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# 1

## MORMONISM

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (whose members have been nicknamed Mormons) claims to be the restoration of the true church established by Jesus Christ. It has no association in any way with Roman Catholicism or with Protestantism. "Its theology, its organization, and its practices are in many respects entirely unique among today's Christian denominations."<sup>1</sup> "It possesses the divine priesthood of God, . . . and is headed by prophets and Apostles as was the Church in the days of Peter and Paul."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, "if it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."<sup>3</sup>

In numerous publications it is emphasized that the church that had been established by Jesus Christ became corrupt. Apostasy triumphed and divinely appointed authority ceased. The church "drifted without direction" after the death of the apostle John. There was no revelation, authority, or divinely approved ministry until the

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, *What of the Mormons?* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, n.d.), p. 2.
2. Mark E. Peterson, *Which Church Is Right?* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, n.d.), p. 25.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 670 (hereafter cited in text or notes as McConkie).

true church was restored through the prophet Joseph Smith.

Born in Sharon, Vermont, in 1805, Smith had moved to Palmyra, New York. There, in 1820, he reported seeing his first heavenly vision. Two personages appeared. Their "brightness and glory defy all description. . . . One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>4</sup>

There followed a series of visitations from a "resurrected personage" named Moroni. These visitations culminated on September 22, 1827. Moroni delivered to Smith the "golden plates," the translation of which is known as the Book of Mormon. In May 1829, John the Baptist appeared and ordained Smith, along with Oliver Cowdery, to the Aaronic priesthood. In June of that same year, Peter, James, and John "came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood" (McConkie 478). This established the authority of the "Church," for without the "Melchizedek Priesthood" "salvation in the kingdom of God" is not "available for men on earth" (McConkie 479).

On April 6, 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was formally established in Fayette, New York, with six members. It has grown to a present membership of more than three million, with branches in every state of the Union and more than a score of foreign

4. P Joseph Smith 2:17. The Mormon sacred books are cited in the following ways in this book: The Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price are each composed of individual books, the same basic format as is found in the Bible. References to the individual books begin either with the abbreviation BM (for the Book of Mormon) or with P (for the Pearl of Great Price) and are followed by the title of the individual book, the chapter number, and the verse number—BM 2 Nephi 29:8 and P Joseph Smith 2:35, for example. Doctrine and Covenants is divided into sections. References to individual sections begin with the abbreviation D&C, which is followed by the section number and the verse number—D&C 27:1, for example. The three books are published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Salt Lake City, Utah.

lands. Various estimates cite as many as fourteen thousand missionaries in active ministry, with some six thousand serving part-time. Full-time missionaries serve voluntarily, without pay, normally for a period of two years. The majority are young men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five.

### THE SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

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.

We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God [P Articles of Faith 8-9].

It is strongly emphasized that the canon of Scripture has never been closed. God's direction has always been by personal communication through commissioned servants. God's laws in one period have been repealed in others, "when a more advanced stage of the divine plan had been reached."<sup>5</sup> Thus in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:17-18), the Savior, it is taught, repealed the Law of Moses. Current and continued revelations are held to be essential characteristics of the church in order that the officers might teach with authority. The president of the church, in particular, is "like unto Moses"—a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church" (D&C 107:91-92). He speaks, upon occasion, with as much authority as does the Bible, or as any other

5. James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), p. 303 (hereafter cited in text or notes as Talmage).

of the accepted sacred books, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

#### THE BIBLE

The official version of the Bible used by the Mormon Church is the King James Version. A revision by Joseph Smith, called the Inspired Version, was not completed and is not used by the Salt Lake City group. It should be noted that to the Mormon the Bible is not absolute in authority nor final or complete in its revelation. The qualifying clause "as far as it is translated correctly" suggests errors in translation which presumably have been corrected by subsequent revelations.

#### THE BOOK OF MORMON

Mormons consider the Book of Mormon to be "a divinely inspired record, made by the prophets of the ancient peoples who inhabited the American continent for centuries before and after the time of Christ" (Talmage 255). It "contains a record of . . . the fulness of the gospel" (D&C 20:9; see also 42:12, etc.). The prophet himself declared that "the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion" (McConkie 99, quoting Joseph Smith).

The Book of Mormon tells the epic story of two waves of immigration to the American continent. In the first, the Jaredite nation "followed their leader from the Tower of Babel at the time of the confusion of tongues" (Talmage 260) about 2250 B.C. These people flourished until 590 B.C., when internal warfare led to their total destruction. The final battle took place at the hill Cumorah, near the present Palmyra, New York. The second migration was under Levi, of the tribe of Manasseh, about the year 600 B.C. Two nations, the Nephite and the Lamanite, came from Lehi's sons Nephi and Laman. The

former "advanced in the arts of civilization, built large cities, and established prosperous commonwealths" (Talmage 260). The latter "fell under the curse of divine displeasure; they became dark in skin . . . and degenerated into the fallen state in which the American Indians—their lineal descendants—were found . . . in later times" (Talmage 260). The final struggle between these two nations also ended at Cumorah, about A.D. 421. The last Nephite survivor, Moroni, completed the Book of Mormon on the golden plates and hid them in the hill Cumorah. He later appeared, a resurrected being, in 1823-27 and gave the plates to Joseph Smith for translation.

The plates were inscribed in characters called "reformed Egyptian" (BM Mormon 9:32). To enable translation, Smith was given the "Urim and Thummim." Perhaps resembling a pair of eyeglasses, these were "two stones in silver bows—and these stones [were] fastened to a breastplate" (P Joseph Smith 2:35). With the aid of these, he completed the translation between December 1827 and February 1828. The story is told in the "Writings of Joseph Smith," which is found in the Pearl of Great Price. In "Writings of Joseph Smith" 2:63-65, Smith cited Professor Charles Anthon as certifying the authenticity of the "reformed Egyptian characters." Anthon vehemently denied this, branding the whole story as "perfectly false." In published statements, the Smithsonian Institution denied knowledge of any authentic cases of ancient Hebrew or Egyptian writing having been found in the New World.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, it is declared that "almost all of the doctrines of the gospel are taught in the Book of Mormon with much greater clarity and perfection than . . . in the Bible. Anyone . . . will find conclusive proof of the supe-

6. For further details concerning the genuineness of the Book of Mormon, see Gordon R. Lewis, *Confronting the Cults* (Nutley, N.J.: Presby. & Ref., 1966), pp. 52ff.

riority of the Book of Mormon teachings" (McConkie 99).

Apparently, Mormon missionaries make much of the claim that the prophet Ezekiel spoke of two books, using the imagery of "two sticks" (Ezekiel 37:16-17). The Bible, they say, is the stick of Judah. The Book of Mormon is the stick of Ephraim and records God's dealings with a portion of the tribe of Joseph. It is "now in the hands of church members who nearly all are of Ephraim" (McConkie 767; see also D&C 27:5).

In truth, the word translated "stick" literally means "tree, wood, or pole." The "stick" is the emblem of the royal scepter. Thus it is that the "stick of Judah" represents the Southern Kingdom; the "stick of Joseph" is the Northern Kingdom, of which the first king was Jeroboam, of the tribe of Ephraim. Ezekiel the prophet was predicting the restoration and future union of the two kingdoms.

#### DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

The work Mormons refer to as Doctrine and Covenants is composed of 136 sections, of which all but two are "revelations given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet" (title page). Section 135 tells of his martyrdom, and 136 is "The Word and Will of the Lord, given through President Brigham Young." An official declaration prohibiting polygamy was appended in 1890 by President Wilford Woodruff.

Significant revelations in this book pertain to baptism for the dead (sections 124, 127-28), celestial marriage (section 132:19c-20), and plural marriage (section 132). In contrast, 42:22-23 and 49:15-16 seem to command monogamy! The Book of Mormon says nothing about the first two matters, and strongly denounces polygamy (Jacob 2:23-36).

## THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

The Pearl of Great Price is a small volume containing "a selection from the revelations, translations, and narrations of Joseph Smith" (title page). It is usually bound with Doctrine and Covenants. The Thirteen Articles of Faith are also included.

## THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

"We believe in God the Eternal Father, and in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (P Articles of Faith, I).

The Book of Mormon seems to equate the Mormon concept of the divinity with that of orthodox Christianity: "This is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end" (BM 2 Mephi 31:21; see also Alma 11:44, etc.). The theologian Talmage, however, explains that "three personages composing the great presiding council of the universe have revealed themselves to man. . . . These three are separate individuals, physically distinct from each other" (Talmage 39). Refuting the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, which states that "there are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory" (Question 6), Talmage declares that this "cannot rationally be construed to mean that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one in substance and in person" (Talmage 40). The oneness of the Godhead, it is declared, "implies no mystical union of substance, nor any unnatural and therefore impossible blending of personality" (Talmage 41). McConkie puts it plainly: "There are three *Gods* . . . separate in personality, . . . united as one in purpose, in plan, and in all the attributes of perfec-

tion" (McConkie 317). The plural word *Elohim* is used as the exalted name, the title of God, the Eternal Father.

"ETERNAL INCREASE"

Mormons view God as "an organized being just as we are, who are now in the flesh."<sup>7</sup> This is in keeping with the doctrine that God is a "progressive being, . . . his perfection possesses . . . the capacity of eternal increase" (Talmage 529). He "was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress."<sup>8</sup> Involved in the scheme of eternal progression, He is simply far, far ahead of us, His children. It is reiterated that "as man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."<sup>9</sup> Thus it is taught that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob "have entered into their exaltation and are not angels, but are gods" (D&C 133:37). It remained for Brigham Young to confuse things somewhat by adding, "Adam is our father and god, the only God with whom we have to do."<sup>10</sup>

"A BODY OF FLESH"

"The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (D&C 130:22). This is stressed in the Mormon handbook for missionaries as part of the revelation given to Joseph Smith. He saw two personages "of flesh and bones."<sup>11</sup> Thus it is taught that to "deny the materiality of God's person is to deny God; . . . an immaterial body cannot exist" (Talmage 48). (In contrast, note Luke

7. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1963), p. 64.

8. Orson Hyde, in Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool, 1854-75), 1:123.

9. Lorenzo Snow, quoted in Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 39.

10. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50.

11. *Uniform System for Teaching Investigators* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press), p. 31.

24:36-43; John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16. Also see "The Holy Spirit," below.)

#### OMNIPRESENCE

The Mormons teach that God is omnipresent. But "this does not mean that the actual person of any one member of the Godhead can be physically present in more than one place at a time" (Talmage 43). Since it is held that "personality" implies "materiality," it must be accepted that "God possesses a form . . . of definite proportions and therefore of limited extension in space" (Talmage 43). His senses and powers, however, are infinite, including that of transferring Himself from place to place. He is likewise omniscient and omnipotent "through the agency of angels and ministering servants," and is thus "in continuous communication with all parts of creation" (Talmage 44).

#### THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is "a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22). He does not have a body of flesh and bones, like the Father and the Son. He is described as "the influence of Deity, the light of Christ, or of Truth, which proceeds forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space, and to quicken the understanding of men."<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, He "can be in only one place at a time" (McConkie 359), although He "emanates from Deity" like "electricity, . . . which fills the earth and the air, and is everywhere present" (McConkie 753).

#### "MANY GODS"

Mormons teach that there are many Gods. The following excerpt from McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* is explicit:

12. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 60.

"Every man who reigns in celestial glory is a god to his dominions," the Prophet said. (*Teachings*, p. 374.) Hence, the Father, who shall continue to all eternity as the God of exalted beings, is a *God of Gods*. Further, as the Prophet also taught, there is "*a God above the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. . . . If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered that *God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father*, you may suppose that he had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? . . . Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not believe that he had a Father also?" (*Teachings*, pp. 370, 373.) In this way both the Father and the Son, as also all exalted beings, are now or in due course will become Gods of Gods. (*Teachings*, pp. 342-378.) (McConkie 322-23)

Related to this is the declaration that "Abraham and Isaac and Jacob have entered into their exaltation, and are not angels, but are gods" (D&C 132:37). In keeping with the grand scheme of eternal progression, "there never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds, and when men were not passing through the same ordeals that we are now passing through."<sup>13</sup>

#### "CELESTIAL PARENTAGE"

The Gods have wives! There is a Mother in Heaven! This is normal teaching related to the fact that God is *literally* the father of our spirits. (See "The Doctrine of Man," below.) "Each god, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters."<sup>14</sup> "The begetting of children makes a man a father and a woman a mother whether we are dealing with man in his mortal or immortal state" (McConkie 516). God, the exalted and glorified Man of Holiness, "could not be a Father unless a Woman of like glory, perfection, and ho-

13. Brigham Young, in John A. Widtsoe, ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954), p. 22.

14. Orson Pratt, *The Seer* 1, no. 3 (March 1853): 37.

liness was associated with him as a Mother" (McConkie 518). This "glorious truth of celestial parentage" (McConkie 516) is expressed in a Latter-day Saint hymn:

In the heavens are parents single?  
 No; the thought makes reason stare!  
 Truth is reason, truth eternal,  
 Tells me I've a Mother there.  
 (In McConkie 517)

Following his statement that Adam is the Mormons' God, Brigham Young declared that Adam "brought Eve, one of his wives, with him."<sup>15</sup> In the same way, mortal beings who gain the ultimate exaltation will become eternal fathers and mothers and will populate their own worlds with their own spirit children. This involves celestial marriage, the rite by which participants continue on as husband and wife in the celestial kingdom (see "The Doctrine of the Atonement," below).

### THE DOCTRINE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ "is the eternal Jehovah, the promised Messiah, Redeemer and Savior, the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (McConkie 129). Although it may seem to be in keeping with Bible teaching, Mormonism's Christology is nevertheless not that of orthodox Christianity.

#### FIRST BORN OF THE SPIRIT CHILDREN OF ELOHIM

"Among the spirit children of Elohim, the first-born was and is Jehovah, or Jesus Christ, to whom all others are juniors.<sup>16</sup> "This distinction as "first-born" describes Christ's relationship to *all* God's children. Angels and demons, as well as human beings, are included. Various

15. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50.

16. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 70.

types of beings serve God as angels, or messengers. *All* were the children of the Father. "The devil . . . is a spirit son of God who was born in the morning of pre-existence" (McConkie 193). Devils, or demons, "are the spirit beings who followed Lucifer in his war of rebellion in preexistence" (McConkie 195). One-third of the spirit children of God followed Lucifer in that rebellion. The difference between Christ and man or demon is therefore one of degree, or of position, and not of kind. This rejects any thought of His distinctive deity.

#### BY OBEDIENCE GAINED RANK AS A GOD

"By obedience and devotion to the truth he attained that pinnacle of intelligence which ranked him as a God . . . while yet in his pre-existent state" (McConkie 129). It should be noted that this is not the normal pattern. Birth in a mortal body is deemed necessary for the ultimate attainment of godhood. (See "The Doctrine of God," above, subsection "Eternal Increase.")

#### WAS THE EXECUTIVE OF THE FATHER IN CREATION

Jesus Christ was the executive of the Father in the work of creation. In this work He was aided by Michael (or Adam), "Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, James, and John, Joseph Smith and many others" (McConkie 169).

#### WAS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY; WAS LITERALLY THE SON OF ELOHIM

Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. This assures His *unique* status. It is emphasized, however, that although the conception took place by the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ is not the Son of the Holy Ghost, but of the Father. Talmage adds: "Elohim is LITERALLY the Father of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and also of the body"

## 42 WHAT THE CULTS BELIEVE

(Talmage 466). "He was not born without the aid of a man, and that man was God."<sup>17</sup> Brigham Young adds: "Who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; . . . the same character that was in the garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven."<sup>18</sup>

### WAS SINLESS

He was altogether sinless. "He is essentially greater than any and all others, by reason (1) of His seniority as the oldest or firstborn; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father; (3) of His selection and foreordination as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of the race; and (4) of His transcendent sinlessness" (Talmage 472).

### DIED ON THE CROSS

He died on the cross, voluntarily and willingly giving His life for the redemption of mankind. (See "The Doctrine of the Atonement," below.)

### ROSE THE THIRD DAY

He rose again the third day, with a tangible body of flesh and bones. In addition to the resurrection appearances as recorded in the Bible, the Book of Mormon tells of His coming to the Americas as a resurrected being. He organized the church among the Nephite people, with twelve disciples to lead it (BM 3 Nephi 11).

17. Joseph F. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 1:18.

18. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50-51.

## WILL COME AGAIN TO SET UP HIS KINGDOM

He is coming again in power and great glory to set up His kingdom on earth. (See "The Doctrine of Last Things [Eschatology]," below.)

## THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Life began for man and for all created things (animals, fowls, fishes, and every living creature—even the earth itself) at the time of their respective spirit creations. However, it must be understood that God did not create anything, in the sense of bringing it into primal existence. He "organized" the elements which are "co-eternal with Him" (McConkie 751). The elements thus "organized" are known as "intelligences," or "spirit children" (McConkie 751).

In the broad sweep of eternity, man's advance in the scheme of eternal progression involves at least four stages: (1) the premortal or spirit existence, with bodies "made of a more pure and refined substance than the elements from which mortal bodies are made. (Ether 4:16; D&C 131:7-8.)" (McConkie 589). (2) Mortal life on earth, with body and spirit temporarily joined together (D&C 93:33). (3) In the spirit world, the abiding place of disembodied spirits, after death. It is "upon this earth," and will be "without inhabitants" after the resurrection (McConkie 762). (4) Immortality, the resurrected state with body and spirit *inseparably* connected.

## FREE-AGENCY OF THE SPIRIT CHILDREN

The spirit children of God were given the right of free agency—that is, the freedom to choose good or evil. Their choices determined to a degree their later state. One-third rebelled along with Satan and fell with him. They will remain "unembodied," never to enter the scheme of eternal progression (see "The Doctrine of Eter-

nity [The Final State]," below, subsection "Perdition"). Two-thirds stood "affirmatively for Christ," but some were less "valiant" than others. This explains the "millions of insane and afflicted people upon the earth," and "those living in squalor, filth, poverty and degradation."<sup>19</sup> What they are is the result of choices made in premortal existence. For the same reason, blacks, who are of the lineage of Cain, have been, until 1978, denied the priesthood and its attendant blessings in this mortal state (see "The Mormon Black and the Priesthood," below).

#### ADAM IN THE PREMORTAL STATE

In the premortal state, Adam was Michael, the archangel (D&C 27:11; 107:54). As the first man, he was formed "in the image of his spiritual Father, God" (Talmage 63). He was placed with one of his preincarnate wives, Eve, in the Garden of Eden. This place, also called Adam-ondi-Ahman, is located in "an area for which Jackson County, Missouri, is the center" (McConkie 20). Zion, the New Jerusalem, will be built there in the latter days.

#### ADAM'S FALL

"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (BM 2 Nephi 2:25). Adam and Eve had immortal bodies. Eve, however, sinned and became mortal. That created a dilemma for Adam. He had been given two commands: First, multiply and replenish the earth; second, do not touch the forbidden tree. Eve was now mortal. Adam, being yet immortal, could not obey the first command without disobeying the second! "He

19. John J. Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro* (Orem, Utah: Bookmark, 1967), pp. 29-30.

deliberately and wisely chose to stand by the first and greater commandment, and . . . partook of the fruit" (Talmage 65).

The Fall was foreordained within the purpose of God. It is to be regarded as a good thing in that it was a means of providing billions of preexistent spirits with mortal tabernacles. Adam cried, "Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy" (P Moses 5:10). Eve exults, "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (P Moses 5:11). The Mormon catechism declares that the Fall should be thought of as one of the great advancements toward eternal exaltation and happiness. Man thus became mortal, a blessing in disguise in that it provided the opportunity for eternal progression and perfection to all spirit children of Elohim. It also brought to man the knowledge of good and evil. This "is an essential element in the commission of sin, and our first parents did not have this knowledge until after they had partaken of the fruit" (McConkie 804).

#### MORMON TEACHING ON ORIGINAL SIN

The doctrine of original sin is denied by the second article of faith: "We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (P Articles of Faith 2). "Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning" (D&C 93:38). The age of accountability is reckoned to be eight, since it is stated that "their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old" (D&C 68:27).

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. (P Articles of Faith 3-4)

In contrast to Lucifer's plan, which would have compelled men to obey God, Christ offered Himself so that men might be free to choose for themselves. There are two aspects of salvation: general, or unconditional, and individual, or conditional.

#### GENERAL SALVATION (UNCONDITIONAL)

General, or unconditional, salvation is assured for all. Bodily weakness, disease, and physical death came upon all men because of the transgression of Adam. Men become *mortal* (which means that they become subject to "separation of the eternal spirit from the mortal body" (McConkie 185). Christ, by the work of redemption, overcame physical death and *guaranteed* physical resurrection to all living things. This is immortality! "Even the unbeliever, the heathen, and the child who dies before reaching the years of discretion, all are redeemed by the Saviour's self-sacrifice from the individual consequences of the Fall. . . . The resurrection of the body is one of the victories achieved by Christ through His atoning sacrifice" (Talmage 85). Included also are "beasts, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea" (D&C 29:23-25), and "the earth . . . and the infinite expanse of the worlds in immensity" (McConkie 642). The only exceptions are the sons of perdition.

## INDIVIDUAL SALVATION (CONDITIONAL)

Individual, or conditional, salvation pertains to the eternal progression of the individual soul and is entirely contingent upon obedience, works, and choices in *this* sphere of existence. The guarantee of immortality (physical resurrection) is not synonymous with "eternal life," or "exaltation." It does not assure "godhood" in eternity.

There are three possible spheres of existence in eternity. Only one, the celestial, is the abode of those who continue in the eternal progression to be as "gods." (See "The Doctrine of Eternity [The Final State]," below.) Entrance to this sphere is on the basis of obedience to the laws and ordinances, and "by devotion and faithfulness, by enduring to the end in righteousness and obedience, it is then possible to merit a celestial regard" (McConkie 116; see also D&C 20:29; BM 2 Nephi 9:23-24). It is with this in mind that Talmage asserts that "the sectarian dogma of justification by faith alone has exercised an influence for evil" (Talmage 479). Where one goes after he is resurrected is determined by his individual responses, actions, and choices *now*.

## BAPTISM

"To the Mormons, baptism . . . is the most vital and significant of all ordinances—the very gateway into the kingdom of heaven—an indispensable step in our salvation and exaltation."<sup>20</sup> Without it, forgiveness of sins is impossible. As Joseph Smith stated, "They who believe not on your words, and are not baptized in water in my [Jesus'] name, for the remission of their sins, that they may receive the Holy Ghost, shall be damned" (D&C 84:74). Infant baptism is considered a "gross perversion" of true Christian doctrine.

20. Wallace F. Bennett, *Why I Am a Mormon* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 124.

Baptism for the dead is the "welding link" between "fathers and children" (D&C 128:18). This unique practice occupies a prominent place in current Mormon temple activity, and presumably will be the great work during the Millennium. The basic teaching is that many have died without the opportunity to hear and believe the gospel. To them, in the spirit-world, Christ went and preached after His death. First Corinthians 15:29 and 1 Peter 3:18-22 are claimed as supporting this. There are others "who have gone into the spirit world who have never submitted to the ordinance of baptism, while vast numbers of those who have been baptized had the ordinance administered by one who held no rightful authority whatever."<sup>21</sup> They also are given opportunity to hear and to believe. But even spirit believers cannot be saved without water baptism. Therefore baptism by proxy is a major activity for which

the Latter-day Saints are assiduously engaged in erecting temples wherein this ordinance may be performed. . . . The Saints are flocking to the temples of the Lord and redeeming their dead from the grasp of Satan. They are performing a great and mighty work for the human family who have lived upon the earth in the different ages of the world's history, and who, in some instances, by revelation, make manifest to their children or friends the fact that they have accepted the Gospel in the spirit world.<sup>22</sup>

In pursuit of this activity, the "Church has accumulated more than 150,000 rolls of microfilm covering more than 230 million pages of vital statistics, and the

21. John Morgan, *The Plan of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, n.d.), p. 22.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

work is still going on."<sup>23</sup> There were said to have been 3,607,962 such baptisms during 1965.

#### CELESTIAL MARRIAGE

Mormons consider "celestial marriage [to be] the gate to an exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial world" (McConkie 118; see also D&C 131:1-4). This rite is performed only in Mormon temples. By it the man and woman are "sealed for time and eternity" and "have eternal claim on their posterity, and the gift of eternal increase."<sup>24</sup> Provided they keep all the other terms and conditions set forth, they become "gods in their own right" (McConkie 118). This exalting ordinance can also be performed vicariously, for the benefit of worthy dead.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this [the American] continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory. (P Articles of Faith 10)

#### THREE GATHERINGS

The gatherings are three in number: "the house of Joseph will be established in America, the house of Judah in Palestine, and . . . the Lost Tribes will come to Ephraim in America to receive their blessings in due course" (McConkie 306; from D&C 133).

*Israel.* The people of Israel will assemble in the land of Zion, which is the North American continent. It is pointed out that upon Ephraim, the son of Joseph, was

23. Bennett, p. 130.

24. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:44.

conferred the birthright in Israel (Genesis 48:5-22). The Northern Kingdom of Israel, later scattered over all the known world, was frequently referred to as Ephraim. Thus Ephraim "stands at head in the Latter days . . . and must be gathered first to prepare the way . . . for the rest of the tribes of Israel."<sup>25</sup> Further, "Joseph Smith was pure Ephraimite,"<sup>26</sup> of the lineage of Joseph, and "the great majority of those who have come into the Church are Ephraimites."<sup>27</sup> Thus the House of Israel is being gathered as men and women join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the house of Israel is being established in Zion.

*Judah.* The house of Judah (the Jewish people) is now being gathered to Jerusalem, mostly in unbelief. "The great body of [them] will not receive Christ as their Redeemer until he comes himself and makes himself manifest unto them."<sup>28</sup>

*Lost tribes.* The lost ten tribes are descendants of people carried away captive by Shalmaneser of Assyria (721 B.C.). Many are still living in "the north countries," where the Lord has hidden them. Proof of their existence is found in the Book of Mormon (BM 3 Nephi 16:1-4; 17:4). They were visited by the resurrected Lord after His ministry on this continent among the Nephites. "In due course [they] will return and come to the children of Ephraim to receive their blessings. This great gathering will take place under the direction of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (McConkie 458).

25. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:252.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

## CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL REIGN

The millennial reign of Christ will follow the gathering of Israel and establishment of an earthly Zion.

*The first resurrection.* This glorious period of peace and prosperity will be inaugurated by the first resurrection. Called the "resurrection of life," or "of the just," it will be in two parts. Those being resurrected with celestial bodies will come forth in the morning of the first resurrection. They will be caught up to meet the Lord, and will descend with Him, to reign together with Him (D&C 88:95-98). Apparently included are all children who die before reaching the age of accountability. In the afternoon, those with "terrestrial bodies" will rise (see "The Doctrine of Eternity [The Final State]," below, subsection "The Terrestrial Kingdom"). They live on the earth during the millennial reign.

*Christ's second coming.* The Lord's return will be marked by destruction of the wicked. This event will occur at the end of the Battle of Armageddon, which will then be in progress. The earth will be cleansed of all its corruption and wickedness. All the wicked, not worthy of either celestial or terrestrial glory, will spend the thousand years in "the prison house prepared for them." There they are to "repent and cleanse themselves through the things which they shall suffer."<sup>29</sup>

*Cleansing of the earth.* The earth will be cleansed by fire, renewed, and given its paradisiacal glory, a return to the "edenic, terrestrial state."

*Binding of Satan.* Satan will be bound, his powers limited for the 1,000 years. Men will be to a degree relieved from temptation, but "sin will not be wholly abolished, nor will death be banished" (Talmage 371).

29. Ibid., p. 60.

"Children will live to reach maturity in the flesh, and then may be changed to a condition of immortality" (Talmage 371).

*Inhabitants of the earth.* "Mortal and immortal beings will tenant the earth, and communion with heavenly powers will be common" (Talmage 371).

*Millennial work.* The great work of the Millennium will be the vicarious performing of "saving and exalting ordinances" (baptism and celestial marriage) on behalf of "worthy dead who did not have opportunity during life" (McConkie 501).

*Proclamation of the gospel.* The gospel will be taught with great power, and "eventually all people will embrace the truth."<sup>30</sup>

*The second resurrection.* At the end of the Millennium the second resurrection will take place. As in the case of the first resurrection, it has two parts. Those who are destined for celestial glory (see "The Doctrine of Eternity [The Final State]," below, subsection "The Terrestrial Kingdom") are raised in the "fore part." In the "latter end" comes the resurrection of damnation, pertaining to the sons of perdition.

*The release of Satan.* Satan will be released, and will lead the final rebellion at the end of the Millennium. He will deceive men again and will gather together "his armies, even the hosts of hell" (McConkie 501). His defeat will be total. All, including Satan, will be cast into "punishment so terrible that the knowledge is withheld from all except those who are consigned to this doom" (Talmage 60).

30. Ibid., p. 64.

## RESURRECTION OF THE EARTH

The earth will die, be resurrected, and become "a celestialized body fit for the abode of the most exalted intelligences" (Talmage 375). "The Millennium, with all its splendor, is but a more advanced state of preparation, by which the earth and its inhabitants will approach fore-ordained perfection" (Talmage 375).

## THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNITY (THE FINAL STATE)

There are three eternal kingdoms of widely differing glories, and another place for the sons of perdition. The status and place of the individual in eternity is the outcome of his own efforts, and "not Christ's sacrifice."<sup>31</sup> Each kingdom is organized on a plan of graduation. Advancement within each is possible, but progress from one to another lacks "positive affirmation" (Talmage 409).

## THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM

The celestial kingdom (the sphere of exaltation) will be located on the "resurrected" earth. It will be the abode of those who have been cleansed of sins and have continued obedient to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. "They shall be gods, because they have no end" (D&C 132:16-26). "They have eternal increase . . . ; that is, they have spirit children in the resurrection, in relation to which offspring they stand in the same position that God our Father stands to us" (McConkie 257). All who attain unto this sphere shall dwell in the presence of God and His Christ forever (D&C 76:62).

31. Bennett, p. 191.

## THE TERRESTRIAL KINGDOM

The terrestrial kingdom will be peopled by those who did not accept the gospel until they were in the spirit world. With them will be "accountable persons who die without law; . . . honorable men of the earth who are blinded . . . and who therefore do not accept and live the gospel law" (McConkie 784); and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were not valiant, but were lukewarm. They remain unmarried and without exaltation; and they receive the presence of the Son, but not the fullness of the Father.

## INHABITANTS OF THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM

The celestial kingdom is the place to which "most of the adult people who have lived from the day of Adam . . . will go" (McConkie 778). Joseph Smith saw in a vision that the inhabitants of the celestial world "were as innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore" (D&C 76:109). Having rejected Christ and lived wickedly, they will be the last to be resurrected, and they will have suffered the wrath of God in the spirit world. In this sphere they will never know the presence of God or of Christ, but shall continue as servants of God.

## PERDITION

*Perdition* signifies that there is no hope of any degree of salvation. "Two persons, Cain and Satan, have received the title *Perdition*" (McConkie 566). The sons of perdition include the angels who rebelled with Satan, and men who commit unpardonable sin—that is, "having received the testimony of Christ, and having been endowed by the Holy Spirit [they] then deny the same and defy the power of God" (Talmage 410). The unpardonable sin "can be committed by those only who have re-

ceived knowledge and conviction of the truth" (Talmage 410). They are doomed to everlasting fire.

However, this is softened by the idea that "there must be an end to future punishment." It is called "eternal punishment" because God is "eternal." "Eternal punishment" is simply "God's punishment; . . . it is the name of the punishment God inflicts, he being eternal in his nature." God has the power to pardon beyond the grave! Eternal punishment may endure "one hour, one day, one week, one year, or an age."<sup>32</sup>

### POLYGAMY

The practice of polygamy, or plural marriage, "was established as a result of direct revelation, and many of those who followed the same felt they were divinely commanded to do so" (Talmage 424). The record is found in Doctrine and Covenants, section 132. Its heading reads: "Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet at Nauvoo, Illinois, recorded July 12, 1843, relating to the new and everlasting covenant, including the eternity of the marriage covenant, as also plurality of wives." In this revelation it is clear that one of the "essentials for the attainment of the status of godhood" is "marriage duly authorized" (D&C 132). In verses 52 to 54 of section 132, Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, is told that she must prepare to receive additional wives "given" to her husband, otherwise she would be destroyed.

It has been noted that the gods of Mormonism are polygamous, and are constantly begetting children. The second president, Brigham Young, is credited with the statement that "when our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, . . . he brought Eve, *one of his wives*, with him."<sup>33</sup> Thus it is that the concept that Jesus Christ

32. Morgan, pp. 23-24.

33. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50.

was married, and that He was a polygamist, evokes no consternation. Only by begetting children could He attain unto the utmost in the celestial kingdom.

Polygamy became a controversial issue in later Mormon history. But there is no doubt that the practice was common and that it began with Joseph Smith the Prophet. The sixth president of the church, Joseph F. Smith, wrote: "I can positively state, on indisputable evidence, that Joseph Smith was the author, under God, of the revelation on plural marriage."<sup>34</sup> He cites an affidavit concerning one plural wife of Joseph Smith. He also gives the names of six other women who testified, under oath, "that they were sealed during his lifetime to the Prophet Joseph Smith."<sup>35</sup> Polygamy continued as a church observance in Utah for ten years without any law's being enacted in opposition to it. Beginning with 1862, however, federal statutes were framed declaring the practice unlawful. After many appeals by the church had been unsuccessful, Mormon president Wilford Woodruff, the only man on earth holding the keys of sealing ordinances, issued an official declaration in 1890. Thereupon the church discontinued the practice of plural marriage, according to James E. Talmage, one of the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church (Talmage 424, 524-25).

### THE MORMON BLACK AND THE PRIESTHOOD

As noted above, Joseph Smith was ordained to the Aaronic priesthood by John the Baptist and to the Melchizedek priesthood by Peter, James, and John. Those two priesthoods are central in the organization of the Mormons. "As pertaining to eternity, the priesthood is the eternal power and authority of Deity by which all things exist; by which they are created, governed, and

34. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 489.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 489-90.

controlled; by which the universe and worlds without number have come rolling into existence; by which the great plan of creation, redemption, and exaltation operates throughout immensity. It is the power of God" (McConkie 594).

The lesser priesthood is the Aaronic, containing the offices of deacon, teacher, priest, and bishop. It is preparatory—by it one is trained for the greater, the Melchizedek priesthood. This latter has within it the offices of elder, seventy, high priest, patriarch or evangelist, and apostle. The Melchizedek priesthood is "the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven" (McConkie 476). Mormon doctrine specifically declares "that those spirits sent to earth through the lineage of Cain and of Ham are absolutely denied the priesthood as far as mortal life is concerned" (McConkie 479). The Mormon Church further holds that there were premortal spirits who were "less valiant" than others, and who "thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality." They "are known to us as the *negroes*" (McConkie 527). Blacks are denied the priesthood and "under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority" (McConkie 527). They are "not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned" (McConkie 527). This is the Lord's doing, and is based on His eternal laws of justice!

It is all the more remarkable that on June 9, 1978, Mormon president Spencer W. Kimball, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, issued this decree: God "by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority. . . . Accordingly, all worthy members of the Church may be or-

daigned to the priesthood without regard for race or color."<sup>36</sup> This long-expected decree was widely promulgated and was hailed by the fewer than one thousand black members of the church. Apparently no attempt has been made to reconcile these diametrically opposed edicts of "the will and word of the Lord" and His eternal laws of justice. Inasmuch as mortal existence was defined by irreversible actions made in the preexistent spirit world, no doubt explanations are impossible.

### DIVISIONS IN MORMONISM

At the death of Joseph Smith, a special conference voted on August 8, 1844, at Nauvoo, Illinois, to accept the church council of twelve apostles, headed by Brigham Young, as the interim governing body pending reorganization of a presidency. The main body, numbering some twenty thousand, went with Young to Utah. These composed the beginning of the group usually alluded to when mention is made of "the Mormons." Membership today is approximately two million.

Five dissenting groups refused to follow Brigham Young and formed separate organizations. Of these, only one is significant. It is The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with headquarters at Independence, Missouri. They are called Josephites. The original thousand followed Emma Smith, Joseph's first wife, and were later organized by Joseph Smith, Jr. Today the membership is approximately 175,000. An active publication program emphasizes the differences that exist between themselves and the Utah Mormon Church, as the main body is designated.

Both groups believe in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Both accept and publish "many of the reve-

36. *Forward Magazine* 2, no. 1 (1978), p. 1. The magazine is published by Christian Research Institute, Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675.

lations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith in our respective versions and additions of the *Doctrine and Covenants*."<sup>37</sup> Differences relate to conflicting views concerning God, the question of polygamy, secret temple rites, and prophetic succession and leadership. Strong exception is taken to the "axiom current among Mormons for many years, 'As man is, God once was; as God is, many may become.'"<sup>38</sup> The teaching that God is Himself a progressive being is rejected. The Reorganized Church teaches that God is eternally unchangeable. With this naturally goes the repudiation of Brigham Young's Adam-God theology. Correlated with this is the denial of the doctrine of celestial marriage as related to the eternal progression and exaltation of men.

The Reorganized Church maintains that polygamy is contrary to the teaching and practice of Joseph Smith. Documental evidence is offered to prove that the accepted story of the plural wives of the Prophet was a deception perpetrated by Brigham Young and his immediate associates. Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* is not accepted as divine revelation.

In the Kirtland Temple of the Reorganized Church there are no secret meetings of any kind. All meetings are open to the public; none of the sacraments and ordinances is conducted in secret. The "Secret Temple Rites" as practiced by the Mormons of Utah are held to be abhorrent. Finally, the Josephites disavow the claim that Young and his successors are the ordained elders of the church. They followed Joseph Smith, Jr., as the designated successor of his father, and have maintained their own line of "revealed" succession.

37. Elbert A. Smith, *Differences That Persist* (Independence, Mo.: Herald), p. 6.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

This group publishes and uses the Inspired Version of the Bible. Started by Joseph Smith as a revision of the King James Version, it was not completed by him and is therefore not used by the Utah Mormons.