the strong orientation toward two-parent families in the Church (Hulse, p. 17). Church leaders admonish all members to be sensitive to the needs of people in difficult circumstances and to offer help and appropriate encouragement and compassionate service wherever possible.

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DOCTRINE

[*This entry consists of five articles:*

For related articles, see, generally, Articles of Faith; Gospel; Jesus Christ; *and* Plan of Salvation. *See also* Intellectual History *and* Smith, Joseph: Teachings of. *For articles of a philosophical nature, see* Epistemology; Ethics; Knowledge; Metaphysics; Philosophy; Reason and Revelation; Theology; *and* Truth, *among others.*]

MEANING, SOURCE, AND HISTORY OF DOCTRINE

MEANING OF DOCTRINE. The word "doctrine" in the scriptures means "a teaching" as well as "that which is taught." Most often in the Church it refers to the teachings or doctrine of Jesus Christ, understood in a rather specific sense. Scripturally, then, the term "doctrine" means the core message of Jesus Christ—that Jesus is the Messiah, the Redeemer. All other teachings are subordinate to those by which all people "know how to come unto Christ and be saved"—that is, to the "points of doctrine," such as faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. At one time, stressing the preeminence and foundational nature of this message, Jesus taught, "And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock" (3 Ne. 11:40).

In the King James Version (KJV) of the Old Testament, the word "doctrine" occurs six times (Deut. 32:2; Job 11:4; Prov. 4:2; Isa. 28:9, 29:24; Jer. 10:8), usually as a translation of the Hebrew word *leqakh*, meaning "instruction" or, more literally, "what is to be received." In the KJV New Testament it is used some fifty times, most often in reference to the teaching or instruction of Jesus Christ, less frequently to the teachings of others.

The "doctrine of Jesus Christ," which the Savior's listeners found "astonishing" (Matt. 7:28) and "new" (Mark 1:27) and which he attributed to the Father (John 7:16–19), is synonymous with his central message, the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. In Paul's words, it was the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand and that God "hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18).

The apostles, following the death and resurrection of the Savior, continued to teach this essential message (Acts 13:12; 1 Tim. 6:1). They used the word "doctrine" most often in reference to what a person must believe and do in order to be saved (Acts 2:41–47; 1 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 6:1–3).

Most occurrences of the term "doctrine" in the New Testament are in the singular and refer to the "doctrine of Jesus Christ." The plural "doctrines" usually refers to the teachings of men and devils, false and vain teachings contrary to or denying the Savior's "doctrine." Jesus' message comes from the Father and has its content in Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Redeemer, the way of salvation. The "doctrine" of Jesus Christ is the foundation

upon which all other teachings, principles, and practices rest.

The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants use the word "doctrine" in the same way. In the singular it always refers to the "doctrine of Jesus Christ" or to the "points of his doctrine" and means "that which will ensure the salvation of those who accept and act upon it." In the plural, it refers to the false teachings of devils or others (2 Ne. 3:12; 28:9; D&C 46:7). The Book of Mormon uses "doctrine" in this special sense as the "doctrine of Jesus Christ" or the gospel (twenty-eight times). Jesus attributed his teaching to the Father: "This is my doctrine, . . . that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God" (3 Ne. 11:32–33). Later he declared, "This is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of the Father, . . . and my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; . . . that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before the Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (3 Ne. 27:13–16; cf. D&C 76:40–42).

Thus, the "doctrine of Jesus Christ" is the only teaching that can properly be called "doctrine." It is fixed and unchanging. It cannot be modified or contradicted, but merely amplified as additional truths that deepen understanding and appreciation of its meaning are revealed. It is the basis on which the test of faith is made, and the rock or foundation of all other revealed teachings, principles, and practices.

Some of these other teachings comprise what is sometimes referred to as the PLAN OF SALVATION, which is understood as the larger historical setting in which the "doctrine of Jesus Christ" is situated and hence best understood. This is the plan worked out by the Father from the beginning, centering on the ATONEMENT of Jesus Christ as the necessary means by which all individuals are saved and exalted. All other revealed teachings are either aspects of the doctrine of Jesus Christ or extensions, elaborations, or appendages of it. The Prophet Joseph SMITH taught, "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended unto heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (*TPJS*, p. 121).

Some of the "appendages" that are explicitly identified in the scriptures as part of the doctrine of Jesus Christ are (1) faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; (2) repentance of all sins; (3) baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; (4) the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying-on of hands by those in AUTHORITY; (5) enduring in righteousness to the end; and (6) the resurrection of all human beings to be judged by Christ (3 Ne. 9:1–16; 11:23–39; 19:7–28; 27:13–21; D&C 10:62–69; 33:10–15; 39:5–6; 76:40–43). Additional teachings, or "things we know" (D&C 20:17), that are closely associated with this foundation include knowledge about the nature of GOD, the CREATION and the FALL OF ADAM, AGENCY, continuing REVELATION, an open CANON and the continual search for the truth of all things, PREMORTAL LIFE, the GATHERING OF ISRAEL, the role of a COVENANT people, sharing the gospel, HOPE and CHARITY, the establishment of ZION, the second coming of Christ, Christ's reign on earth for a thousand years, TEMPLE ORDINANCES for the living and the dead, the preaching of the gospel in the postearth SPIRIT WORLD, the need for PRIESTHOOD, degrees of glory in the hereafter, ETERNAL MARRIAGE, and the concept of ultimate EXALTATION in the presence of God to share his glory and life.

In addition to its scriptural use, the word "doctrine" has a broad meaning in Mormon vernacular, where it is used to mean virtually everything that is, or has been, taught or believed by the Latter-day Saints. In this sense, doctrinal teachings answer a host of questions. Some relate closely to the core message of the gospel of Jesus Christ; others are farther removed and unsystematically lap over into such disciplines as history, psychology, philosophy, science, politics, business, and economics. Some of these beliefs qualify as official doctrine and are given to the Saints as counsel, exhortation, reproof, and instruction (2 Tim. 3:16). Continual effort is made to harmonize and implement these principles and doctrine into a righteous life. Other teachings, ones that lack official or authoritative standing, may also be widespread among Church members at any given time.

SOURCE OF DOCTRINE. God is the source of doctrine. It is not devised or developed by man. It is

based on eternal truth and is revealed by God to man. It can be properly understood only by revelation through the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:11–14; Jacob 4:8).

God dispenses eternal truths "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Ne. 28:30). At times, he has revealed the fulness of the gospel, and those who have accepted and lived it were received into his presence. When people have ignored or rejected his gospel, God has on occasion withheld his Spirit, and people have had to live in a state of spiritual darkness (*see* APOSTASY).

God reveals as much light as humankind is willing to abide. Hence, varying amounts of true doctrine have existed on the earth at different periods of time, and people on earth during the same era have enjoyed differing amounts of truth. In this sense, there can be said to be a history of doctrine—that is, an account of how, over time, humankind has either grown or declined in the knowledge of the things of God, man, and the world. Joseph Smith taught, "This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed" (*TPJS*, p. 256).

Many factors influence how much God reveals, to whom, and under what circumstances. These include (1) who takes the opportunity to ask the Father in the name of Christ; (2) how much faith those seeking knowledge have; (3) what they ask for; (4) what is good for them to receive (D&C 18:18); (5) how willing they are to obey what is given (Alma 12:9–11); (6) what the will and wisdom of God require, for he gives "all that he seeth fit that they should have" (Alma 29:8); (7) whether the faith of people needs to be tested (Mormon was about to write more, but "the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people" [3 Ne. 26:8–11]); and (8) how spiritually prepared people are to receive the revelation (for example, Jesus taught through PARABLES in order to protect those who were not ready to understand [Luke 8:10; D&C 19:22]). The eternal truths constituting the gospel do not change, and eventually all who are exalted in the kingdom of God will understand them and apply them fully. However, mankind's knowledge and understanding of these truths change, as do the policies and practices appropriate to concurrent levels of understanding and obedience.

Inasmuch as God's house "is a house of order . . . and not a house of confusion" (D&C 132:8), there must be one who can speak for God for the whole Church and also settle differences. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the living prophet is the only one authorized to "receive revelations and commandments" binding on the entire Church (D&C 28:1–7; 43:1–7; 128:11). From the time the Church was organized, there has been—and always will be—"a prophet, recognized of God and his people, who will continue to interpret the mind and will of the Lord" (Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign* 7 [May 1977]:78). Ordinarily, the prophet acts in concert with his counselors in the FIRST PRESIDENCY and the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES—those who hold, with the Prophet, the "keys of the kingdom" (D&C 81:2; 112:30)—with the principle of quorum unanimity and COMMON CONSENT of the members of the Church giving power and validity to their decisions (D&C 26:2; 107:27–31). Acting collectively and under the inspiration of God, these leaders are authorized to determine the position of the Church at any given time on matters of doctrine, policy, and practice. This is the proper channel through which changes come. Latter-day Saints believe that God "will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (A of F 9). It is expected that such revelations will involve an expanded understanding of doctrine.

Many individuals write or preach their views. Some, by study and obedience, may learn truths that go beyond the stated position of the Church, but this does not authorize them to speak officially for the Church or to present their views as binding on the Church. There are many subjects about which the scriptures are not clear and about which the Church has made no official pronouncements. In such matters, one can find differences of opinion among Church members and leaders. Until the truth of these matters is made known by revelation, there is room for different levels of understanding and interpretation of unsettled issues.

HISTORY OF DOCTRINE. The doctrine of the Church was revealed principally through the Prophet Joseph Smith, though subsequent additions and clarifications have been made. These truths are part of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, known on earth in earlier times but now lost, necessitating a restoration by revelation.

The Prophet Joseph Smith received and shared his doctrinal understanding line upon line, from the time of his FIRST VISION in 1820 to his death in 1844. In many instances, his own under-

standing was progressively enhanced. In other matters, he learned certain principles early but only taught them as his followers were able and willing to accept them. Concerning the hereafter, for example, he said, "I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them" (*TPJS*, p. 305).

There is no simple pattern or predictable sequence in the growth of Joseph Smith's knowledge. Much of his doctrinal understanding gradually unfolded through revelations that he received in response to various contemporary issues and circumstances facing the infant but quickly expanding Church. Other teachings emerged quite spontaneously. His perceptions grew in completeness and detail, but they did not lose their historical footing in past dispensations or their undeviating goal of bringing people to Christ.

One important catalyst in this process was Joseph Smith's systematic examination of the Bible (*see* JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE [JST]), which yielded inspired biblical interpretations and textual restorations. Also, many sections of the Doctrine and Covenants are revelations answering questions that arose in this process (e.g., D&C 76, 91, 132).

Joseph's teachings about the Godhead illustrate the previous points. At first, he simply taught that God the Father and the Son were separate personages, without mentioning explicitly the nature of their bodies, even though 3 Nephi 11:15 (translated in 1829) made it clear that Jesus' resurrected body was tangible. Later, in Nauvoo, Joseph declared that "there is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones" (*TPJS*, p. 181, a comment made in 1841 on the biblical text in John 5:26), and that both the Father and the Son have bodies of "flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (D&C 130:22). Two months before his death, Joseph, for the first time in a recorded public sermon—indeed, in his crowning sermon about the nature of God, the KING FOLLETT DISCOURSE—taught that God is an exalted man. And two weeks before his death he spoke of a "plurality of Gods," expanding one's understanding in Genesis 1 of the Hebrew plural *elohim*, or "gods" (Joseph had studied Hebrew in 1835), explaining that "there are Gods many and Lords many, but to us only one, and we are to be in subjection to that one," and declaring that for fifteen years he had always preached "the plurality of Gods" (*TPJS*, pp. 370-71; cf. 1 Cor. 8:5–6).

Similarly, Joseph's teachings relating to such things as the nature of man, his premortal existence, his agency, and his eternal potential of GODHOOD also gradually unfolded to him and to those around him. He learned in December 1830 that "all the children of men" were created "spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth" (Moses 3:5). A revelation in 1833 indicated that a component of each individual existed before his or her spiritual creation, a component called INTELLIGENCE, which "was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29). During the period 1835–1842, while translating the book of Abraham, Joseph Smith learned that Abraham had seen into the premortal world and beheld myriads of "intelligences that were organized before the world was," in the presence of God (Abr. 3:22). Many were "noble and great" and chose to follow Christ. To this was added in 1841 that "at the first organization in heaven we were all present, and saw the Savior chosen and appointed and the plan of salvation made, and we sanctioned it" (*TPJS*, p. 181).

The Prophet's teachings on the atonement of Jesus Christ, creation, foreordination, salvation for the dead, priesthood, temple ordinances, eternal marriage, exaltation, and many other subjects can all be shown to have followed similar courses of development during his ministry (Cannon, Dahl, and Welch).

By 1844, the basic doctrinal structure of the Church was in place. Since that time, however, there have been official pronouncements clarifying doctrinal understanding or adapting doctrinal applications to particular circumstances. Some are now included in the Doctrine and Covenants; others are published as official messages of the First Presidency (cf. *MFP*). Over the years, various procedures and practices have received greater or lesser emphasis as changes have occurred in economic conditions (*see* CONSECRATION; TITHING; UNITED ORDER; WELFARE), political circumstances (*see* CHURCH AND STATE; POLITICS; WAR AND PEACE), intellectual atmosphere (*see* INTELLECTUAL HISTORY), Church growth (*see* ORGANIZATION), and many other areas. The essential doctrine of the Church, however, has remained constant amid such change.

Certain Church leaders have written extensively of their understanding of the doctrines of the

Church and, as a consequence, have had a significant influence on what many members believe (*see* TREATISES ON DOCTRINE below). These have included Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, James E. Talmage, John A. Widtsoe, B. H. Roberts, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Bruce R. McConkie. Their writings evidence some differences of opinion on unsettled issues, just as different schools of thought exist among Church members in general on certain issues. Examples include efforts to reconcile current scientific teachings and revealed truths, to ponder the nature of uncreated intelligence, and to define eternal progression. Latter-day Saints have faith that answers will eventually be revealed, and are urged, in the meantime, to seek knowledge by all available means and to show tolerance toward those espousing differing opinions on such subjects.

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DISTINCTIVE TEACHINGS

Few religious doctrines are unique in the strict sense, but many are rare enough to be considered distinctive features of this or that religion or denomination. Several doctrines of the Latter-day Saints are distinctive in this sense, although in most cases other Christians have at some time held identical or similar beliefs. Latter-day Saints insist that their distinctive doctrines were revealed by God in earlier DISPENSATIONS headed by Adam, Enoch, Noah, and so forth down to the time of Christ. Thus, while they may be distinct among modern denominations, these newly revealed doctrines were shared with the one true Church of Jesus Christ in ancient times.

Unique to LDS theology in modern times is a view of the GODHEAD as consisting of three separate beings, two possessing bodies of flesh and bone and one possessing a spirit body. An official declaration concerning the Godhead states: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22). Latter-day Saints take the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, in a literal, anthropomorphic sense, attributing to God both a human form and emotions. They accept both a "oneness" and "threeness" of the Godhead as taught in the Bible. However, they reject the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, and believe instead that the Godhead is one in mind, purpose, and testimony, but three in number. Thus, they believe that God is spirit in the sense that he is infused with spirit, and in the sense that the Holy Ghost is a spirit, but they do not limit the Father or the Son to incorporeality.

Latter-day Saints identify Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, specifically as Jesus Christ. They believe that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who walked with Enoch and who talked with Moses on Mount Sinai, was the premortal Jesus Christ, or God the Son, acting as the agent of his Father.

Latter-day Saints also have distinct doctrines about the nature of the universe and how it began. Because they believe that spirit and matter are actually the same thing in different degrees of refinement (see D&C 131:2), Latter-day Saints perceive the universe in terms of two realms, the physical and the spiritual, but these are not antithetical. They deny the spirit/matter dichotomy and insist that both spirit and matter make up a single eternal universe.

Moreover, Latter-day Saints understand "in the beginning" to mean "in the beginning of our part of the story," or in the premortal state "when God began to create our world." They do not believe in an absolute beginning, for in LDS theology spirit, matter, and element are all eternal. Creations may progress from lower to higher orders, and it is God's work and glory to bring this development about (Moses 1:39), but there never was a time when matter did not exist. Latter-day Saints reject the common idea of an ex nihilo creation—that God made everything that exists out of nonexistence. They teach instead that God created everything out of pre-existing but unorganized materials. He organized pre-existing elements to create worlds, and he organized pre-existing intelligence to beget spirits. The spirits of all human beings existed as God's spirit children before their mortal birth on earth.

LDS eschatology also offers several distinct doctrines. For example, Latter-day Saints believe in a temporary state between DEATH and RESURRECTION that the scriptures call the spirit world. This temporary spirit world includes Paradise, where the spirits of the righteous await their glorious resurrection, and Hell, where the spirits of the wicked suffer for their sins while they await resurrection to a lesser degree of glory (Alma 40:11–14; cf. Luke 16:22–23). LDS doctrine teaches that every human being will be resurrected. Many were resurrected soon after Jesus' resurrection; the remaining righteous will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ, and the wicked at the end of Christ's one-thousand-year reign on earth. Hell is a temporary condition, which will yield up its captive spirits at the Resurrection, just as death will yield up its bodies (2 Ne. 9:10–14; cf. Rev. 20:13–14). In the Resurrection all suffering comes to an end (D&C 76:84, 88–89), and all human beings except the sons of perdition will be saved in one of three kingdoms, or degrees of glory: the celestial, the terrestrial, or the telestial (D&C 76:1–19; 88:29–32; cf. 1 Cor. 15:4–42).

Distinctive LDS doctrines concerning the nature of the Church include the belief that the Church of Jesus Christ has been on earth many times, beginning with father Adam, in much the same form it has now and with the same doctrines. The Church and gospel of Jesus Christ are eternal. They were revealed to the people of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jared, Lehi, and others. Adam knew the gospel, was baptized by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, just as the Saints in all other dispensations. At times humanity has rejected or distorted the gospel and fallen into apostasy. But eventually the gospel has been restored to its original purity through prophets called to begin a new dispensation. Most recently this same eternal gospel has been restored through the modern Prophet Joseph SMITH. Thus the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was not the result of a long religious evolution, nor was it merely the restoration of primitive Christianity, but it was the final restoration to earth of an eternal gospel of Jesus Christ revealed to humanity many times since the beginning.

What distinguishes "the true and living Church" from all other churches is possession of the priesthood keys of the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 16:19). The belief that possession of the apostolic keys is necessary in the true Church is not unique to Latter-day Saints, but the insistence that one of those keys necessarily bestows the gifts of prophecy and revelation is. To hold the keys of the kingdom as Peter did is to be a prophet, seer, and revelator like Peter. And in order to be "true and living" a church must receive these apostolic keys as exercised and transmitted through the hands of its living prophets. As a tree is alive only when its branches are connected to its trunk and roots, so a church is alive only when it is connected by an open channel of revelation to its divine source. Where ecclesiastical leaders have no such prophetic link with the heavens, a church may even teach true doctrines, but it can not be "true and living" (see D&C 1:30; 27:12–13), for it lacks the necessary communication with its own divine roots.

With such emphasis placed on the need for living prophets, it follows that the word of God is primarily the word as spoken to and communicated by the prophets. The written words, the scriptures, are always important as historical precedent and as a record of what the Lord has said to his people in the past, but they are supplemental and secondary to what he may say now through his living prophet. Since Latter-day Saints believe in the genuine gift of prophecy, it follows that the revelations received by modern prophets should be esteemed as highly as those received by ancient ones. Hence, the LDS canon of scripture can never be closed: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (A of F 9).

The Latter-day Saints are also unique in several aspects of their concept of salvation. While most of the LDS doctrines would be familiar to other Christians—for example, the doctrines of the Atonement, justification, sanctification, and grace—there are several distinct features found among the Latter-day Saints. They make a distinction between generic "salvation," which to them means that through the atonement of Christ one is delivered from the grave and from the power of Satan and hell to enter a degree of glory, and "exaltation," which means that through the atonement of Christ and personal obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ one is

raised to the highest degree of glory to share the powers and privileges of God, to sit on his throne and reign in eternity (see D&C 76:1–119; 88:22–23; cf. Rev. 1:6; 3:21). To be exalted is to become like God (*see* DEIFICATION).

Faithful Latter-day Saints receive in the LDS temples the ordinances and knowledge necessary for celestial exaltation. One part of these sacred rites is called the temple ENDOWMENT because it constitutes a major part of the overwhelming gift extended to humanity through the atonement of Christ. Another temple ordinance is the SEALING of husbands and wives, parents and children into families that will endure for time and for eternity. The celestial kingdom will consist of God's heavenly family linked together in love as husbands and wives, parents and children, and brothers and sisters forever. As single individuals, human beings may be saved in lesser degrees of glory, but only families can be exalted.

Not everyone has had the opportunity in mortal life to hear the gospel of Christ and receive all the ordinances of exaltation. Latter-day Saints teach that God has provided for all to hear the gospel so they can accept or reject its blessings. Those who do not have that opportunity in mortality will receive it in the spirit world. The New Testament teaches that Jesus himself visited the spirit world after his death on the cross and preached to the spirits there: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. 3:18–19). The purpose of his preaching ministry to the spirits is revealed in the next chapter: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Pet. 4:6). This doctrine has been amplified and explained in latter-day revelation (D&C 137, 138; *see* SALVATION FOR THE DEAD).

Other areas in which the views of the Latter-day Saints differ noticeably from those of the contemporary religious world are the concepts of TIME AND ETERNITY, the LIGHT OF CHRIST, the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST, the positive estimate of the CREATION and of the physical EARTH, the eternal necessity of ORDINANCES, the centrality of the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT for modern Christians, and the concept of heaven as a CELESTIAL KINGDOM located upon this renewed and glorified earth.

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LDS DOCTRINE COMPARED WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

As biblical scholar W. D. Davies once pointed out, LDS doctrine can be described as biblical Christianity separated from hellenized Christianity, a conjunction of first-century Judaism and Christianity. Latter-day Saints accept the BIBLE and its apostolic teachings as God's word, but reject many later interpretations of the Bible that express Greek philosophical concerns—they accept John and Paul but reject Augustine. For example, Latter-day Saints accept both the threeness of God and the oneness of God as biblical teachings. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three divine personages who together constitute one GODHEAD. But Mormons reject the attempts of postbiblical, nonapostolic Christianity to define how the oneness and the threeness of God are related. They accept the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, but reject the philosophical doctrine of the Trinity as defined at the Council of Nicaea and later. In short, Latter-day Saints reject the AUTHORITY and conclusions of theologians and philosophers to define or interpret what the Bible, apostles, or prophets have not. They accept biblical Christianity, but not its extension in extrabiblical CREEDS and traditions.

To those Christians who have welded the Bible to its later interpretation and cannot separate Plato and Augustine from Peter and Paul, and cannot think of "true" Christianity in first-century categories, LDS doctrine may seem iconoclastic in separating biblical texts from their later "traditional" interpretation. Nevertheless, Latter-day Saints feel that New Testament Saints would have

been just as uncomfortable with the philosophical creeds of later Christianity as they themselves are.

LDS rejection of much postbiblical Christianity is based on belief in an ancient APOSTASY that is both predicted and chronicled in the New Testament (e.g., 2 Thes. 2:1–5; 3 Jn. 9–10). Apostolic authority ceased just after the New Testament period, and without apostolic leadership and authority the Church was soon overwhelmed by alien intellectual and cultural pressures. The simple affirmations of biblical faith were turned into the complex propositions of THEOLOGY. Though subsequent churches were still "Christian," in the LDS view they no longer possessed the *fulness* of the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST or apostolic authority. Latter-day Saints would agree with Catholics and "high church" Protestants that apostolic authority is essential in the true church but would also agree with other Protestants that apostolic authority was lacking in medieval orthodoxy. A close parallel is presented by Protestant rejection of Roman Catholic claims to binding apostolic authority. While Latter-day Saints trace the Apostasy to roughly the second century and reject subsequent orthodoxy, most Protestants would place it somewhere nearer the fifteenth century and then reject subsequent Catholicism.

Protestants who denied the necessity of apostolic succession, or who did not believe its links were severed by the Reformation, generally held that the fulness of the gospel could be achieved by reforming the Roman Church. Latter-day Saints, who insist on the necessity of apostolic succession but believe its links were severed early, see a reformation as inadequate for recovering the fulness of the gospel and reestablishing original Christianity. Only a total restoration of apostolic doctrines and authority could reestablish the pure Christianity of the first century. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sees itself as constituting this Restoration.

LDS rejection of hellenistic philosophy in matters of doctrine accounts for many characteristic differences between Latter-day Saints and other Christians. For example, Latter-day Saints reject the Platonic spirit–matter dichotomy, which holds that spirit and matter are opposed and inimical to each other. They believe instead that spirit is refined matter and that both spirit and matter are eternal, being neither created nor destroyed. The Prophet Joseph SMITH taught that "there is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes" (D&C 131:7).

Thus, for Latter-day Saints there is no ultimate incompatibility between spirit and matter or between the spiritual and the physical realms. In LDS theology, the physical elements are coeternal with God. The idea that physical matter is transitory, corrupt, or incompatible with spiritual or eternal life is rejected. Latter-day Saints usually define "spiritual" as "infused with spirit" rather than as "nonphysical." This unitary understanding of spirit and matter allows them to accept the Father and the Son as the concrete, anthropomorphic beings represented in scripture and reject the definition of God as the abstract, "totally other" nonbeing of philosophical theology. For Latter-day Saints, God *exists* in the normal sense in association with time and space, rather than in the abstract Platonic sense of beyond time and space. The traditional disparagement of matter and of the physical state of being is not well grounded biblically, and Latter-day Saints believe it is a product of hellenistic thought. They also think the concept of a God "without body, parts or passions" dismisses too much of the biblical data or allegorizes it excessively.

Since Mormons believe that the elements are eternal, it follows that they deny the ex nihilo creation. Rather, the universe was created (organized) out of preexisting elements that God organized by imposing physical laws. The Prophet Joseph Smith also taught that intelligence is also eternal and uncreated: "The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. . . . Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle" (*TPJS*, pp. 353–54).

Just as God organized preexisting matter to create the universe, so he organized preexisting intelligence to create the spirits that eventually became human beings. Consequently, Latter-day Saints do not view God as the *total* cause of what human beings are. Human intelligence is uncreated by God, and therefore independent of his control. Thus Mormons insist that human beings are free agents in the fullest sense, and deny both the doctrines of prevenient and irresistible grace, which make God's choice determinative for SALVATION or damnation. God will not coerce independent, self-existent wills. Though he desires the exaltation of all, and offers it equally to all, its achievement requires individual cooperation, a covenant relationship. In this way, LDS theology

escapes the classical dilemma of predestination and theodicy imposed by believing that God created all things from nothing and is therefore solely responsible for the final products. Their radical doctrine of individual free agency also allows the Latter-day Saints to deny the theory of human depravity. The fall of Adam did not totally incapacitate humans from doing any good thing—they remain able to choose and to perform either good or evil. Moreover, Latter-day Saints accept the concept of the "fortunate Fall" (*mea culpa*). The Fall was a necessary step in the progress of humanity: "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Ne. 2:25).

A positive view of the physical universe and of man also allows Latter-day Saints to anticipate a physical afterlife, the CELESTIAL KINGDOM, a community of physically resurrected beings transformed and perfected. Unlike many ancient church fathers, they do not long to escape the realm of the flesh, but rather to sanctify it. Hence, in the LDS view, even the physical relationships of FAMILY and MARRIAGE can continue in the eternities in a sanctified state. Thus there is little asceticism and no CELIBACY in LDS theology, which sees in both of these tendencies a denial of the goodness of God's physical creation (Gen. 1:31); and LDS theology avoids the traditional disparagement of the human body and the contempt for human SEXUALITY that are largely due to the neoplatonism of late antiquity.

While common ground for Latter-day Saints and other Christians is an acceptance of the Bible and its teachings, issues of interpretation aside, Mormonism agrees with "high church" orthodoxy against conservative Protestantism on the doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture. Though they accept the Bible, Latter-day Saints, like Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox, for example, do not believe that the biblical text alone is sufficient for salvation. Biblical teaching, while true and accepted, has been imperfectly preserved and can be fully reconstituted only through supplemental REVELATION. This is not because New Testament Christianity was defective, but because New Testament Christianity is only partially preserved in the modern Bible. Those doctrines that were not preserved must be *restored*; consequently, Mormons deny both biblical inerrancy and sufficiency. Since the apostles and prophets of earliest Christianity received direct revelation from God (see, e.g., Acts 10:9–16, 28), Latter-day Saints believe that any church claiming the fulness of the gospel must also enjoy this gift.

This crucial principle of continuing revelation is illustrated in the experience of the Prophet Joseph Smith, whose visions and revelations form the foundation of LDS doctrine. As the *magisterium* of the church is fundamental for Roman Catholics, and the scriptures are the *fontes* for Protestants, for Latter-day Saints the highest authority in religious matters is continuing revelation from God given through the living APOSTLES and prophets of his Church, beginning with Joseph Smith and continuing to the present leadership.

Latter-day Saints insist that both the CANON of SCRIPTURE and the structure of theology are always open-ended, and can always be added upon by God through revelation to his PROPHETS (A of F 9). Through this means they have received clarification of biblical doctrines that are disputed in other denominations, for example, Christ's ministry to the dead in 1 Peter 3:18 and 4:6 (see D&C 128; 137; 138). Also through modern revelation Latter-day Saints have received some distinctive doctrines that are not explicitly found in the Bible. In these cases modern revelation has not rehabilitated a doctrine that is unclear, but has restored a doctrine that was entirely lost.

Latter-day Saints share with most Christians the conviction that salvation comes only through the ATONEMENT of Jesus Christ, which is representative, exemplary, and substitutionary in nature. Christ is the mediator of humanity to the Father instead of fallen Adam; he sets an example for humans to emulate; and he takes mankind's place in suffering for sins.

Latter-day Saints are monophysite in their CHRISTOLOGY; that is, they believe Christ has only one nature, which is simultaneously both human and divine. This is possible because the human and the divine are not mutually exclusive categories in LDS thought, as in the duophysite christology of much orthodoxy. As Lorenzo SNOW said, "As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be" (Snow, p. 46). Most Christians would agree with the first half of this couplet as applied to the person of Christ, but Latter-day Saints apply it also to the Father. The second half of the couplet is more orthodox in the denominational sense than either Protestants or Catholics, for Latter-day Saints share the ancient biblical doctrine of DEIFICATION (*apotheosis*) with Eastern Orthodoxy. Several of early Christianity's theologians

said essentially the same thing as Lorenzo Snow. Irenaeus said, "If the word became a man, it was so men may become gods" (Against Heresies, 4. Pref), and Athanasius maintained that "[Christ] became man that we might be made divine" (On the Incarnation, 54). Yet Latter-day Saints combine both halves of the couplet to reach what they feel is the only possible conclusion—human and divine are not mutually exclusive categories. Mormons insist that the two categories are one: Humans are of the lineage of the gods. Latter-day Saints would agree entirely with C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*:

> He said (in the Bible) that we were "gods" and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him, if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine [p. 175].

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HARMONIZATION OF PARADOX

Because Latter-day Saints reject the influences of Neoplatonism on original Christian theology, they are not on the horns of the dilemmas posed by some of the paradoxes in traditional Christian theology. This is not to say, however, that LDS ethical life and religious thought are free of paradox. LDS perspective tends to harmonize many paradoxes through its views that opposition is necessary in all things and that God and mankind are in the same order of reality but at different stages of knowledge and progression.

As used in ordinary discourse, "paradox" usually refers to a statement that on its face is unbelievable because it is apparently self-contradictory or is contrary to well-established facts, common sense, or generally received belief. While many paradoxes are no doubt false, not all necessarily are. Indeed, in the history of human thought, many brash paradoxes have overthrown a generally received but false belief, eventually to become widely accepted themselves —"some time a paradox, but now time gives it proof" (*Hamlet* 3.1.115).

Classical Christian theology is in many ways paradoxical. This is often the result of the unstable theological blending that occurred in the early centuries of Christianity when (a) insights that came from personal Judeo-Christian revelation were (b) interpretatively recast within an impersonal Neoplatonic view of reality. To mention a few:

1. (a) The loving God who is profoundly touched by the feelings of our infirmities is (b) without passions or outside influences.
2. (a) The God who acts in human history and responds to personal prayers is (b) timeless and unchangeable.
3. (b) The God without body or parts became (a) embodied in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.
4. The God who is (b) absolutely unlimited and good, and who created all things out of nothing (a) created a world abounding with evils.
5. (a) The Godhead consists of three perfect and separate persons who (b) collectively constitute one metaphysical substance.

Latter-day Saint doctrine, while affirming (a) the Judeo-Christian dimensions of the foregoing propositions regarding God, rejects (b) the Neoplatonic framework and metaphysic within which Judeo-Christian revelation has historically been interpreted. Accordingly, LDS understanding of Christian doctrine does not manifest those paradoxes that are generated by the union of these two incompatible sets of beliefs.

Latter-day Saint thought builds bridges between entities and quantities that are normally thought to be incongruous (*see* METAPHYSICS). Reality is not seen as a dichotomy but as a graded continuum: Thus, SPIRIT is understood to be a form of MATTER, but a highly refined form; and TIME is part of eternity. A corporeal God is omnipresent through the light that emanates from him and that is in and through all things (D&C 88: 12–13).

In ethical discourse, the axiomatic and eternal principle of AGENCY demands that there be "an

opposition in all things" (2 Ne. 2:11) to ensure that meaningful choices can be made—not only between good and evil but also from among an array of righteous alternatives (*see* ETHICS; EVIL; SUFFERING IN THE WORLD; THEODICY). Weakness exists that it may bring strength (Ether 12:27). Thus, Latter-day Saint moral life ranges between options that are often paradoxical: the imperatives of improving oneself or serving other people; spending time at home or rendering Church service; favoring individuality or institutionality; obtaining wealth or giving to the poor; finding one's life by losing it in service to others (Matt. 10:39).

Such tensions, however, do not impede LDS action, nor are they transcended through mysticism, irony, or resignation (whether optimistically or pessimistically). They are embraced in a series of interrelated gospel principles that guide LDS life, including

- personal revelation (by the Holy Ghost each individual can tell what leads to Christ [Moro. 7:12–13; 10:5–6])
- the mandate to act (knowledge of what is right comes by doing it [John 7:17])
- the making of voluntary covenants (people obligate themselves by what they agree to do)
- an extended concept of self (helping others is tantamount to helping oneself)
- the atonement of Jesus Christ (his judgment will encompass both divine grace and human works, retributive justice and compassionate mercy)
- the eternal relativity of kingdoms and progression (with all their differences, all people are on the same pathway to perfection).

For Latter-day Saints, the paradoxes of knowledge are generally resolved under the concept of "continuing revelation" (*see* EPISTEMOLOGY; REVELATION). While Latter-day Saints are inclined to hold that each truth is self-consistent and coherent with all other truth, they also acknowledge the imperfection of human understanding. Mortal attempts to comprehend or express divine truths are inherently liable to error for at least two reasons: (1) the linguistic-conceptual frameworks within which such facts are expressed and interpreted are culturally conditioned and manifestly inadequate; and (2) mankind's awareness of the facts is fragmentary and incomplete, "for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8–9), and in mortality "man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend" (Mosiah 4:9). But by revelation, human knowledge may increase: "No man knoweth of [God's] ways save it be revealed unto him" (Jacob 4:8). "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Thus where definitively clear revelation appears to contradict generally received opinion, common sense, or well-established facts, Latter-day Saints give priority to revelation and trust that time will give proof to what now seems paradoxical or that within God's more complete comprehension of things there may be mediating principles by which two apparently conflicting partial truths may be reconciled. This trust and hope for further revelation quiet such unsearchable paradoxes as how God's complete knowledge can be reconciled with mankind's agency, how scriptural and scientific accounts of creation can be harmonized, or how, in general, study and faith, REASON AND REVELATION, symbolic vision and practical literal-mindedness can all be accommodated concurrently. LDS doctrine is resistant to extremes: Its authoritativeness has not been transformed into abstractions or absolutes; nor have its revelations wandered into mysticism or vagueness. In such ways, the doctrines of the eternal gospel maintain their own set of tensions in a mortal world.

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TREATISES ON DOCTRINE

Doctrinal works—that is, periodicals, tracts, and books—have been numerous in the LDS tradition, reflecting the lay character of the ministry, the large corpus of scripture, and continuing concern with right belief as well as right conduct.

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DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

[This entry consists of twenty articles: