

The Eternal Progression Doctrine of Mormonism

By Sandra Tanner

To help the reader gain a better understanding of the Mormon belief in man's eternal progression we will quote a few passages which show the Mormon concept of a plurality of Gods. Joseph Smith taught:

"First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves, that is the great secret. . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity. . . . God himself; the Father of us all dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did, . . . Jesus said, as the Father hath power in himself, even so hath the Son power; to do what? why what the Father did, that answer is obvious; in a manner to lay down his body and take it up again. Jesus what are you going to do? To lay down my life, as my Father did, and take it up again.--. . . You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves; to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done; by going from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, . . ." (*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 5, pp. 613-614)

In the book *Mormon Doctrine* we are told:

"Further, as the prophet also taught, there is 'a God above the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.... If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered that God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father, you may suppose that he had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? . . . Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not believe that he had a Father also?' (*Teachings*, pp. 370, 373.) In this way both the Father and the Son, as also all exalted beings, are now or in due course will become Gods of Gods. (*Teachings*, pp. 343-376.)" (Mormon Doctrine, compiled by Bruce R. McConkie, Salt Lake City, 1966 ed., pages 322 & 323)

"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. To us, speaking in the proper infinite sense, these three are the only Gods we worship. 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. . . .

"Indeed, this doctrine of plurality of Gods is so comprehensive and glorious that it reaches out and embraces every exalted personage. Those who attain exaltation are gods." (*Ibid.*, pp. 576-577)

"Godhood is not for men only; it is for men and women together." (*Ibid.*, p. 844)

"Mortal persons who overcome all things and gain an ultimate exaltation will live eternally in the family unit and have spirit children, thus becoming Eternal Fathers and Eternal Mothers." (*Ibid.*, p. 517)

"God himself, the Father of us all, is a glorified, exalted, immortal, resurrected Man!" (*Ibid.*, p. 643)

"God is omnipotent. . . . Omnipotence consists in having unlimited power, and God has all power, and there is no power which he does not have. . . . Those who obtain exaltation will gain all power and thus themselves be omnipotent." (*Ibid.*, p. 544)

The Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde made this comment:

"Remember that God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, a mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement; has moved forward and overcome, until He has arrived at the point where He now is." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p. 123)

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, stated:

"He is our Father--the Father of our spirits, and was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an exalted being. . . . God has once been a finite being; . . ." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7, p. 333)

"But I expect, if I am faithful with yourselves, that I shall see the time with yourselves that we shall know how to prepare to organize an earth like this--know how to people that earth, how to redeem it, how to sanctify it, and how to glorify it, with those who live upon it. . . ." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 6, pp. 274-275)

"Consequently every earth has its redeemer, and every earth has its tempter;..." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 14, p. 71)

Lorenzo Snow, who was President of the Mormon Church, wrote the following in a poem entitled "Man's Destiny":

Still, tis no phantom that we trace
Man's ultimatum in life's race;
This royal path has long been trod
By righteous men, each now a God:
As Abra'm Isaac, Jacob, too,
First babes, then men--to gods they grew.
As man now is, our God once was;
As now God is, so man may be, --
Which doth unfold Man's destiny. . . ."
(*The Gospel Through The Ages*,
by Milton R. Hunter, 1958, p. 113)

Milton R. Hunter tells how God progressed to Godhood:

"We accept the fact that God is the Supreme Intelligent Being in the universe. He has the greatest knowledge, the most perfect will, and the most infinite power of any person within the realm of our understanding. . . .

"Yet, if we accept the great law of eternal progression, we must accept the fact that there was a time when Deity was much less powerful than He is today. Then how did He become glorified and exalted and attain His present status of Godhood? In the first place, aeons ago God undoubtedly took advantage of every opportunity to learn the laws of truth and as He became acquainted with each new verity He righteously obeyed it. From day to day He exerted His will vigorously, and as a result became thoroughly acquainted with the forces lying about Him. As he gained more knowledge through persistent effort and continuous industry, as well as through absolute obedience, His understanding of the universal laws continued to become more complete. Thus He grew in experience and continued to grow until He attained the status of Godhood. In other words, He became God by absolute obedience to all the eternal laws of the Gospel--by conforming His actions to all truth, and thereby became the author of eternal truth. Therefore, the road that the Eternal Father followed to Godhood was one of living at all times a dynamic, industrious, and completely righteous life. There is no other way to exaltation.

"HOW MEN MAY BECOME GODS

"Thus all men who ascend to the glorious status of Godhood can do so only by one method--by obedience to all the principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . If to obtain eternal life means to enjoy the same type of life that god lives and to experience similar experiences, then those people who receive it to the fullest degree shall actually be Gods." (*The Gospel Through The Ages*, pp. 114-117)

Writing in 1853, the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt stated:

"The celestial beings who dwell in the Heaven from which we came, having being raised from the grave, in a former world, and having been filled with all the fulness of those eternal attributes, are called Gods.. . .

"In the Heaven where our spirits were born, there are many Gods, each one of whom has his own wife or wives which were given to him previous to his redemption, while yet in his mortal state. Each God, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters; . . . As soon as each God has begotten many millions of male and female spirits, . . . he, in connection with his sons, organizes a new world, after a similar order to the one which we now inhabit, where he sends both the male and female spirits to inhabit tabernacles of flesh and bones. . . . The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and worship their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited. . . .

"The number of sons and daughters of God, born in Heaven before this earth was formed, is not known by us. They must have been exceedingly numerous, as may be perceived, by taking into consideration the vast numbers which have already come from Heaven, and peopled our planet, during the past six thousand years. . . . Seventy thousand million, therefore, is a rough approximation to the number of inhabitants which the Lord destined to dwell in the flesh on this earth. . .

"It must be remembered, that seventy thousand million, however great the number may appear to us, are but two-thirds of the vast family of spirits who were begotten before the foundation of the world: the other third part of the family did not keep the first estate. Add to seventy thousand million, the third part which fell, namely, thirty-five thousand million, and the sum amounts to one hundred and five thousand million which was the approximate number of the sons and daughters of God in Heaven before the rebellion which broke out among them.

"If we admit that one personage was the Father of all this great family, and that they were all born of the same Mother, the period of time intervening between the birth of the oldest and the youngest spirit must have been immense. If we suppose, as an average, that only one year intervened between each birth, then it would have required, over one hundred thousand million years for the same Mother to have given birth to this vast family." (*The Seer*, by Orson Pratt, pages 37-38)

Now we turn to a few quotes from the Bible which show the impossibility of the Mormon concept of God being true. The Bible tells us:

"I am he: before me there was no God formed neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour." (Isaiah 43:10-11)

"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6)

". . . there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:21-22)

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: ..." (Num. 23:19)

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, . . ." (Romans 1:22-23)

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:16-18)

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (I Tim. 1:17)

"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see;" (I Tim. 6:16)

". . . his dear Son: . . . Who is the image of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15)

"God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

"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." (Jeremiah 23:24)

"For I am the Lord, I change not;" (Malachi 3:6)

"They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." (Psalms 102:26-27)

For more information on Mormonism, see "*Mormonism Shadow or Reality*" on our book list under Cults, False Teachings and Issues.