

God-Men and Spiritual Vegetables: The Occult Worldview of Mormonism

by Greg Loren Durand



Animism and the Transmigration of Spirit

The *Cabala* is a body of occult doctrine, originally Jewish, which has been adopted with enthusiasm by non-Jewish occultists since the fifteenth century.... Modern occultists are attracted to the *Cabala* because of its age and its mystery, and because they can draw from it the great magical principles that the universe is a unity, that it has an underlying pattern connected with numbers and planets, that man is God and the universe in miniature, and that man can develop the divine spark within him until he masters the entire universe and himself becomes God.¹

The underlying worldview of the occult religions is *monism*. This philosophy states that there is only one ultimate reality or state of being, which is known to Hindus as *Brahma*,

1. Richard Cavendish, *The Black Arts* (New York: G.P. Putnam Publishing Group, 1967), page 81.

or the “God-source.” Since everything is an emanation or part of this reality, all things, whether animate or inanimate, are of their very essence divine, and are to be distinguished from one another only in that each reflects a different stage of transmigrational development, or evolution. Simply stated, a rock is believed to be “God” just as is a cow, a bird, a human being, and so forth. A direct result of this worldview is what is known as *animism* — the belief that all things possess a soul or spirit, and are thus alive in some sense.

According to occultist and Thirty-Third Degree Mason Manly P. Hall, the occult initiate knows that the essence of divinity — the “Life Principle” or “Spark of God” — is found in every “plant, animal, mineral, and man,” and therefore “recognizes the oneness of life manifesting through the diversity of form.”² Albert Pike, another Masonic authority, cited the Indian *Vedas* as proof of the universal antiquity of this teaching:

One great and incomprehensible Being has alone existed from all Eternity. Everything we behold and we ourselves are portions of Him. The soul, mind or intellect, of gods and men, and of all sentient creatures, are detached portions of the Universal Soul, to which at stated periods they are destined to return. But the mind of infinite beings is impressed by one uninterrupted series of illusions, which they consider as real, until again united to the great fountain of truth. Of these illusions, the first and most essential is individuality. By its influence, when detached from its source, the soul becomes ignorant of its own nature, origin, and destiny. It considers itself as a separate existence, and no longer a spark of the Divinity....

2. Manly P. Hall, *The Lost Keys of Masonry* (Los Angeles, California: Hall Publishing Company, 1924), pages 93-94.

The dissolution of the world... consists in the destruction of the visible forms and qualities of things; but their material essence remains, and from it new worlds are formed by the creative energy of God; and thus the Universe is dissolved and renewed in endless succession....

Thus, the soul of everything that breathes, being a fraction of the Universal Soul, none perishes; but each soul merely changes its mould and form, by passing successively into different bodies. Of all forms, that which most pleases the Divine Being is Man, as nearest approaching His own perfections. When a man, absolutely disengaging himself from his senses, absorbs himself in self-contemplation, he comes to discern the Divinity, and becomes part of Him.³

Here are two related concepts that have gained wide acceptance in modern society via the New Age Movement and other esoteric systems: spiritual reincarnation and biological evolution. Just as reincarnation teaches that souls are evolving toward spiritual perfection with each lifetime, evolution is based on the idea that biological perfection is attainable via the passage of eons of time. Evolution, in some form or another, has always been the underlying theme of occultism, as the ancient pagans sought to work their way “up from the beasts and on their way to the gods.”⁴ In the words of spirit medium Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, “[Evolution] is ‘Satanic’ ... for it is owing to the prototype of that which became in time the Chris-

3. Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (Washington, D.C.: Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction, Thirty-Third Degree, 1962), pages 604-605.

4. Ken Wilber, *Up From Eden* (New York: Doubleday Publishing Company, 1981), page 1.

tian Devil — to the Radiant Archangel who wanted Man to become his own creator and an immortal god — that men can reach Nirvana and the haven of heavenly divine Peace.... The Kabalistic axiom, 'A stone becomes a plant; a plant a beast; a beast a man; a man a God,' holds good throughout the ages...."⁵

In Blavatsky's worldview, the universe is a living organism — a macrocosm which contains within itself a microcosm of evolving spiritual hierarchies. Energy is constantly progressing through each hierarchy on its way upwards toward absorption into the Absolute (*Brahma*). This evolutionary process began in the distant past when the "Planetary Spirit" of this world incarnated itself into the material sphere, and thus found itself "finally imprisoned within a physical skin."⁶ The earth is itself a macrocosm of still more individual "entities," which appeared initially as simple-celled creatures and then progressed on to somewhat more complex organisms. As the planet moved through each of its seven stages of development, these "sparks of spirit" likewise evolved through a continuous cycle of death and subsequent rebirth until they had passed through a corresponding seven levels of their own. These ranged from the plant kingdom to the animal kingdom. Finally, advancement into the human kingdom was made possible eighteen million years ago when the earth entered its fourth (Atlantean) age. It was then, under the guidance of Lucifer, that "angelic monads from higher spheres had incarnated in, and

5. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, 1963), Volume II, pages 245, 258.

6. Vera S. Alder, *The Initiation of the World* (New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1968), page 34.

endowed [man] with understanding,"⁷ thereby placing mankind on the path of evolution to godhood.

The Transmigration of Spiritual Vegetables

One does not have to look very far to find basically the same occult teachings in the writings of early Mormon leaders. Orson Pratt, for example, wrote:

The Gods are one in qualities and attributes. Truth is not a plurality of truths, because it dwells in a plurality of persons, but it is one truth, indivisible, though it dwells in millions of persons. Each person is called God, not because of his substance, neither because of the shape and size of the substance, but because of the qualities which dwell in the substance. Persons are only tabernacles or temples, and TRUTH is the God, that dwells in them. If the fulness of truth dwells in numberless millions of persons, then the same one indivisible God dwells in them all. As truth can dwell in all worlds at the same instant; therefore, God who is truth can be in all worlds at the same instant....

When we worship the Father, we do not merely worship His person, but we worship the truth which dwells in His person. When we worship the Son, we do not merely worship His body, but we worship truth which resides in Him. So, likewise, when we worship the Holy Ghost, it is not the substance which we alone worship, but truth which dwells in that substance. Take away truth from either of these beings, and their persons or substance would not be the object of worship. It is truth, light, and love that we worship and adore; these are the same in all worlds; and as these constitute God, He is the same in all

7. Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, Volume II, page 267.

worlds; and hence, the inhabitants of all worlds are required to worship and adore the same God.⁸

Not only are we told by Pratt that this spirit essence of “truth” dwells in “numberless millions of persons,” but apparently the same particles of spirit, which Manly P. Hall referred to as the “Life Principle” or the “Spark of God,” and the late Mormon historian B. H. Roberts identified as the “spark of Deity” or “manifestations of the Divine,”⁹ are also inherent in both animal and plant life as well.¹⁰ Joseph Smith taught that this spirit essence, also known as “intelligence” or the “light of truth,”¹¹ has eternally co-existed with God, and is, in fact, the very substance of which he (or it) is composed:

Element had an existence from the time [God] had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end....

We say that God himself is a self-existent being. Who told you so? It is correct enough; but how did it get into your heads? Who told you that man did not exist in like manner upon the same principles?...

The mind or intelligence which man possesses is co-equal with God himself....

8. Orson Pratt, *The Seer* (Liverpool, England: S. W. & F. D. Richards, 1853-1854), February 1853, page 24.

9. B. H. Roberts; in Joseph Fielding Smith (editor), *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1976), page 347 (footnote).

10. Joseph Smith, in Smith, *ibid.*, page 34.

11. *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:29.

Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it had a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end.... There never was a time when there were not spirits; for they are co-equal with our Father in heaven....

...God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all. God himself could not create himself. Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it.¹²

Furthermore, early Mormon apostles taught that, due to the essential equality of all "intelligence," even vegetables could eventually attain a "celestialized" state of godhood through a process that is suspiciously similar to the transmigration of souls in Hinduism, as summarized above by Albert Pike. Even much the same terminology, such as "disorganization" and "reorganization" of spirit, for instance, is present in the following excerpt of the writings of Orson Pratt:

That vegetables as well as animals have spirits, is clearly shown from the fact that they have capacity for joy and rejoicing.... We are compelled to believe that every vegetable, whether small or great, has a living intelligent spirit capable of feeling, knowing, and rejoicing in its sphere....

This is the origin of spiritual vegetables in Heaven. These spiritual vegetables are sent from Heaven to the terrestrial worlds, where, like animals, they take natural

12. Joseph Smith, in Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, pages 351-354; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), page 751; B.H. Roberts, article: "The Immortality of Man," *Improvement Era*, April 1907, pages 401-423.

tabernacles, which become food for the sustenance of the natural tabernacles of the animal creation. Thus the spirits of both vegetables and animals are the offspring of male and female parents which have been raised from the dead, or redeemed from a fallen condition....

If [these particles of spirit] were once organized in the vegetable kingdom, and then disorganized by becoming food of celestial animals, and then again reorganized in the form of the spirits of animals which is a higher sphere of being, then, is it unreasonable to suppose that the same particles have, from all eternity, been passing through an endless chain of unions and disunions, organizations and disorganizations, until at length they are permitted to enter into the highest and most exalted sphere of organization in the image and likeness of God?

...[H]ere, then, is apparently a transmigration of the same particles of spirit from an inferior to a superior organization, wherein their condition is improved, and their sphere of action enlarged. Who shall set any bounds to this upward tendency of spirit? Who shall prescribe limits to its progression? If it abide the laws and conditions of its several states of existence, who shall say that it will not progress until it shall gain the very summit of perfection, and exist in all the glorious beauty of the image of God?¹³

Other early Mormon leaders, such as Brigham Young, who, like Joseph Smith, was himself a Mason, also taught that “the Earth is a living creature,” and that the tides are actually caused by the planet’s breathing.¹⁴ According to Heber C.

13. Pratt, *The Seer*, March 1853, pages 34, 38; July 1853, pages 102-103; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 77:1-4.

14. Fred C. Collier (editor), *The Teachings of President Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Colliers Publishing Company, 1987), Volume III, page

Kimball, also a Mason, the earth is the offspring of “parent earths” and is itself undergoing an evolutionary “salvation” as is the rest of creation.¹⁵ Orson Pratt explained in *The Seer* that once resurrected from the dead and thus redeemed, the earth will become a “celestialized” being, or a great sun, as its parents had done before it.¹⁶ Joseph Smith also taught that the earth, in its “sanctified and immortal state,” will be transformed into “a globe like a sea of glass and fire.”¹⁷

The Occult Reversal of God and Satan

In the occult, Satan (or Lucifer) has traditionally been associated with the sun, the harbinger of spiritual light. Esoteric philosophy teaches that it is this “great being,” *not* the God of the Old Testament, that was the true redeemer and benefactor of mankind in the Garden of Eden and who later possessed the body of Jesus of Nazareth to rescue the Jews from their idolatrous worship of Ilda-Baoth (Jehovah), and to instruct them in the truth of man’s inherent or potential divinity. For example, occult medium H.P. Blavatsky wrote in her book, *The Secret Doctrine*:

Once the key to Genesis is in our hands, it is the scientific and symbolic *Kabbala* which unveils the secret. The Great Serpent of the Garden of Eden and the “Lord

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15. Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool, England: F.D. and S.W. Richards, 1855), Volume VI, page 36.

16. Pratt, *The Seer*, February 1853, page 23.

17. *Doctrine and Covenants* 77:1, 130:7-9; see also Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume IX, page 87.

God" are identical....¹⁸

Stand in awe of him, and sin not; speak his name with trembling.... It is Satan who is the god of our planet and the only god....

When the Church, therefore, curses Satan, it curses the cosmic reflection of God....

In this case it is but natural... to view Satan, the Serpent of Genesis as the real creator and benefactor, the Father of Spiritual mankind. For it is he who was the "Harbinger of Light," bright radiant Lucifer, who opened the eyes of the automaton [Adam] created by Jehovah, as alleged; and he who was the first to whisper, "In the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as Elohim, knowing good and evil" — can only be regarded in the light of a Saviour. An "adversary" to Jehovah... he still remains in Esoteric Truth the ever loving "Messenger" ... who conferred on us spiritual instead of physical immortality....

Satan, or Lucifer, represents the active... "Centrifugal Energy of the Universe" in a cosmic sense.... Fitly is he... and his adherents... consigned to the "sea of fire," because it is the Sun... the fount of life in our system, where they are purified... and churned up to re-arrange them for another life; that Sun which, as the origin of the active principle of our Earth, is at once the Home and the Source of the Mundane Satan....¹⁹

In *Morals and Dogma*, Albert Pike, an avowed Luciferian, wrote:

To prevent the light from escaping at once, the De-

18. Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, Volume I, page 414.

19. Blavatsky, *ibid.*, Volume II, pages 234, 235, 243, 245.

mons forbade Adam to eat the fruit of “knowledge of good and evil,” by which he would have known the Empire of Light and that of Darkness. He obeyed; an Angel of Light induced him to transgress, and gave him the means of victory; but the Demons created Eve, who seduced him into an act of Sensualism, that enfeebled him, and bound him anew in the bonds of matter....

To deliver the soul, captive in darkness, the Principle of Light, or Genius of the Sun, charged to redeem the Intellectual World... came to manifest Himself among men.... It but put on the *appearance* of a human body, and took the name of Christ in the Messiah, only to accommodate itself to the language of the Jews. The Light did its work, turning the Jews from the adoration of the Evil Principle, and the Pagans from the worship of Demons. But the Chief of the Empire of Darkness caused Him to be crucified by the Jews (emphasis in original).²⁰

According to Pike, it was the *demons*, not God, that barred Adam from the Tree of Knowledge, thereby perpetuating his spiritual ignorance (compare to Genesis 2:15-17). However, an “Angel of Light” persuaded him to rebel against the “demonic” command (compare to Genesis 3:1-4), and, as a result, Adam was “enlightened” and initiated into the “true religion,” which, of course, is supposedly that of Freemasonry. This “Angel of Light” later assumed the appearance of a man (compare to John 1:1, 14) in order to act as redeemer of mankind, turning the world from its worship of the Edenic “demons.” Elsewhere in the same volume, Pike wrote, “Lucifer, the light-bearer! Strange and mysterious name to give to the spirit of darkness! Lucifer, Son of the Morning! Is it *he* who

20. Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, page 567.

bears the Light, and with its splendors intolerable, blinds feeble, sensual or selfish souls? Doubt it not!" (emphasis in original).²¹ According to the Apostle Paul, this angel is none other than Satan himself.

Consistent with this occult reversal of God and Satan, and the accompanying belief that Adam's "fall" was actually an initiation into the "mysteries," it is interesting to find the same doctrine in Mormon theology. Brigham Young stated, "The devil told the truth.... I do not blame Mother Eve. I would not have her miss eating the forbidden fruit for anything in the world...."²² Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth LDS president, went even further: "The fall of man came as a blessing in disguise.... I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin. We can hardly speak of anything resulting in such benefits as being a sin...."²³ More recently, Sterling W. Sill commented, "Adam fell, but he fell in the right direction... toward the goal.... He fell upward."²⁴ Directly contradicting Romans 5:12-20, Adam's fall in Mormonism is seen as a "blessing in disguise" because "the devil told the truth" in the Garden of Eden. Mormons have accepted the same lie that is the foundation of all pagan religions — that man may attain godhood through initiation into the "mysteries." More will be discussed on this subject later.

We can also find traces of this occult reversal in Joseph Smith's purported translation of the Bible. For example, in his

21. Pike, *ibid.*, page 321.

22. Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, June 18, 1873, page 308.

23. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1954), Volume I, pages 113-115.

24. Sterling W. Still, *Deseret News*, July 31, 1965, page 7.

version of Matthew 4:1, we read, "Then Jesus was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness, to be with God." Compare this with what Matthew 4:1 really says: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Much the same confusion exists in Matthew 4:5, in which it is the Holy Spirit, not the devil, who sets Christ on the pinnacle of the temple, as well as verse 8 of the same chapter, in which it is again the Spirit, not Satan, who takes Him onto a high mountain and shows Him the kingdoms of the world (see also Luke 4:5 and 4:9 in the *Inspired Version*).

Furthermore, in light of the occult belief that Satan, the ancient god of the pagan sun-worshippers, dwells in a "sea of fire," as taught by Blavatsky, it is interesting to note that Joseph Smith taught that the Mormon god also dwells in "everlasting burnings," as will all faithful Mormon males who eventually ascend into the Celestial Kingdom.²⁵ In the Temple Endowment ceremony, which is believed to be a necessary stepping stone for exaltation, patrons are instructed at one point to don embroidered fig-leaf aprons which are earlier associated with the "power and priesthood" of Lucifer.²⁶ Furthermore, when later offering a prayer to God, Adam is answered by Lucifer, who then identifies himself as "the god of this world."²⁷ In the henotheism of Mormonism, there are an infinite number of "Holy Personages," and yet LDS worship is reserved for "Elohim," the "god of this world," whom both 2

25. Joseph Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume VI, page 4; see also Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, pages 346-347.

26. Charles Sackett, *What's Going On in There?* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sword of the Shepherd Ministries, Inc., 1982), page 28.

27. Sackett, *ibid.*, page 33.

Corinthians 4:4 and the Endowment ceremony identify as the devil. This corresponds to Brigham Young's statement that the God of Christendom is the Mormon devil.²⁸ The following words of Joseph Smith are a fitting conclusion to this discussion: "Hell is by no means the place this world of fools suppose it to be, but on the contrary, it is quite an agreeable place...."²⁹

Mormon Astrology, Necromancy, and Magic

The ancient worship of the heavenly bodies eventually evolved into the occult science of astrology and the belief that the sun, moon, and stars influenced earthly events and human personality. This is the Hermetic doctrine of "as above, so below." There is strong evidence to suggest that the Tower of Babel was built specifically for astrological purposes, in that it provided the necessary elevation above the dusty atmosphere of the Babylonian desert to permit a clear view of the stars and to thus enable the builders to chart their progress across the heavens. Occult expert Richard Cavendish wrote, "Astrological considerations have always been extremely important in magic. Magicians link the planets with the great forces which move the universe, as in the *Cabala*, because the ancients identified the planets with the gods. To control the planetary influences is to control the driving impulses beneath the surface of things."³⁰

It has been documented that the Smith family was heavily involved in witchcraft and necromancy, and that they

28. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume V, page 331.

29. Joseph Smith, quoted in *Nauvoo Expositor*, June 7, 1844.

30. Richard Cavendish, *Black Arts*, page 222.

possessed numerous occult parchments and talismans.³¹ One of these was the magical “Jupiter talisman” which was discovered on Joseph’s body after he fell to his death from the second story of the Carthage jailhouse.³² This medallion indicated a belief in the occult art of astrology, since Jupiter was the “ruling planet” of his birthdate. Several of the magical parchments, amulets, and other paraphernalia owned by the Smith family, which are still in the possession of the LDS church today, were also replete with astrological symbolism.³³ According to Brigham Young, Joseph Smith had even made an attempt, probably during the Nauvoo period, to establish astrology as an official institution of the Mormon church.³⁴

31. Reed C. Durham, *No Help For the Widow's Son* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Martin Publishing Company, 1980); *Mormon Miscellaneous*, October 1975; D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1989). Dr. Durham delivered this information before the Mormon History Association on April 20, 1974. For this he was severely criticized by other Mormon scholars and officials for his frankness and was even confronted by then-president Spencer W. Kimball himself. As a result of the negative response to his research, Dr. Durham felt it necessary to write an immediate letter to the General Authorities, reaffirming his faith in Joseph Smith as a prophet of God and the Mormon church as the only true church. D. Michael Quinn, on the other hand, was not so fortunate. As a result of the publication of his book, he lost his job as Professor of History at Brigham Young University, and eventually was excommunicated. Obviously, this is one important aspect of their prophet’s life that the LDS hierarchy does not want either the members of their church or the general public to know.

32. Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, pages 66-72.

33. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism, Magic, and Masonry* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1983), page 11.

34. Brigham Young, *Young's Office Journal*, 30 December 1861; see also Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, page 58.

Necromancy, or communication with the dead, has also played an important role in Mormon history, beginning with Smith's earliest "visions." Mormon leaders have traditionally taught that he was actually a spirit medium. For example, in an 1853 sermon, LDS elder Parley P. Pratt revealed that Mormonism is founded entirely on the practice of necromancy, and that the spiritualist movement of the Nineteenth Century, which had begun only five years earlier, actually aided the cause of the LDS church:

Who communicated with our great Prophet, and revealed through him as a medium, the ancient history of a hemisphere, and the records of the ancient dead? Moroni, who had lived upon the earth 1400 years before....

Who revealed to him the plan of redemption, and of exaltation for the dead who had died without the Gospel and the keys and preparations necessary for holy and perpetual converse with Jesus Christ, and with the spirits of just men made perfect?... Those from the dead!...

Shall we, then, deny the principle, the philosophy, the fact of communication between worlds? No! verily no!

Editors, statesmen, philosophers, priests, and lawyers, as well as the common people, began to advocate the principle of converse with the dead, by visions, divination, clairvoyance, knocking, and writing mediums, etc., etc. This spiritual philosophy of converse with the dead, once established by the labors, toils, sufferings, and martyrdom of its modern founders, and now embraced by a large portion of the learned world, show a triumph more rapid and complete — a victory more extensive, than has ever been achieved in the same length of time in our world.

An important point is gained, a victory won, and a countless host of opposing powers vanquished, on one of the leading or fundamental truths of "Mormon" philos-

ophy, viz. — “that the living may hear from the dead.”³⁵

According to Ezra Taft Benson, the spirit world “is very close,” and the veil between it and the physical realm “can be very thin.”³⁶ Other LDS sources indicate that spirits often make contact with the living to give counsel, offer comfort, obtain or give information, or to prepare men for death.³⁷ Others appear to faithful Mormons to testify that they have converted to Mormonism “on the other side,” and to request baptism by proxy so they can advance to godhood. Mormonism also places great emphasis on baptism for the dead, and spiritual visitations are said to be commonplace in their temples: “The living are thus authorized, under prescribed conditions, to act for the dead, and the fathers and spirit world look to the children in the flesh to perform for them the works which they were unable to attend to while in the body.... This glorious doctrine... regulates the communion of the living with the dead.... The temple where the ordinances can be administered for the dead, is the place to hear from the dead.”³⁸

Other evidence of the occult foundation of the Mormon church is the involvement of its early leaders in crystal-gazing,³⁹

35. Parley P. Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume II, pages 44-46.

36. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1988), page 31.

37. Duane S. Crowther, *Life Everlasting* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1988), page 151.

38. Charles W. Penrose, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Juvenile Instructor's Office, 1888), pages 40-41; see also Wilford Woodruff, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume XIX, page 229.

39. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (self-published, 1887), page 12; William D. Purple, “Reminiscences” (1877), in Dan Vogel,

astral projection,⁴⁰ automatic writing,⁴¹ the usage of divining rods,⁴² and ritual magic.⁴³ Ironically, Bruce R. McConkie admitted that necromancy is practiced by “apostate people,” and is therefore “an abomination.”⁴⁴ A recently published doctrinal manual of the LDS church likewise stated, “Mediums, astrologers, fortune tellers, and sorcerers are inspired by Satan even if they claim to follow God. Their works are abominable to the Lord.... We should avoid all associations with the powers of Satan.”⁴⁵

Demonic Activity and “Burning Bosoms”

The records of early Mormonism are replete with accounts of activity from the spirit world. According to John Whitmer, who was the official Church Historian in Joseph Smith’s time, some converts to the new religion would “act like an Indian in the act of scalping,” or would “slide or scoot on the floor with the rapidity of a serpent....”⁴⁶ During the ordina-

editor, *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), Volume IV, page 135.

40. Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume IV, pages 135-136.

41. Solomon F. Kimball, *Improvement Era*, October 1929, pages 583-585.

42. *Doctrine and Covenants* 8:8; Isaac Butts, affidavit in Arthur C. Deming, *Naked Truths of Mormonism* (Oakland, California: Deming and Company, 1888), page 2.

43. Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, pages 53-77.

44. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, page 526.

45. *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Corporation of the President, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988), page 142.

46. John Whitmer, *John Whitmer’s History* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Modern Microfilm Company, n.d.), Chapter Six.

tion ceremony of Harvey Whitlock as a high priest in 1831, he was seen to have “turned as black as Lyman was white,” his fingers “were set like claws,” and, unable to speak, he went about the room with eyes “as the shape of oval Os....”⁴⁷ On another occasion, one man, who weighed over 200 pounds, was thrown through the air by an unseen force, and another “began screaming like a panther....”⁴⁸

Temple dedications were often the scenes of such mysterious occurrences. Joseph Smith wrote of “many strange visions” that were seen when the first temple was dedicated at Kirkland, Ohio on March 27, 1836. It was noted that men would run about “under the influence,” while others would “speak in a muttering, unnatural voice and their bodies [would] be distorted....”⁴⁹ Mormon writer Joseph Hiernerman likewise described such things as personages of light, auras of light around some of the speakers, strange music, and other manifestations during the dedication of the Mormon temple in Manti, Utah.⁵⁰

So frequent were these supernatural occurrences that Heber C. Kimball suggested the following as a means of protection against harrassment by evil spirits:

Now I will tell you, I have about a hundred shots

47. Max H. Parkin, *Conflict at Kirtland: A Study of the Nature and Causes of External and Internal Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio Between 1830 and 1838* (Salt Lake City: Max Parkin, 1966), pages 79-80.

48. Parkin, *ibid.*

49. Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, April 1, 1842, page 747.

50. Joseph Heinerman, *Spirit World Manifestations: Accounts of Divine Aid in Genealogical and Temple Work and Other Assistance to Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Joseph Lyon and Associates, 1986), pages 94-97.

on hand all the time — three or four fifteen-shooters, and three or four revolvers, right in the room where I sleep; and the Devil does not like to sleep there, for he is afraid they will go off half-cocked.

If you will lay a bowie knife or a loaded revolver under your pillow every night, you will not have many unpleasant dreams, nor be troubled with the nightmare, for there is nothing that the Devil is so afraid of as a weapon of death.⁵¹

Not all of the spirit manifestations in early Mormonism, however, were seen as works of the devil. Just as in Masonic lore, Mormon literature is filled with references to “angels of light.” The foremost of these is Moroni, the golden figure which may be seen atop every Mormon temple today. The visitation of Moroni to Joseph Smith on September 21-22, 1823 bears undeniable similarities to magical incantations and conjuring of spirits in the occult arts.

In astrology, certain days correspond to the ruling planet of the occult practitioner: Sunday is ruled by the sun, Monday by the moon, Tuesday by Mars, Wednesday by Mercury, Thursday by Jupiter, Friday by Venus, and Saturday by Saturn. Furthermore, the successive hours of both day and night are also ruled by the various planets according to the following: The ruling planet of the particular day would also rule the first hour after sunrise, each hour thereafter being ruled by every other planet in a reversal of the above sequence. The first hour after sunset is ruled by the planet which is fifth in order from the ruling planet of the day. For example, a magician whose ruling planet is Jupiter would begin to cast a spell

51. Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume V, page 184.

or conjure up a spirit sometime between Sunday night, beginning one hour after sunset, and Monday morning, two hours after sunrise. A full moon is also believed to increase the effectiveness of the incantation, which is to be repeated three times.⁵²

It is therefore no coincidence that Joseph Smith, whose ruling planet was Jupiter, chose Sunday, September 21, 1823 — the autumn equinox when the moon had reached its maximum fullness — to contact the spirit of Moroni. Martin Harris noted that Smith had spent the earlier part of the evening in an unsuccessful dig for buried treasure near his home.⁵³ According to Oliver Cowdery, Smith began praying about eleven or twelve “to commune with some kind of messenger.”⁵⁴ So precise was he in following the instructions for conjuration, that he “had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation....”⁵⁵ His ritual was indeed successful. The “angel” Moroni appeared to him three times during the night and told him the location of the golden plates on which the *Book of Mormon* text was allegedly inscribed, giving him instructions regarding their retrieval, and a fourth time early the next morning to repeat his message.⁵⁶

Smith’s description of Moroni was as follows:

52. Cavendish, *Black Arts*, pages 222-224.

53. John A. Clark, *Gleanings By the Way* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: W.J. and J.K. Simon, 1842), page 225.

54. Oliver Cowdery, letter to W.W. Phelps; *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, February 1835, page 79.

55. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1964), Volume I, page 11.

56. Smith, *ibid.*, pages 11-14.

...I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor. He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen.... Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person.⁵⁷

This description is nearly identical to those given by New Agers and other occultists of similar encounters with spiritual entities.⁵⁸ Whether Smith really did experience the mani-

57. Smith, *ibid.*, page 11.

58. Will Baron, a former devotee of the writings of New Age occultist Alice A. Bailey, described a vision of the "Ascended Master" Djwhal Khul in his book, *Deceived by the New Age*:

Suddenly, a physical force that I had never felt before seemed to come upon me. Brilliant light filled my whole being, as if my whole body had become an incandescent lamp. I felt and perceived this sphere of light to be encompassing me and permeating every cell of my body. My brain, especially, was flooded with light, as if a thousand-watt bulb had been switched on inside of my head....

Suddenly, a man radiating intense golden-white light stood before me. My first perception was that the mysterious, shining figure looked just like Jesus Christ.

Immediately a strong intuitive thought, or "knowingness," surfaced that told me this person was Djwhal Khul, the high-ranking member of the White Brotherhood of Masters. He was the master who had dictated to Alice Bailey the contents of the metaphysical books she had published under her own name.

He appeared to be surrounded by so much brilliance that I could not make out any background scenery. All I could see was his

festation of such an entity is open to question. However, that it could not have been an angel of God is evident from the fact that the visitation was the result of an attempt to conjure up the dead according to occult formulae. This practice is forbidden in Scripture (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Isaiah 8:19).

It is also interesting to note that this entity was originally identified in the earliest accounts of the visitation as "Nephi."⁵⁹ This name and its derivatives have played an important role in the occult arts. For instance, "Nephiomaoth" was one of the magical names of God used by the "Christian" Gnostics of the First Century.⁶⁰ According to the Jewish *Kabbalah* and other occult texts, "Nephes," "Neph," or "Nephum" was used to signify "that which is called out by *Magicians* and *Necromancers*" (emphasis in original).⁶¹ "Moroni" itself also was associated with the occult.⁶²

It is this spirit who, via the *Book of Mormon*, has

kingly form surrounded by light as he stood motionless before me.

I noticed his curly golden hair resting upon his shoulders. He wore a long white robe. His arms hung at his side, and his feet were hidden by the light that enshrouded his entire being. Even though I had difficulty distinguishing his facial features because of the intensity of light that seemed to emanate more strongly from his face, he looked very handsome and dignified ([Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1980], pages 62-63).

59. *Times and Seasons*, 15 April 1842, page 753; Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors For Many Generations* (London: S.W. Richards, 1853), page 79.

60. G.R. Mead (translator), *Pistis Sophia: A Gnostic Gospel* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896), page 378.

61. John Beaumont, *An Historical, Physiological, and Theological Treatise of Spirits* (London: D. Brown, 1705), page 90.

62. Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, pages 131-132.

instructed millions of Mormons and prospective converts to the LDS church to do the following: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye should ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”⁶³ This “manifestation” of the “power of the Holy Ghost” is further described in *Doctrine and Covenants*: “...[B]ehold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it be right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong...”⁶⁴

Mormons rely upon this promised “burning of the bosom” experience as a testimony of the truthfulness of their church and its prophet. However, the folly of obeying the instructions of an entity, that, if indeed real, was actually a demonic spirit conjured up by a modern sorcerer should go without saying.

63. *Book of Mormon*, Moroni 10:4-5. Two important questions must be asked regarding this passage of Mormon scripture. First, does not the fact that Mormons follow the instructions given in the *Book of Mormon* logically presuppose that they have already accepted it as being true *prior* to praying? Also, the wording of Moroni 10:4 is interesting: “[A]sk God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true...” If Moroni’s words are to be taken literally, would not a subsequent “testimony” indicate that the *Book of Mormon* is “not true”?

64. *Doctrine and Covenants* 9:8.

Early Mormonism's Acceptance of Evolution

In light of the preceding information, it is obvious that the philosophical and theological foundations of Mormonism are far removed from the biblical worldview of a personal Creator-God who is transcendent and therefore separate from His creation. Instead, Joseph Smith and the other LDS leaders of the early 1830s were heavily influenced by the very same philosophies which have undergirded the pagan religions throughout human history.

The doctrine which we will now examine is the Mormon belief that matter, or "element," is eternal and therefore uncreated. According to Smith, "Element had an existence from the time [God] had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end...."⁶⁵ Citing what he referred to as the "Eternal Duration of Matter,"⁶⁶ Smith insisted that "no part or particle of the great universe could become annihilated or destroyed."⁶⁷ On this subject, Parly P. Pratt wrote:

First. There has always existed a boundless infinitude of space.

Second. Intermingled with this space there exists all the varieties of the elements, properties, or things of which intelligence takes cognizance; which elements or things taken altogether compose what is called the Uni-

65. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 351.

66. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Volume IV, page 182.

67. Joseph Smith, quoted by Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1968), page 146.

verse.

Third. The elements of all these properties or things are eternal, uncreated, self-existing. Not one particle can be added to them by creative power. Neither can one particle be diminished or annihilated.⁶⁸

Charles W. Penrose agreed: "...[T]he elements... never had a beginning — the primal particles never had a beginning. They have been organized in different shapes; the organism had a beginning, but the elements... of which it is composed never had."⁶⁹

According to second LDS prophet Brigham Young, matter "can be organized and brought forth into intelligence, and to possess more intelligence, and to continue to increase in that intelligence."⁷⁰ As we have seen, such a concept is strikingly similar to the worldview found in various forms of the occult, specifically Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Kabbalism, Hinduism, etc. The belief that the universe is eternal and its components are constantly progressing to higher levels of existence is also very much in line with the theory of evolution that is propagated in the public schools today.

Of course, since modern Mormonism attempts to portray itself as just another Christian denomination, it has become customary for LDS apologists to downplay the blatantly occultic teachings of their early leaders and to attempt to rid their religion of any connection with evolutionary concepts. Hence, since the mid-Twentieth Century, Mormon literature has been increasingly devoted to attacking Darwinian evolu-

68. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to Theology*, page 43.

69. Charles W. Penrose, *Journal of Discourses*, Volume XXVI, page 27.

70. Brigham Young, *ibid.*, Volume VII, pages 2-3.

tion and contrasting it with “latter-day revelation”:

I say most emphatically, you cannot believe in this theory of the origin of man, and at the same time accept the plan of salvation as set forth by the Lord our God. You must choose the one and reject the other, for they are in direct conflict and there is a gulf separating them which is so great that it cannot be bridged, no matter how much one may try to do so.

If you believe in the doctrine of the evolutionist, then you must accept the view that man has evolved through countless ages from the very lowest forms of life up through various stages of animal life, finally into the human form.⁷¹

What Joseph Fielding Smith condemned above is exactly what early LDS leaders such as Orson Pratt taught. Some Mormon writers have admitted that Joseph Smith “did not accept the dogma of Creationism...”⁷² For Smith, there could not have been a single beginning of all things, because his doctrine of eternal progression rested upon the assumption that limitless generations of gods had evolved from mortal men in a limitless number of universes previous to ours.

The Biblical Doctrine of Creation

In keeping with Joseph Smith’s teachings, modern Mormonism has continued to deny that God created the universe *ex nihilo*, or “out of nothing”:

71. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1954), Volume I, pages 141-142.

72. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe*, page 300.

To create is to organize. It is an utterly false and uninspired notion to believe that the world or any other thing was created out of nothing or that any created thing can be destroyed in the sense of annihilation.⁷³

We should emphasize that the word “created” which some men have interpreted as “being made from nothing” really comes from a Hebrew word which means “to organize.” In other words, the Lord’s power of creation is really his organizing power. Even with God there is no such thing as making something from nothing.⁷⁴

Solomon was quite correct when he wrote, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). As is the case with all heresies, Mormonism’s cosmology should be quite familiar to those studied in Church history. In the early years of the Third Century, Tertullian’s treatise entitled *Against Hermogenes* was devoted to refuting the teaching that God organized the universe out of pre-existent and eternal substance known as “Matter.” Tertullian drew this teaching out to its logical conclusion by noting that if God required matter to create, then God is to that extent subservient to matter: “For if He drew His resources from it for the creation of the world, Matter is already found to be the superior, inasmuch as it furnished Him with the means of effecting His works; and God is thereby clearly subjected to Matter, of which the substance was indispensable to Him.... On this principle, Matter itself, no doubt, was not in want of God, but rather lent itself to God, who was in want of it... [God was] one who was, I suppose,

73. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, page 169.

74. W. Cleon Skousen, *The First 2000 Years* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1953), page 19.

too small, and too weak, and too unskilful, to form what He willed out of nothing."⁷⁵

Contrary to the claims of Mormonism, the Christian Church has historically insisted that God created *ex nihilo*. Time, space, and matter are only viewed as eternal inasmuch as they existed as ideas within the mind of God; otherwise, they had a definite beginning (Isaiah 41:4 64:4; Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 1:2; 2 Peter 3:4). This concept of creation *ex nihilo* is primarily drawn from Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Charles Hodge commented on this important verse:

The proof of the doctrine of a creation *ex nihilo*... is plain from the fact that no mention is ever made of any preexisting substance out of which the world was made. The original creation is never represented as a moulding of matter into form and inbuing it with life. Nor do the Scriptures ever represent the world as an emanation from God, proceeding from Him by a necessity of His nature. Much less does the Bible ever identify God and the world. In thus ignoring all other doctrines, the Scriptures leave us under the necessity of believing that God created the world out of nothing.⁷⁶

Of particular interest to our discussion is the Hebrew word **בָּרָא** (*bara*), which is translated "created." In the con-

75. Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes*, Chapter VIII; in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (editors), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), Volume III, page 481.

76. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), Volume I, pages 558-559.

text of Genesis 1:1, this word is to be distinguished in meaning from **יָצַר** (*yatsar*), which is used to describe the formation of man's body from the already existing materials of the earth (Genesis 2:7), **חָוַל** (*chuwl*), which refers to the structuring of the formless earth of Genesis 1:2 (cf. Psalm 90:2), and **עָשָׂה** (*asah*), which carries the same essential meaning as **חָוַל** (Genesis 2:3). Though **בָּרָא** may at times carry the meaning of the forming of already existing materials, as in the case of the creation of mankind (Genesis 1:27, 5:1; Deuteronomy 4:32; Isaiah 45:12), it should be noted that in each of these cases, the verb is coupled with an accusative noun. In other words, the Scripture clearly mentions the material which is being acted upon. In Genesis 1:1, the absence of an accusative noun is significant to show that there was, in fact, no substance involved in the initial creation of "the heavens and the earth."

The Agency of the Word in Creation

The very wording of the first chapter of Genesis itself rules out the possibility that God merely "organized" pre-existing and eternal matter. For instance, in verse three we read, "Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light." This is reiterated in 2 Corinthians 4:6, where we are told that "God... commanded light to shine out of darkness...." In other words, God spoke of light where there was no light, and thus brought it into existence. Light was not derived from a pre-existing substance called "darkness," for the darkness that was in the beginning was the absolute absence of light and was therefore nothing.

Therefore, the origin of all things was the divine Word, or *fiat*, of the eternal God. Though it is certainly beyond the

capacity of our limited minds to comprehend, the relationship of the Father and Son is described in terms of the thinker and his thought, and the speaker and his words. Tertullian wrote:

For before all things God was alone — being in Himself and for Himself universe, and space, and all things. Moreover, He was alone; for He had with Him that which He possessed in Himself, that is to say, His own Reason. For God is rational, and Reason was first in Him; and so all things were from Himself. This Reason is His own Thought (or Consciousness) which the Greeks call *logos*, by which term we also designate Word or Discourse....

For although God had not yet sent out His Word, He still had Him within Himself, both in company with and included within His very Reason, as He silently planned and arranged within Himself everything which He was afterwards about to utter through His Word....

I may therefore without rashness first lay this down (as a fixed principle) that even then before the creation of the universe God was not alone, since He had within Himself both Reason, and, inherent in Reason, His Word, which He made second to Himself by agitating it within Himself....⁷⁷

Then, therefore, does the Word also Himself assume His own form and glorious garb, His own sound and vocal utterance, when God says, "Let there be light." This is the perfect nativity of the Word, when He proceeds forth from God — formed by Him first to devise and think out all things under the name of Wisdom... then afterward

77. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, Chapter V; in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume III, page 600.

begotten, to carry all into effect... Thus does He make Him equal to Him: for by proceeding from Himself He became His first-begotten Son, because begotten before all things; and His only-begotten also, because alone begotten of God, in a way peculiar to Himself, from the womb of His own heart — even as the Father Himself testifies: “My heart,” says He, “hath emitted my most excellent Word.”⁷⁸

It is apparently in this sense of “speaking” forth His “Reason” or “Wisdom” in the form of the Word that the Son was “eternally begotten” of the Father, who is the “fountain of the Godhead.”⁷⁹ In the preamble of John’s Gospel, the Son of God is designated as “the Word” who was “in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2), and through whom “all things were made” (verse 3). Thus, to quote Tertullian once again, “[T]he Father acts by mind and thought whilst the Son, who is in the Father’s mind and thought, gives effect and form to what He sees.”⁸⁰ We see this concept taught in the book of Hebrews: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3). The Greek word *φαινόμενων* (*phainomenon*), translated as “things which are visible,” is a present adjectival participle, which carries the characteristics of both a verb and a noun.⁸¹ From this word, we have our English word “phenomenon.” In essence, what the writer of Hebrews was attempting to convey is that what can

78. Tertullian, *ibid.*, Chapter VI, page 601.

79. Tertullian, *ibid.*, Chapter XXIX, page 625.

80. Tertullian, *ibid.*, Chapter XV, page 610.

81. Ray Summers, *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1960), page 90.

be seen was not made of anything that had the potential to appear of itself, either to us or to God. Another clear passage in this regard is Romans 4:17, which states that God "calls those things which do not exist as though they did." In other words, the universe was made out of nothing.

That **בְּרֵאשִׁית**, as it appears in Genesis 1:1, must refer to creation *ex nihilo* is also plain from the fact that such act of creation left the earth "without form, and void" (Genesis 1:2). It would be absurd to suggest that God's re-organization of pre-existing materials merely resulted in additional chaos, for He "did not create [the world] in vain... [but] formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18). Thus, we are drawn to the conclusion that there were two stages involved in the creation: first, God created the substance of matter, or "primeval dust of the world" (Proverbs 8:26), out of nothing through the instrumentality of His Word, and second, He organized this created matter into the present world (*cosmos*). Regarding a possible objection to this doctrine, Reformed theologian Robert Lewis Dabney wrote, "It is objected that a creation out of nothing is a contradiction, because it makes nothing a material to act on, and thus, an existence. We reply that this is a mere play upon the meaning of the preposition; We do not mean that 'nothing' is a material out of which existences are fashioned; but the term from which an existence absolutely begins. God created a world where nothing was before."⁸²

The Historical Testimony of the Fathers

Consistent with the claim that the Mormon religion is

82. Robert Lewis Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), page 248.

“restored Christianity,” LDS apologists have repeatedly attempted to find support for their doctrines in the writings of the early Church fathers. However, although they may find scattered and obscure references in these early writings to such things as “deification,”⁸³ they are very hard-pressed indeed to locate any endorsement of the postulation that matter is eternal. For example, in the Second Century, Irenaeus was very clear in denouncing as “infidelity” the denial that “God... formed all things... out of what did not previously exist” and that “God... created matter itself.”⁸⁴ He went on to write, “While men, indeed, cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of matter already existing, yet God is in this point pre-eminently superior to men, that He Himself called into being the substance of His creation, when previously it had no existence.”⁸⁵

Tertullian, writing in the late Second and early Third Centuries, was even more clear:

The object of our worship is the One God, He who by His commanding word, His arranging wisdom, His mighty power, brought forth from nothing this entire mass of our world, with all its array of elements, bodies, spirits, for the glory of His majesty; whence also the Greeks have bestowed on it the name of Kosmos.⁸⁶

83. Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, article: “Comparing LDS Beliefs With First-Century Christianity,” *The Ensign*, March 1988, page 8.

84. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book II, Chapter X:2-3; in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume I, page 370.

85. Irenaeus, *ibid.*, Book II, Chapter X:4.

86. Tertullian, *Apology*, Chapter XVII; in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume III, page 31.

This authority of Scripture I claim for myself even from this circumstance, that whilst it shows me the God who created, and the works He created, it does not in like manner reveal to me the source from which He created. For since in every operation there are three principal things, He who makes, and that which is made, and that of which it is made, there must be three names mentioned in a correct narrative of the operation — the person of the maker, the sort of thing which is made, and the material of which it is formed. If the material is not mentioned, while the work and the maker of the work are both mentioned, it is manifest that He made the work out of nothing. For if He had had anything to operate upon, it would have been mentioned as well as the other two particulars.... What, therefore, did not exist, the Scripture was unable to mention; and by not mentioning it, it has given us a clear proof that there was no such thing: for if there had been, the Scripture would have mentioned it.⁸⁷

In the early part of the Third Century, Hippolytus, who is believed to have been a disciple of Ireneaus, wrote, "The first and only (one God), both Creator and Lord of all, had nothing coeval with Himself, not infinite chaos, nor measureless water, nor solid earth, nor dense air, nor warm fire, nor refined spirit, nor the azure canopy of the stupendous firmament. But He was One, alone in Himself. By an exercise of His will He created things that are, which antecedently had no existence, except that He willed to make them."⁸⁸ In the Fifth Century, Augus-

87. Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes*, Chapter XX; in Roberts and Donaldson, *ibid.*, page 489.

88. Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Book X, Chapter XXVIII; in Roberts and Donaldson, *ibid.*, Volume V, page 150.

tine of Hippo championed the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* as well: "...God made all things which he did not beget of himself, not of those things that already existed, but of those things that did not exist at all, that is, of nothing.... For there was not anything of which he could make them."⁸⁹

The Philosophical Problems of an Eternal Universe

Not only is the Mormon doctrine of the "Eternal Duration of Matter" untenable from a scriptural standpoint and without historical support, but it fails to stand up to philosophical scrutiny as well. Christian doctrine declares that God alone is self-existent and eternal; as the "unmoved Mover," He is necessary in His existence and therefore incapable of change (Malachi 3:6), whereas the creation is contingent and in a constant state of flux.

Change, or motion from one state of being to another, involves the passage of time. Now, time is a finite measurement and can have no meaning in the context of infinity. For example, there can be no measurement of time known as a day contained within the definition of eternity, for no amount of finite days may ever equal eternity. The finite and the infinite are as incompatible as night and day. Each successive day is dependent, or contingent, upon the passage of the preceding day. Therefore, each day is not self-existent for it draws its existence from the one preceding it. Merely extending the series back *ad infinitum* does not solve the dilemma of the necessary

89. Augustine, *Concerning the Nature of Good*, Chapter XXVI; in Philip Schaff (editor), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1987), Volume IV, page 356.

relation of the contingent to the cause. As Robert Lewis Dabney noted, “[A] series composed only of contingent parts must be, as a whole contingent. But the contingent cannot be eternal, because it is not self-existent.”⁹⁰

It is apparent that Mormon apologists, much like advocates of the atheistic notion of an eternal universe, have not given careful thought to the problems that arise from their founder’s ideas of “Eternal Duration.” For example, in his book, *Mormon Doctrine*, Bruce R. McConkie applied this concept to what is known in Mormonism as “eternal progression”: “Endowed with agency and subject to eternal laws, man began his progression and advancement in pre-existence, his ultimate goal being to attain a state of glory, honor, and exaltation like the Father of spirits.... This gradually unfolding course of advancement and experience — a course that began in a past eternity and will continue in ages future — is frequently referred to as a course of *eternal progression*” (emphasis in original).⁹¹ McConkie’s talk of a “process that began in past eternity and will continue in ages future” is entirely nonsensical. Simply put, the fact that said process “began” shows that it is *temporal*, not eternal. McConkie further confused the matter by defining “endless time” as “eternal, unending duration of time”⁹² on the one hand, and then by defining “eternal” as “the opposite of that which pertains to *time*....” (emphasis in original)⁹³ on the other, and by even defining “eternity” as the antithesis of the

90. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, page 20.

91. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pages 238-239.

92. McConkie, *ibid.*, page 225.

93. McConkie, *ibid.*, page 233.

“realm of time.”⁹⁴

Such confusion is the necessary product of a false belief system that attempts to place matter on the same footing as God. The Mormon simply cannot develop a coherent cosmology from such a faulty basis. The following lengthy quotation from J. P. Moreland’s book, *Scaling the Secular City*, may be helpful in further illustrating this point:

Suppose a person were to think backward through the events in the past. In reality, time and the events within it move the other direction. But mentally he can reverse that movement and count backward farther and farther into the past. Now he will either come to a beginning or he will not. If he comes to a beginning, then the universe obviously had a beginning. But if he never could, even in principle, reach a first moment, then this means that it would be impossible to start with the present and run backward through all of the events in the history of the cosmos. Remember, if he did run through all of them, he would reach a first member of the series, and the finiteness of the past would be established. In order to avoid this conclusion, one must hold that, starting from the present, it is *impossible* to go backward through all of the events in history.

But since events really move in the other direction, this is equivalent to admitting that if there was no beginning, the past could have never been exhaustively traversed to reach the present moment (emphasis in original).⁹⁵

94. McConkie, *ibid.*, page 239.

95. J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), page 29.

Time involves, and in fact *relies* upon, the passage of its units from future to past, but such terms as these are meaningless when speaking of eternity, which contains no future and no past. The very fact that time passes is a clear indication that its cause is outside of itself. The belief that "eternity is a long time"⁹⁶ is therefore an oxymoron (a contradiction in terms), as is "eternal progression." This is borne out by the Scripture itself when it speaks of "the beginning, before there was ever an earth" (Proverbs 8:23), and is perhaps what is meant when we are told that God "divided the light [day] from the darkness [night]" (Genesis 1:4-5), and later created "lights in the firmament of the heavens" to provide for "signs and seasons, and for days and years" (verse 14).

Can it be said that time was indeed created, but that matter is eternal? Not at all. Mormons believe that matter has eternally existed in a series of organizations and reorganizations. According to McConkie, "An infinite number of worlds have come rolling into existence at [God's] command."⁹⁷ However, this process implies motion, and, as stated above, motion cannot exist independent from the passage of time.

Finally, the very existence of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* presents an insurmountable problem for the proponents of an eternal universe. Since a true infinity can contain no contingents, how can the existence of such an allegedly false doctrine be explained? If one declares that it originated in the mind of man, then an element of contingency has been introduced

96. M. Lynn Bennion and J. A. Washburn, *Principles of the Restored Church at Work* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Deseret Sunday School Union, 1954), page 3.

97. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, page 169.

into that which is claimed to be eternal, thereby destroying the claim to eternity. However, the idea that such a doctrine has itself existed eternally is likewise problematic. Can falsehood be said to be eternal, being as it is a perversion, and therefore a derivative or contingent, of truth? Such questions as these simply cannot be answered within the scope of Mormonism or any other non-Christian belief system which denies the biblical account of creation.

Scripture Discounts the Doctrine of Pantheism

We have also seen that Mormonism has historically embraced what is known philosophically as *monism* (that all things are but manifestations of one reality or Being), and more specifically, *pantheism* (that "God is all and all is God"). Granted, most Mormons today would object vehemently to being labeled as pantheists. However, that this is precisely what Orson Pratt had in mind when he deified "Truth" and insisted that all things partake of it is an indisputable fact. Joseph Smith taught the same thing, though he used the term "intelligence" in place of Pratt's "Truth" to describe that which even God is made of. In other words, "God came from the universe; the universe did not come from God..."⁹⁸

The occult doctrine of an eternal substance, by whatever name it is called, from which even "God" derives his/its existence is entirely at odds with the teachings of the Bible. God's distinction from His creation is seen throughout the Scriptures, and contrast is frequently made between His eternity and the

98. Frank J. Beckwith, "The Philosophical Problems With the Mormon Concept of God," *Christian Research Journal*, Spring 1992, page 27.

temporality of the creation:

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever
You had formed the earth and the world, even from ever-
lasting to everlasting, You are God (Psalm 90:2).

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the
earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like
smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment, and those
who dwell in it will die in like manner; but My salvation
will be forever, and My righteousness will not be abol-
ished (Isaiah 51:6).

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word
will by no means pass away (Matthew 24:35).

The distinction between Creator and creation can espe-
cially be seen in the plan of redemption. In John 3:16, we are
told that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begot-
ten Son." Though this verse is misunderstood by many to teach
that God's love is directed toward each and every human being
in history, whom He earnestly desires to save, it is more accu-
rately interpreted to be speaking of the creation-order. The fact
that creation itself will one day benefit from Christ's atoning
sacrifice is made clear in Romans 8:19-22: "For the earnest ex-
pectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the
sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not will-
ingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the
creation itself also will be delivered from bondage of corrup-
tion into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we
know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth
pangs together until now."

Since we read that the creation has been "subjected to

futility," from which it will someday be delivered, the only logical conclusion is that it is distinct from God. After all, God is a perfect Being, and, with the exception of the unique event of the Incarnation, He can never be said to suffer "futility," nor can He be "delivered from bondage of corruption." God is self-sufficient, whereas the creation is dependent upon the decree and power of the Creator for its continued existence: "God... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...." (Hebrews 1:2-3) Again we see here the importance of the divine *fiat* — God's Word *created* the world, and God's Word *sustains* the world. The clear distinction between Creator and creation is abundantly evident throughout the Scriptures. Therefore, we must conclude that pantheism is not so much false as it is an outdated concept. Quite simply, there was once a "time" when nothing but God existed, since He alone is self-existent and eternal (Psalm 90:2). Either God created the universe out of nothing, or He created it out of Himself. Because of this, the historic Church has always taught that God created *ex nihilo*, as we have seen. It was the first-century Gnostic heretics who attempted to introduce their pantheistic views into the Church, as they are again seeking to do via Mormonism and similar cults.

The Bible Condemns Occult Activity

We have seen extensive evidence that nearly all early

Mormon leaders were heavily involved in the occult arts, and that Mormonism itself is rooted firmly in occultic ideology and practice, particularly necromancy. All involvement in occult practices, including attempted communication with the spirits of the dead, is strictly forbidden in the Bible. When coming into the Promised Land, the Israelites were given the following prohibition:

When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; cf. Leviticus 19:31, 20:27).

The main reason that the Bible takes such a strong stand against spiritism is that the contacted spirits are not at all what they seem to be, but are actually demonic entities. Though seldom appearing as such, their true identity may be discerned from the anti-Christian theology that is consistently delivered through séances, Ouija boards, automatic writing, and other occultic channels (1 John 4:1-3). Demons are immortal beings of more ancient origin than man, and have unlimited access to the files of human history. As it suits their evil purposes, they utilize this knowledge to masquerade in a variety of forms, sometimes as a departed loved one, depending upon the emotional needs of the inquirer.

The Bible records only two incidents of communication

with the dead — both of them divinely ordained. The first of these is described in 1 Samuel, chapter 28. Here, King Saul disobeyed God by invoking the spirit of the prophet Samuel through the medium of Endor (verses 7-8). Much to the surprise of the medium, what appeared was not her familiar spirit as intended, but Samuel himself (verse 12). The dead man then prophesied in the name of the Lord concerning Saul's defeat and death at the hands of the Philistines, which was fulfilled the following day (1 Samuel 31:6). That this was not a masquerading demon is clear from the nature of the given prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:21-22).

Mormon apologists have attempted to use such passages as this to show that godly men and women may communicate with the dead, and thereby to justify their leaders' involvement in necromancy. However, it should be pointed out that Saul by this time had become completely apostate and it was because of his attempt to communicate with the dead prophet that he lost his life: "So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance" (1 Chronicles 10:13).

The second account of communication with the dead is given in the seventeenth chapter of Matthew's gospel. In this case, Jesus Christ was transfigured into His true heavenly glory, and was seen by three of His disciples to speak with Moses and Elijah (verse 2). The possibility that demonic spirits were in operation here must also be ruled out, for not only was the contact initiated by Christ, but God the Father also approved of His Son's actions (verse 5). As Creator, God obviously has both the power and the right to communicate with whomever He wishes, whether they are living or dead. How-

ever, Scripture makes it quite clear that contact with the “other side” is off limits to humans. When men begin to seek spiritual information from sources other than God’s Word, deception inevitably occurs and the person is led to a false concept of himself and his relationship to his Creator. Therein lies the greatest danger of the practice of spiritism. Mormons, therefore, would do well to heed the words of the prophet Isaiah: “...[W]hen they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?” (Isaiah 8:19-20).

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