

Gospel Gleaner

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Inside this Issue

Andy Erwin

In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* we will be encouraging brethren in some of things we must continue to do as Christians. Evangelism, benevolence, spiritual growth, and brotherly love are too important to neglect. I believe you will find the articles to be informative and encouraging.

Also, in this issue of the paper are two articles addressing the Mormon doctrines of polytheism and deification. In a recent trip to Idaho, via Salt Lake City, I was reminded of the widespread influence of this heresy in the western part of the United States. I even overheard a Mormon trying to evangelize a woman in the airport, who happened to be confined to a wheel chair and could not get away! The articles expose the movement for what it is – heresy. Also, you will find an advertisement for Charles A. Shook's book, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon*. Sam Hester has reprinted this book. If you have ever been curious about the full extent of the fraudulent claims of this movement, you will find this work to be worthy of your study.

One last note, three brotherhood bookstores happily carry the *Gleaner* and disperse it freely. These bookstores are Mars Hill Bookstore in Florence, Alabama, DeHoff Christian Bookstore in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and Christian Family Bookstore in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Should you need anything in the way of study materials, VBS, or church supplies, we recommend them highly.

Evangelism: Personal and Public

Roger Shepherd

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:7-12, NASB).

The most significant approach to evangelism in the twenty-first century is relational evangelism. Relational evangelism seeks to build a loving relationship with God through Christ and then with one another in the church and community.

Does John give us an appropriate purpose statement for twenty-first century evangelism in 1 John 4:7-12? I desire to exegete this passage with this aim in mind. First, what is the teaching and application to the first readers? Second, does this passage teach principles for twenty-first century evangelism?

KNOWING GOD

What does “knowing God” mean in this text and in the context of twenty-first century evangelism? Those who are loving others are “knowing God” (4:7, 8). The phrase in Greek is *ginoskei ton theon* (present tense) meaning “to arrive at a knowledge of someone or something, know, know about, make acquaintance of” that is in the context, God (4:2).¹

John uses this term with a combination of two genitive constructions to be translated by *this we know that Jesus Christ remains in us, namely by the spirit* (4:13).² We have an acquaintance and relationship with God through biblical knowledge from Christ and the Spirit. In 1 John 2:3 the perfect tense indicates that believers know God, or *we have known Him* and our knowledge and obedience to His commandments still stands. Thus, John argues that saints have a personal relationship with God through the knowledge of His word. This is significant to evangelism in the twenty-first century.

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 199. (abbr. BDAG)

²BDAG, 200.

Born of God

In the phrase “born of God” John uses the perfect passive of *gennao* meaning *has been born of God* (4:7). The first believers were already in that relationship with God at the time of this writing. This word ties this first letter of John to his Gospel. *Gennao* in this context means “to become the parent of, beget by procreation according to the Spirit’s design and the new birth spiritually; thus, *I became your father as Christians through the gospel* (4:7).³

In the new birth of the water and the Spirit, God literally becomes our Father spiritually! This cannot be real without a personal relationship with God. In the Great Commission Jesus commanded the disciples to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father” thus, a relationship (Matt. 28:19), “having been regenerated by Christ”⁴ in conversion and then he/she teaches this to others.

God is a loving Father, and based upon this relationship we go and make other disciples. I argue that John is doing outreach both to the congregation of God and to those in the community at large. This is a characteris-

tic of those who have been born of God, loving God and community.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

The community can see a manifestation of God who is the source of love in our love for Him and one another in the congregation. In this the relationship with God and loving one another “manifested the love of God” (4:9).

What does “manifest” mean? The aorist passive form of *phaneroe* literally means “to cause to become known, disclose, show, make known, thus, being translated *become public knowledge, be disclosed, become known* (4:9).⁵ God and His gospel become public knowledge through love practiced and expressed by Christians to God and one another. *Phaneroe* is primarily is “a manifestation of God who is love, therefore, “to cause to become visible, reveal, expose publicly with relatively more focus on the sensory aspect than on the cognitive (4:9).”⁶ Love for God and others is an outward manifestation that will draw the lost to Christ.

Relational Evangelism

Love for God and one another are a very significant qualities for twenty-first century evangelism. This is relational evangelism. It is building relationships with the people of God to maintain faith and with people in the

³BDAG, 193.

⁴Daniel L. Akin, *The New American Commentary an Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture 1, 2, 3 John*, Vol. 38 (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing, 2001), 177.

⁵Akin, 1048.

⁶Akin.

community to bring them to faith in Christ. Evangelism that reaches the un-churched in a postmodern society is built on relationships.

Relational is a word that means relationship, a partnership, to share common life, a connection, association, or involvement between people. The connection that people of all nations make with one another is from the example of God and Jesus. The relational approach is highly recommended as it seeks to build a strong relationship with lost people. It seeks to build a relationship with the never-churched, and then evangelize. It also has a holding power to keep the converted saved. Christians can successfully share their faith in Christ in today's churches after a relationship has been established.

JESUS OUR PROPITIATION

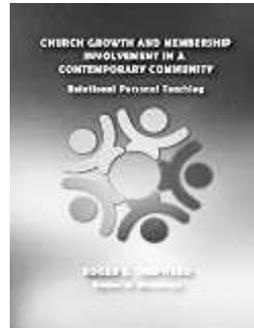
The first converts to Christianity were taught that Jesus is the "propitiation" (*hilasmos*) for their sins (4:9-10). Jesus is the "appeasement necessitated by sin, expiation, sacrifice to atone, a sin-offering."⁷ John continues one of his themes concerning how sinners can live "through Him" (Jesus) and then "manifest the love of God" to the lost world (4:9).

Propitiation as "the standard of love is not what humans feel but what God has revealed in Christ's life and

death on the cross."⁸ It is "cross" salvation through the love of God! Therefore, God *satisfied* His wrath for sin in Jesus, the propitiation for sin. This is the message for twenty-first century evangelism.

CONCLUSION

In this passage, John provides a statement to be applied in the context of twenty-first century relational evangelism. We have an inner motivation for evangelism. First, God loved us and sent His Son as the propitiation or atoning sacrifice and Savior for the world. Second, as we love God and one another, we share Jesus with the lost. This is the heart of evangelism today! This certainly applies to twenty-first century evangelism.



Church Growth and Membership Involvement in a Contemporary Community: Relational Personal Teaching

Roger Shepherd

\$15.95

⁷BDAG, 474.

⁸Jeremy Royal Howard, Editor, *Holman Study Bible NKJV Edition* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2013), 2138.

Works of Benevolence and Kindness

John T. Polk, II

On Paul's journey to Rome his shipwreck let him encounter "unusual" (unexpected, out of the ordinary, like the miracles in Acts 19:11-12) "kindness" (*philanthropia*, love of humans) from "natives" (*barbarians*, people of a foreign language).

"Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold" (Acts 28:1-2, NKJV).

Paul said these "barbarians" not only met him and his entourage's immediate needs, but later stated that, "They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary" (Acts 28:10). Their love of humanity helped Paul go on his way.

Jesus did not use this word, but described the action when He said the Samaritan "had compassion" (Luke 10:33-35). It is unexpected to find a love of mankind in a Samaritan, or in Barbarians, but it can be found.

The only other time the word "philanthropy" (translated "kindness") is used in the New Testament, is when used of God in Titus 3:3-4: "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various

lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the *kindness* and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared."

God showed His love for all mankind by sending "our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:3-4). The Divine love for mankind is thus universally identified.

A different Greek word is used for God's "kindness" in Ephesians 2:7: "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Christians must strive to have more of this God-like quality. "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is *kind* to the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6:35).

God's "kindness" to His enemies should also be reflected in His children. Sinners must become "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). In putting on Christ, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on

tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering” (Colossians 3:12); and to become “kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgive you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Peter summarized Jesus’ life by showing “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). “Doing good” literally means “working well.” It certainly applies to Jesus, for He never failed to meet the needs of anyone who approached Him with a request for benevolence.

Jesus helped people with miracles to prove that “God was with Him,” but Christians must prove that God is with us by loving humankind with good works. Our “good works” may relieve someone’s burden so that they may look to God. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Our “good works” may show our honorable conduct “among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12).

Christians “are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”

(Ephesians 2:10). “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

Supporters of the gospel do good works ranging from the women who “provided for Him from their substance” (Luke 8:1-3); to “Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge” (Acts 21:16); to sending the faithful “forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God” (3 John 6). “Good works” support everyone and everything Jesus Christ supported while He was on earth!

“Good works” cannot support, or encourage sins which violate God’s word. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Ephesians 5:11). “Good works” should not support or be included in “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Christians should “not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16).



Growing in God's Grace and Knowledge

Ronald Bryant

The words contained in 2 Peter 3:18, seem simple, yet they are profound, even majestic, in what they require. It is obvious that the duty expressed in 2 Peter 3:18 is not optional.

Two powerful concepts are set forth: (1) The grace of our Lord, and (2) The knowledge of our Lord. Jesus is the source of the grace that brings life and hope. He is also the source of the knowledge (i.e. the truth) that leads to life. He is the grace to which we turn, and the source of the knowledge that we are to fully embrace. He is the subject and the object of the gospel; the focus of our faith.

2 Peter begins with two powerful concepts: (1) The knowledge of God, and (2) The divine power. The knowledge spoken of is a special kind of knowledge. It is the knowledge that is complete. Jesus is the source of that knowledge; of the truth which He lived, taught, and authored. The “divine power” is that which John referenced as “grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The Lord's deeds and words were ruled by grace and established by truth. All was by divine power, especially His resurrection (Romans 1:4). He was God's ultimate gift. His moral excellence, matchless teaching, sinless life, and sacrifice manifested

His obedience to the Father. They are undeniably the basis and the arena of the Christian life.

Peter understood how the Lord has “given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4, KJV). Thus, “for this very reason giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:5-7). Moreover, “if these things are yours and abound you will be neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8). Upon these exhortations, Christians are ultimately urged to make their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Some of the dangers Christians would face are then spelled out (2:1-3:14). Peter admonished believers to be diligent to be found by Christ, in peace without spot and blameless, and value the longsuffering of the Lord (2 Peter 3:14-15). He warned them, “be-ware lest you fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked” (2 Peter 3:17). Rather than being led astray, the apos-

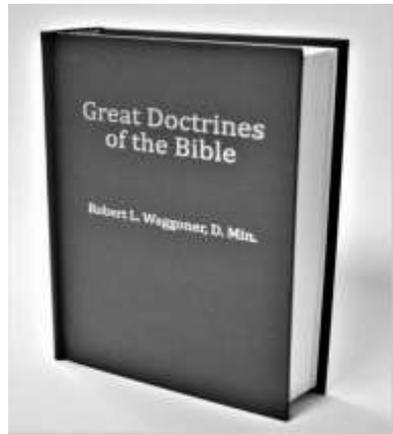
tle desired for Christians to “grow in the grace and the knowledge and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

The last verse of 2 Peter is simple, yet profound. It is enduring and perpetually valid. The life of faith is vital and productive. Growth is essential. Spiritual growth must be earnestly desired. It is axiomatic that if it is not desired it will not be sought nor can it be obtained.

The arena of growth for the believer is specific. It is obtained in the grace and the knowledge of Christ. These concepts are central in the gospel; in its reception and in its application. In this passage “grace” is far more than “God’s good will;” it has everything to do with the being and the character of Christ, what He accomplished, and provided. The word “knowledge” is not merely knowledge about Christ, but the knowledge, the truth that He proclaimed and authored. It has to do with that which He taught and epitomized (cf. Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:1-3; 5:8-9).

To reiterate, the “grace of Christ” has to do with His grace – His character and being; “the knowledge of Christ” has to do with His word – the words of the truth of the gospel which He authored. It is His character and will, made known in His work in His word that makes and sustains believers. Yet, it is readily apparent that each believer must choose to lay hold and make application of that which is supplied in and by Christ.

It is only in genuine commitment to Christ that a person can be united with Christ. It is only in personal communion with Him that one can grow in His grace (His character – His likeness), and in His knowledge (the truth He proclaimed, lived, and authored). It is only in knowing Him, in living in His presence and purpose, that one can be a partaker of the nature, add the virtues required (2 Peter 1:5-8), and make his calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10-11).



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Promoting Brotherly Love and Fellowship

Raymond Elliott

It should be the desire of every disciple of Jesus Christ to promote greater love among members of the body of Christ. However, to accomplish such a wonderful effort, one must, of course, possess love for his brothers and sisters in his heart.

Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35, ESV).

One of the ways that we have “passed from death to life,” is “because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). The apostle Peter wrote, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22). If a Christian claims to love God, but hates his brother, “he is a liar” and he “has not seen God” (1 John 4:20).

Loving our brothers and sisters in Christ is a spiritually maturing process. Consider Paul’s observations of the church in Thessalonica concerning their love for their brethren, “Now about brotherly love, you do not need anyone to write to you, because you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. And indeed, you

are showing this love to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to excel more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:9, 10). The fact is, the more we love God, the greater love we will have for His children!

Perhaps the word, ‘promote’ does not always carry the correct connotation in spiritual matters. Of course, it does not intend to mean that we should ‘promote’ someone or some product to be bought. Some of the synonyms seem to present suitable meanings. Words like “encourage, foster, nurture,” may be preferred.

The writer of Hebrews (10:24) wrote, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...” Thus, we are admonished to encourage brethren to grow in their love for one another. But, how may we achieve this precious goal in our lives?

We can exhort brethren to be faithful (Hebrew 3:13) and to attend the worship assemblies (Hebrews 10:24, 25). We can encourage brethren to manifest the same care for all the members of one’s congregation (1 Cor. 12:25) and to help a brother or sister who is in need (1 John 3:17, 18). If necessary, our love should be so great as to even “lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 1:16).

We are to be “forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). Of course, we should always pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ (James 5:16).

In many ways we can foster brotherly love in the family of God. In a congregation of Christ, there are expedient methods and opportunities wherein we can encourage greater brotherly love.

- Plan a common meal where brethren can sit down and visit one another while eating.
- Divide the members into different groups for the purpose of visiting the sick and others who are in need of attention for various reasons. This will give brothers and sisters an opportunity to become better acquainted.
- In larger congregations, it would be good if members would change locations where they normally sit during the assemblies in order to meet, in a personal manner, members they had not met previously.
- It is very important that members do not form a ‘group’ wherein they only speak to and associate with their close friends.
- Inviting members of the church into your home for a visit is a good way to become better acquainted. Or, plan a time when you could visit in the homes of

the members of your congregation.

In 1 Peter 2:17, the apostle Peter gave this admonition, “Honor all people. **Love the brotherhood.** Fear God. Honor the king.” We should love the collective family of God, even though we will never meet everyone in this lifetime.

However, there is the possibility of knowing brethren of other congregations in a general area. This was done more in generations past, mainly because of gospel meetings being conducted by various churches of Christ. I remember hearing brother Rex A. Turner, Sr., say, “I am glad that I grew up in the ‘gospel meeting era.’”

Still, there are special occasions when brethren can attend events that afford opportunities for brothers and sisters in Christ to get acquainted with one another. It is good that we become friends with our brothers and sisters from different congregations and grow in our love for them.

I want to mention the example of congregations in a county in this state (Alabama) who support one another during their gospel meetings. This might not always be wise; but, during the gospel meetings in this area the other churches will dismiss their Wednesday night Bible classes and attend the on-going meeting. I know of no other county in my personal experience where these rural and small town congregations are closer together in their love for one another.

In conclusion, I want to mention the passage of scripture found in 2 Peter 1:5-11, wherein are mentioned the qualities of character that should be found in the heart and life of every faithful Christian. Please note that “brotherly love” (ASV, “brotherly kindness,” ESV), is placed next to “love,” the “greatest,” as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:13). Also, please contemplate the promises found in this text for the Christians whose life is filled with these ‘graces.’

“For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8-11, NKJV).

What precious promises! What blessed assurance! Faith will become sight, hope will become a reality, and our love for God and for all the redeemed will be eternal!

Read carefully the lyrics of this beautiful hymn, “How Sweet, How Heavenly”:

“How sweet how heav’nly is the sight,
 When those that love the Lord
 In one another’s peace delight, And so
 fulfill the word.
 When each can feel his brother’s sigh,
 And with him bear apart;

When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
 And joy from heart to heart.

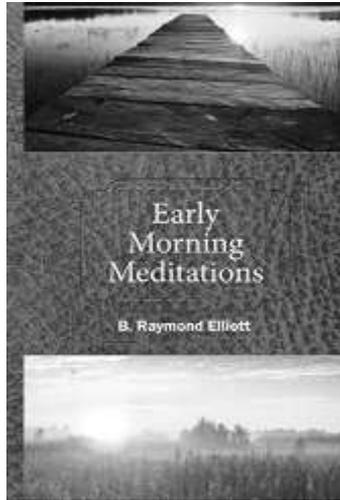
When love in one delightful stream
 Thro’ every bosom flows,

When union sweet and dear esteem In
 every action glows.

Love is the golden chain that binds
 The happy souls above;

And he’s an heir of heav’n who finds
 His bosom glow with love.”

- Joseph Swain, 1792



Early Morning Meditations

Raymond Elliott

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HEAPS

Mark McWhorter

In 2 Chronicles 31, King Hezekiah led the Israelites back to a proper relationship with God. He appointed Levites and priests to rotations in service to the Temple. David had originally done this in 1 Chronicles 25. Some were appointed to prophesy with music. Others were for porters. Some were in charge of the gates. Others were to be officers and judges.

Sacrifices were to be offered for burnt and peace offerings. Burnt offerings were to bring the worshipper into the proper relationship with God. Peace offerings were in thanksgiving for the peace with God that the burnt offerings brought. The priests had to offer sacrifices first be sanctified for such service, then they offered for the people. There was to be praise in the gates.

Before all of this was done, the people destroyed all the idols of pagan worship. We are told they broke, cut down, and threw down until they had ‘utterly destroyed them all.’ They were committed to returning to God.

Hezekiah appropriated some of his wealth to sustain the Temple service. He did this out of a good heart and to be a proper example to the people. If the King was willing to give a significant portion of his wealth, then each

Israelite should have been willing to do so as well.

The people were commanded by the King to give their portions to the priests and Levites. This offering was to encourage those who gave service in the Temple. God had commanded such support when He gave the Law of Moses. But, the Israelites had not been following the Law for some time. Hezekiah was doing what he could to bring the Israelites into conformity with the Law.

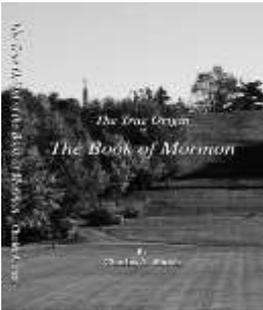
As soon as the people heard what Hezekiah wanted them to do, they did it. In verse five, we are told they brought an abundance of all the fruit of the fields. They also brought their tithes.

Verse seven tells us that they continued to bring things to the Temple for five months. Verse six records that they laid up ‘heaps.’ The Hebrew word means ‘piles.’ In this verse, the word is doubled. It says ‘heaps, heaps.’ This emphasis lets us know there was a very large amount contributed. There was so much, even Hezekiah asked why there were so many piles. He was told that the people had brought so much the priests and Levites could not use it all in this amount of time. He was told that the Lord had blessed them tremendously.

God had told the Israelites that if they followed His commands, and obeyed Him, He would bless them. Azariah, a chief priest, tells Hezekiah that God indeed blessed the people. God had blessed them with a great harvest of all things of the field.

It would have been easy for the people to keep almost all of it for themselves. That is what many people do today. They receive great blessings and then decide to keep them for their own desires. God is given a small amount (if any) of what He provided.

In this instance, the Israelites had the right attitude. They recognized that God provides all, they knew that those in the Temple required sustenance as commanded by God, they knew that daily sacrifices were required, and they wanted to show God how much they loved Him. May all of us follow their example!



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THE CHURCH DOES NOT HAVE A MONEY PROBLEM

Douglas Hoff

In America today most churches do not have a money problem. Sure, there are plenty of small congregations that do not have a full time preacher. Some churches have full time preachers who work part time or even full time jobs so they can preach and teach the gospel. Often, the preachers' wives also work to supplement the family income. Other churches employ retired preachers who have Social Security income.

Some may think this shows churches do have a money problem. To a degree, that may be true. In general though, the church does not have a money problem, but we may be suffering from a giving problem. Look at the life of the average church member. Does he or she have a house to live in, clothes to wear, and food to eat (cf. 1 Tim. 6:8)? If we twenty-first century Americans are not careful, we may allow the deceitfulness of riches to enter our hearts (Mark 4:19), by concluding we are not rich and need "just a little bit more" (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

Most American Christians today have more than enough money to take care of the basic necessities of life. One reason some congregations

struggle financially is due to the Christian's money being tied up paying for houses, cars, entertainment, luxuries, etc. Is it sinful to enjoy the fruit of our labors? No, the scriptures tell us that "the living God gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). Abraham and Job were both blessed financially by God and they are counted among the faithful (James 2:23; 5:11). Being rich is not inherently bad but one's attitude toward riches will determine if money is his god. Remember, covetousness is called idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).

Most churches have plenty of money. Sadly, only a very small percentage of it will ever be in the collection plate on the Lord's Day. Those who are "rich" in this present age are commanded to be "ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:18-19, NKJV). It seems the church has long suffered from a giving problem, not a money problem.

PREACHING CAN CAUSE QUITE A STIR!

Gerald Cowan

Peter said he wanted to stir up the hearts of those he wrote to, in a positive and productive way (2 Peter 3:1). The gospel truth can in fact stir people in a negative way, no matter how careful, loving, and kind the preacher is. Some thought Paul and Silas turned their world "upside down" (Acts 17:6).

Preaching about God and certainly about the one true God will stir up atheists and idolaters. Preaching divine creation stirs up the evolutionists and materialists.

Preaching morality and absolute truth stirs up the immoral and the relativist who think in terms of social cultural viability. Preaching the authority of scripture stirs the liberal post-modern crowd who think we

have outgrown this "ancient and obsolete" Bible.

Preaching against liquor stirs up the social drinkers and drunkards. The same principle applies to other drugs, including tobacco – imagine preaching against marijuana which is well on its way to the same legal status as alcohol and tobacco. Those most heavily and hopelessly addicted raise their voices most loudly in objection to any negative mention of their mind-bending illusion-maker.

Preaching on marriage, divorce, and the home stirs the adulterer, the delinquent children, and the delinquent parents. It also stirs the homosexuals and the transgenders. Governments, courts, schools (pre-school through post-graduate schools), perse-

cute and prosecute critics of current culture for “hate crimes.”

Preaching on work stirs the lazy. Preaching against gambling may stir up the state and the nation, as well as all those who hope to get rich by gambling rather than by work. Preaching on honesty stirs the dishonest, the liar, the cheat, and the hypocrite. Preaching about proper speech and civility stirs the gossip, tale-peddler and rumor-monger, and the whole news and information industry (properly derided as “fake news” media). Preaching against the debauchery and corruption and elevation of evil in Hollyweird and the entertainment industry stirs up the “stars” who like to think they are the epitome and apex of everyone’s dreams and aspirations but, as a class, are beneath the bottom of the bottom dregs, the absolute nadir of humanity.

Even in religion, in the churches and the church – there are matters of particular concern. Preaching on modesty (common a few decades ago but hardly ever mentioned now) stirs the immodest and the attention-seeker. Preaching about attendance stirs the irregular and indifferent attenders. Preaching faithfulness stirs the unfaithful. Preaching dedication and commitment stirs the uncommitted. Preaching about giving stirs the covetous and stingy. Preaching about almost anything that limits freedom to be whatever you want to be in the present post-Christian church stirs up the post-modern post-moral, post-

scientific, post-human, post-spiritual generation who seems to think of God as the Great-Freebie-Giver who enjoys watching us enjoy ourselves and doesn’t want to restrict our freedom.

Unless the world and the church are now perfect, we still need to do a lot of stirring.

There are some common expressions that show a misunderstanding of the preacher’s intention and effort. Some think it is a compliment to tell the preacher, “You really stepped on my toes.” That often indicates that a temporary and soon-forgotten pain or discomfort has been suffered. But there is usually no change in performance or activity. They may have sore toes in the auditorium but they are able to walk as usual and with the pain having moved upward to lodge as frowns and grimaces on the face by the time they leave it.

Some think it is a compliment to say, “Our preacher preaches over our heads.” What that means is that his sermons cannot be understood and applied by his audience of ordinary people. But what good is a sermon if no one understands it? And what good is preaching what one ought to do if nobody does it, or even pretends that he intends to do it? The result would be no change and no growth, no improvement in performance and activity. The church joins the world in order to be allowed to exist in the world. That condition stirs a few – not as

many as it should, but at least a few – preachers.

No preacher is content to step on the toes or preach over the heads of people. Actually, that is a contradiction in terms. If it is hitting their toes it can't be over their heads. Maybe the two expressions should not be applied to the same sermon, or to the same person.

Preachers want to share the truth. They want the truth to be understood and applied. They want it to change the lives of those who hear it. Preachers do not want to inflict pain unnecessarily. They hope the pain will lead to a correction and cure of the problem. If the shoe hurts your foot but the shoe is right, then you should fix your foot.

Preachers want to be like Jesus, the Master preacher/teacher. There was an occasion on the road to Emmaus when He spoke to two disciples (Luke 24:25-32). He said to the disciples, *“O fools, and slow of heart to believe what the prophets spoke”* (24:25). He then carefully explained what the scripture meant (24:26-31). Later they said, *“Didn't our hearts burn within us when he spoke to us?”* (24:32).

If I step on your toes or peach over your heads, I am missing the mark. I have not found the proper range. I need to adjust my aim, because I am not hitting the target I'm aiming for. I want to hit you square in the heart with the word of God. I want to cause some holy heart burn.

When the word of God enters your heart, pricks your heart, cuts your heart, and burns your heart there's a chance you will be offended. There's a chance that you, not being a truth-seeker, will resist the truth and the truth-speaker (Acts 7:54, 57-58). In that case both the Lord and I will be deeply pained. But there's also a chance that you will be moved to accept it, obey it, adjust your life to it (Acts 2:37, John 3:20-21), and when that happens both you and I and the Lord will rejoice.

I suppose by now, if you are still reading this, you may be thinking it's just preacher talk, just a preacher trying to make you feel guilty. I remember an incident, about 50 years ago, in my first full-time “located” ministry after ten years of school and regular but part-time preaching, when a certain member of the congregation told me I was a successful preacher. He said, “You seem to think your job is to make all of us feel miserable and I'd say you are successful about 95% of the time.”

That was one of the times (there's been an uncountable multitude of times) when I thought I would quit. That man went on to admonish me that, “You can catch a lot more flies with honey than with vinegar.” I told him I didn't fancy myself, nor did I think God intended me to be, a fly-catcher.

Isn't there something said about being fishers of men? And isn't it

frustrating and futile to wait for and accept only the fish which jump unprompted into your boat?

He had a wise comeback for that too. He said, “You’ll get more fish for the Master with permission than you will with prevention.” Ok, but if I permit what the Lord doesn’t permit He may throw me out along with my kettle of fish. And if He throws me out, can you persuade Him to put me back in? “I’ll ask Him to have mercy on you as one of the well-intentioned but ignorant preachers I’ve had to tolerate,” was his parting shot.

Peter said his intention was to “stir up your sincere mind” (NASB), or “stimulate you to wholesome thinking” (NIV). I like to think that is my motive and desire too. If I can make you think, honestly and sincerely, you will come to a proper understanding of the gospel of Christ. That’s the only kind of stirring I want to do. If you feel I have missed it and am on the wrong path, please use the same resource for correcting me as I use for instructing (sometimes correcting) you – the word of God in the Bible. I have no artificial lure, no “bait” to dangle before you to attract you, tempt you, and catch you. If the truth of God isn’t attractive to you, you may not be a fish attractive to me, or to Him.



Remembering George Bailey

Hugh Fulford



George W. Bailey was born in Kaufman, Texas, on April 3, 1922. He was baptized into Christ in 1935 by Gayle Oler and began preaching when he was 14 years old. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, Southwestern Tech in Oklahoma, the University of New Mexico, and Abilene Christian College.

He served churches in Weatherford, OK; Albuquerque, NM; Oklahoma City, OK; Abilene, TX (where he preached for the College/University congregation for 15 years); and the Prestoncrest church in Dallas.

On a personal note, when I moved to Dallas in 1983 to preach at Skillman, George was the first preacher to come by my office to welcome me to Dallas. He no longer was the preach-

er at Prestoncrest, but was serving as one of the congregation’s elders. We went to a nearby restaurant for a cup of coffee and a most enjoyable visit.

George Bailey was a man and master of the Book. His sermons were filled with scripture—dozens, scores, and perhaps sometimes a hundred scripture citations—all done perfectly from memory with never a note of any kind before him!

When J. D. Thomas selected 12 men as the great preachers of the day and published a volume of their sermons George Bailey was included (Volume 2). Two of my favorite Bailey sermons are “Can You Recommend Your Religion?” and “The Church Faces the Future with Confidence,” both of which I have preached on dozens of occasions. His sermon on “Life’s Inadequate Harbors,” based on Paul’s perilous voyage across the Mediterranean Sea (Acts 27), is an absolute masterpiece and I have outlined it, but no one can possibly preach it with the effectiveness with which George preached it.

George was the master of the epigrammatic statement (a pithy saying or remark expressing an idea in a clever and amusing way). In emphasizing the need for every Christian to be a missionary he said, “If you can’t go across in person, come across with your purse,” i.e., give so that others can go.

George conducted gospel meetings and area-wide campaigns for Christ

throughout the United States. He visited and preached in almost 100 foreign countries, including China and Russia, preaching in Moscow, Leningrad, and Rostov. In 1964 he was a guest speaker at the World’s Fair in New York City.

Between his pulpit ministries in Abilene and Dallas, he spent his full-time in evangelistic work, both in the U. S. and overseas. For several years he was a regular speaker on the Herald of Truth radio and television programs. He was a popular speaker on brotherhood lectureship programs.

My mother told of her and my father hearing him at an area-wide “Training for Service” series in Florence, Alabama, and how she sat utterly mesmerized by his preaching. One of the last times I heard him and visited with him was at Polishing the Pulpit in Sevierville, TN in 2009. We both spoke on the “Graybeards” session, and George kept the audience as well as all of us on the panel rolling with laughter at his reminiscences.

George was married to the former Ela Beth Todd for 68 years prior to her passing. They were the parents of two sons. George passed from this life on November 11, 2017 at the age of 95. He is buried in the Elliott-Hamil Garden of Memories Cemetery in Abilene, Texas.



The Unchanging Christ

Hebrews 1:12

Introduction:

1. This text (Heb. 1:12) is part of a quotation from Psalms 102:25-27.
2. It describes the second person of the Godhead, the Son of God.
3. There is change and decay in all that we see, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8).

Discussion:

- I. **Christ Is Unchanging in His Person.** “Thou art the same”
 - A. He is immutable. (2 Peter 3:12; Hebrews 7:26; 6:19).
 - B. He is Immortal. “Thy years shall not fail.”
 - C. He is Invincible. “Sit...until...”
- II. **Christ is Unchanging in His Provision.** (v. 3) “When He had by himself purged our sins.”
 - A. He is the victorious Savior. A complete victory over Satan, over sin, and over sin.
 - B. He is the vicarious sufferer, (Isaiah 53:5-6). All past and present sins are laid on Him.
 - C. He is the voice of supplication, (Hebrews 12:24). His blood cries out for mercy, not vengeance.
- III. **Christ Is Unchanging in His Power.** (v. 3) “Upholding all things by the word of His power.”
 - A. His word is the New Covenant. (See Hebrews 8:10-12). In that covenant we find: a relationship, knowledge, and salvation.
 - B. His word tells us He will come again, (Hebrews 10:37; 9:27, 28; 10:34, 35).
 - C. His words tell us of the great city to come, (Hebrews 13:14) of endless duration.

Conclusion:

Is your desire for Him who changes not to abide with you? We know the *new* soon becomes *old*. The here and now will soon be *past*. Let us place our all in Him who will never leave us or forsake us!

-Mike Kiser

Mormon Polytheism

Andy Erwin

In the first of thirteen Articles of Faith, Joseph Smith declared in a very orthodox way, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”¹ However, as we delve deeper into Mormon beliefs, we find a very unusual and unorthodox doctrine for any religion, but especially for a religion claiming to be a restoration of true Christianity.

HEAVENLY FATHER AND HEAVENLY MOTHER

In reality, Mormonism at its core is polytheistic. Mormon polytheism asserts that this universe consists of an infinite number of gods and goddesses, each ruling their own planet as a god-family. Mormons believe this line of father-gods and mother-gods reaches into an infinite eternity, but bear in mind that they teach each “god” had a birth and thus, a beginning. Therefore, none of their “gods” is eternal – without beginning or ending.

It so happens that the Mormon god, “Elohim,”² as they refer to him,

is the father-god of the planet Earth and he rules with his mother-god, the “Heavenly Mother.”³ Mormons claim, “Though the scriptures contain only hints, statements from presidents of the church over the years indicate that human beings have a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father.”⁴ Of the unnamed Heavenly Mother:

Latter-day Saints believe that all the people of earth who lived or will live are actual spiritual offspring of God the Eternal Father (Num. 16:22; Heb. 12:9). In this perspective, parenthood requires both father and mother, whether for the creation of spirits in the premortal life or of physical tabernacles on earth. A Heavenly Mother shares parenthood with the Heavenly Father. This concept leads Latter-day Saints to believe that she is like him in glory, perfection, compassion, wisdom, and holiness.⁵

Mormons teach that Jesus is the spiritual offspring of this particular father and mother god, and that the Mormon Jesus is the physical offspring of this father-god and the vir-

¹ Joseph Smith, *The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from <http://lds.org/library/display/0%2C4945%2C106-1-2-1%2CFF.html>

² Stephen E. Robinson, *God the Father: Overview*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/God_the_Father

³ Elaine Anderson, Cannon, *Heavenly Mother*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Heavenly_Mother

⁴ Anderson

⁵ Anderson

gin Mary. Writing for the church-sanctioned *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Gerald Hansen Jr., writes:

Ancient and modern scriptures use the title Only Begotten to emphasize the divine nature of Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints recognize Jesus as literally the Only Begotten Son of God the Father in the flesh (John 3:16; Doctrines and Covenants 93:11; Moses 6:52). This title signifies that Jesus' physical body was the offspring of a mortal mother and of the eternal Father (Luke 1:35, 1 Nephi 11:18). It is LDS doctrine that Jesus Christ is the child of Mary and God the Father, 'not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof' (JC, p. 81)...Christ inherited the ability to die from his mortal mother and the power to resurrect himself from his immortal Father. Dying was for him a voluntary, deliberate act for mankind, made possible only because he was the Only Begotten of the Father (Doctrines and Covenants 20:18-26).⁶

If this doctrine is true, it would require that the Mormon "Elohim" leave his "Heavenly Mother" and celestial bride on their celestial residence nearest the planet "Kolob"⁷ to

come to the planet Earth and have an extra-marital sexual intercourse with Mary, thus causing her also to commit adultery against her espoused husband Joseph. Thus, the Mormon Jesus would have been the illegitimate child of a two-fold adulterous affair. We feel it is necessary to point out such things hoping to prove this doctrine is anti-biblical, anti-God, and anti-Christ.

A GOD OF FLESH AND BONE

Mormons believe that "Elohim" is able to have such tangible relationships because their god is not purely spirit, as is the God of the Bible (John 4:24). Joseph Smith taught, "God is a glorified and perfected man, a personage of flesh and bones. Inside his tangible body is an eternal spirit."⁸

Mormons have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man" (Romans 1:23). By changing the God of the Bible from the purely spirit, self-existing Creator that He is, into a physical, tangible created man, Mormons have, "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). Essentially,

the residence of God." It is "first in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time. . . . One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of this earth." (Book of Abraham, pp. 34-35; Abra. 3:3-9.) (Mormon Doctrine, p.428). In Utah, Kolob National Park has been named after this supposed planet.

⁸ Doctrines and Covenants 130:22.

⁶ Gerald Hansen, Jr. *Jesus Christ: Only Begotten in the Flesh*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Jesus_Christ#Firstborn_in_the_Spirit

⁷ Kolob means "the first creation." It is the name of the planet "nearest to the celestial, or

Mormons have denied the God of the Bible to create a lesser, inferior god of their own.

Mormons believe that the gods now residing throughout the universe were once mortal men on other planets who, through obedience to the commands of the gods of that planet, attained exaltation to godhood. Such is Mormon doctrine for how their “god” became a god. Moreover, they believe that we human beings have the potential of attaining the same measure of godhood as well, and that someday we can reign over a planet of our own with our celestial bride, which would have been sealed with us by eternal matrimony in this life.

Having once been a mortal being, born on a foreign planet, they believe that their god was once conceived of a father-god and mother-god just as they believe mortal men have been conceived by him and his god-wife. Joseph Smith wrote:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. . . . He was once a man like us; yea that God himself, the Father

dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did...⁹

Brigham Young taught, “[T]hat God the Father was once a man on another planet who ‘passed the ordeal we are now passing through...’”¹⁰ While on this unidentified planet, the Mormon father-god met his mother-god. Together they produced spirit children.

At this point, it seems fair and reasonable to ask the question of how a man-like father-god and mother-god created “spirit children.” Does it not follow that if the father and mother gods were personages of flesh and bones as Joseph Smith taught, this union would have produced after its kind? How could a union of two beings comprised of flesh and bones produce spirit children?

Mormon “Apostle” Bruce McConkie once affirmed:

An exalted and glorified man of holiness could not be a Father unless a woman of like glory, perfection, and holiness was associated with him as a Mother. The begetting of children makes a man a father and a woman a mother whether we are dealing

⁹ Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), p.321.

¹⁰ Brigham Young, *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), p.29.

with man in his mortal or immortal state.¹¹

Thus, the Mormon gods did not become father and mother until they procreated. Their god is therefore not an everlasting father. Neither is he a creator of man, but a procreator, no different than a human male. Mormons therefore believe that all men and women on planet Earth are the physical offspring of their father and mother god.

James Talmage wrote, “God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title ‘Elohim,’ is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of the spirits of the human race.”¹²

Again, it is asserted that their god is the literal father of the spirits of the human race through procreation. For Mormons, flesh and bone creatures begat spiritual beings, of which Jesus is said to have been the first.

CREATION OF EARTH

When the time came to create planet Earth, Joseph Smith wrote, “...the head of the gods called a council of the gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and (the) people in it.”¹³

It was at this council that Lucifer rebelled against “Elohim’s” decision

to use Jesus as the redeemer of the world. Lucifer influenced a third of the hosts of heaven to rebel with him and they warred against Adam (aka Michael the archangel according to Mormon doctrine) and his forces.

Lucifer was defeated. He and his followers were cursed to live on this planet as demons or evil spirits, being forever deprived of human bodies and the possibility of deification. The ones who sided with Jesus are born into this world in “white and delightful” skin. The ones who remained neutral during the war are born into this world with black skin as a curse against them. Though not readily admitted by Mormons, this doctrine contributed to the racism which forbade black priests in the Mormon Church until 1978. Let us now observe the official (but lengthy) Mormon explanation of these supposed events.¹⁴

ADAM AND EVE

Once the “war in heaven” ended and “Elohim” proceeded with his creation, he placed Adam and Even in the Garden to serve as the father and mother of all mortals. Moreover, “In this physical-spiritual state in Eden, Adam was called the ‘first man’ (Moses 1:34) and given responsibility to dress the garden and ‘open the way of the world’ (*The Prophet Joseph*

¹¹ Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1991), p.516.

¹² James Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book Company, 1984), p.421.

¹³ Joseph Smith, p. 349.

¹⁴ Brent L. Top, War in Heaven, Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/War_in_Heaven

Smith, p. 12).”¹⁵ However, as long as Adam and Eve remained in the Garden, according to Mormon doctrine, they could not procreate, and therefore “Elohim’s” plan could not be enacted.

Accordingly, “In order to obey the command of God to multiply and people the earth, Adam and Eve transgressed the law. Their deliberate action resulted in their fall, and they were expelled from the garden. ‘Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy’ (2 Nephi 2:25). Thus, their action precipitated, as God had planned, the mortal phase of the Plan of Salvation.”¹⁶

Adam and Eve are viewed as noble martyrs in Mormon doctrine because they *obediently chose to sin* against the Mormon god. Because he obeyed their god by sinning, Adam is believed to be second only to Jesus insofar as human beings can be exalted.¹⁷

Today, the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* wishes to rewrite the Adam-God doctrine of Brigham Young. However, Mormon “Apostle” Bruce R. McConkie, stated in a letter to Mr. Eugene England (dated February 19, 1981) that “Young and others of the early Brethren” did in fact hold to the

view that Adam was their “Elohim.”¹⁸ Not only did he admit such was the case, but also referred to Mormons now believing this doctrine as “cultisits.”

Such disagreements over matters of doctrine are typical in most churches. However, in the Mormon Church, the ones disagreeing are claimed to be inspired “Prophets” and “Apostles” of God. Thus, one man supposedly led by the Holy Spirit called another man’s doctrine – supposedly led by the Holy Spirit – “cultist.” If Brigham Young was speaking the inspired word of God when promulgating the Adam-God doctrine, why did the Holy Spirit inspire McConkie to call it “cultist?” Are they not advocating that the Holy Spirit inspires “cultist” doctrine?

THE MORMON DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PROGRESSION

For one to understand the Mormon doctrine of their gods, one must also understand the Mormon doctrine of “eternal progression.” As we have observed, Mormons believe, “[A] plurality of gods exist . . . there is an infinite number of holy personages, drawn from worlds without number, who have passed on to exaltation and are thus gods.”¹⁹ In the likeness of Adam, Mormons believe that these

¹⁵ Arthur A. Bailey, *Adam: LDS Sources*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Adam>

¹⁶ Bailey

¹⁷ Bailey

¹⁸ Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine*, (Salt Lake: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1982), p. 4.

¹⁹ Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1991), 576-577.

inhabitants on these innumerable planets are now “progressing, as are human beings on this earth, according to eternal principles towards a God-like life.”²⁰

Concerning the inhabitants of Earth, Mormons believe, “Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so that undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.”²¹

Stephen C. Walker expressed this doctrine thusly, “As children of God, men and women have infinite potential (see 2 Nephi 2:20; Heb. 12:9). As a result of their divine heritage, all people carry the inherent capacity and the predisposition to become as their heavenly parents.”²²

THE MORMON DOCTRINE OF EXALTATION

The result of Mormonism’s eternal progression is the doctrine of “exalta-

tion.” Margaret McConkie Pope defines the doctrine of exaltation thusly:

To Latter-day Saints, exaltation is a state that a person can attain in becoming like God—salvation in the ultimate sense (Doctrines and Covenants 132:17). Latter-day Saints believe that all mankind (except the sons of perdition) will receive varying degrees of glory in the afterlife. Exaltation is the greatest of all the gifts and attainments possible. It is available only in the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom and is reserved for members of the Church of the Firstborn. This exalted status, called eternal life, is available to be received by a man and wife. It means not only living in God’s presence, but receiving power to do as God does, including the power to bear children after the resurrection (*The Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 300-301; Doctrines and Covenants 132:19). Blessings and privileges of exaltation require unwavering faith, repentance, and complete obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Savior stated the following conditions: ‘Strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me’ (Doctrines and Covenants 132:22). All Church ordinances lead to exaltation, and the essential crowning ordinances are the Endowment and the

²⁰ Hollis R. Johnson, *Worlds*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from: <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Worlds>

²¹ Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, Charles W. Nibley, *Doctrinal Expositions of the First Presidency*. From the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*

²² Stephen C. Walker, *Mankind*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Mankind>

eternal marriage covenant of the temple (Doctrines and Covenants 131:1-4, 132).²³

IN SUMMARY

The Mormon doctrine of gods opposes the biblical doctrine of God in the following ways:

- 1.) It denies that God is an eternal, timeless being, without beginning or ending, from everlasting to everlasting.
- 2.) It turns God into a created being, spawned by other gods who pre-existed Him.
- 3.) It teaches that God had to be subject to a greater law than His own, and through obedience to this law, He became deity. Therefore, moral law would not emanate from God, but from the gods who pre-dated Him.
- 4.) It denies the immutable nature of God, claiming that He has changed from a man, as we are, into a god.
- 5.) It changes the nature of God from a pure spirit to flesh and bone.
- 6.) It makes God dependent on another god – a Heavenly Mother, as well as His god parents.
- 7.) It teaches that an infinite number of gods and goddesses co-inhabit an infinite number of planets.
- 8.) It teaches that God did not create man, but procreated man with the Heavenly Mother.
- 9.) It denies that God's throne is in heaven, but somewhere near the planet Kobol.
- 10.) It teaches that God can have sexual relations with a mother-god and an earthly woman.
- 11.) It renders God to have committed adultery against the mother-god with Mary.
- 12.) It teaches that two human-like gods can produce billions of spirit children, including Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- 13.) It therefore denies that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.
- 14.) Some, including Brigham Young, have taught that Adam was the Mormon god.
- 15.) It teaches that God can be honored and obeyed by sinning against Him.
- 16.) It teaches that mortal men can someday become a god, with all the attributes and power He possesses, literally perfect as God is perfect.
- 17.) It teaches that a man and a woman, who have achieved godhood, can someday procreate other beings on another planet.
- 18.) It teaches that the beings which man and woman procreate can al-

²³ Margaret McConkie Pope, *Exaltation*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Exaltation>

so become gods – equal to God – on a planet of their own.

IN CONCLUSION

Members of the Lord’s church and people in general should be aware of the depths of this evil heresy. Not one aspect of Mormon polytheism is true. It is utterly and entirely false from beginning to end.

If it were not for the use of biblical names, and a few wrongly applied Bible references, one would not recognize any correlation whatsoever to the Bible. If one would take this story and simply change the names, you have a completely pagan mythology.

However, by using Bible names and references – although dreadfully misinterpreted – Mormons have succeeded in deceiving millions with their fables. While they continue to lead souls away from the God of the

Bible, we must be mindful to work that much harder to bring souls back to the God of the Bible. Only by truly knowing “God is,” and who God is, can we successfully help ourselves and others answer the threat of the Mormon doctrine of gods.



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Do Men Become Gods?

Jackson Erwin

One of the more defining doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is that of deification. What does this doctrine teach? One Mormon apologist wrote:

Latter-day Saints see all people as children of God in a full and complete sense; they consider every person divine in origin, nature, and potential. Each has an eternal core and is “a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.” Each possesses seeds of divinity and must choose whether to live in harmony or tension with that divinity. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all people may “progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny.” Just as a child can develop the attributes of his or her parents over time, the divine nature that humans inherit can be developed to become like their Heavenly Father’s.¹

The doctrine of deification is the belief that God was once a man who also was in subjection to another god. He lived faithfully under the laws of that god to the point that He Himself obtained divinity. Likewise, according to Mormonism we are of the same species as God and will, therefore,

become gods ourselves and reign over our own planets if we are faithful to Him.

John 10

This is a doctrine which is completely foreign to biblical teaching. However, LDS members will warp both Scripture and the writings of early Christians in an attempt to prove their point. One such is found in the tenth chapter of John’s Gospel.

The chapter begins with Christ teaching the foundational truth that He is the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:1-21). Then, as He was walking in the temple at the time of the Feast of Dedication, the Jews came to Him and asked, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly” (NASB). Christ then returned to His previous lesson on the Shepherd and the sheep. He demonstrated the Jew’s rejection of Him as the Messiah. He then concluded His argument with a statement declaring His Deity, saying, “I and the Father are one,” thus causing the Jews to pick up stones to execute Him.

When the Lord asked why they wished to kill Him, their answer was, “...for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.” It was this reply that led Jesus to give a statement that has been a “proof-text” for Mormon missionaries

¹ “Becoming Like God,” *Gospel Topics* on LDS.org (25 February 2014)

for almost 200 years. “Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” (vs. 34-36).

The passage cited by Jesus comes from Psalm 82, which provides for us the Christ’s intention for the phrase, “You are gods.” This Psalm is the key to understanding John 10:34. While Mormons twist Psalm 82 to try and support deification, such an interpretation cannot be logically or hermeneutically held.

The Jews knew what Christ meant when He used this reference. He said, it was, “written in your Law.” This came from the book the Jews held as being inspired by God. They found it authoritative and the foundation of spiritual truth. They understood the Psalm and what it meant and we must interpret John 10:34 in light of Psalm 82.

Psalm 82

The Psalm of Asaph begins with the statement, “God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment...” (v.1) Who are these “gods”? As the text explains, they are the human, non-divine, judges of Israel. This is proven by Asaph’s questions to these gods, “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Vindicate the weak and

needy; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.”

The Psalmist is writing of unjust judges who were standing in the place of God, as they were supposed to be ruling over Israel in the light of God’s word and righteousness. However, they instead were cruel and covetous. They forsook the righteous decree of God and followed after their own desires. Remember, according to Mormons, these are supposed to be the faithful children of God who have ascended to a Divine godhood!

The verse Christ explicitly quotes is verse 6, which reads, “I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.’” Who were the gods? Again, they were the judges of Israel, standing in the place of God. Just as Yahweh delivered justice and commandments to Israel, so also were these judges to make sure that such justice was being delivered. This language is not exclusive to Psalm 82.

A Figure of Speech

The Lord spoke in the same way about Moses in Exodus 4:16, saying, “Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and **you will be as God to him.**” He says to Moses again in Exodus 7:1, “See, **I make you as God to Pharaoh,** and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.” Therefore, it is not unknown for God to speak of those who are fulfilling His will as being “God” in the sense that they are

standing for God by His own authority.

However, a death stroke to the Mormon position of these being actual, fully transformed and divine beings comes in Psalm 82:7: “Nevertheless you will die like men and fall like any one of the princes.” These weren’t immortal, god-like beings who were ruling over their own planets in eternity. Rather, the truth is completely brought out that these are men who were living in wickedness and who would be destroyed because of their abuse of their God-given office. God doesn’t die like a man because He is eternal. He is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2). Because of His eternal nature, God does not face the danger of death or destruction.

From Isaiah 43:10-11, we learn that God declares the impossibility of men becoming gods by saying, “...Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me.”

What is Christ meaning, then, when He utilizes this text to support His claim of Messiahship and Deity? He uses it to show that, if the men who were judges over Israel were called “gods” for declaring the word of God and executing His will, why then would it be blasphemy for Him to declare Himself the Son of God when doing the same thing? Christ was standing for the truth of God’s word (John 5:19-20; 14:10). He never committed iniquity (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet.

2:22; 1 John 3:5) and always acted on behalf of the righteousness of God (Jn. 16:8; Rom. 10:4).

The “gospel” of Mormonism is not the gospel of Christ. It is not Christianity and it is certainly not a restoration of the first century church. The church of Christ can be found when one compares its teachings and organization with the true gospel of Christ (Jn. 8:31).

Mormonism teaches a different Christ, a different God, a different gospel, a different church founder, and a different authority than that found in Sacred Writ. Because of this, we cannot condone or extend the hand of fellowship. As it is written, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we preached to you, he is to be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

Mormons must turn with a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). Mormons must turn to the faith that was “once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). Mormons must turn to the church that we read of in the New Testament. They must lay aside all of the traditions and commandments of their fraudulent founders. Let them become dedicated to Christ and to the church which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).



SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Ernest Underwood

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15)

Some verses in the Bible are simply amazing in the many lessons which they contain. Ephesians 4:15 is one of these verses. This passage speaks about truth -- the truth which makes one free from sin. Let us notice some of the lessons contained therein.

THE MESSAGE OF TRUTH

Biblical truth, in order to be effective in the lives of men, must be spoken or proclaimed. Jesus commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Why the gospel? We must preach the gospel because the gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16). It is by this truth that the soul is purified. Peter stated, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." (I Peter 1:22). Paul affirmed that those in Rome were "made free from sin" by their obedience to the doctrine (Romans 6:17-18).

A second thought is that truth must be spoken. Each week the general public is subjected to a variety of religious discourses. As one compares many of these religious speeches with the Bible he learns that much of that which is being taught is not truth, but

simply that which is formed in the doctrines and feelings of men.

We also learn of our individual responsibility to teach truth. Paul was writing to the saints at Ephesus, not just to preachers, elders, or other leading brethren. To these saints he gave the commandment to "speak the truth..." The question is also asked in another place, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). May each of us realize and fulfill our responsibility to speak the truth.

THE MANNER OF TRUTH

The manner in which the truth is to be spoken is "in love." This word love invokes some strange thoughts to many people. Some seem to think that love means being willing to compromise with error and those who teach it. Others view love as a sentimental, giddy, emotional feeling about God, the cross, sin, and salvation. None of these convey the concept of true biblical love.

True biblical love expresses a genuine concern for others. It causes one to desire the highest good even for an enemy -- that highest good being the salvation of the soul. It involves telling one the truth when the risk is great that such action will bring about alienation of friends.

Jesus angered the scribes and Pharisees when he told them the truth about themselves and about God's attitude toward them in their present condition. Yet, this same Jesus looked upon them with love and lamented, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matthew 23:37).

If we speak the truth in love we will call upon men to obey. To fail to tell men the truth is to fail to call them to obedience to that truth. To allow them to believe that they are saved short of that full obedience is nothing short of spiritual homicide. Men who would do such, although claiming to love the souls of their hearers, actually express a hateful contempt for them. A casual reading of Matthew 15:8-14 and the entire second chapter of 2 Peter will serve as proof for this statement.

THE MOTIVE OF TRUTH

The proper motive of spiritual truth and those who proclaim it is that the recipient of that truth "may grow up in all things...even Christ." Motives which are simply to increase the numbers, the contribution, or the prestige of the proclaimer are impure and shameful motives. It is a sad but true fact that some teach truth so that they may manipulate those to whom they

preach. They teach truth in order to create a situation of what is commonly known as "preacher-itus" among their followers.

True Christians teach the truth so that souls may be saved. These do not first survey the racial, economic, or social standing of the ones to be taught before deciding if they are worthy. True children of God see the lost. They recognize that anyone who has not obeyed the gospel is lost, and they want to give them the opportunity to be saved. For this reason they seek the lost. They are willing to sacrifice time and money in an effort to search out and tell the saving gospel to the lost. Having found the lost, they save them by the preaching of the gospel.

Unfortunately, many who have been sought out and had the gospel preached to them turn a deaf ear to it and remain in their lost condition. However, the faithful saint will continue to see, seek, and save the lost as he has opportunity and ability.

There are other lessons which can be gleaned from our text, but these should suffice to make us appreciate the value of taking a text and studying it for our own benefit. May each of us have the zeal to do so.

