races, Mormonism traces this back to the pre-existent state. If you behaved reasonably well, you were born "white" in this life; if you did not behave well, you were born "black". Modern Mormons have expressed displeasure over this teaching, but they cannot deny that it was official doctrine for over a century.

There is a reason why one man is born black and with other disadvantages, while another is born white with great advantages. The reason is that we once had an estate before we came here, and were obedient, more or less, to the laws that were given us there. Those who were faithful in all things there received greater blessings here, and those who were not faithful received less. (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 476-77).

## 2. Biblical Refutation

The Bible never speaks of man as existing prior to creation. Only God was eternally pre-existent.

- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1
- So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Gen. 1:27

- This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Genesis 5:1.
- In the beginning was the Word [the Son of God] and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

## H. The doctrine of original sin.

### 1. Mormon teaching

According to Mormon teaching, the Fall was not a bad thing but a good thing. Eve first disobeyed God by eating of the forbidden fruit. At this juncture Adam found himself in a dilemma. Previously God had commanded him and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28). Since Eve had now fallen into the state of mortality and Adam had not, they were in such dissimilar conditions that they could not remain together. If they should not remain together, however, they would be unable to fulfill God's command to replenish the earth. On the other hand, to yield to Eve's request to eat the fruit would also be tantamount to disobedience. Adam, however, "deliberately and wisely decided to stand by the first and greater commandment; and therefore, with understanding of the nature of his act, he also partook of the fruit . . ." (Talmage, Articles of Faith, p. 65).

Mormons glory in the "Fall" of Adam. Why? Because they teach that if Adam had not partaken of the forbidden fruit, they would never have had any children, i.e., the disembodied souls would never have received a physical body. The Book of Mormon says:

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden . . . And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin . . . Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (II Nephi 2:22-25).

Do Mormons really glory in the Fall? Yes! *The Pearl of Great Price* says: "Adam cried, 'Because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy.'" (Moses 5:10-11). Eve likewise rejoices at the fall, saying, "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seen and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption . . ." (5:11). Likewise, the Mormon Catechism says, "We ought to consider the fall of our first parents as one of the great steps to external exaltation and happiness."

### 2. Biblical refutation

- Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12
- But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man [Adam], how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:15-19.

## **I. Doctrine of free will (or free agency) of man.**

### 1. Mormon teaching

One of the most prominent aspects of the Mormon doctrine of man is the insistence that man is a free agent, that is, that man does not act out of compulsion, but that every man is free to act for himself. Free agency is ascribed by Mormons to God, to pre-existent spirits, and to man.

In *Mormon Doctrine*, Bruce McConkie writes:

Agency is the ability and freedom to choose good or evil. It is an eternal principle which has existed with God from all eternity. The spirit offspring of the Father had agency in pre-existence and were thereby empowered to follow Christ or Lucifer according to their choice. It is by virtue of the exercise of agency in this life that men are enabled to undergo the testing which is an essential part of mortality." (p. 25).

According to the *Pearl of Great Price*, the great sin of Satan was that he tried to take away man's free agency. We read:

Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, have given him, . . . I caused that he should be cast down." (Moses 4:1).

It can be seen, then, that free agency is an essential part of the great plan of redemption. "It [free agency] is the only principle upon which exaltation can come. It is the

only principle upon which rewards can be given in righteousness." (Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, I:70).

## 2. Biblical refutation

In light of what has been said about the Fall, it is clear that Mormons do not admit that man has lost his ability to choose and to do good works which are pleasing to God. He is still able, at every moment, to make the right choices or to repent of whatever wrong choices he may have made. In other words, God accepts man because he (man) makes right decisions and good works. This is nothing but blatant work-righteousness.

Scripture does not ascribe to fallen man the ability to choose good. When Scripture speaks of man's free will, it only does so in negative terms, i.e., he actively opposes God.

- That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:6
- For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. Romans 7:18
- For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. [7] Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. [8] So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:6-8
- But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. 2:14
- And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Eph. 2:1

It is interesting what our Lutheran Confessions say on this point:

Therefore the Scriptures deny to the intellect, heart, and will of the natural man all aptness, skill, capacity, and ability to think, to understand, to be able to do, to begin, to will, to undertake, to act, to work, or to concur in working, anything good and right in spiritual things as of himself, 2 Cor. 3:5; Rom. 3:12; John 8:37; 1:5; 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7; John 15:5; Phil. 2:13. (*Formula of Concord, S.D., II:12-14*).

## J. The doctrine of salvation in detail

## 1. Mormon teaching

Mormon theology distinguishes between general salvation and individual salvation. It teaches:

Salvation is twofold: General -- that which comes to all men irrespective of a belief (in this life) in Christ -- and, Individual -- that which man merits through his own acts through life and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel." (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, II:302-3).

General salvation, according to Mormon theology, consists in this, that by Christ's atonement all living beings shall be resurrected. We read:

We need a little more explanation as to just what we mean by unconditional [general] redemption. That means to restore us from this mortal state to the immortal state: in other words, to give unto us the resurrection. That comes to every creature, not only to men but also to fish, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field . . . . All of them had spiritual existence before they were placed upon the earth; therefore they are to be redeemed. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, II:10-11).

The resurrection of the body (of every living thing) is one of the victories achieved by Christ through His atoning sacrifice. (Talmage, p. 58.)

Individual salvation is based upon human merits or works. Those who are thus saved go to one of three Mormon heavens (more on this below). Mormons distinguish various degrees of salvation. The highest is sometimes called eternal life and sometimes exaltation. Receiving exaltation means to become a god. To be eligible for this highest degree of salvation, however, one must obey all the commandments of God:

"Very gladly would the Lord give to every one eternal life, but since that blessing can come only on merit--through the faithful performance of duty--only those who are worthy shall receive it. . . . To be exalted one must keep the whole law . . . . To receive the exaltation of the righteous, in other words eternal life, the commandments of the Lord must be kept in all things." (*Doctrines of Salvation* II:5,6).

## 2. Biblical refutation

Scripture does speak of a general resurrection (John 5:28-29; Matt. 25:31-46), but this a resurrection prior to final judgment. Everyone in the general resurrection will receive the same body he had on earth. However, there will be a difference: unbelievers' bodies will be fit to live in hell (Is. 66:24); believers' bodies will be changed to live in heaven, bodies without the corruption of sin (I Cor. 15:42-

44). Scripture knows nothing of the Mormon concept of the resurrection of birds, fish, etc. The important thing to keep in mind here is that the Scriptures speak of a general resurrection prior to the great judgment by Christ. Mormon theology teaches that this general resurrection is a form of salvation, a universal gift of immortality (but not eternal life or exaltation; this latter state is gained by works).

As to the Mormon doctrine of individual salvation on the basis of merit, Scripture asserts the very opposite, viz., that salvation is by grace through faith alone. The Scriptures are very clear:

- But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. [22] This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. [28] For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Romans 3:21-24, 27-28.
- Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. Galatians 2:16
- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- [9] not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians. 2:8-9
- He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5

#### **K. The doctrines of celestial marriage and baptism**

It must be kept in mind that, according to Mormon theology, if one is to reach the state of exaltation, the highest state, the commandments of God must be kept. Two of these commandments concern celestial marriage and baptism.

## 1. Celestial marriage

For Mormons there are two kinds of marriages: marriage for time and marriage for eternity (the latter is called celestial marriage). A marriage for time—one that is not performed in a Mormon temple—will be dissolved at death. People so married will be single in the life to come, and will live there as angels, but not as gods. Their children will be left without parents in the future life, unless they are adopted by parents who have been sealed together for eternity. Those, however, who have been married in a temple have been sealed to each other for eternity; their union will last forever. Parents who have been so sealed to each other "will have eternal claim upon their posterity, and will have the gift of eternal increase, if they obtain the exaltation. . . . All who obtain this exaltation will have the privilege of completing the full measure of their existence and they will have a posterity that will be as innumerable as the stars of heaven." (*Doctrines of Salvation* II:68).



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In light of this it is not surprising to hear Bruce McConkie (one of the foremost Mormon theologians) say:

The most important single thing that any member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints can ever do in this world is to marry the right person by the right authority in the right place. (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 111).

McConkie also states, "Celestial marriage is the gate to an exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial world." (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 118). From this, it is clear that no one can receive the fullness of salvation without celestial marriage. There are, however, exceptions: (1) if a woman desires such marriage, but remains single against her wishes, no blessing shall be denied her; and (2) a faithful Mormon wife whose husband shows no interest in the Church or its ordinances shall nevertheless receive exaltation.

### **Biblical Refutation**

The Bible knows of no such doctrine as celestial marriage. In fact Jesus plainly spoke against this doctrine in response to a question by the Sadducees. See Matthew 22:23-30.

## 2. Baptism

Mormon theology teaches that baptism by immersion is absolutely necessary for salvation. Infant baptism is opposed since little children "are not capable of committing sin" (Moroni 8:8); hence they "need no repentance, neither baptism" (8:11). The age at which a child is to be baptized is specified in Doctrines and Covenants (68:27) as eight years.

Mormonism also teaches the distinctive doctrine of "baptism for the dead". Since baptism is essential for salvation and since the church was not restored until the revelations of Joseph Smith, the living may be baptized by proxy for the dead. Doctrines and Covenants (chapter 124 and 128) discusses this teaching in detail. Such baptisms must be performed in the temple (124:28-37). The ordinance was instituted before the foundation of the world (124:33). It is a matter so important that the salvation of the living depends upon it: "for their [the ancestors] salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation" (128:15). Mormons must therefore work for the salvation of the dead of their own lineage as far back as they can go. (See Doctrines of Salvation, II:167).

### **Biblical Refutation**

It is not true that baptism is absolutely essential for salvation. Only faith is absolutely essential and faith is worked by the Holy Spirit through both Word and Sacraments. See John 6:47, 3:36; Rom. 10:17; Titus 3:5; Matt. 26:26.

Mormons often use 1 Corinthians 15:29 to prove their doctrine of baptism for the dead. But this passage has long been debated as to its meaning. The one thing the Bible clearly teaches is that at the moment of death, one's eternal destiny is sealed (Hebrews 9:27, Luke 23:43, Eccl. 12:7). The baptism referred to in 1 Corinthians 15 cannot mean that one's eternal state can be changed by baptism after death. In all probability what this passage means is that it was not at all uncommon for a dying Christian to exhort his family to seek Christian baptism. Such baptism then could be seen as a baptism for the dead.

### **I. Mormon Heavens**

Those who are saved, which constitute all but the so-called "sons of perdition," will spend eternity in one of three Mormon heavens.

1. The celestial kingdom (the highest heaven).

This kingdom, which will be located on this earth after its renewal, "is prepared for the righteous, those who have been faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord, and have been cleansed of all their sins." (J.F. Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, II:208). Most of those who enter this kingdom receive full exaltation; those who receive this exaltation constitute the "church of the First-born" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:54); they are gods (D&C 76:58). They will live with spouses with whom they will live for eternity and with the children to whom they have so sealed. They shall continue to procreate children (though they will be spirit children).

## 2. The terrestrial kingdom

This kingdom will be located on some sphere other than the earth, presumably another planet. Into this kingdom will go the following:

- a. Accountable persons who die without the law.
- b. Those who reject the gospel in this life and who reverse their course and accept in the spirit world. In other words, there is a second chance after death.
- c. Honorable men of the earth who are blinded by the craftiness of men and who therefore do not accept and live the gospel law.
- d. Members of the Mormon Church who are not valiant, but who are instead lukewarm in their devotion to the Church and to righteousness. (See *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 708).

It should be noted that all who enter this kingdom shall be morally clean. They will be ministered to by those in the celestial kingdom (D&C 76:87); they will receive the presence of the Son but not the fullness of the Father (76:77). They are denied the power of procreation.

## 3. The telestial kingdom

This kingdom will be found on still another earth. "Into this kingdom will go all of those who have been unclean in their lives . . . These people who enter there will be the unclean; the liars; sorcerers; adulterers, and those who have broken their covenants." (Answers, II:209). They "receive not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant" (D&C 76:101). "These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God until the fullness of times (76:106). "Yet these, after they have been punished for their sins and have been turned over to the torments of Satan, shall eventually come forth, after the Millennium, to receive the telestial kingdom." (Answers II:209). These people shall be numerous, their number being as great as the sand on the

seashore (D&C 76:109). They shall to be able to have children.

There is opportunity for advancement within each of the Mormon heavens. One cannot, however, progress from one kingdom to the next.

### **Biblical Refutation**

Scripture does teach a doctrine of degrees of glory in heaven, but it knows of no such thing as three heavens. It especially denies that those who reject the Gospel will be in a heaven of any kind.

- He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:36
- There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: [20] And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, [21] And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. [22] And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; [23] And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. [24] And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. [25] But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. [26] And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. [27] Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: [28] For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. [29] Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. [30] And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. [31] And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. Luke 16:19-31.
- If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. [9] And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. Matthew 18:8-9

### **M. The Mormon Hell (the "Sons of Perdition").**

1. The hell of Mormonism consists of two groups: (1) the devil and his angels, and (2) human beings. Those humans whose sins have placed them beyond "the present possibility of repentance and salvation" are in this category. (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 409). These are people who have committed the unpardonable sin (Cf. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, II:219-220). The sons of perdition are but a small portion of the human race and only they are doomed to suffer the wrath of God, together with the devil and his angels, in eternity. They are the only group who will not and cannot be redeemed (D&C 76:38).

## 2. Biblical Refutation

The Word of God assigns all who do not believe the Gospel, not just those who commit the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, to Hell. See John 3:36; John 3:18; Mark 16:16.

- He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:36
- He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:18
- He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Mark 16:16

## N. The Millennium

F. E. Mayer, *The Religious Bodies of America*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961) p. 462, describes the Mormon millennium as follows:

Basic for the Mormon eschatology is the assumption that during the millennium two cities are to be established: Jerusalem for the Jews and Zion for the ten tribes of Israel . . . . They hold that the millennium will be ushered in when the Jews accept Christ as their personal redeemer and return to Jerusalem. Christ will reign personally in Zion (Independence, MO), where He will establish a perfect theocracy and administer both kingdoms - the Jerusalem and Zion kingdoms -- under one authority. During the millennium perfect peace, righteousness, and length of life will prevail. . . . At the conclusion of this period the earth will be 'celestialized' so that men may reach their foreordained perfection and ultimately become literal offspring of the Deity."

Following the Millennium, the eternal states are ushered in, i.e., all people are assigned eternally to one of the three heavens or to the Mormon hell. Suffice it to say that Scripture knows of no such millennial scheme. See John 18:36; Matthew 24 & 25.