

Some Unanswered Questions Regarding the Mormon Worldview

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Abstract

This thesis argues that Mormonism is in essential agreement with ancient pagan thought in a number of crucial areas. Ancient philosophers are quoted along with representative Mormon authorities. Minimal comments are made because the parallels are obvious. This thesis is of a polemical nature. The goal is to challenge Mormon leaders, and in particular Brigham Young University faculty members to engage in serious interaction with conservative biblical scholarship.

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Pagan Influence upon the Mormon World View

In the pages that follow I will show areas of essential agreement between Mormonism and Greek philosophy. I am advancing this thesis primarily because any impartial research into this subject will confirm that there exists an essential agreement between Mormon theology and ancient pagan thought in a number of crucial areas. Secondly, I have done this because of the astounding false accusations that have come out of Brigham Young University (B.Y.U.) in recent years about Neo-Platonism and its supposed influence upon Christianity.

One example being an article titled *Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses* by David L. Paulsen, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Brigham Young University. Mr. Paulsen sent me this article that he was preparing for publication. In the letter that accompanied this manuscript he solicited my "comments criticisms and especially suggestions for improvement." In this article before quoting Augustine, Mr. Paulsen prejudices the reader's mind by saying:

In his newly-found Neo-Platonic interpretation of Christian doctrine, He exults.¹

I believe accusations of this nature reveal the shoddy research that B.Y.U. engages in, and also how far out of step the school is with the rest of the philosophical and theological academic world. The last serious attempts that tried to demonstrate the Gnostic and Neo-Platonic influence upon Christianity ended forty years ago. There is a whole body of literature that completely refutes any supposed relationship that Rudolf Bultmann tried to conjure up. This "Johnny come lately" use of discredited arguments may impress the ignorant. So far as adding anything of value to scholarly debate it is very dubious. The books listed in the Bibliography Section one represent a small part of the body of literature that refutes the B.Y.U. revival of a discredited thesis.

Failure on the part of the B.Y.U. faculty to engage in serious interaction with books listed in the Bibliography and those in the appendix attached to my philosophical challenge will reveal an apparent unwillingness or possibly an inability to interact with conservative scholarship. Can B.Y.U. be anything other than a sectarian indoctrination center if it fails to interact with honesty those who have refuted this discredited thesis? Serious scholarship has always interacted with differing points of view.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that Mormon theology is Greek philosophy, but that Mormonism appears much closer to ancient pagan thought than Christianity has been alleged to be. The following thirteen positions were clearly held by pagan philosophers. I maintain that Mormon leaders

are teaching concepts that have their origin in ancient pagan thought. The apostle Paul warns us to "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ," Col. 2: 8. It is my thesis that you, as a member of Mormonism, have been spoiled through the vain philosophy of men. The following survey show which philosophies have affected Mormonism.

1. Knowledge comes through sensations, i.e., experience. Empiricism is rooted in the pagan philosopher Aristotle. Particularly this is seen in his work *De Anima*. In this work Aristotle deals with the types of senses. Aristotle starts this book by saying:

That there is no sixth sense in addition to the five enumerated -- sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch -- may be established by the following considerations:²

Aristotle then goes on for several pages explaining the methods of receiving sensations and then reaches a conclusion that Mormon epistemology appears to have adopted. Aristotle concludes by saying that:

Again, sensations are always true, imaginations are for the most part false.³

The philosopher Epicurus agrees with Aristotle. Epicurus explains it as follows:

For the existence of bodies is everywhere attested by sense itself, and it is upon sensation that reason must rely when it attempts to infer the unknown from the known.⁴

In what ways has the Mormon religion bought into this empirical epistemology?

Mormon revelation that was given by Joseph Smith simply assumes that sensations are reliable. *The Book of Mormon* tells us how to find truth in the following way:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would 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.⁵

Exactly how does the Mormon Holy Ghost reveal this truth to man? Joseph Smith puts it this way in the *Doctrine And Covenants*:

But, behold, 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 is right I will

cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.⁶

So truth for Mormonism is determined by a burning sensation. How a person can tell empirically the difference between valid and invalid inferences is unclear.

2. The finite (or limited) god concept. The idea of limited gods is seen throughout Greek philosophy. For example, in Plato's *Parmenides* we have this discussion:

But will God, having absolute knowledge, have a knowledge of human things? Why not?... And if God has this perfect authority and perfect knowledge, his authority cannot rule us, nor his knowledge know us, or any human thing; just as our authority does not extend to the gods, nor our knowledge know anything which is divine, so by parity of reason they, being gods, are not our masters, neither do they know the things of men.⁷

How is the Mormon deity finite, or limited? Mormon leader Bruce R. McConkie tells us of the limits of one of the Mormon deities this way:

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. He is a Personage of Spirit, a Spirit Person, a Spirit Man, a Spirit Entity. He can be in only one place at one time, and he does not and cannot transform himself into any other form or image than that of the Man whom he is, though his power and influence can be manifest at one and the same time through all immensity.⁸

Mormon leader James E. Talmage places the same restrictions on the Father of the Mormon Godhead:

His person cannot be in more than one place at anyone time.⁹

Both the Greek and Mormon deities are clearly finite in that their bodies limit them. In my philosophical challenge to the leaders of Mormonism I argue that their gods, just like the Greek gods, cannot know the future or have exhaustive knowledge of the universe.

3. The rejection of a sinful heart or nature. In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* we learn about Socrates and his Pelagian like ideas concerning man's natural ability:

For Socrates was entirely opposed to the view in question holding that there is no such thing as incontinence;¹⁰

Incontinent being defined as:

"Not continent; lacking in restraint, esp. over the sexual appetite."¹¹

Christians have always have always believed that our sin has brought on dreadful consequences. We have lost our freedom to choose what is good. Our choices are in line with the desires of our nature. Our natures are sinful and as a result our choices always go toward the inclinations of our fallen natures. We choose, but these choices are always in harmony with our natural state.

Socrates believed in man's natural ability of restraint. In what ways have Mormon theologians argued for a position much closer to that of Socrates than that of Christianity? Former Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards explains his view of man's ability:

Thus all nations and people have free agency and, according to their choice, the Lord will do unto them.... If all men are not saved, it will be because they, in the exercise of their free will, do not accept his gift of grace.¹²

Fallen man according to Richards is able to do many things. Through man's own choice he can be saved. If men are not saved it is because "they...do not accept his...grace". It is easy to detect Richard's emphasis upon man's ability. Socrates believed in the power of restraint, which would include man's ability to choose and evaluate the best choices.

4. Exceptional men becoming gods. In Plato's *Gorgias* we have the story of mortals becoming judges, i. e., gods:

I have made my sons judges: two from Asia, Minos and Rhadamanthus, and one from Europe, Aeacus. And these, when they are dead, shall give judgment in the meadow at the parting of the ways, whence the two roads lead, one to the Islands of the Blessed, and the other to Tartarus.... Rhadamanthus sends to the Islands of the Blessed. Aeacus does the same; and they both have sceptres, and judge; but Minos alone has a golden sceptre and is seated looking on, as Odysseus in Homer declares that he saw him....¹³

In Plato's *Apology* we learn more concerning this:

He is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgement there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemus and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life,¹⁴

Mormon leaders have also taught that certain people in this world may become gods themselves.

Joseph Smith puts it this way:

Here, then is eternal life to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves,¹⁵

Mormon authority Milton Hunter agrees with this, and tells about Joseph Smith's doctrine of men becoming Gods in this way:

No prophet of record gave more complete and forceful explanations of the doctrine that men may become Gods than did the American Prophet....¹⁶

Both the ancient Greek religion and Mormonism hold to the belief that certain men may be able to become Gods.

5. The world or matter existing eternally and not created by God or the gods. Epicurus taught this idea. Epicurus says:

To begin with, nothing comes into being out of what is non-existent. For in that case anything would have arisen out of anything, standing as it would in no need of its proper germs. And if that which disappears had been destroyed and become non-existent, every thing would have perished, that into which the things were dissolved being non-existent. Moreover, the sum total of things was always such as it is now, and such it will ever remain. For there is nothing into which it can change.... Beyond bodies and space there is nothing which by mental apprehension or on its analogy can conceive to exist. When we speak of bodies and space, both are regarded as wholes or separate things, not as the properties or accidents of separate things. [he repeats this in the First Book and in Books fourteen and fifteen of the work "On Nature" and in the Large Epitome], of bodies some are composite, others the elements of which these composite bodies are made. These elements are indivisible and unchangable, and necessarily so, if things are not all to be destroyed and pass into non-existence, but are to be strong enough to endure when the composite bodies are broken up, because they possess a solid nature and are incapable of being anywhere or anyhow dissolved. It follows that the first beginnings must be indivisible, corporeal entities.... Of all this there is no beginning, since both atoms and void exist from everlasting.¹⁷

Mormon founder Joseph Smith agrees completely with Epicurus:

You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing; and they will answer, "Doesn't the Bible say He created the world?" And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been out of nothing. Now, the word create came from the word baurau which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos-chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure 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.¹⁸

6. Pre-existence of souls and men. Plato taught this belief. In the work called *Phaedrus* we read:

This soul shall at her first birth pass, not into any other animal, but only into a man....¹⁹

Ronald Nash in his book *Christianity & the Hellenistic World* explains how in the early church the heretic Origen held to a Platonic idea of Pre-existence.

Mormon leader Bruce R. McConkie teaches the idea of pre-existence much like Plato. He has this to say:

Pre-existence is the term commonly used to describe the pre-mortal existence of the spirit children of God the Father.²⁰

7. Polytheism or believing that more than one god exists. In Plato's *Laws* Book Ten we read:

If Cleinias and this our reverend company succeed in proving to you that you know not what you say of the Gods, then will God help you; but should you desire to hear more, listen to what we say to the third opponent, if you have any understanding whatsoever. For I think that we have sufficiently proved the existence of the Gods....²¹

Also this polytheism was part of the common philosophical belief of the Greeks.

Mormonism shares this polytheistic outlook.

Joseph Smith founder of Mormonism agrees with Plato:

In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the

Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it.²²

8. The corporeal or physical god concept is rooted in Stoicism. Plotinus referring to the Stoic school says this about them:

To a certain school, body-forms exclusively are the Real Beings, existence is limited to bodies; there is one only Matter, the stuff underlying the primal- constituents of the Universe: existence is nothing but this Matter: everything is some modification of this; the elements of the Universe are simply this Matter in a certain condition. The school has even the audacity to foist Matter upon the divine beings so that, finally, God himself becomes a mode of Matter - and this though they make it corporeal, describing it as a body, void of quality but a magnitude.²³

The Mormon scriptures called the *Doctrine And Covenants* agrees with and promotes this Stoic notion:

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's....²⁴

Mormon leader James E. Talmage concurs with this teaching. He has this to say about it:

Admitting the personality of God; we are compelled to accept the fact of His materiality....²⁵

9. All men are children of God. This notion comes from Stoicism. Epictetus tells us this about man's origin:

If the things are true which are said by the philosophers about the kinship between God and man, what else remains for men to do than what Socrates did?²⁶

A little further into the chapter we learn this information:

The most comprehensive community is that which is composed of men and God, and that from God have descended the seeds not only to my father and grandfather, but to all beings which are generated on the earth and are produced, and particularly to rational beings for these only are by their nature formed to have communion with God, being by means of reason conjoined with Him - why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the world, why not a son of God, and why should he be afraid of anything which happens among men? Is kinship with Caesar or with any other of the powerful in Rome sufficient to enable us to

live in safety, and above contempt and without fear at all? and to have God for your maker and father and guardian, shall not this release us from sorrows and fears?... And are we not in a manner kinsman of God, and did we not come from Him?²⁷

McConkie's position is identical with that of Epictetus:

All men are brothers in the sense of being the spirit offspring of Deity.²⁸

10. The concept of free agency or (free will). The Epicureans promoted this pagan idea in particular. Lucretius informs us of the Epicurean thought. He does this by mocking the Stoics and their doctrine of Providence or God's control of the world:

They would seek a refuge in handing over things to the gods and supposing all things to be guided by their nod.²⁹

If the gods guide all things, what happens to free agency? Wouldn't man's choices also be guided?

Plotinus also tells us this about Epicureanism:

Epicurus denies a Providence....³⁰

Why did he do this? Because according to Epicurus, providence and free will conflicted, or at least they appeared to.

McConkie explains man's free agency essentially the same as the Epicureans:

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself. (2 Ne.2:26-30;10:23; Alma 13:3; Hela. 14:31.)³¹

11. A. The fall of man being necessary and B. that souls come to this earth to learn good from evil, C. then can return after meeting certain requirements, and D. attain salvation, i.e., becoming godlike. Plotinus the third great master of Hellenistic thought taught this.

A. In the second *Ennead* Plotinus begins to explain man's fall this way:

For our part, nature keeps us upon the work of the Soul as long as we are not wrecked in the multiplicity of the Universe: once thus

sunk and held we pay the penalty, which consists both in the fall itself and in the lower rank thus entailed upon us: riches and poverty are caused by the combinations of external fact.³²

In the fourth *Ennead* he gives us more information about this:

With this comes what is known as the casting of the wings, the enchaining in body: the soul has lost that innocency of conducting the higher which it knew when it stood with the All-Soul, that earlier state to which all its interest would bid it hasten back. It has fallen.... Souls that take this way have place in both spheres, living of necessity the life there and the life here by turns . . . they must of necessity experience birth.³³

Mormon leader McConkie in essence agrees with this as stated:

In conformity with the will of the Lord, Adam fell both spiritually and temporally . . . Temporal death also entered the world, meaning that man and all created things became mortal, and blood became the life preserving element in the natural body.... Adam fell that men might be. (2 Ne. 2:19-25; Moses 5:11; 6:45-48; Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 107-120.)³⁴

B. Beginning in the fourth *Ennead*, Plotinus informs tells of man s task of learning good from evil, and our benefit from it:

If it [the soul] turns back quickly, all is well; it will have taken no hurt by acquiring the knowledge of evil and coming to understand what sin is.... Where the faculty is incapable of knowing without contact, the experience of evil brings the clearer perception of Good.³⁵

James E. Talmage agrees and puts it this way:

Sin was introduced to the world by Satan; yet it is by divine permission that mankind are brought in contact with sin, the contrast between evil and good thus being learned by experience.³⁶

C. What type of requirements do we have to meet to advance from this life? Plotinus in the first *Ennead* puts it this way. (Notice the emphasis on man's self effort of purification to meet the requirements in order to advance):

Since Evil is here, "haunting this world by necessary law," and it is the Soul's design to escape Evil, we must escape hence. But what is this escape? "In attaining Likeness to God," we read. And this is explained as becoming just and holy, living by wisdom, the entire nature grounded in Virtue.... And elsewhere he [Plato] declares all the virtues without exception to be purifications.... The solution is in understanding the virtues and what each has to give: thus the man will learn to work with this or that as every several need demands. And as he reaches to loftier principles and other standards these in turn will define his conduct: for example, Restraint in its earlier form will no longer satisfy him, he will work for the final Disengagement; he will live no longer, the life of the good man such as Civic Virtue commends but, leaving this beneath him, will take up instead another life, that of the Gods.... What art is there, what method, what discipline to bring us there where we must go?³⁷

McConkie in essence agrees and explains it this way:

Full salvation is attained by virtue of knowledge, truth, righteousness, and all true principles. Many conditions must exist in order to make such salvation available to men.... Salvation in the celestial kingdom of God, however is not salvation by grace alone. Rather, it is salvation by grace coupled with obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.³⁸

D. The final goal for Plotinus is as follows in the second *Ennead*:

There is another life emancipated, whose quality is progression towards the higher realm, towards the good and divine, towards that Principle which no one possesses except by deliberate usage but so may appropriate, becoming each personally, the higher, the beautiful, the Godlike.³⁹

Plotinus continues this idea in the sixth *Ennead*:

For to be a god is to be integral with the Supreme.... Thus we have all the vision that may be of Him and of ourselves; but is of a self wrought to splendour, brimmed with the Intellectual light, become that very light, pure, buoyant, unburdened, raised to Godhood.... When the soul begins again to mount it comes not to something alien but to its very self; thus detached, it is not in nothingness but in itself; self-gathered it is no longer in the order of being; it is in the Supreme. There is thus a converse in virtue of which the essential man outgrows Being, becomes identical with the Transcendent of Being. The self thus lifted, we are in the

likeness of the Supreme.... This is the life of gods and of the godlike and blessed among men....⁴⁰

The goal for the Mormon is virtually identical with this. McConkie sums up the Mormon position as follows:

Exaltation is eternal life, the kind of life which God lives.... They have eternal increase, a continuation of the lives, eternal lives ... They inherit in due course the fulness of the glory of the Father, meaning that they have all power in heaven and earth. (D.&C. 76:50-60; 93:1-40.) Then shall they be gods, because they shall have no end....⁴¹

It is admitted that there are fundamental differences between Plotinus and Mormonism. Mormonism holds to a radical materialistic view, while Plotinus came dangerously close to rejecting matter altogether. It is important to note, however, that both systems have schemes for accomplishing ultimate goals that parallel each other in an uncanny way.

12. Rejection of the Creator/creature distinction. Mormon theology agrees completely with the Greek philosophers. For example Pythagoras said that:

Gods and men are akin....⁴²

McConkie again shows the agreement with the ancient Greeks as follows:

All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.⁴³

13. Plato taught an ethical dualism. He believed in two principles, the One or the good and the Indefinite Dyad the source of evil.⁴⁴ He also saw good and evil occurring in cycles.⁴⁵

Specifically Plato had this to say in his work *Theaetetus*:

Socrates. Evils, Theodorus, can never pass away; for there must always remain something which is antagonistic to good.⁴⁶

The religion of Zoroastrianism also taught an eternal struggle between good and evil which is an ethical dualism.⁴⁷

This same dualism appears in *The Book of Mormon*:

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things.⁴⁸

In addition to these thirteen points one can find an interesting parallel between the Greek gods coming from Mt. Olympus to visit men, and the Mormon gods coming from Kolob. In particular you have the story of Zeus having sexual relations with a mortal woman to produce Hercules. In Mormonism you have one of the Mormon deities coming to earth to have sexual relations with the mortal woman Mary to produce the Mormon Jesus.

These thirteen points show the vast amount of Greek philosophy that has been absorbed by Mormonism concerning the nature of God, the nature of man, and the cosmos.

Some years ago Mormon researchers were trying to show that elements of Mormon theology had survived among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi writings, and the Mandaean writings. Einar C. Erickson was a leader among this group of Mormon researchers. I would agree with them that you find Mormon theological parallels among the Gnostic sects. We should congratulate these researchers for finding these parallels that exist between Mormonism and Gnosticism. I want to make it clear that I do not accept Erickson's thesis. I believe, however, that Erickson's work inadvertently serves to confirm my thesis that Mormonism is in essential agreement with ancient pagan thought. Therefore any similarities between Mormonism and Christianity would be only one of Mormonism using Christian terminology with substantial redefinitions.

When discussing Mormon dependence upon Greek philosophy we are not dealing with trivial points of similarity, but essential areas of agreement between the ancient Greek and Mormon world views. The following would be a fair description of the Mormon world view.

A. Epistemology:

William James describes empiricism as a "tough-minded materialistic epistemology".⁴⁹

Mormon epistemology could be described as an Aristotelian based empirical system. Mormon philosopher Sterling McMurrin appears to confirm this analysis of Mormon epistemology:

But it is possible to say that Mormonism in its philosophical inclinations participates strongly in the empirical attitudes that are characteristic of recent and contemporary thought. It [Mormon epistemology] acknowledges the claims of scientific method -- [and] a combination of empiricism and qualified rationalism and it even exhibits sensory empirical leanings in its references to revelation....⁵⁰

B. Ontology:

Mormon Ontology could be described as a Stoic, i.e., a materialistic, fundamentally monistic metaphysic. McMurrin describes Mormon Ontology as follows:

On the question of the qualitative nature of reality, the Mormon position is perhaps best described as fundamentally monistic but with an important dualistic facet....⁵¹

It should also be noted that for Mormonism ultimate reality contains diversity such as countless corporeal finite gods scattered throughout the cosmos. It should also be of interest to again see McMurrin's analysis:

Mormon philosophy is an unqualified commitment to metaphysical pluralism. The concept of reality as a composition of independently real entities is established explicitly in certain statements that have been accepted by Mormon writers as normative for doctrine, and it can be discerned as a fundamental presupposition of popular Mormon thought by inference from innumerable ideas and attitudes that are commonplace with Mormon people....⁵²

How Mormonism attempts to escape this metaphysical monistic/pluralistic contradiction will be of interest. McMurrin goes on to tell us about the temporal, spatial, and material aspect of the Mormon god's being:

There are numerous important implications for religion resident in the doctrine that God is a spacial and temporal being. Among these in Mormon theology are the belief, contrary to the verdict of Christianity generally, that God is an embodied being with a spatially configured form, and the belief that not only is heaven located somewhere but that the eternal life of a heavenly being is temporally ordered....⁵³

C. Ethics:

Mormon ethics could be described simply as a type of pragmatic platonic humanism. McMurrin has described Mormon ethics in this very way:

Yet even though its moral philosophy has a pronounced platonic character, Mormonism in practice has always exhibited marked pragmatic tendencies. Both William James and John Dewey evidenced an interest in the pragmatic facets of Mormonism, Dewey finding that Mormon group life expressed much that was central in his own instrumentalism.⁵⁴

McMurrin goes on to say this about Mormonism:

It is the belief that though he is finite man nevertheless has

necessary being, that constituted the philosophical justification of much that characterizes Mormon theology, supporting, for instance, its pelagian and arminian tendencies, and giving fundamental encouragement to its accent on the positive facets of human existence. Here is the philosophical ground for the paradoxical Mormon concept of the fall of man, the denial of original sin, the rejection of the traditional doctrine of grace, the intense preoccupation with the freedom of the will, the opposition to the dogmas of election and perseverance, the liberal estimate of human nature, and the affirmation of the radically unorthodox concepts of God and salvation.⁵⁵

It should be noted that the Mormon is continually trying to interpret reality-utilizing methods of science, which are based upon man's finite reason and sensory experience, along with the revelations that the Mormon Kolobian deities give him. This is the essence of humanistic ethics. Or again as McMurrin puts it:

Indeed, it is not entirely inaccurate to describe Mormonism as a kind of naturalistic humanism within a general theistic context.⁵⁶

D. Teleology:

Mormon teleology could be described as cyclical. All pagan teleology was of this nature until Christianity introduced a linear view of history. Mormon history keeps repeating itself with new earths, and new saviors on to infinity. Again to quote McMurrin:

It is of major importance to Mormon doctrine that it is grounded in the idea that the universe is for the most part dynamic in the sense of there being a kind of cosmic evolution with the world moving endlessly in time toward goals which when reached inevitably propose others beyond....⁵⁷

The ultimate goal for the faithful Mormon and their offspring is essentially the same and is best stated by Plotinus:

In all this there is no sin--there is only matter of discipline-but our concern is not merely to be sinless but to be God....⁵⁸

It can be said in summary that the philosophical positions advanced by the Greeks influenced to such a large extent the areas of epistemology, ontology, ethics, and teleology that the Greek argumentation is a sufficient cause for positions that have been adopted by western religions and philosophy. These same concepts have influenced present day Mormonism. While admitting that Mormonism may not be aware of the original source of some of its positions, it nevertheless is dependent upon Greek philosophical ideas at numerous points. Apostate thinking down to present day has never escaped entirely from Greek

thought. Mormon positions along with other forms of paganism are related, too, and are the result of the superior apostate thinking of the Greek philosophers.

The Mormon world view could be described as an empirical epistemology working closely with a contradictory Stoic monistic/pluralistic metaphysic, along with a form of a pragmatic Platonic ethical dualism which incorporates a radical pelagian/free will view of man's nature combined with a cyclical teleology. Or, briefly, you could describe this as the Greek, Mormon, Gnostic world view.

Introductory Comments

During the last three years I have attempted to get a response from your leaders concerning a number of theological and philosophical questions. The purpose of my questions has been to expose the weakness of the Mormon world view to answer questions that get to the root of Mormon presuppositions.

Because I have received no response from the leaders of Mormonism after more than sufficient time to answer my questions, I now direct this challenge to the Mormon community as a whole. You may be surprised at the number of questions and their complexity. I'm not expecting the average Mormon to answer all of these questions. Let me suggest responding to any five questions.

My response to Mormon attacks on my faith has gone right to the essentials of one's ability to know if you have true knowledge of things and have found Mormonism lacking. I maintain that the message given at the supposed first vision is a serious attack upon the historic Christian faith. Labeling someone's creedal statements an abomination is certainly not a compliment. The nature of my response has taken the form of a challenge.

Theological and Philosophical Challenge

To The President of the Mormon

Church and The Twelve Apostles:

May 13, 1988

Over the years I have developed a very low view of the Mormon Church due in part to your official representatives called missionaries, or elders. After talking to many of them, I have noticed that all are unable to answer the questions I raised about your world view, and usually are unwilling to attempt to do so. Other members of your church have attempted to answer my questions, but without exception they say that their answers are their own personal opinions and do not represent the official position of their church. This is most frustrating. Who does represent your church? Does your church have something to hide? What accounts for the complete widespread ignorance of the official position of your church?

I'm interested in an official quotable position, even if it involves official speculation. That is why my letter is directed to you, the leaders of the Mormon religion. It is mind boggling to find a religious movement as large as yours in which its adherents are unable to articulate its official doctrine.

In talking to members of your religion I have asked them if they would like me to adopt their Mormon beliefs. They answer in the affirmative. I then give them the opportunity to convince me with logical, biblical, reasons to surrender my beliefs and adopt their beliefs.

I now give you the same opportunity. For me to adopt your world view, you will have to show me that your world view can better answer the philosophical and theological questions that I will raise. The Christian Theistic world view has solid, biblical, and logical answers to these questions. The following questions represent a philosophical and theological challenge to your world view. If you provide no response to these questions, I will have no alternative but to conclude that you are unable to answer these questions, and Mormonism is therefore an idolatrous, subjective, emotional, and irrational system.

I will list the questions numerically under each of the basic elements of a world view.

Four philosophical areas will be covered.

Introduction

1. Please offer me a definition of the Mormon world view. Do not give an answer like "read the Book of Mormon". I have already read this book and many other Mormon books.

2. Is your world view logically coherent?

A. Epistemology:

1. Are Mormons and your God, or gods, empiricists, rationalists, irrationalists, or do you hold to some other concept of gaining knowledge?

2. Sterling McMurrin on page eleven of his book, *Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion*, states that Mormons and their Gods are basically empiricists. Is McMurrin correct in his perception of Mormon epistemology?

3. How would you respond to the arguments of Gordon Clark in *A Christian View of Men and Things and Religion, Reason, and Revelation* and of Cornelius Van Til in *Defense of the Faith* and *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* that neither empiricism nor rationalism can give certain knowledge?

4. How would Mormonism answer the objections to empiricism raised in writings by David Hume, Emmanuel Kant, and Jean-Paul Sartre? Hume was a skeptic despite his adherence to empiricism. Emmanuel Kant was reportedly awakened from his dogmatic slumbers when he saw the effects of

Hume's skepticism on empirical epistemology.

5. Is empiricism a Christian epistemology?

6. Are the revelations of the Mormon God empirically based revelations?

7. Aristotle, John Locke, David Hume, George Berkeley, and Bertrand Russell were all empirical thinkers. They would all agree that knowledge comes through the senses in the following order: (a) sensations (b) perceptions (c) memory images, (d) development of abstract ideas. Perceptions are inferences from sensations. How do you know valid from invalid inferences?

8. About five percent of the population does not have any memory images at all. How can these people be empiricists?

9. What about studies which deal in the areas of the threshold of sensations? These studies show unreliable the senses can be, especially sight (colors), and hearing (sound).

10. Can tiredness, drugs, and optical illusions deceive the senses?

11. What about sin? Demonic deception?

12. Will you defend empiricism by starting in the middle of, or at the end of the system? This is committing the logical fallacy of begging the question. Show me how the first part of your system works.

13. Empirical epistemology has its roots in the pagan philosopher Aristotle. Should a Christian incorporate pagan thinking into Christianity?

14. During the humanistic enlightenment, Locke, Hume, and Berkeley developed systematic empirical thought, or at least they thought they did. Does a Christian really want to be influenced by these enlightenment thinkers?

15. The main objection goes back to question number seven. Would it be more biblical to adopt a Christian theory of knowledge as stated by Cornelius Van Til in his book of the same title? See also Augustine's *De Magistro* for a historic study in the area of epistemology. This work refutes Aristotle's empiricism.

16. What do you mean by God?

17. Where did your God come from?

18. Are there other beings like your God?

19. If so, where did they come from?
20. What do you mean by "create"?
21. Can you present any conclusive lexical evidence that the Hebrew word for "create" (*bara*) means "to organize out of pre-existing matter"?
22. Let s summarize what I think Mormons are teaching, but correct me if I'm wrong. The Mormon God was once a man, had a beginning and organized preexistent matter into a world and possibly other worlds. Who created or organized the world your God lived on when he was a boy before becoming God?
23. How can you use words like "omnipresent" (present everywhere), "omnipotent" (all powerful), and "omniscient" (all knowing) to describe a finite or limited God?
24. Does Mormon epistemology reject the use of logic?
25. How does your God travel? A space ship? Don't beg the question.
26. Does your God exist in time?
27. If he does exist in time, how can he know the future? Remember his body limits him to be in only one place at a time.
28. Existing in time prevents us from knowing the future. Why not your God? Don't beg the question by saying "Because He's God." Being God doesn't seem to help him overcome the physical limitation of being at one place at a time.
29. How would it be logically possible for your God to control the future if He does not know the future?
30. How does the Mormon Church extricate itself from the logical contradiction between the doctrine of God's omnipresence and the fact that the Mormon god has a body, which by definition must be finite? By religious irrationalism? By Hegelian dialectical logic?
31. Mormon theology appears to accept the concept of God's omnipresence, but then holds to the antithesis of a God with a body. Is your belief that the Holy Spirit is like electricity and filling the universe, the synthesis? Is this Hegelian dialectics?
32. Inside the front cover of the *Book of Mormon* one finds the proposition that there is only one God.

However, the Mormon religion seems to teach the antithesis of this proposition, namely there are three separate Gods. Are your beliefs in the doctrine of three gods, but one in purpose, the synthesis? Is this another example of Hegelian logic?

33. What role does the law of non-contradiction have in Mormon theology?

34. What does the Mormon Church mean by "one"?

35. When Mormons declare that they believe in only one God, and at the same time really mean that they believe in three Gods, but one in purpose, is this the informal logical fallacy of equivocation?

36. Does your God submit to more senior Gods in the universe? If so, in what way?

37. How far does the dominion of your God extend? Just this solar system? The Milky Way Galaxy?

38. Where do the other Gods domains begin? Are their domains overlapping?

39. How does your God communicate with the other Gods? Intergalactic phone service, unknown radio frequency, mental telepathy, and celestial general conferences?

40. Is the universe bigger than your God is? Remember he has a body.

41. Is the universe endless?

42. Has your God been everywhere in the universe? When?

43. If answer to question 41 were yes, how would your God with a finite body ever finish exploring the universe?

44. When would he ever have time to be God over this world?

45. How does your God learn about the universe around him, i.e., the places he has not been yet? Can your God describe the physical characteristics of all the different planets, and stars he hasn't been to yet? If yes, how?

46. If not, is his knowledge limited?

47. Could your God be overthrown by more powerful Gods with a different agenda, from a region of the universe that he has not yet visited?

48. If not, how do you know? Don't beg the question.

49. If this is possible, why should I put my faith in him?
50. Could your God ever step down from being God? Or could his power disintegrate?
51. If this could happen, what would his followers do?
52. If your God is a junior God in the universe, and there are more senior Gods, why shouldn't I put my faith in a senior God?
53. Would it be logical to put my faith in a junior God who could be overthrown, step down, or who's power could disintegrate?
54. Would it be an expression of religious irrationalism to do so?

B. Ontology:

1. What is prime reality; i.e., the really real?
2. How does Mormonism try and solve "the one and the many" problem?
3. Is reality ultimately one (a unity), or many (a diversity)?
4. How do the universals relate to the particulars?
5. Is there a creator/creature distinction?
6. Does Mormonism teach valid principles of continuity and discontinuity? Please explain them.
7. Do men and the Gods exist in a realm of being in general?
8. Is God further up the scale of being than man?
9. Are there two types of being: created/uncreated?
10. Mormons in the past have told me that God and man share the same type of existence, and that there is no real distinction. God is only further along in the process of eternal progression than men. Is this true?
11. If this is true, how is Mormonism different metaphysically from ancient pagan concepts?
12. You may say "there is much truth in ancient religions". How do you know you believe the truth in

the ancient religions and not falsehood? See Rushdoony's book *The One and the Many*.

13. Is chance, i.e., future contingency, part of the universe that your God lives in?

14. If so, could some kind of chance event start a chain reaction and thwart the plans of your God? Why not, if the answer is no?

15. Does the Mormon Church believe in the autonomy of human reason?

16. What about autonomy of the human will, i.e., free agency?

17. If so, how would the Mormon Church respond to the charge that they have uncritically accepted the position of the fifth century British monk Pelagius?

18. In 1523 A.D. a man named Erasmus tried to defend the doctrine of free will, i.e., free agency. In 1524 A.D. Martin Luther in his book, *The Bondage of the Will*, answered Erasmus's new semi-revised form of the Pelagian doctrine. Have the leaders of the Mormon Church ever responded to Luther's arguments? If not, will they in the future?

C. Ethics:

1. Where did evil come from?

2. Are there laws or a law structure higher than your God?

3. If so, where did these laws come from?

4. Can concepts such as good and evil exist in raw matter?

5. Or do they have to exist in a mind?

6. If concepts such as good and evil must exist in a mind, and many Gods exist in the universe, would not the definition of good and evil be very subjective, since there are many minds?

7. Do all the Gods in the universe interpret these laws the same? How do you know?

8. How do you know that your God is correctly interpreting these laws in the universe?

9. How do you know evil is not good?

10. Did evil exist when your God was boy on another planet?

11. Why should one prefer good over evil?
12. What assurance can be provided that the Mormon God is correctly interpreting the law structure above him?
13. Will your God ever defeat evil in the universe?
14. Why haven't the more senior Gods defeated it yet?
15. Are there evil Gods in the universe? If not, how do you know?
16. If so, could they destroy or defeat the good Gods?
17. Do you believe that the free will argument is a solution to save your God from being weak and responsible for evil, and its results?
18. How would you respond to Gordon Clark in his *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* that such a thing as free will can not save your God from being responsible? See also Antony Flew's *God and Philosophy*. Flew is a non-Christian.

D. Teleology:

1. Is history linear or endless?
2. Is eternal progression a concept of history that involves endlessness?
3. Will time ever cease to exist in the part of the universe your God rules over? What about other parts of the universe?
4. Is there any real substantial difference between eternal progression and the Hindu teleological concept of history? What is the difference, if any?
5. How would you respond to the charge that the Mormon concept of teleology is in complete harmony with ancient pagan thought? See Rushdoony's *The One and the Many*.
6. Does your God control history? In what way? Partially? Completely?
7. What is the ultimate purpose of creation?
8. In what way does evolutionary theory differ from eternal progression? In what ways are they similar?

I will be looking forward to the official response to these questions, although I'm not sure a response will be forthcoming because of the apparent inability of the Mormon world view to answer these questions.

As I stated at the start, this theological and philosophical challenge is an attempt to force you to see the implications of your finite god concept. Your rejection of the God of Christian Theism, the ontological Trinity, has resulted in a chaotic world view. Your rejection of the self attesting Christ of Scripture as your starting presupposition, or axiom, and your resulting commitment to independence, i.e., autonomy, have resulted in a false faith in a finite god.

When one's starting presupposition is human autonomy (see Genesis chap. 3), the only god that can be permitted to exist is a finite god, one that does not threaten the false delusion of human autonomy. When you do not allow God, the ontological Trinity, to be the ultimate standard for interpretation, confusion results. When man is the ultimate standard, all knowledge becomes futile, or hopeless. Take one look at the twentieth century and the popular humanistic existentialism that smothers the pursuit of true knowledge. Your rejection of the ontological Trinity as the interpretive principle has resulted in an unbiblical answer to the "one and the many problem."

Your resulting authoritarianism "when the leaders speak ..." and "listen to the prophet ..." cannot stop the collapse of what you believe is true and certain. Mormons cannot have absolute assurance of anything, especially assurance of their salvation. The questions, if honestly faced, show that the finite god of Mormonism is definitely not the God of Romans 8:28. Only a sovereign God who totally controls and predestinates all things can fulfill the promises contained in Romans 8:28. The finite god of Mormonism is trapped in the space-time universe, and is surrounded by chance and mystery. Given enough time the plans of the finite god of Mormonism will be thwarted. The god of Mormonism can't save himself from the ultimate mystery and contingency the universe holds for him. How can he save you? Please do not react to this challenge the way that members of your religion do by committing several logical fallacies. Their first is to attack the historic Christian creeds, especially the Nicene creed. (See Rushdoony's *The Foundations of Social Order* for an intelligent explication of the creeds.)

All Mormons I have talked to reject the biblical doctrine of God summarized by the historic creeds because they can't comprehend or understand such a God. This is a ridiculous standard. If the average Mormon is consistent, he or she should reject microwave ovens, refrigerators, telephones, and cars because they can't comprehend how these everyday items work. Are you sure you have not committed the terrible sin of Romans 1:18-23 by making God into a man which you can comprehend and who will not threaten your human autonomy? The second fallacy I normally encounter is the attack upon the reliability of Scripture. Can you tell me the ordinary standards for evaluating historical documents? If you or members of your religion are unable to do so, why do you feel qualified to speak about the reliability of the Bible? A third fallacy is attacking motives, or character. God alone is the judge of these matters.

These fallacies are really nothing more than a smoke screen to hide the inability of Mormonism to deal with the objections raised against it. You may feel secure in Mormonism, but this is a sinful delusion.

Your feeling of security is nothing more than emotions that come as result of the words of God borrowed from the Bible. Flee from your false assurance to Calvary. I will not cater to any false belief you hold in autonomy. The gospel of Jesus Christ is right in front of you. You are not invited, but rather the Scriptures command you to repent and believe the gospel.

Calvary is your only hope. The true saints will fall on their faces in the dust at Calvary and see their total inability and hopelessness. At Calvary there is a revelation of two things: grace and wrath. Because God is holy, sin will be punished. God is a jealous God and idolatry will not be tolerated. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered the wrath of God for His people, those who believe in him and have no confidence in themselves. Grace is revealed powerfully to those who put their trust totally in Jesus and His perfect complete work of redemption.

It is my prayer that you, the leaders of Mormonism, will consider the implications of your finite god concept and repent. If you continue to glory in and cherish human autonomy, the end result is death. The empirical god of Mormonism has given you unreliable revelations. The endless speculations and revisions in the writings of those who are within Mormonism, both official and non-official demonstrate this.

Any Mormon who happens to see this challenge to the Mormon world view is welcome to respond, but please indicate if your answers are the official position of your church. If they are not, what should I do with them? They may be interesting, but if they are not the official position, then they are nothing more than your own personal speculations, which cannot be cited as the official position. Surely the leaders of the Mormon Church are capable of providing official answers to these questions. Your own speculations would really be quite useless as far as quoting them is concerned. Is there something wrong with quoting an official church position?

Please consult the appendix for titles of books that present a Christian world view. If you expect to be taken seriously, you are obligated to answer the questions above and to interact with the books listed. Maybe it's not in your best interest to do so. As I mentioned at the beginning no response will be most revealing.

Sincerely,

Jack Kettler

Appendix

By Augustine:

De Magistro

Anti-Pelagian Writings

By Gordon Clark:

A Christian View of Men and Things An Introduction to Philosophy

Religion, Reason, and Revelation

By John Frame:

The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God

By Martin Luther:

The Bondage of the Will

By Rousas John Rushdoony:

The One and the Many

The Foundations of Social Order

By What Standard?

By Francis A. Schaeffer:

A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture in his Complete Works, Volume 1

By C. Gregg Singer:

From Rationalism to Irrationality

By Cornelius Van Til:

Defence of the Faith

A Christian Theory of Knowledge

Christian Theistic Ethics

A Survey of Christian Epistemology

Follow up letter

To The President of the Mormon

Church and the Twelve Apostles:

November 14, 1988

Dear Sirs,

Recently a Mormon scholar in Salt Lake City told me in a letter that the "Mormon god surrounds his body with light, and then can travel with the light at the speed of light." Rumor has it that the Mormon god had to travel to the region of *Alpha Centauri* to help his fellow gods put down a rebellion. *Alpha Centauri* is about 4.29 light-years away. A round trip would take 8.58 years at the speed of light. Assuming all goes well and the Mormon god is not put in some kind of intergalactic jail, we could be looking at close to nine years before the Mormon god can return.

Could this account for the delay in answering my letter of May 13, 1988? This same Mormon scholar told me that those who attain godhood cannot rebel or be overthrown. How does this scholar know this? Did he interview all the supposed gods in the universe including Satan? When did he do this? His statement appears to be nothing more than a bare assertion that was not proven epistemologically. Assertions of this nature are just not persuasive.

Will you along with this scholar slip into subjectivism at this point to escape from your apparent inability to defend your beliefs, the "end all debate" Mormon testimony, which appears to be nothing more than subjective escapism. While I will admit that subjectivism is appealing and has arguments in its favor, there are numerous reasons to reject it. All organizations, whether religious, political, or whatever, can offer numerous testimonials in their favor.

For the sake of argument I have adopted your god concept, and then raised questions against it that you have not dealt with in any of the extensive Mormon literature that I've read. Could it be that you, the president of the Mormon Church and the twelve apostles, are really nothing more than a president of a large corporation with a counsel of twelve business men? Unless I am notified that an official response to my letter of May 13, 1988, is forthcoming, I really, have no choice but to make your inability to answer basic philosophical and theological questions public.

Sincerely,

Jack Kettler

Closing Comments

Now that you have read the questions that were sent to your leaders, please consider the following. Mormon attempts to convince me of Mormonism have failed for the following reasons. The first reason

is my faith is rooted in historical reality. I have been to Jerusalem. I am unable to find any New World locations mentioned in the *Book of Mormon*.

Mormon faith appears to be nothing more than a leap in the dark. The second reason is my God is infinite where the Mormon god is finite. A limited god is unworthy of my worship for reasons listed in this challenge. The third reason is being the Mormon inability to answer the epistemological questions. Simply assuming empiricism to be true is not convincing.

What kind of assurance do you have as a Mormon? I maintain that you have absolutely no assurance or certainty of anything - especially your eternal salvation. If you still think that you are secure within Mormonism, then either you have not understood the force of the questions or you have fled into religious irrationalism. The inability of Mormon leaders to answer questions of this nature demonstrates the logical absurdity of your finite god concept.

On September 1, 1988, Dr. Nibley promised to respond to three of my questions. Dr. Nibley said this, "Why the 98 questions? For a sensible person three could have done the job, which I intend to demonstrate in a forthcoming effusion."

After waiting one year for Dr. Nibley's forthcoming effusion, I began to wonder if possibly Dr. Nibley had got stumped. On September 3, 1989 I wrote Dr. Nibley back and explained that my reason for the ninety-eight questions was due to vague answers I receive from Mormons when asking general philosophical questions. The ninety-eight questions would force any Mormon responding to be specific. At this time I also asked Dr. Nibley if his promised effusion would be coming anytime soon. Dr. Nibley wrote back on September 13, 1989 and said "Kind of soon maybe."

At this point I can only speculate as to why Dr. Nibley has not responded yet. It is highly probable that Dr. Nibley got stuck on question number seven in the section on epistemology.* In fact, I again challenge any Mormon to answer this question. I simply do not believe any Mormon empiricist can defend the faulty epistemology of Mormonism.

Another scholar in Salt Lake City tried to respond to questions of this nature. See my follow up letter to your leaders November 14, 1988. This scholar's answers bordered on the bizarre. His answers were assertions that had no proof of any kind.

If you have had the courage to face these questions with honesty, I am sure you agree that Mormonism is not all that you thought. In fact, epistemologically speaking, Mormonism is in shambles. The scholars at B.Y.U. can not be of any help. They do not themselves grasp the epistemological weakness of Mormonism. To put it bluntly, your situation is perilous. There is a way out of the dark forest of empiricism. The answer is in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mormonism is not the answer since, in reality it is nothing more than ancient pagan beliefs that have resurfaced. If you want to give up your faulty empirical epistemology, the books listed in the Bibliography Section Two will set forward a Christian Theistic epistemology. Regarding the questions that have been raised about your world view, please write.

* Dr. Nibley addresses my questions in "The Terrible Questions," from *Temple and*

Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present, volume 12 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Don E. Norton, Editor. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1992), pp. 336-378. In essence, Dr. Nibley says my questions are the wrong questions. He believes answers to questions of a theological and philosophical nature are such that they will never satisfy everyone. So what? Should students of theology and philosophy give up and become existentialists? Nibley asks "Why the thousands of volumes?" and "Why can't they come up with answers?" (339).

"Theologians can talk about these things until the cows come home. It is inexhaustible; they keep themselves in work forever, talking about these things." (338) "In the hereafter, what difference will these questions make? The real question, of course, is, Is this all there is?" (339). Apparently, Dr. Nibley does believe that there is something to these types of questions because he refers me to a number of things he has published that deal with "many of these questions". Have the cows come home yet? Dr. Nibley has kept himself employed over the years by dealing with questions concerning the truthfulness of Mormonism. Has Dr. Nibley's answers satisfied everyone? Again, I ask Dr. Nibley have the cows come home yet?

Dr. Nibley concludes his comments on page 371 with his Mormon testimony. He believes that this inner feeling is more reliable than endless rationalistic wrangling. It should be noted that Dr. Nibley has done more than his share of rationalistic wrangling over the years. Some of Dr. Nibley's most incredible mental rationalistic gymnastics are found in his attempted defenses of the Book of Abraham. Please consult the book *...by his own hand upon papyrus* by Charles M. Larson, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Institute for Religious Research, 1992). In this work, Larson interacts with some of Dr. Nibley's futile defenses of the Book Of Abraham.

In response to my theological and philosophical challenge to Mormonism, Dr. Nibley failed to justify his own presuppositions. This was the essence of my challenge, for he borrowed from Christian presuppositions in order to defend his Mormon beliefs. Dr. Nibley uses logically structured sentences in all his writings. Yet he neglects to inform his audience how his world-view can account for such things as the laws of logic, science, and ethics. Dr. Nibley simply begs the question and hopes that nobody will notice. It is only in terms of Christian presuppositions that answers to the philosophical questions I raised can be found. Dr. Nibley believes in logic, science, and ethics. In the Mormon world-view, they are nothing more than arbitrary celestial social conventions.

The Mormon gods did not create the law structure of the universe. It is supposedly eternal. It is just there. The Mormon god is not free to break or change these laws or his power may disintegrate. (See *The First 2000 Years* by W. Cleon Skousen.) The Mormon concept of millions of gods in the universe guarantees no assurance that these laws will always be interpreted the same way by the gods. What evidence can Mormons provide these millions of gods interpret the law structure the same way? Irrational faith is an escape, not an answer. When remembering that the Mormon world-view incorporates time and chance into its universe, sooner or later some major changes will happen.

Mystery and contingency surround the Mormon gods. The Mormon gods may even become lost in space, or overthrown by celestial revolutionaries. Their power may disintegrate if they violate the sensibilities of the intelligences (eternal life forms that exist prior to human existence).

Dr. Nibley uses absolutist terminology at numerous places in his writings when referring to his god. Many Mormons make use of words such as omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. These words are meaningless when attributing them to finite deities. This is a smoke screen on Dr. Nibley's part to prop up his finite, limited god. It is contradictory and irrational to use absolutist terminology in defense of a finite deity. And furthermore, the use of absolutist terminology tends to give the average Mormon a false sense of security. Finite deities cannot control things so as to give absolute assurance. By definition, a finite deity cannot do anything as an act of sovereignty.

Finite deities cannot know the future. If the Mormon god cannot know the future how can he control the future? The Mormon god reacts to events as the future unfolds. As a result, Mormonism cannot give assurance of future security for the believer. They may appeal to the Bible to obtain assurance. In many Mormon writings, attempts have been made to prove the Bible unreliable. Why appeal to the Bible now? Has it suddenly become reliable?

The world is what God says it is in the Bible. The Christian God is the source of the universal laws that make life possible, as we know it. That is why the world is intelligible and science is possible. It is only when men reject Biblical revelation as Dr. Nibley has done that the questions I have raised become terrible. Please consult the book titled *The Mormon Concept Of God* by Beckwith/Parrish, (Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 1991.) This work demonstrates that in terms of its own presuppositions, Mormonism is irrational, incoherent and false.

The Nonsense Column

The purpose of the nonsense column is to interact with responses to my challenge of your leaders. This section will be continued as I receive attempts to defend the corporeal, empirical, finite god of the Mormon religion. Only the most bizarre speculations and the most blatant violations of logic will appear in this section.

One philosophy professor at B.Y.U. tried to answer my questions about a finite corporeal god traveling around in an endless universe. The essence of his argument was that the Mormon god's influence and power is everywhere, so in effect the Mormon god is everywhere. This apparent irrationalist confusion of word definitions may very well be an evasion tactic. Influence and power are not the same as a person's being or physical presence. This is a violation of the law of contradiction, which says that a word has a definite meaning. It means something and it also does not mean other things. The word dog has a meaning as well as not meaning other things. Dog does not mean ice cream or lake. A boss at the office may be a mean, high-pressure manager who keeps his people in fear. He may be in one room and the employees in another. His influence and power may be exerted in the room where he is not. The fact remains, the boss is not there, and consequently the employees may be hiding many things from the powerful, influential boss.

The Mormon god may very well face a similar situation, such as a well-hidden rebellion in his corner of the universe. To press the point further, let me suggest that you stop eating. Your influence and power can do this for you. Applying this type of irrationalism in our every day lives would be suicidal.

McConkie on page 359 of *Mormon Doctrine* and Talmage on page forty three of *Articles Of Faith* both taught that the Mormon god had a body that was limited to being in one place at a time. To be sure, both men also believed that their God had a spiritual nature. But having a spiritual nature with great influence and power is still not the same as being there in person. Along with this, you have the Mormon concept of a plurality of gods in the universe. This means many influences and powers everywhere. In the Bible, God reveals Himself as the Sovereign One. By definition there can be only one Sovereign. The idea of many Sovereign Gods is a logical contradiction. The attempt to answer questions about your god's inability to know things by postulating a theory of influence and power as being the same as his personal presence is a failure. The whole discussion when bringing in Mormon concepts such as many gods along with their influences and powers degenerates into total nonsense.

The same Salt Lake City scholar who some-how discovered how the Mormon god travels had some other interesting bits of knowledge. He informed me that, "This earth was once part of a much larger planet big enough to make a million earths like ours. This greater planet had such greater revolutions, that 1 day was a thousand years.

It was on this greater planet where the dinosaurs etc; existed and the part chosen to become this earth, where the garden was planted & Adam & Eve place along with the other living beings. When this chunk was hurled around the sun, it's day became a 24 hour period and this earth, then became subject to the greater light, the sun & the lesser light the moon"[sic]. I would respond to this in the same way that I did in my November 14, 1988, letter to your leaders. How does this scholar know these things? The way this scholar talks you would think he has been on a trip in outer space. With a planet the size that this scholar is talking about, can you imagine the gravitational force?

This scholar did say that "Every resurrected being, including the Gods, are no longer subject to the gravitational powers of this mortal earth". What about this large planet? The dinosaurs were not resurrected beings. They would have been smashed flat against the surface of a planet of that size. I would suggest this scholar try his hand at science fiction. Again I would say to this scholar, how do you know these things? Explain your epistemology to me. Are you getting special revelations? Do your views represent the official Mormon position? It sounds like so much religious mysticism.

To be continued . . .

"Mormon Beliefs Versus The Bible" Volumes 1-3 now available.

More Nonsense

Mormon scholar John Gee responded to my theological and philosophical challenge. Mr. Gee is associated with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.). Elements of his response were seriously flawed. Gee provided some helpful but hardly conclusive lexicographical information on the Hebrew word *Bara*.

This Hebrew word has to do with creation. Unfortunately, Gee did not deal with Isaiah 45:7 in which the Hebrew words *bara*, *asa* and *yasar* appear. This verse provides important context to the proper understanding of *Bara*.

It would be interesting to see if Gee could point out the pre-existing matter in this verse that his view of creation requires. The lexicographical information that Gee provided was restricted to a small portion of scripture. He simply failed to take into account the overall context of scripture when evaluating the lexicographical evidence. Part of the lexicographical argument that he cited would prove too much. For example, on page six of his response the material he cited attempts to prove:

1. Gen. 1:1 is warmed over paganism; cf. *enuma elish*.
2. Use of Grimm's fairy tales make Gen. 1:1 like *enuma elish* or equal to fairy tales.

Gee also made unwarranted extensive use of foreign languages. A friend of mine who reads all of the languages contained in Mr. Gee's response does not believe that he is competent to handle some of the languages in his response. This is especially true of the Hebrew as the following reveals:

1. On page three of his response Gee's quotation of Jeremiah 31:29,30 is garbled (sentence structure).
2. On page six there is a non-sensical grammatical error. He has a future becoming a past tense when the two verbs refer to entirely different action.
3. On page seven Gee confuses numbers. He has 80 written for what should be 20.

Gee's Mormon god organized the world out of pre-existing matter. This is a good Platonic belief. Gee would probably disagree with this. Hostile Christian critic Bertrand Russell in his *A History of Western Philosophy* in the section dealing with Plato's Cosmogony (branch of metaphysics) has this to say:

Thus it appears that Plato's God, unlike the Jewish and Christian God, did not create the world out of nothing, but rearranged pre-existing material. (144)

It appears that Russell, even though an avowed enemy of Christianity was more honest in dealing with theological positions than Gee. Would Gee argue that Bertrand Russell was mistaken in his assessment of the Christian doctrine of creation being different from Platonism? Gee's position is the one that is substantially the same as Plato's. It could be that Gee is blinded and cannot see that his own doctrine of creation is Platonic to the core.

In his response, Gee accused me of an historical anachronism. This is because of what I said about Socrates and his Pelagian like ideas. What I said was sufficiently qualified so that it was not an anachronism at all. Joseph Smith, allegedly the most brilliant of men, in his Book of Mormon should have eliminated the following anachronisms:

1. In the *Book of Mormon* we find in Jacob 7:27 the French word *adieu*.
2. In Alma 11:7, barley is mentioned.
3. In 3 Nephi 14:16, grapes and figs are spoken of as if they existed in the New World at this time.
4. In Ether 9:18,19, the following are mentioned: cattle, sheep, swine, goats, asses, and horses.
5. In Mosiah 9:9, wheat is mentioned.
6. 2 Nephi 5:15, describes steel, brass, iron, copper, and silver.

In the above, Smith is guilty of a serious chronological misplacing of things in the *Book of Mormon*. Incredibly, Gee in his response claims to be an "idiot". He says this because of his faith in Smith and his Book of Mormon. It is interesting to note that Smith claimed he knew more than all the lawyers of his day combined and that "God was his right hand man". Gee should pay heed to the wisdom of B. H. Roberts, a Mormon apostle. Roberts concludes that the Book of Mormon: "is the product of one mind, and that, a very limited mind..." (Consult *Studies Of The Book Of Mormon* by B. H. Roberts and *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe.)

There is one Mormon that Gee is not impressed with. His name is Sterling M. McMurrin. McMurrin was a professor at the University of Utah. Gee says, "Furthermore, almost no good Mormons that I know believe (or even care about) McMurrin." So what? This statement by Gee is non-sensible. Does Gee know all "good Mormons"? Has he interviewed all "good Mormons" to know what they believe about McMurrin? Contrary to Gee, McMurrin has some valuable insights into Mormonism.

Sterling McMurrin admits a relationship between Mormonism and Greek philosophy. In his book *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* he openly acknowledges agreement with Greek philosophy at several points. The following quotations by McMurrin establish a relationship between Mormonism and Greek philosophy in the area of creation:

Now Mormonism has much in common with the naturalistic positions of the Greek. It holds, in the first place, that although the structure and configurations of the world are the product of God's creative act, that anything at all should exist is not due to God but is simply a given fact.... In the second place, the naturalistic disposition of Mormonism is found in the denial of

the traditional conception of the supernatural. (2)

An interesting and important facet of the Mormon conception of reality is the materialism that is defended so consistently and emphatically by Mormon writers.... The Greek atomists and the Hellenistic and Roman Epicureans were materialistic in their theories of reality. (5)

The established Mormon doctrine is squarely opposed to the traditional concept of creation and is in principle reminiscent of the position common to the classical Greek naturalism. That position, which denies creation as an original beginning, was clearly enunciated in the fifth century before Christ by Parmenides of Elea. (24-25)

As a constructor of artisan God, not entirely unlike Plato's demiurge of the *Timaeus*, the Mormon deity informs the continuing processes of reality and determines the world's configurations, but he is not the creator of the most ultimate constituents of the world, either the fundamental material entities or the space time that locate them. (29)

How are Gee and Mormonism substantially different from the Greek position concerning creation? What is wrong with McMurrin's analysis?

In his book *The Reformed Pastor and Modern Thought*, Dr. Van Till says the following concerning Greek philosophy:

The ultimate concern of the Reformers was to bring the fullness of grace in its purity to men. They therefore sought to set it free from the encrustations of Greek metaphysics which are the metaphysics of fallen man. (171)

Van Til's use of the word encrustation shows how pervasive he believed Greek philosophy to be. The philosophical positions advanced by the Greeks influenced to such a large extent the areas of epistemology, ontology, ethics, and teleology that the Greek argumentation is a sufficient cause for positions that have been adopted by western religions and philosophy. These same concepts have influenced present day Mormonism. While admitting that Mormonism may not be aware of the original source of some of its positions, it nevertheless is dependent upon Greek philosophical ideas at numerous points. Apostate thinking down to present day has never escaped entirely from Greek thought. Mormon positions along with other forms of paganism are related, too, and are the result of the superior apostate thinking of the Greek philosophers.

Mormon leaders are probably not well read in Greek philosophy. The Mormon positions concerning

God, man and the cosmos simply assume the validity of previous apostate thought. This is true of many Mormon positions. This is done because of the shared presuppositions with other forms of unbelief. If you strip away the veneer of Christian terminology, you are left with something that resembles Greek assumptions in a remarkable way. Thus, you could argue that Mormonism in its developmental stages had knowledge of certain positions developed by the Greeks, while not necessarily recognizing them as an original source. By embracing their positions rather than repudiating them, Mormon thought is shown ultimately to be dependent upon Greek thought.

Only Christianity has been able to break free from Greek apostate thinking. This is true insofar as the Christian follows the Reformers in placing the self attesting Christ, speaking authoritatively in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as paramount in all thought. One of the battle cries of the Reformation was "sola scriptura." Paul describes it this way: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Every other form of western philosophy has to a large extent resulted from the thinking of the Greeks. The religions of the west have suffered from the same problem.

There is a relationship between religion and philosophy. Philosophy deals with how we know things, the nature of reality, ethics, and concepts of history. The Bible also deals with these same questions although there is a different emphasis.

Some comments from Gordon Clark's *Thales To Dewey* may be helpful concerning Christianity and pagan influence. (This will be necessary to refute Mormon assertions of Christian dependence upon Greek philosophy.) Clark makes the following summary in his section on paganism and Christianity:

For such reasons as these it may be concluded that paganism and Christianity are radically distinct. Any points of similarity are superficial and trivial. To speak of them as alike is no better than indentifying Epicureanism and Platonism on the ground that both were founded by men. This conclusion is not weakened by two cautions that should be observed. First, since the New Testament was written in Greek, it uses words found in pagan writings. John even used the term Logos. But the point in question is not the use of words but the occurrence of ideas. Logos in John and hypostasis in Hebrews are not evidences of pagan ideas. Nor should one find Aristotle in the Nicene Creed because it says God is a substance or reality. One cannot forbid Christian writers to use common words on pain of becoming pagans. The second caution is that while Christianity and the Greek philosophies, as systems, have no element in common, the Christians, as people, often held pagan ideas. They had been converted from paganism and could not divest themselves of familiar modes of thought all at once. Therefore when they came to expound and defend Christianity, they inconsistently made use of Platonism or Stoicism. By a long and arduous struggle these inconsistent

elements were gradually removed from a few fundamental areas, and thus a purely Christian Nicene Creed came into being. But on other topics, and especially in cases of individual authorship, the struggle was not so successful. Then, too, as time went on, the attempts to escape pagan ideas and to preserve the purity of New Testament thought grew weaker, and one might say, almost ceased. (195)

Unlike Joseph Smith, I have never claimed to be anything other than a layman. As a layman, it has been easy to identify numerous parallels between Greek philosophy and Mormon theology, just as Mormon writer Sterling McMurrin confirms the parallels that I have identified. In summary, it can be said that Mr. Gee's response did not rescue Mormonism from my charge that Greek apostate thinking has influenced it. Gee's extensive use of foreign languages did not intimidate or impress me. Gee did point out some legitimate mistakes that I made due to the fact that I am a layman. However, none of these problems were significant enough to overthrow my thesis that Mormonism has been influenced by various elements of Greek philosophy.

More Nonsense

Mormon (BYU) scholar Louis Midgley, while not sending a formal response, did correspond with me over a six-month period concerning my challenge to Mormonism. His satirical questions were most gracious compared to Gee's response. Our dialogue consisted primarily of questions raised by Midgley. I responded by sending Midgley books by serious Reformed Christian scholars. This was an attempt to realize my goal of getting BYU faculty members to engage in serious interaction with conservative Biblical scholarship. The following are some of the significant doctrines that Midgley questioned. Points three and four, Midgley asserted, were the result of Greek philosophy entering into Christianity. Next to the Christian doctrine that Midgley questioned, I will list the material that was sent to him.

1. Pressuppositions: Mr. Midgley received *By What Standard?* by R. J. Rushdoony, *Defense Of The Faith* by Van Til, and finally the book *Three Types of Religious Philosophy* by Gordon H. Clark.
2. Religious Liberalism: This topic arose because I questioned why Mormons interact with theological liberals and never serious Reformed scholarship. It appears as if Mormon scholars are more at home with theological liberalism. Mr. Midgley received *Christianity And Barthianism* by Van Til.
3. The Trinity: Mr. Midgley received an extensive article on the Trinity by B. B. Warfield in the book entitled *Calvin An Augustine*.
4. Original Sin: Mr. Midgley received *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* by John Murray.
5. The Authority of Scripture: Mr. Midgley received the work entitled *Scripture And Confession edited by John H. Skilton*.

Mr. Midgley offered no response to the above scholarly books. The above titles all utilize what is known as the grammatical, historical, and exegetical method when interpreting Scripture. A response on Midgley's part would reveal the radical anti-Christian presuppositions that he is imposing on Scripture. Midgley's attack on the above positions, (three, four, and in particular, five) and his lack of response to the scholarly material he received, demonstrate that he is unable to refute historic Christian theology. Midgley did reveal that his presuppositions were anti-Christian in nature. Midgley did not want to give any credibility to my question about lack of interaction with conservative scholarship (point two). Yet the absence of interaction with Christianity's best defenders is most revealing. To Be Continued.

Biblical Refutation of the Greek/Mormon Positions

1. Knowledge comes through sensations, i.e., experience. Psalm 31:5; 136:6 John 1:9; 5:6; 17:3. See chap. 8 in Language and Theology for an exegesis of verses that appear to teach knowledge coming through sensations.
2. Finite or (limited gods). Dan. 4:34,35; 5:21; Isa. 43:10-13.
3. The rejection of a sinful heart or nature. Job 15:15,16; Psalm 51:5; Eccl. 7:20; 8:11; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 3:9-18; 5:12.
4. Exceptional men becoming gods. Isa. 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:21.
5. The world or matter being eternal and not created by God or the gods. Genesis 1:1. See question number twenty-one in the section on epistemology of this work.
6. Pre-existence of souls and men. Genesis 2:7; Job 38:4; Rom. 4:17.
7. Polytheism or believing that more than one God exists. Isa. 44:6-8; 45:21.
8. The corporeal or physical god concept. Num. 23:19; Hosea 11:9; Luke 24:39; John 4:24.
9. All men are children of God. John 8:44; Eph. 2:3.
10. The concept of free agency or (free will). John 1:13; 5:40; Rom. 3:11; 8:7. By rejecting free will or agency I am not saying that we do not make choices, but that we do not make undetermined choices.
11. A. The fall of man being necessary, Gen. 3:13; Job 34:10; 2 Cor. 11:3; Jas. 1:13. When considering God's eternal plan, of course the fall is included in it. What I am objecting to is the Mormon view that the fall is necessary to continue advancing men to godhood. The Christian view is that the fall was permitted by divine decree. In the Mormon view however it is absolutely an essential good thing that

happened.

11. B. that souls come to this earth to learn good from evil, Gen. 3:19; 6:5; Ps. 14:3; Rom. 5:12; 7:18; Eph. 2:1,5,12; 4:18. Man is not on probation or learning good from evil. The Scriptures declare mankind dead in sins and trespasses. Man is in bondage or a slave to sin.

11. C. then can return after meeting certain requirements and attain salvation, i.e., Eph. 2:8,9. Man is not saved by meeting requirements or works but by grace. Grace being defined as God's undeserved love or unmerited favor.

11. D. becoming godlike. Isa. 43:10; 45:21.

12. Rejection of the Creator/creature distinction. Num. 23:19; 3:14; Jer. 23:24; 2 Chron. 6:18; Psalms 147:5.

13. An ethical dualism. Exodus 7:13; 1 Samuel 16:14; 2 Samuel 17:14; 1 Kings 22:20-22,34-38; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Prov. 16:9

* I have limited my comments in this section on purpose because it is beyond the scope of this paper. I am however more than willing to defend and explain my interpretation of the scriptures listed above.

End notes

Notes: Greek Origins

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2. Aristotle, *De Anima*, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Trans. by J. A. Smith, (New York: Random House, 1941), [Bk.2.ch.12] 425a-428a p. 581.

3. Ibid., p. 587.

4. Diogenes Laertius, *Epicurus*, *Diogenes Laertius 2*, Trans. by R.D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 10.40. p.569.

5. Joseph Smith,* *The Book Of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977), p. 520.

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7. Plato, *Parmenides*, Vol. 7 of Great Books of the Western World, Trans. by Benjamin Jowett, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), [134] p. 490.

8. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), p. 359.

9. James E. Talmage, *Articles Of Faith*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988), p. 39.

10. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, The Basic Works of Aristotle, Trans. by W.D. Ross, (New York: Random House, 1941), [Bk.7:ch.2] 1145b p. 1038.

11. Emery & Brewster, *The New Century Dictionary*, (New York: P. F. Collier & Son Corporation, 1927), p. 811.

12. LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work And A Wonder*, (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book Co. 1978), p. 345,
347.

13. Plato, *Gorgias*, Vol. 7 of Great Books of the Western World, Trans. by Benjamin Jowett, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), [523,524,526] pp. 292,293.

14. Plato, *Apology*, Vol. 7 of Great Books of the Western World, Trans. by Benjamin Jowett, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), [41] p. 211.

15. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith; (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), p. 346.

16. Milton Hunter, *The Gospel Thru The Ages*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), p. 115.

17. Diogenes Laertius, *Epicurus*, Diogenes Laertius 2, Trans. by R.D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 10.39-46. pp. 569-575.

18. Smith, Arranged by J. F. Smith; pp. 350-352.

19. Plato, *Phaedrus*, The Works of Plato, Trans. by Benjamin Jowett, (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 289.

20. McConkie, p. 589.

21. Plato, *Laws*, Vol. 7 of Great Books of the Western World, Trans. by Benjamin Jowett, (Chicago:

Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), [905] p. 768.

22. Smith, Arranged by J. F. Smith; p. 349.

23. Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, Vol. 17 of Great Books of the Western World, Trans. by S. Mackenna and P.S. Page, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 2.4,1; p. 50.

24. Joseph Smith, *Doctrine And Covenants*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976), p. 238.

25. Talmage, p. 39.

26. Epictetus, *Discourses of Epictetus*, Vol. 12 of Great Books of The Western World, Trans. by George Long, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), [Bk1:ch.9] p. 114.

27. Ibid., p. 115.

28. Mcconkie, p. 105.

29. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, Vol. 12 of Great Books of the Western World, Trans. by H. A. J. Munro, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), [1161,1194] pp. 76,77.

30. Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, Vol. 17 of Great Books of the Western World, Trans. by S. Mackenna and P.S. Page, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 2.9,15; p. 75.

31. McConkie, p. 26.

32. Plotinus, 2.3,8; p. 45.

33. Ibid., 4.8,4; p. 203.

34. McConkie, pp. 268,269.

35. Plotinus, 4.8,5&7; pp. 203,204.

36. Talmage, p. 52.

37. Plotinus, 1.2,1; p. 6. 1.2,3; p. 7. 1.2,7; p. 10. 1.3,1; p. 10.

38. McConkie, pp. 670,671.

39. Plotinus, 2.3,9; p. 45.

40. Ibid., 6.9,8; p. 358. 6.9,9; p. 359. 6.9,11; p. 360.

41. McConkie, p. 257.

42. Diogenes Laertius, *Pythagoras*, Diogenes Laertius 2, Trans. by R.D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 8.27. p. 343.

43. McConkie, p. 589.

44. A. H. Armstrong ed.. *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 26.

45. A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1977), pp. 58,59.

46. Plato, *Theaetetus*, The Works of Plato, Trans. by Benjamin Jowett, (New York:

Random House, 1956), p. 526.

47. Gordon H. Clark, *Thales To Dewey*, (Jefferson: Trinity, 1989), p. 192.

48. Joseph Smith, *The Book Of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977), 2 Nephi 2:11-27 pp. 53-55. (please read verses 11-27)

49. Clark, p. 504.

50. Sterling McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965), p. 11. (See Doctrine And Covenants p. 13.)

51. Sterling McMurrin, *The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1979), p. 17.

52. Ibid., p. 8.

53. Ibid., p. 14.

54. Ibid., p. 25.

55. Ibid., p. 29.

56. Ibid., p. 20.

57. Ibid., p. 21,22.

58. Plotinus, 1.2,6; p. 9.

Notes Nonsense Column & Comments

1. David L. Paulsen, *Must God Be Incorporeal?* (Provo: unpublished paper, 1988), pp. 8,9.

2. Alma Giggi**, (Salt Lake City: unpublished personal letter 1989).

* Lest some one question why I have listed Joseph Smith as the author of the *Book of Mormon* a word of explanation is probably necessary. Inside the front cover of the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon* Joseph Smith is listed as the Author and Proprietor.

** This scholar's response was to an earlier draft of my May 13, 1988 letter to the Mormon leaders.

I'm sure that some one will probably question the use of McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* for a source to document Mormon beliefs. Many times in the past I have documented Mormon beliefs from Mormon Doctrine only to have the Mormon say, "that's not Mormon Doctrine" or, "that's just his opinion". I simply will not waste my time playing mindless games. For the average Mormon who says something like that, let me ask you this,"

Why should I value your opinion higher than McConkie's?" Remember he was an apostle of your church. What's your status within Mormonism? Are you more knowledgeable than McConkie? Are you willing to let me quote you as an official representative of Mormonism? It seems to me that if you are questioning McConkie then you are not a very good Mormon. Remember "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy." See *Improvement Era*, June 1945, p. 354.

I will also answer this question the way Mormons respond when told that their church is not Christian. The Mormon says, "but look at the name of our church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints". Look at the name of McConkie's book. It is called *Mormon Doctrine*. The articles I have cited in McConkie's book make direct reference to Mormon Scripture or to established Mormon doctrine.

I'm sure that some will be saying "so what that our beliefs are similar to some ancient philosophical positions. No doubt these ancient beliefs were correct". Please see question number twelve in the section on Ontology.

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