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THE MORMON HEAVENLY FATHER

THE GODHEAD (PART 1)

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TRUTH TO MORMONS MINISTRY

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INTRODUCTION

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie emphasized the importance of having a correct view about the Godhead, as well as the consequences of an errant view of God:

So a belief in a false god can engender no faith in the human breast. If a person believes that an idol is God, or that Deity is a power or essence that fills the immensity of space, or if he has any other false concept, he estops himself from gaining faith, because faith is a hope in that which is not seen which is true. Faith and truth cannot be separated; if there is to be faith, saving faith, faith unto life and salvation, faith that leads to the celestial world, there must first be truth.

...faith can be exercised only by those who conform to the principles of truth which come from the true God who actually exists.¹

McConkie affirmed this important principle in a talk he gave in which he said that:

There is no salvation in believing any false doctrine, particularly a false or unwise view about the Godhead or any of its members. Eternal life is reserved for those who know God and the one whom he sent to work out the infinite and eternal atonement. True and saving worship is found only among those who know the truth about God and the Godhead and who understand the true relationship men should have with each member of that Eternal Presidency.²

These may be the only LDS quotes in this article that Christians could mostly agree with. To have a false God that does not exist is to possess a false salvation. Dear Latter-day Saint, do you hope to be saved? Then trusting in heretical doctrines about God the Father or Christ will not save you according to your own leadership. In fact, Joseph Smith Jr. equated the gospel itself as dependent upon the believer trusting in the true character of God:

It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God...³

The 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants expounds on this fact:

Lecture Third of Faith 3:2,4, P. 36 4

Let us here observe, that three things are necessary, in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation... Secondly, a correct idea of his character, perfections and attributes.

1 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 262

2 Ibid., *Our Relationship With the Lord*, p. 2

3 Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, by Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 345; *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 305, *Journal of Discourses*, 6:3

4 The *Lectures of Faith* were removed from Mormon scripture in 1920

Every truth-seeking Latter-day Saint should seriously ponder these statements by LDS authorities. Perhaps we should consider the warning from one more authority on what Christ thought about this subject—hear Christ Himself:

John 8:24

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

Notice that Jesus said that it wasn't enough just to believe "I am" [existence], but to believe that "I am he" [His personhood]. This article will demonstrate conclusively that Mormonism believes in a Heavenly Father, but not in the personhood of the revealed biblical Father God. The implications of having created an idol for a Mormon god goes much further than knowing the character of God. Of equal concern is that almost all heresy begins with an incorrect or weak view of the Godhead. If you get the Heavenly Father wrong, or Jesus wrong, or the Holy Spirit wrong, then your understanding of the gospel and doctrines will be wrong as well. Mormon Apostle Mark E. Peterson affirmed the implication of a church that espouses a false view of the Godhead:

One of the great signs of the true Church is the correct doctrine of...the Godhead....⁵

⁵ Mark E. Peterson, *This Is Life Eternal*, p. 35

The First Article of Faith contained in the scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints says that *"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."*⁶ LDS often cite this article as prima facie evidence that they are members of authentic Christianity. What is far more important, however, is what LDS teach about each member of the Godhead. This article will investigate the characteristics and attributes of Deity for the Heavenly Father. It is the conclusion of this former Latter-day Saint, as well as that of bible-believing Christians, that the Mormon Heavenly Father is a false God and an idol that does not exist in reality. This article will demonstrate why things that are different are not the same, and that the LDS God cannot be the God of the historic and genuine Christian faith.

There is probably no greater sin than to place your trust in a God whose attributes do not match those of the God of the Bible. The biblical term for such a sin is idolatry. The fact that Joseph Smith failed to represent the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob proves that he was not a true prophet. God warned the children of Israel that if any arose and attempted to entice Israel to "go after other gods" he was to be put to death (Deuteronomy 13:1-3, 5). Do you think He takes this any less serious today? To insist on following the God of the Mormon Church will result in spiritual death and a painful separation from the Creator for all eternity.

⁶ *Pearl of Great Price*, p. 60

Distinctives Summary for the Heavenly Father

	The Father God of Mormon	The Father God of Christianity
1	Resides near the planet Kolob	A Spirit with no definitive locale
2	Not self-existent	The one and only God
3	An exalted man	Is not an exalted man
4	Also known as Adam, the first man	Created Adam, the first man
5	A created being	Is uncreated
6	Has a body of flesh and bone	Is Noncorporeal (a Spirit)
7	Once a sinner	Never a sinner
8	A god by achievement	Has always been God
9	Not personally omnipresent	Is personally omnipresent
10	Not omnipotent	Is omnipotent
11	Not omniscient	Is omniscient
12	Not immutable	Is immutable
13	Internally inconsistent	Is internally consistent in all His ways
14	Personally contingent upon time	Is personally independent of time
15	Has parents	Has no parents
16	Is married	Is not married
17	Knew Mary to sire Christ Jesus	Conceived Jesus through the Holy Ghost
18	Has a son named Lucifer	Made Lucifer
19	Has been seen visibly by man	As Spirit, does not reveal His Person
20	Forgives sin conditionally	Forgives sin unconditionally
21	Requires unbiblical actions to enter Heaven	Requires faith in Christ to enter Heaven

Distinctive No. 1 — The Mormon god resides near the planet Kolob

The Mormon Heavenly Father lives in the Celestial Kingdom, the highest of three Mormon Heavens. Mormon scripture adds to our field of astronomy, teaching that the Mormon god lives not on, but nearest to the planet known to LDS as *Kolob*.

Pearl of Great Price, Abraham, Chapter 3

2 And I saw the stars, that they were very great, and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God; and there were many great ones which were near unto it; 3 And the Lord said unto me: These are the governing ones; and the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God: I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest.

Quoting from the Pearl of Great Price, Mormon Apostle states in his book, Mormon Doctrine:

Kolob means “the first creation.” It is the name of the planet “nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God.”⁷

Little else is known about this planet in Mormon theology. Mormonism in recent times has distanced itself from this belief, presumably because it sounds (and is) bizarre. Make no mistake, however, LDS scripture affirms Kolob and the current LDS hymnbook appears to this mysterious place of God as well.⁸

Biblical Position

The Bible is silent on the existence of such a star for God's residence. As such, no specific textual negation is possible. However, because the Christian God is a spirit and personally omnipresent, it is highly unlikely that He would live at a particular geo-spatial location within His creation.

Distinctive No. 2 — The Mormon god is not self-existent

Mormonism presents the Heavenly Father as one among countless other Gods, each ruling over their own creations. The Mormon god then *is not* self-existent, but shares His status with many others. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie said:

⁷ Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 428, quoting from the Book of Abraham 3:3-9

⁸ *If You Could Hie to Kolob*, Hymn page. 284 (Text by William W. Phelps, 1792-1872). View at: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/if-you-could-hie-to-kolob?lang=eng>

“Three separate personages—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—comprise the Godhead. As each of these persons is a God, it is evident, from this standpoint alone, that a plurality of Gods exists. . . . But in addition there is an infinite number of holy personages, drawn from worlds without number, who have passed on to exaltation and are thus gods”.⁹

Even though McConkie uses a small "g" in labeling the infinite number of Gods, each is still thought to be true Deity in the fullest sense of the word. In fact Mormons themselves expect to someday be counted among the ranks of Deity. Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt practically illustrated just how many Gods there are in Mormonism:

If we should take a million of worlds like this and number their particles, we should find that there are more Gods than there are particles of matter in those worlds.¹⁰

While the Christian faith is *monotheistic*, believing in a singularly existent God, Mormonism is a *polytheistic* religion. The term *polytheism* comes from the Greek words *polu*, meaning "many" and *theos*, meaning "God." The dictionary defines polytheism as a "belief in or worship of more than one god."¹¹ Whether one worships only one God or many is irrelevant. Teaching a pantheon of true God's anywhere is to be polytheistic.

Redefining Terms

Since Christians universally reject polytheism as heresy, Mormon leadership disowns this title by uniquely defining the term. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie explained that polytheists are those who worship *pagan deities*. To Mormons then, the polytheistic title is therefore not applicable to those who believe in real Gods.

It should be remembered that polytheism has reference to pagan deities to whom reverence, devotion, and worship are given. It is not to be confused with the gospel truth that there are "gods many, and lords many". But to us there is but one God, the Father, . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 8:4-7) The saints are not polytheists.¹²

Despite McConkie's wordsmithing, polytheism does not force the narrow interpretation of pagan deity worship. *Belief in or worship of* more than one God of any kind identifies one with a polytheistic faith. The fact that Mormonism doesn't worship other Gods besides their own doesn't negate their belief in countless other Gods.

9 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., pp. 576-577

10 Orson Pratt, February 18, 1855, *Journal of Discourses*, 2:345

11 *The New Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language*, 1993 ed., p. 779

12 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. p. 579

It is helpful also to note the choice of words used by McConkie's denial statement. Notice he says that to us there is only "one *God*, the Father" and "one *Lord* Jesus Christ." It is curious here that he chooses not to title Christ as a God. McConkie knows that his Church considers Jesus to be an independent and separate God in the fullest sense of the word.¹³ However, to say that both the Father and Jesus are each separate Gods would not resonate well when at the same time trying to deny polytheistic doctrine. Is this perhaps why McConkie chooses to title Christ as *Lord* rather than a *God*?

Admittedly, McConkie does say "that most scriptural references to the Lord have reference to him [Christ]."¹⁴ Considering, however, that McConkie was specifically addressing polytheism in his statement, a far less ambiguous and forthright explanation would have been to say that "to us [Mormons] there are but *three Gods*, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." This would have more clearly and accurately articulated what Mormonism truly believes.

Biblical Position

The Christian God is self-existent. Though Mormons almost universally caveat the following verses as pertaining to this world, those words are found nowhere in any text.

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Deuteronomy, Chapter 4

35 Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him. 39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Isaiah 43:10

Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Isaiah, Chapter 44

6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. 8 Fear ye not; neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.

¹³ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 576

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 450

One would presume that the Mormon Heavenly Father would know about other Gods, especially His own Mormon Heavenly Father who gave birth to Him. Yet the Father here indicates that He's not "read in" about countless other Mormon gods sharing space in eternity.

Isaiah, Chapter 45

5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me...
 6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.
 21...and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me. 22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

No less than three times in this passage does the Lord plainly convey the message that He is the one and only God. Unless a person is reading with presuppositional bias, there is simply no way you can objectively render this passage and many others to allow literally innumerable Gods ruling over other worlds. In fact if innumerable Gods really existed elsewhere, then God's statement here is not only misleading, but also patently false and would certainly confuse any objective reader without doctrinal preconceptions.

Isaiah 46: 9

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is one else; I am God, and there is none like me.

Interesting that the Heavenly Father of the Christian faith says there are no others like Him when Mormonism teaches that the Heavenly Father eventually exalts all His faithful children to the ranks of Deity.

Isaiah 48:12

Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.

In just the few Bible citations quoted there are no less than twenty-one straightforward, unambiguous declarations that there is only one God. These Bible declarations have not been revealed in shadows or difficult theological terms, but in simple, direct language. If the Mormon Heavenly Father was really one God among literally countless other Gods, then His seemingly clear statements of *singleness* are misleading at the very least. Surely we will be without excuse, as the Bible is pregnant with statements declaring a singularly existent God and without qualification. Respectfully, to teach otherwise is open rebellion against the Father's revealed truth.

The God of the Bible has no equal and no one with whom to be compared, as He has clearly stated from scripture:

Isaiah 40:18

To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

Isaiah 40:25

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

Clearly, the countless Mormon gods who have achieved the omnipotent status of deity are comparable and equals with the Mormon god. If the Mormon god is comparable with countless others, perhaps the God that Latter-day Saints are following should be more closely examined.

*** * * LDS Rebuttals * * ***

LDS Rebuttal 1: "One God' references in the Bible are referring only to the one unified purpose, action, and belief between the three Mormon gods and do not denote God's literal being."

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie presented this interpretation:

There are three Gods—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—who, though separate in personality, are united as one in purpose, in plan, and in all the attributes of perfection.¹⁵

It is true that some passages in the Bible can be interpreted to mean God's single, unified purpose or action between members of the Godhead. However, even allowing the widest latitude in interpretation for references to *one God*, all must still be understood through the lens of several other clear passages that we have looked at which specifically limit the existence of Deity to one being. Whatever passages Mormons can therefore use to show oneness of purpose cannot also be used to allow the possibility of countless Gods.

LDS Rebuttal 2: "References to 'one God' are referring only to this world and therefore do not preclude Gods presiding over other worlds."

As mentioned previously, an objective student of God's Word must note that none of the Bible passages cited actually contain the words necessary to convey or infer a multiplicity of Gods. Consider the following illustrations to identify whether God was limiting His context to just this world:

¹⁵ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 317

Isaiah 45:5-6

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me...I am the Lord, and there is none else.

If God really meant that He was the only God for this world and was not denying other Gods in other places, then this thought would require Him to state something like:

I am the Lord, and there is none else *for this earth*, there is no God beside me *within my specific kingdom*...I am the Lord, and there is none else *as far as yea are concerned*.

or

I am the Lord, and *while there are Lords many and Gods many over other worlds, but to you and this world* there is none else...I am the Lord, and there is none else *with regard to this world*.

Isaiah 43:10

Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

If innumerable Gods were the intended meaning, then the English language would require sentence construction similar to:

Before me there was no God formed *over this world*, neither shall there be after me.

The words needed in the English language to convey unique LDS interpretation on multiple Gods are simply not in the text. If God's intent was to use written language to clearly convey truth on this vital subject without misrepresentation, then He has done a very poor job.

LDS Rebuttal 3: "The Bible doesn't teach that there's only one God because some references to God are really referring to idols."

If this were the case, then we should be able to replace the word *God* with *idols* and still retain the same meaning. Consider the following to see how well this works:

Isaiah 43:10 (Actual Text)

Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Example Text (According to Mormon Understanding)

Before me there was no idol formed, neither shall there be after me.

Not even LDS believe that there were no pagan idols made before or after the God they worship. The context of this and similar verses is clearly not referring to idols.

LDS Rebuttal 4: "We're not polytheists because we believe in one Godhead."

A prominent Mormon Apostle explained it this way:

Monotheism is the doctrine or belief that there is but one God. If this is properly interpreted to mean that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—each of whom is a separate and distinct godly personage—are one God, meaning one Godhead, then true saints are monotheists.¹⁶

While Christians consider the Godhead to be a quantitative value of one, Mormonism redefines it to mean one *organization* of multiple Gods. No other Christian faith interprets monotheism like McConkie does. If McConkie had said that one *Godhead* equals three Gods he would have been much less ambiguous and would have more clearly presented the true Mormon position.

*** * * LDS Proof Text * * ***

1 Corinthians 8:5-6

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things...

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie uses Paul in this passage to prove that there are many true Gods.¹⁷ Mormon President and Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. also disputed the true Bible context regarding pagan gods when he explained:

Some say I do not interpret the Scripture the same as they do. They say it means the heathen's gods. Paul says there are Gods many and Lords many; and that makes a plurality of Gods, in spite of the whims of all men.... You know and I testify that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods. I have it from God, and get over it if you can. I have a witness of the Holy Ghost, and a testimony that Paul had no allusion to the heathen Gods in the text.¹⁸

Despite Smith's wisdom on the subject, the context of First Corinthians *is not* a plurality of actual living and true Gods, but of idols. The verse immediately preceding this passage sets the context when it says "we know that an *idol* is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one" (1 Cor. 8:4). The word *idol* is mentioned no less than four additional times within this chapter (1 Cor. 8:1,7,10). Even though Joseph Smith capitalizes "Gods" and "Lords" in his

¹⁶ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. p. 511

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 577

¹⁸ Joseph Smith Jr., *Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 372

quotation of the Apostle Paul, these same titles *are not* capitalized in 1 Corinthians 8 and therefore *cannot* mean true Deity.

It should not be overlooked that Paul says they were *called* gods. Just because Paul acknowledged that there are things or persons called gods doesn't mean they are Deity. As someone once said, "*Your cat may have kittens in the oven but that doesn't make them biscuits.*" Paul was using his wit through satirical language to contrast the difference between the pantheon of false gods and that of the one and only true God. It was this same Paul who said in verse six, "*But to us there is but one God...*" Paul clearly sets apart the belief of "us" (the Christian church) that worship the only true God. Using a holistic approach to Bible interpretation, this same writer cannot be acknowledging multiple Gods since he has stated elsewhere in the Bible that there was only one God. (1 Tim. 2:5)

*** * * LDS Proof Text * * ***

Psalms 82:6 (similar with John 10:34)

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

Does this passage prove the existence of more than one true God? Notice again the use of a small letter "g," which throughout the Bible never means true Deity. Reading the context of the entire chapter, God was pronouncing judgment on corrupt leaders, not literal Gods. Verse seven says, "*But ye shall die like men*, and fall like one of the princes." No true God can die. A reader without a predisposed position to defend would see the usage of satire and irony in Jesus' words to rebuke His audience. He was in no way inferring or acknowledging the possibility of Godhood for mankind.

Jesus also spoke in the present tense ("Ye *are* gods."). Mormon doctrine teaches that its followers *will be* Gods only *after* death and when appointed as such by the Mormon Heavenly Father. No living Mormon on earth currently possesses Godhood. Therefore this passage *cannot* be used to prove a multiplicity of Gods.

*** * * LDS Scripture Contradictions * * ***

Many Mormons are unaware that *all three* extra-biblical books of Mormon scripture actually contradict a multiplicity of Gods. Remember to view the following passages in the context that the *Book of Mormon* is said by Mormons to be “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion,”¹⁹ containing between itself and the Bible the “fullness [or completeness] of the gospel.”²⁰ We should therefore find clear doctrine that corrects and clarifies what Mormonism says the Bible really means. You be the judge if this is the case.

Book of Mormon Witness Statement

On the front pages of the *Book of Mormon*, before the First Book of Nephi, we find a statement made by three witnesses (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris), verifying the truthfulness of this book of scripture. The last sentence of their statement ends with the following:

...And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

The Book of Mormon certainly missed an opportunity for clarity if many Gods exist. Here's another problematic scripture:

Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 31:21

(See also Alma 11:44; 3 Nephi 11:27,36; Mormon 7:7)

...And now, behold, 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. Amen.

Neither Second Nephi nor similar passages clarify a different context other than a singularly existent God anywhere for all people, in all solar systems. Another missed opportunity for the most correct book on earth. Consider another:

Book of Mormon, Mosiah, Chapter 15

1 And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. 2 And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son -- 3 The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus

¹⁹ *Book of Mormon*, Introduction
²⁰ *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:12

becoming the Father and Son -- 4 And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

Yet another missed opportunity to present the fullness of the Mormon god and Jesus, whom are one in purpose only. Here's some more contradictory LDS scriptures:

Book of Mormon, Alma 11:7

For if there be no Christ there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a god, and he is Christ. . .

Book of Mormon, Alma 11:26-29

And Zeezrom said unto him: Thou sayest there is a true and living God? And Amulek said: Yea, there is a true and living God. Now Zeezrom said: Is there more than one God? And he answered, No.

Pearl of Great Price, Moses 1:6

And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:19

And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:28

Which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end. Amen.

So in summary, none of the previous LDS scripture citations fix, correct, or clarify what Mormonism says the Bible really means on this topic. This should give every objective reader pause to consider whether the concept of countless Gods can be supported from either the Bible or all three supplemental books of Mormon scripture. Any additional passages that can be suggested to teach plurality are going to be contradicted with the clearly worded passages in this section. If we are to be consistent, LDS scripture suffers from the same lack of clarity that Mormonism says the Bible suffers from. This is indeed significant for a religion that builds its case on the basis of having restored gospel truth supposedly lost by all other Christian denominations.

A Serious Commandment Going Ignored

Every Mormon is familiar with the Ten Commandments, which includes this warning: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3). Should the teaching of countless Gods be of concern to Mormons in light of this commandment? Some say that use of the uncanceled "g" in god restricts this commandment to a context of false gods.

Graven images are specifically mentioned in the next commandment, however. God simply says here in verse three to "have no other gods." Since there is indeed only one true God, then it makes sense that scripture would use a small g.

Does the word *have* really mean to *worship* no other, as some Mormons say? At the risk of stating the obvious, the word *worship* is not used. This then goes beyond the narrow interpretation of worship and includes the believer's faith and doctrine as well! To teach the idea that there are more Gods than particles of matter among the worlds²¹ cannot be pleasing to the Father. To teach as doctrine that you yourself will one day become an independent, omnipotent, and sovereign God cannot be honoring to God in light of His commandment already given.

Distinctive No. 3 — The Mormon god Is an exalted man

Mormonism teaches that God is an exalted man, once mortal, now immortal. The belief that God is a man like us is in keeping with the LDS worldview that all faithful men and women in the Mormon Church will someday become Gods and Goddesses in the fullest sense of the word.

It is not insignificant to note that neither the Book of Mormon, or the Doctrine and Covenants specifically teach that the Heavenly Father of Mormonism is an exalted man. This cardinal doctrine of the Mormon faith is accepted based on the word of LDS leadership. First Mormon President and Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. said:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!²²

21 Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 2:345

22 History of the Church, Vol. 6, p. 305 (see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345)

Fifth Mormon Prophet and President Lorenzo Snow coined the well-known expression:

As man is God once was, as God is, man may be.²³

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie declared:

God is an exalted man, perfected, enthroned, and supreme....Man and God are of the same race, and it is within the power of righteous man to become like his Father...²⁴

Mormon Apostle John Widtsoe stated:

God and man are of the same race, differing only in their degrees of advancement.²⁵

Mormon Apostle Parley P. Pratt pontificated:

God, angels, and men are all of the same species, one race, one great family.²⁶

Biblical Position

The Christian God has never been a mortal man. The Christian God in fact is not like man, and is transcendent above all things and all of His creation.

Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent.

While Mormons may see no problem since God “is not,” rather than “was not” a man, the context from the Jewish monotheistic faith is clearly not about “when” God was a man, but is declaring that He never was a man. The true God cannot be of the same species as man since Moses is herein stating that God is transcendent above mankind’s being.

²³ Lorenzo Snow, *Articles of Faith*, p. 430

²⁴ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd. ed., pp. 250, 465-466

²⁵ John Widtsoe, *Gospel Through the Ages*, p. 107

²⁶ *Key to the Science of Theology*, 1978 ed., p. 21

Psalm 50:21

These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

Romans 1:22-23

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man... (See also 1 Sam. 15:29; Isa. 31:3; Ezek. 28:2,9; Hos. 11:9)

The Apostle Paul herein warns against anyone who attempts to use their wisdom to create a God like themselves. No matter how deified the Mormon god may be now, declaring Him as a man just like us ultimately robs Him of His Deity and brings Him down to the level of man. Whether man rises to the level of Deity, or God condescends to the level of man, either condition puts mankind on parity with his maker.

What God has revealed in the Bible about His nature is clear. We have no common genetic heredity or divine bloodline from the true God. We come as creations of His image, receiving the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters into His family. We share no common genealogical family tree of Deity. God is not of the same "species" or "race" as man, but transcends far above all of His creation, man included.

* * * LDS Proof Text * * *

Genesis 1:26,27

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (See also Lk. 24:39; Heb. 1:3)

Mormons use this and similar verses to prove that God is a man since we are created in His "image." However, using a holistic approach to Bible revelation, many clear statements declare that God is a *Spirit* (Jer. 23:24; Isa. 31:3; Jn. 4:24; Col. 1:15) and Luke 24:39 makes it clear that a spirit does not have flesh and bones. Christians are said to be "conformed to the *image* of his Son" (Rom. 8:29), but this does not mean that we are all to look physically like Jesus.

Additionally, the Holy Ghost of Mormonism is described in an official church handbook as "a spirit that has the form and likeness of a man."²⁷ If it is true that a non-tangible spirit in Mormonism can have a body in the "likeness" of man, yet without flesh and bones, then God's

27 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 37

image mentioned in the Bible cannot prove a body of flesh and bones either. Christian author Marvin Cowan describes how the image of God cannot take a literal physical context:

Just because man has a body of flesh, blood, and bones does not mean that God is made of the same material. The statue, or image, of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial is 19 feet tall and made of white Georgia marble, but that does not prove that President Lincoln was a giant made of white marble. "Image" does not mean "made of the same material" or "made the same size."²⁸

Whatever then we may say of the word *image*, and *likeness*, it cannot be used in context to prove a physical body. The image of man and Christ describes our *reflection* of God's moral and spiritual nature (albeit now imperfect), and not His actual countenance. A mirror doesn't show the actual person, but reflects what the qualities of a person. This passage then is figurative language for God initially creating man to reflect many of the same qualities as Himself, though this image has become marred after the fall of man through Adam. As does God, we live, love, have a will and intellect, and through our personalities and ability to communicate can share spiritual fellowship and eventually physical presence with Him. Going beyond these reflections of nature is Biblically unsupportable. Authors David A. Reed and John R. Farkas explain:

As to man's physical form, if it were truly the same as God's there would have been no need for Christ to change his form when he came to earth as described in Philippians 2:6,7: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." The fact that Christ had to give up "being in the form of God" to be "made in the likeness of men" shows that the two are not the same.²⁹

Bible commentator Allen P. Ross explains the image of God:

Being created in God's image means that humans share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God's nature, that is, in His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him.³⁰

Bill McKeever, founder and director of *Mormonism Research Ministry* adds:

What is the image of God? Throughout the Bible we see that man carries certain characteristics in common with God. He has a soul, and he has a spirit that will continue to exist throughout eternity. Another characteristic man had at the beginning, but lost at the time of the fall, was the moral image of God. When Adam was created, he was perfect. When he sinned, he fell from that perfect state. This is clear in Genesis 5:3, which says Seth was created after Adam's image-the sinful image of his literal father. Because of Adam's transgression, sin entered the world (Romans 5:12). The moral

28 Marvin W. Cowan, *Mormon Claims Answered*, 1989 ed., pp. 17-18

29 David A. Reed and John R. Farkas, *Mormons Answered Verse by Verse*, p. 38

30 Editors John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1985, p. 29

image lost through the fall is regained only through the new birth. Colossians 3:10 reads: "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."³¹

Exodus 33:11

The LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend...(See also Gen. 32:30)

To the Mormon, if the Heavenly Father and we have a face, and we are created in the image of God, then God must be a man like us. This and similar proof texts break down immediately, however, when considering that the expression "face to face" does not automatically imply a physical "eyes on" with the persons speaking. An *interrogator* and a *subject* sitting across from each other in a dark room can be said to speak "face to face," but yet never see any physical characteristics of each other.

Taking a holistic approach to what the Bible teaches on God, the context of these passages cannot prove Moses or anyone else has seen God in an exalted human form since John 1:18 explains that "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Exodus 33 must therefore be using other descriptive techniques to convey a truth.

Metaphors

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a name or quality is attributed to something in which it is not literally applicable, (e.g. an "icy stare," a "cold shoulder," or a "hard heart"). This is a common communication technique throughout the Bible and the reader must be careful not to interpret literally where metaphorical language is used.

Exodus 33:11 is not inferring that God is a man, but is clearly using metaphorical language to convey the idea that Moses spoke to God in a *personal*, *intimate*, and *direct manner*, such as when two friends converse. The phrase "face to face" conveys the idea of proximity and of a one-on-one discussion with another. This personal conversation is similarly described elsewhere in the Bible as talking "mouth to mouth" when God spoke with Moses:

Numbers 12:5-8

And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will

31 Bill McKeever, *Answering Mormons' Questions*, p. 51

speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

Note that even though God spoke to Moses directly, he saw only the “similitude” or *likeness* of God, not the actual Person of God. It cannot be said then that Moses saw God in exalted, human form.

Anthropomorphisms

Exodus 33:11 uses another descriptive technique known as an *anthropomorphism*.

Anthropomorphic language applies human form or characteristics to God (e.g. face, hands, eyes, walking) that allow finite human minds to describe infinite characteristics of God in terms that we can relate to. Such language is not to be taken literally. Anthropomorphisms can also convey human characteristics through things seen in nature. One Bible Dictionary has this to say about anthropomorphisms:

Anthropomorphism grows naturally in a faith that views God as active and relational. . . . In the typically concrete fashion of the Hebrew mind, the inspired writers of the Old Testament speak of God's eyes, ears, hands, and feet; but they meticulously avoid letting the descriptions become too tangible and concrete. God's movement among humanity is described as walking; His acceptance of sacrifice is through smell; His awareness of human plight is through sight; His feelings are represented in terms of human emotion. He rules as king, tends as shepherd, loves as father. This picturesque language is metaphor, but it is more. It is faith affirming the reality, uniqueness, and sovereignty of God.³²

Mormons choose to interpret “face to face” literally, while accepting other anthropomorphisms as figurative. For example, even Mormons do not think that God has actual “feathers” and “wings” in Psalm 91:4; or has “horns coming out of his hand” in Habakkuk 3:4; or that He “measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span” of His literal hand in Isaiah 40:12; or has literally billions of eyes to see in every place in Proverbs 15:3; or that the eyes of the Lord literally have legs as they “run to and fro throughout the whole earth” in 2 Chronicles 16:9’ or that He literally “*sitteth upon the circle of the earth*” in Isaiah 40:22.

Mormons surely reject the literal interpretation of clouds having feet in Exodus 33:9; or that the “heart of the sea” in Exodus 15:8 proves that the sea has components of the human anatomy.

³² Holman Bible Dictionary, 1991, p. 63

Mormons readily accept the figurative language of Proverbs 30:28 where spiders have "hands," and ants are described as "people" in Proverbs 30:25.

Even with ourselves, surely Mormons don't interpret a literal context when we're told to "Cleanse your hands ye sinners; and purify your hearts..." in John 4:8. Surely no Mormon would literally attempt to "...gird up the loins of your mind..." in Peter 1:13.

So the point is, that trying to literally interpret all references to the human body as literal body parts is without contextual support. Just as these examples are not to be taken literally, the *face to face* of Exodus 33 is not to be taken literally as evidence that God is a man, having a face in the likeness of ours.

* * * LDS Scripture Contradictions * * *

Mormons should consider that *all three* extra-biblical books of LDS scripture contradict official church doctrine that God was once a man. Instead they teach that God has always been God.

Book of Mormon, Mosiah 3:5

...the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity...

Book of Mormon, Mormon, Chapter 9

9 For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?
19...I say unto you he changeth not...(See also 1 Nephi 10:18 and 2 Nephi 29:9)

Are there any modifiers given within these scriptures to limit the context to God's personal qualities and not His very person or being as well? No. Let's look at some more:

Book of Mormon, Moroni 8:18

For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity. (See also Moroni 7:22)

Doctrine and Covenants 20:17

By these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them. (See also D&C 39:1)

Pearl of Great Price, Moses 1:3

And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?

Distinctive No. 4 — The Mormon god is also known as Adam, the first man

On April 9, 1852, second Mormon President and Prophet Brigham Young taught that the first Adam in the Garden of Eden was actually God the Father. This peculiar doctrine known as the *Adam-God Doctrine* is likely unknown to most new LDS converts, as most LDS either deny that it was ever taught, or claim that that non-Mormons have taken it out of context. Is this rebuttal supportable? Consider an excerpt of Young's teaching:

When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, He came into it with a *celestial body*, and brought Eve, *one of his wives*, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the *Archangel*, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! About whom holy men have written and spoken—He is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom we have to do....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.³³

The context of this excerpt demonstrates on multiple levels that Young meant exactly what he said. Consider the following facts supporting Adam as the very God of Mormonism:

1. Note that the Mormon Adam “brought Eve, one of his wives” with him to the Garden of Eden. In Mormon theology, men don’t begin accumulating wives until their physical birth on a planet earth. Prior to that, LDS children of God exist only as spirit brothers and sisters in a pre-existent abode in Heaven. Thus, if Adam brought one of his wives, he was already a God.

33 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50-51

2. If Adam was as Young said “the only God with whom we have to do,” then he was clearly God the Heavenly Father. Mormon’s worship and follow God, not Adam the man.

3. Note also Young’s use of the capitalized *Father* and *God* in his discourse. Only the Mormon Heavenly Father gets this capitalized title. All other LDS gods are annotated with a small “g” out of respect and acknowledgement of their positional subordination to the Father.

4. Notice that Young said “the same character...in the garden of Eden” was the same Father of Jesus. No Mormon believes that the first man Adam was the father of Jesus. Of course if the LDS Heavenly Father was also Adam the first man, then we have no conflict.

There is ample evidence that Young’s teaching was interpreted literally among the LDS faithful. The Church owned publication, *Millennial Star* printed an article on December 10, 1853 that verified that Brigham Young meant what He said. The article was entitled "ADAM, THE FATHER AND GOD OF THE HUMAN FAMILY" said that,

The above sentiment appeared in Star No. 48, a little to the surprise of some of its readers; and while the sentiment may have appeared blasphemous to the ignorant, it has no doubt given rise to some serious reflections with the more candid and comprehensive mind. A few reasonable and Scriptural ideas upon this subject may be profitable at the present time.

The Adam is really God! And why not? If there are Lords many and Gods many, as the Scriptures inform us, why should not our Father Adam be one of them? Did he not prove himself as worthy of that high appellation as any other being that ever lived upon the earth?³⁴

LDS Apostle Heber C. Kimball said on June 29, 1856:

I have learned by experience that there is but one God that pertains to this people, and He is the god that pertains to this earth—The first man. That first man sent his own son to redeem the world...³⁵

Many more quotations could be given, but here’s one more from Brigham Young:

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. Now, let all who may hear these doctrines, pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation.³⁶

34 *Millennial Star*, Vol. 15, No. 50

35 Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:1

36 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:51

Biblical Position

The Christian Jesus has created all things, including mankind (Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6,15-17; Heb. 1:2). The Bible is also clear that God created Adam as the first man on earth (Gen. 2:7). As such, the Heavenly Father could not possibly be the first man Adam.

*** LDS Rebuttals ***

LDS Rebuttal: "Brigham Young was only stating his opinion on Adam and was not speaking as a Prophet."

Young put any speculation to rest when in the same King Follett discourse he said:

Now, let all who may hear these doctrines, pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation.³⁷

Additionally, LDS leadership teaches that membership receives “counsel by inspiration, or revelation, at every general conference of the Church.”³⁸ Two church-wide general conferences are given annually. LDS should know that the Adam God doctrine was taught by Brigham Young during a general conference in 1852, making it more than opinion, but doctrine.

Distinctive No. 5— The Mormon god is a created being

Because the Mormon god is an exalted man, He has had a beginning like us. In fact, not only does the Mormon Heavenly Father have a time in which He became a God, He also has had two birthdays prior to His appointment to Deity.

The Mormon god's Spirit Birth

In Mormonism, all people born on earth were first literally born spiritually by God as spirit children during a pre-existence in Heaven. These spirit bodies “*have all the parts of mortal bodies*” and “*the same form as to outward appearance as it now has in mortality....*”³⁹ Since it is believed in Mormonism that mankind is now following the path that the Heavenly Father and all before Him have followed, we can safely infer that the Mormon god has experienced the same course of events. Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie said:

³⁷ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:51

³⁸ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Teachings of the Living Prophets, Student Manual Religion* 333, pp. 62-63

³⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 750

In the literal sense, the expression spirit birth has reference to the birth of the spirit in pre-existence. Spirits are actually born as the offspring of a Heavenly Father, a glorified and exalted Man.⁴⁰

Mormon Seventy Milton R. Hunter explained how we were born as spirits before coming to earth, just as God our predecessor would certainly have done:

A Gospel truth which is as old as the human race...is that all mortals are literally sons and daughters of God. They were His offspring in the spirit world.⁴¹

The Mormon god's Mortal Birth

Since it is believed in Mormonism that mankind is now following the path that the Heavenly Father and all before Him once followed, we learn of the Mormon god's physical birthday as a mortal on another planet like ours. Second Mormon President and Prophet Brigham Young confirmed the Mormon god's created nature:

The Father....commenced the work of creating earthly tabernacles, precisely as he had been created in this flesh himself.⁴²

Tenth Mormon President and Prophet Joseph Fielding Smith explained how the Heavenly Father's physical birth was no different than ours here on earth:

I know that God is a being with body, parts and passions...Man was born of woman; Christ, the Savior, was born of woman; and God, the Father was born of woman.⁴³

Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt said in September of 1853:

We were begotten by our Father in Heaven; the person of our Father in heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by his Father; and again, He was begotten by a still more ancient Father; and so on.⁴⁴

40 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 750

41 Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the Ages*, p. 96

42 Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 50

43 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide*, 1984, p. 152;
See also *Church News*, 19 Sep 1936, p. 2

44 Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, Vol. 1, No.9, p.132

Biblical Position

The Christian God is uncreated. He's had no birthdays and has no birth certificate on file at the galaxy clerk's office. He has no paternal bloodline. He has always been God, just as fully as He is now and could not therefore have been created in any way.

Psalm 90:2

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

Psalm 93:2

Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.

Isaiah 63:16

...thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. (See also Habakkuk 1:12)

Distinctive No. 6 — The Mormon god has a body of flesh and bone

Due to Mormon doctrine that God was once a man like us, He has a physical body of flesh and bones just like us. This belief is codified in LDS scripture, where we're told that "*The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's.*"⁴⁵ In a teaching manual printed by the Mormon Church, we read:

Because we are made in his image (see Moses 6:9), we know that God has a body that looks like ours. His eternal spirit is housed in a tangible body of flesh and bones (see D&C 130:22). God's body, however, is perfected and glorified, with a glory beyond all description.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 130:22

⁴⁶ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 9

Biblical Position

The Christian God is incorporeal. The Bible resoundingly refutes Mormon teaching that the Heavenly Father has a physical body, but teaches that He is a Spirit being without any physical parts.

John 4:24

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

* * * LDS Rebuttals * * *

LDS Rebuttal 1: "John 4:24 doesn't prove that God is without flesh and bones, but is describing God's two-part nature. Like us, God 'is' a spirit who 'has' a body."

Since the Mormon god is an exalted man like us, John 4:24 isn't seen as a factual statement of God's person or essence, but only as a declaration of the *spirit* part of God's two-part nature (body and spirit). One Bible Dictionary, under the subject of *Body*, has this to say regarding man's nature:

The Greek-Hellenistic culture often downplayed the value of the body. Humans were seen as having two or three parts--body and soul or body, soul, and spirit....Modern research, on the other hand, shows that body and soul cannot be observed separate from one another. Body and soul do not form two separate substances. Instead, they comprise the one individual human in an inseparable union.⁴⁷

It is true that after physical death and prior to our resurrection, our spirits will live independent of our mortal bodies for a brief time (Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:6-8). During this time we could technically be called "spirit," but the fact that we will eventually be reunited with our then immortal bodies to form once again a complete union points to the fact that our bodies are more than just something we "have," but are intrinsically part of what we are. This should be readily obvious to Mormons due to their unique belief that they are sent to earth to gain physical bodies needed to become Gods themselves. Physical bodies are not just something LDS and the Mormon gods *have*, but are fundamentally part of who they are.

Just as the flesh and spirit make us what we are, the flesh and spirit make the Mormon god what He is, an exalted man. Saying that the Mormon god is a spirit is therefore out of form and serves no purpose at best. It's a misleading and wrong representation at worst.

⁴⁷ *The Homan Bible Dictionary*, 1991, p. 202

It's worth noting that LDS repeatedly refer to the Holy Ghost in Mormonism as a "Spirit".⁴⁸ Why? Because He *does not* have a body of flesh and bones. Why then the exception for the Mormon Heavenly Father?

The context of John 4:24 is found in verses 20-21. After recognizing Jesus as a prophet, the Samaritan woman at the well was confused as to where one was to worship God; for some worshiped in the nearby mountain, while others worshiped in the temple at Jerusalem. By proclaiming God's nature as Spirit, Jesus was telling the woman that she didn't need to go to a geographical location, as spirit cannot be confined to any one place such as the temple. She could worship the Heavenly Father spiritually and truthfully right where she was.

Continuing with Biblical evidences for the immaterial Spirit God, we read again in the Old Testament:

Jeremiah 23:24

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.

Colossians 1:15

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.
(See also 1 Tim. 1:17 and Heb. 11:27)

LDS Rebuttal 2: "Since Christ has a body and has the 'image' or looks of God, the 'invisible God' cannot mean Heavenly Father is without a body. 'Invisible' means 'unseen,' not unseeable."

Let's address the meaning of God's image and invisibility, one at a time.

1. The *image* of God

The Bible is clear that God is a *Spirit* and Luke 24:39 makes it clear that a spirit does not have flesh and bones.⁴⁹ Christians are said to be "conformed to the *image* of his Son," (Rom. 8:29), but this does not mean that we are all to look physically like Jesus. Additionally, the Holy Ghost of Mormonism is described in an official Church Handbook as "a spirit that has the form and likeness of a man."⁵⁰ If it is true that a non-tangible spirit in Mormonism can have a body in the

48 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 37; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 359

49 Jer. 23:24; Isa. 31:3; Jn. 4:24; Col. 1:15

50 Ibid., p. 37

“likeness” of man, yet without flesh and bones, then God's *image* mentioned in the Bible cannot prove a body of flesh and bones either.

2. The invisibility of God

Mormon Author Stephen Robinson makes this case for an unseen, rather than unseeable God:

...[T]he Greek word *horatos* means "seen." Its negation, *aoratos*, as at 1 Timothy 1:[17], means "unseen" or "not seen." It means "invisible" in the sense of "unseeable" only by inference. Howard Hughes was "unseen" for many years without, I think, having become personally invisible. In regard to whether it is possible to see God under any circumstances, the term *aoratos* is ambiguous, since the most literal translation is "unseen" rather than "unseeable."⁵¹

Robinson clearly prefers the Greek word translations of *seen/unseen*, which better accommodate applications to both the immaterial, as well as the physical flesh and bones God of Mormonism. To Robinson, God is invisible only because He hadn't been seen at that point in history and not because He's an immaterial Being. Of course the Mormon god has now revealed Himself personally in flesh and bones with a spring 1820 visit to Joseph Smith Jr. Smith indeed has had a unique experience since he remains the only man in approximately 6000 years of recorded human history to have had this flesh and bones experience. It is unfortunate that he has no witnesses to this visitation.

Assuming Smith's testimony is true, and Robinson's definition of invisible is correct, then the Bible needs revision. The all-knowing God who can see the course of events upcoming should have said in Colossians that Christ "*is the image of the yet invisible God....*" This would have accommodated upcoming visitations by the flesh and bones Heavenly Father. Such a revision is unlikely considering 1 Timothy 6:16, which tells us that God dwells in "*light which no man can approach.*" God would also have to correct John 1:18, which explains that "*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*" Investigators of Mormonism have a choice to make. Either Robinson's explanation is right, and the Bible now has dated material, or God still is invisible.

Concerning Robinson's explanation for the word *invisible*, other authoritative works do not limit his "most literal translation" of the Greek to that which is only *unseen*. The *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* describes the Greek word *hōratōs* as that which is "*capable of being*

51 Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?*, p. 79

seen:—*visible*.⁵² Therefore its negation (aōratōs) means “invisible,”⁵³ just as the Bible says. The opposite or negation of that which *is* capable of being seen is that which *is not* capable of being seen.

While it is true that *invisible* in Greek can mean both *unseen* or *that which cannot be seen*, the interpretation should be less “ambiguous” to Robinson when consulting the whole counsel of the Bible. The invisible God is not a flesh and bones God, veiled to human eyes, but is a *Spirit*,⁵⁴ and Luke 24:39 makes it clear that a spirit does not have flesh and bones that can be seen.

Isaiah 31:3

Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit...

Mormons once again have a decision to make, for things that are different are not the same. While the Mormon god’s pre-immortal body was one time filling an earthly casket, the true God was still filling heaven and earth. While the Mormon god’s spirit is even now being housed in his own body of flesh and bones, the invisible God’s Spirit indwells in the lives of His children. The true Heavenly Father of the Christian faith is and always will be a God of spirit essence.

*** * * LDS Proof Text * * ***

Genesis, Chapter 1

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...27
So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female create he them.

To the Mormon, since we were created in Gods “image” and “likeness”, and since we have bodies of flesh and bone, this passage is to be understood literally that God must also have a body of flesh and bones. Again, the actual interpretation for this passage is that we are created in the moral and spiritual *nature* of God, not His actual countenance. Using the Bible to interpret the Bible, the word “image” here is not to be taken literally to mean a physical form since the Bible is resoundingly clear that God is a *Spirit*, and Luke 24:39 makes it clear that a spirit does not have flesh and bones.

52 James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 1986, Greek Dictionary section, p. 69, Greek word No. 3707

53 Ibid, p. 14, Greek word No. 517

54 Jer. 23:24; Is. 31:3; Jn. 4:24; Col. 1:15

Exodus 33:11

The LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend... (See also Genesis 32:30)

This passage is proof positive to Mormons that God must have a body since bodies have a face. As already touched on, this passage is using metaphorical and anthropomorphic language—not literal language. Remember that the expression “face to face” does not automatically imply a physical glimpse of the person speaking. The term expresses a personal, intimate and direct manner to conversation between two parties.

The Bible is clear that God is of spirit essence. Moses could not have seen a God in body since 1 Timothy 6:16 tells us that God dwells in *"light which no man can approach."* John 1:18 explains that *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."* Just two verses prior to Exodus 33:11 we find the context for whom or what Moses was speaking to "face to face":

Exodus 33:9

And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.

Notice that God spoke not from a physical eyeball-to-eyeball discussion with Moses, but from within the *cloudy pillar*. The Christian Heavenly Father spoke to Moses via a theophany, not a flesh and bones meeting.

Theophanies

A theophany is the invisible God taking on a visible image or form that mortal man can observe. This technique was used by God to convey the reality of His presence to mortal eyes that were otherwise unable to see Him and live. Examples include visions (Gen. 15:1; Is. 6:1), dreams (Gen. 20:3-7; Gen. 28:12-13), visits by the Angel of the LORD (Judges 6:20-23; Judges 13; Ex. 3:2-6; Josh. 5:14), a burning bush before Moses (Ex. 3:2-4; Acts 7:30), a pillar of cloud by day or fire by night to the children of Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21; Ex. 16:10; Ezek. 10:4), or through a descending dove at Christ's baptism (Jn. 1:32-33).

Theophanies can be further identified as Angelophanies (angelic messengers of God), or Christophanies (manifestations of the pre-incarnate Christ). In each case, theophanies assured the people involved that God was literally in their presence. The Heavenly Father used this

technique prior to the physical manifestation of God to man through Christ Jesus, who was Himself God incarnate (in the flesh). After the Heavenly Father's revelation of God to man through the flesh and bones ministry of His Son Jesus, the use of theophanies were no longer needed and are not seen again in the New Testament. When Philip said to Jesus "*shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,*" Christ answered with "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father" (John 14:9)? The Heavenly Father no longer needed theophanies, for God incarnate walked and talked with Philip in Christ Jesus.

Note also in verse nine that a *cloud stood* at the door of the tabernacle. What Moses actually observed as he was talking face to face was a cloudy pillar, not God in a body. While clouds don't literally *stand*, the anthropomorphism conveys the reality of God's presence and proximity to Moses.

Just seven verses after our primary passage, beginning in verse 18 we see yet more evidence that Moses could not have seen a flesh and bones God. I've added comment where appropriate.

Exodus, Chapter 33

18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory [*his power and magnificence, no body mentioned*]. 19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, [*God's presence is here, no body mentioned*] and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. 20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. [*anthropomorphism, definitely no body seen here if one is to live*] 21 And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: 22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by [*theophany, God is very near, no body mentioned*], that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: [*anthropomorphism, is any human hand big enough to cover somebody, or arm long enough to cover eyes while approaching and walking by?*] 23 And I will take away mine hand, [*anthropomorphism*] and thou shalt see my back parts: [*anthropomorphism, God has finished passing by*] but my face [*anthropomorphism*] shall not be seen.

Clearly, the theme of this scene is that God's magnificence, power, and glory was in the very presence of His people. Moses had asked for God's presence to be with him and God demonstrated to Moses that He was ever present, even though He could not be seen.

Exodus, Chapter 24

When Moses was commanded by the LORD to meet Him on Mount Sinai we read:

10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and it were the body of heaven in his clearness. 11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: and they saw God, and did eat and drink.

If this were the only relevant verse we had in the Bible, one could understandably arrive at the conclusion that God might have a visible body. This rendering cannot be accepted though when we honor the greater context of the Bible. Moses may have had a vision, or may have seen a theophany, but he could not have seen the Person of the Father since God tells the same Moses later that *"there shall no man see me, and live"* (Ex. 33:20). We must balance Exodus 24 against other clearer teaching that tells us that *"no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"* (Jn. 1:18).

Once reaching the summit of the mountain at a distance close enough to see anyone with a body, we are given some more important details from Exodus 24:

16 And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. 17 And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

A few observations from these two verses:

1. Nowhere do we read that Moses saw anything but God's glory speaking from within a cloud. This cannot prove that God has a body.
2. Note that the children of Israel who were left at the bottom of the mountain saw the glory of the LORD like a fire on the top of the mountain. There is no way the physical eye could see a man sized body or even several bodies at such a distance if we were talking about literal personages. It is also doubtful that a body would look like a "devouring fire." If we are to honor Bible context and not read our own meaning into it, the only thing we can say definitively is that Moses saw God's *glory* through a theophany of cloud and fire, but not a body.

Hebrews 1:3

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (See also Acts 7:55-56)

According to Mormonism, Jesus could not have "sat down" at the right hand of the Father if God did not have a physical body. This passage cannot allow a literal interpretation, however, due to numerous other passages that clearly convey a God of spirit essence (Jer. 23:24; Is. 31:3; Jn. 4:24; Col. 1:15), and Luke 24:39 which makes it clear that a spirit does not have flesh and bones. The *right hand* is therefore used figuratively to describe a place or position of favor, power, and authority. A modern-day use of the term is to be called someone's "right hand man." This doesn't any more mean that you're physically next to someone today than it did to the writer of Hebrews. This position of authority is seen today in U.S. military protocol, which requires the highest-ranking person to be on the *right hand* side when walking in a group of people. This allows the soldier with the most power and authority to be readily identified and allows the highest-ranking person on the *right hand* side to salute for the group.

Just before he was stoned to death for preaching the gospel, Stephen had a vision in which he saw Jesus standing on the "right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56). But verse 55 says it was the "glory of God" that Jesus was standing next to, not an embodied Heavenly Father. Christ confirmed this *right hand* position of power and authority when He told His disciples that "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matt. 28:18). This same idea of favor and unfavor is again seen at the judgment where the saved inherit heaven and are received at the *right hand* of God, while the lost are sent to the *left hand* unto everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:33-41). Those living eternally in the punishment of Hell will not be physically and literally present at the left side of God. The position of God's right hand of power is clearly conveyed when He said, "*Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness*" (Is. 41:10).

God describes His *right hand* as righteousness, rather than a geo-spatial location. Jesus also described the Father's right hand as a position of power and authority rather than a location immediately to His right side. "*I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*" (Mark 14:62; see also Acts 5:31).

A Last Point to Consider

Aside from out of context inferences drawn from the Bible and the one verse in Mormon scripture that specifically says that "*The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as*

man's,⁵⁵ Mormons often point to the first vision account by Joseph Smith to prove a flesh and bones Heavenly Father. When the confused Joseph Smith retired alone to the woods to ask God which church to join, he was visited by the Father and the Son. An excerpt of the account follows:

Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith — History 1:17

When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!

It's often overlooked but technically this LDS scripture never says that Smith saw bodies. He saw two "personages" which has been interpreted to mean bodies through LDS paintings of the event and through proclamations from Mormon Prophets. How do LDS know that Joseph Smith didn't see a theophany like all other people have seen when God the Father met with them? Could he have seen only the "glory" of God the Father and not a body?

* * * LDS Scripture Contradictions * * *

Even the *Book of Mormon* and the *Doctrine and Covenants* do not clarify what Mormons say the Bible should say. In fact, both books of Mormon scripture contradict LDS doctrine regarding a body of flesh and bones:

Book of Mormon, Alma 18:26-28

And then Ammon said: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit? And he said, Yea. And Ammon said: This is God. And Ammon said unto him again: Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth. (See also Alma 18:2-5 and 22:9-11)

Book of Mormon, Alma 31:15

Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever.

This passage doesn't appear to accurately reflect the fact that the Mormon god has acquired a body of flesh and bones along the line of progression.

Doctrine and Covenants 93:23

⁵⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22

Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth.

It is again most unfortunate that LDS extra-biblical scripture known as “the most correct of any book on earth [the *Book of Mormon*],”⁵⁶ containing between itself and the Bible the “fullness [or completeness] of the gospel,”⁵⁷ has failed to clarify what Mormons say the Bible really means. The *Pearl of Great Price* likewise doesn’t specifically say that the “personage” of God reportedly seen by Joseph Smith was of flesh and bone.⁵⁸ Such understanding must be inferred.

Indeed, LDS have only one extra-biblical scripture reference in the *Doctrine and Covenants* that specifically states that the Father has a body of flesh and bones,⁵⁹ and this single passage has been used to trump the dozens of other Biblical and LDS citations proclaiming a God of spirit essence. Beyond that we are left to inference and the words of man (LDS Prophets) to give God a body. Not a strong case.

Distinctive No. 7— The Mormon god was once a sinner

Because the Mormon god was once a man on another planet who had to earn His Godhood, He once had all the characteristics we have, including sin. While the Mormon god does not sin now, He did as a man prior to becoming a God. A Teacher's Manual of the Mormon Church quotes Joseph Smith Jr. about the former nature of God:

It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God. . . . He was once a man like us...⁶⁰

Because He was once a man, the manual then concludes:

Our Heavenly Father knows our trials, our weaknesses, and our sins.⁶¹

Therefore, the Mormon god “knows our sins” not only intellectually because He is God, but experientially because He was once a sinner like you and me. Mormon Apostle Bruce McConkie wrote:

The Father is a glorified, perfected resurrected, exalted man who worked out his own salvation by obedience to the same laws he has given to us so that we may do the same.⁶²

⁵⁶ *Book of Mormon*, Introduction

⁵⁷ *Doctrine and Covenants*, 42:12

⁵⁸ *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:17

⁵⁹ *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22

⁶⁰ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 305

⁶¹ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles*, p. 305

Sixth Mormon President Joseph F. Smith explained that the Mormon god went through the same experiences as us, which would imply sin and salvation:

We are precisely in the same condition and under the same circumstances that God our heavenly Father was when he was passing through this, or a similar ordeal.⁶³

Biblical Position

The Christian God has never been a sinner. Indeed a God Who has always been God cannot by definition be a God Who has sinned in the past (Ps. 90:2; Ps. 93:2; Isa. 63:16; Hab. 1:12). The Apostle John knew of the sinless God from all eternity when he witnessed in a vision the four beasts in heaven proclaiming "*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*" (Rev. 4:8). A God *which was* or stated another way, *has been* Holy from all time could not never have sinned in the past. Only sinners need salvation, and the idea that God at any time was a sinner or had to literally work out his own salvation is an impossibility and cannot be pleasing to the Father.

In Christ

Bill Young

See Part 2 to continue with distinctives 8-14

62 Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 64

63 Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 64