

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

“We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take the veil away” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345).<sup>1</sup>

I had a Saturday off and was watching my nephews as well as my boys (not watching as much as making sure serious injury did not occur as oft happens with young boys); my wife was off shopping at Sam’s Club and Wal-Mart. Just prior to her getting back my nephews were picked up (not by child protective services, by their mother) and I came out to help unload the car when my wife pulled up. As I was doing so she asked who the guys with name tags on their shirts and ties were that go door to door.

Wondering why after almost twenty years of discussing such matters and having hundreds of books on both Mormon’s and Jehovah’s Witnesses lining our walls she would be asking such a question, I responded, “Mormon elders.” She responded, “Well, they just walked around the corner of our building.” Giddy, I started gathering my thoughts just in case they came to our door. I had compiled a new “routine” to use with Mormons that I thought would be an effective dismantling of their worldview and make them hunger for the truth. Sure enough, as I was carrying in a heavier item I could see through our kitchen window two clean cut guys come to the door. I directed their attention through the screen of the opened kitchen window by telling them I would be with them in a moment. I gave the wife a glance and she gave me that “go get’em Tiger” “look” that Spiderman gets from M.J.

After inviting them in, getting settled, with some small talk and the ritual offering of something for them to drink, they asked if I had any questions for them. I said, “I do in fact have a question, and the question stems from the previous election year and the exchange between Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney (via the media) who were both running for the Republican nomination.” They were quick to say that the church does not support any one candidate, that they are politically neutral. After their disclaimer I continued, “in an off-cuff remark to a reporter, Mike Huckabee mentioned that Mitt Romney and Mormons believe that Jesus and Lucifer are literal brothers. When Mitt Romney heard about this comment from Huckabee, he responded that this is a canard used by people against the church” (rough quote).

- “So, my question is this gentlemen, maybe you can answer it, are Lucifer and Jesus brothers?”<sup>2</sup>

I got a decidedly more open answer than I expected, but they fell short of getting to the point I was fishing for, which is: *that Heavenly Father (whom they consider God) and one of his wives had celestial sex in order to produce children whom relate to each other as siblings, making us all at least half-brothers and sisters (as there are many wives/goddesses in the Mormon heaven), and this god and goddesses were themselves conceived in much the same way.*<sup>3</sup> One author makes the point that due to

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Beverly, *Nelson’s Illustrated Guide to Religions: A Comprehensive Introduction to the Religions of the World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 368.

<sup>2</sup> This has become my standard opener in steering these young men down the “rabbit-trail,” so-to-speak. Often times they are not aware of the whole dynamic of their own faith, theology, and all that it entails.

<sup>3</sup> John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *What Do Mormons Really Believe?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2002), 54-59

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

this heavenly progeny we are all children of these beings, so “Jesus, Joseph Smith, Noah, Adam, John the Baptist.... Lucifer, who would become the Devil (a.k.a. Satan), Napoleon, George Washington, Joseph Smith, Louis Armstrong, Donny and Marie Osmond, Senator Orrin Hatch, U.S. President George W. Bush, and everyone else who has ever lived on this planet”<sup>4</sup> are siblings.

I retrieved off of one of my bookshelves a manual meant for preparing young Mormons for marriage in the temple on a seminary level. It is entitled, *Achieving Celestial Marriage*.<sup>5</sup> Reading from this should be short and sweet; all you are doing is making sure they understand the church’s stance on the issue, thus, clearing up any misconceived ideas on their part.

“If you gentlemen will indulge me, I want to read from the church's own understanding of this topic,” I then typically show them that this manual is indeed printed and published by the church, and then I read:

“By definition, exaltation includes the ability to procreate the family unit throughout eternity. This our Father in heaven has power to do. His marriage partner is our mother in heaven. We are their spirit children, born to them in the bonds of celestial marriage.”<sup>6</sup>

Continuing, I read just the headings and subheadings of the next sections:

- **GOD WAS ONCE A MORTAL MAN**
  - (1-2) He Lived on an Earth like Our Own
  - (1-3) He Experienced Conditions Similar to Our Own and Advanced Step by Step
- **GOD IS NOW AN EXALTED MAN WITH POWERS OF ETERNAL INCREASE**
  - (1-4) Our Father in Heaven Lives in an Exalted Marriage Relationship
  - (1-5) We Are Literal Children of God, Part of His Family Unit

This quick and simple reading from their own church's seminary level publication gets us both on the same page quickly.<sup>7</sup> I do not argue this point with them, I merely move on with this assumption in mind,

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Abanes, *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church* (New York, NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002), 285.

<sup>5</sup> (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Educational System Department of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 1998), 129. I will attach this entire page in the appendix.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Usually I make this point – that Heavenly Father was a mortal man – early in the conversation, and, will revisit this idea of Heavenly Father being a man born into a world of his own by stating the argument another way. I will point out that it is *possible* that their god owned a gas station, worked at a grocery store as a clerk, went to college, or, even like myself, could have been convicted of crimes and done jail time

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

that their god at some point in the finite past did not exist in bodily form (at all actually) -- was born in a heaven similar to ours, born again on the earth, and was exalted into the position he is in now. In other words, at one point in the finite past, Heavenly Father did not exist as we *know* him today. It is from this premise I continue without missing a beat. "So, according to official church doctrine, Mormon theologians, and Mormon apologists, there is an infinite regress of gods being born and giving birth to other gods. So 'Heavenly Father' himself was given birth to in a similar fashion we were, and that father of your 'heavenly father,' in turn had a father as well. So in a sense there is a great grandfather god, and so on as you regress backward into time." Again, this is not a point to argue, if they try, just point to the manual and say you are going off of official Mormon understanding of the issue, and then continue.

Make the point next then, that this differs from the historic, theistic understanding of God.<sup>8</sup> In the Judeo-Christian understanding of creation, even the space-time continuum was created.<sup>9</sup> The Mormon concept has gods being born into an already established, eternally, existing space with an already eternally existing form of matter. In other words, natural laws, moral laws, mathematical parameters and concepts, spatial components, logic, and the like, must have pre-dated Heavenly Father (the Mormon god of this world). The eye, kidney, inner ear, were not created like the Christian understands that God created them. The Christian has in mind that God created DNA and its accompanying RNA, the coccyx, brain, epidermis, the ability to pro-create, when He spoke Adam and Eve into existence. Prior to that these "items," if I can flipantly refer to them as such, did not exist.

In Mormon theology, on the other hand, DNA pre-dated Heavenly Father, and in fact, he only passes on these as traits to his offspring as they were passed on to him by his father in a sexual act with other goddesses. These forces, the laws of biogenesis, inheritance, gravity, math, moral laws, all impose onto these gods then.<sup>10</sup> The God in Christianity is above these. Actually, the God of the Judeo-Christian reality authored or is the genesis of these concepts; the god in Mormonism is in a sense secondary to

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<sup>8</sup> A definition here is warranted:

Theism is the worldview that an infinite, personal God created the universe and miraculously intervenes in it from time to time.... God is both transcendent over the universe and immanent in it. The three great theistic religions are Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.... The World Was *Created Ex Nihilo*. [In-other-words] The world is not eternal. It came into existence by God's fiat (decree). Its existence is totally contingent and dependent. The universe was not created from pre-existing material (ex materia), as in ... materialism, nor was it made out of God's essence (ex Deo), as in pantheism. It was brought into existence by God, but from nothing.

Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 722-723.

<sup>9</sup> Another short definition of this "before time" concept:

Time and space are creations of God that began at the Big Bang. If you go back beyond the beginning of time itself, there is simply eternity. By that, I mean eternity in the sense of timelessness. God, the eternal, is timeless in his being. God did not endure through an infinite amount of time up to the moment of creation; that would be absurd. God transcends time. He's beyond time. Once God creates the universe, he could enter time, but that's a different topic altogether.

Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence that Points Towards God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 104.

<sup>10</sup> Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, gen.ed. *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 148.

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

these forces or laws imposing upon him in some fashion.<sup>11</sup> Author and pastor Mike Robinson adeptly points this out when he writes:

The Latter-day Saint god lacks eternal omniscience, aseity, supremacy, sovereignty, and omnipotence.... The god of Mormonism does not need to exist for the *intelligibility of human experience*. He cannot supply the transcendental conditions that are needed for the laws of logic, love, and morality. Van Til contended that "the general precedes the particular" in our reality. This implies that the particular exalted man of Mormon theology cannot supply the general and universal realities that must be, for the necessary and unavoidable transcendental conditions listed above. A restricted and fixed exalted man cannot be the indispensable foundation for the unity of experience and knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

As we will see, even the potentiality of all of us becoming gods is connected to the primordial "sea" -- if you will, of "souls" which Mormons refer to as our preexistence -- that when used in connection with the birth of these spirit children allow them to be able to become gods in exaltation. This makes these gods, however, dependent on something that is either co-eternal or preexistent to their godhood being conferred on them; or, alternatively, their godhood being realized. This again makes the Mormon gods secondary and dependent on that which precedes them or is co-eternal with them.<sup>13</sup>

Here we will step away from the general conversational points one can make with these young Mormon missionaries and get into the *knitty gritty* for the readers edification, if we haven't already done so. We

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 223

<sup>12</sup> Presuppositional Apologetics Examines Mormonism: How Van Til's Apologetic Refutes Mormon Theology (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2007), 71-72.

<sup>13</sup> This idea of derivative or dependent deity in polytheism is explained by professor Roy Clouser:

In many polytheistic traditions there are accounts of how the gods came into existence. This means that the divinity of such gods is clearly regarded as derived and secondary as compared to whatever is divine in the sense of having unconditional reality and accounts for their origins (from now on I will call this the status of being divine per se). Take, for example, the account of the gods of ancient Greece as found in Hesiod and Homer. In Hesiod's account, the natural world in an undifferentiated state is what just is; it exists unconditionally and gave rise to everything else after it generated a gap between the earth and the heavens he called *Chaos*. Following that initial change, all other specific forms of existence were generated including the gods. According to Homer the primordial reality was *Okeanos*, a vast expanse of watery stuff from which arose all else including the gods. Despite their differences, then, both accounts agree that the gods are dependent on a more basic reality so the gods are themselves derivative realities. This is why no one of them — nor all of them together — could be called "creator" in the sense that God is in Genesis. Moreover, the gods are not only secondary divinities because of their optic dependency upon something else that is divine per se. They are also secondary in the noetic sense, since the beliefs about them depend upon the belief in Okeanos or Chaos. For no individual being could be believed to be a god — that is, a being with more divine power than humans possess — unless it was already believed that there is a per se divine source of all other things which confers varying degrees of power upon them. The same is true of the myths of ancient Babylonia. In them, too, the gods acquire their divine status and power derivatively.

- For according to them, the origin of all things was the primeval watery chaos, represented by the pair Apsu and Tiamat.... With them the cosmogenic theogony begins.

*The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 17-18 (emphasis added).

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

will pick up the more general talking point in a bit. James Talmage, Mormon Apostle and theologian, in his very important Mormon text, *Articles of Faith*, says the following:

**The Father and The Son:** A Doctrinal Exposition by The First Presidency and The Twelve — The scriptures plainly and repeatedly affirm that God is the Creator of the earth and the heavens and all things that in them are. In the sense so expressed, the Creator is an Organizer. God created the earth as an organized sphere; **but He certainly did not create, in the sense of bringing into primal existence, the ultimate elements of the materials of which the earth consists, for “the elements are eternal”** (D. & C. 93:33)<sup>14</sup>

What are these infinite properties that pre-date and in some sense coexist eternally in some form with these gods from which they derive their “eternality” from? Richard Abanes points out some of these ideas in his exhaustive history of the Mormon Church:

...there is a “limitless” amount of cosmic spirit matter known as “intelligence,” out of which Elohim and Heavenly Mother made countless spirit babies via celestial sex. Their ethereal unions somehow siphoned off portions of that great ocean of cosmic “intelligence” and clothed each of these portions with a spirit body. The resulting offspring not only bore their image, but had resident within them the potential for godhood, an attribute of Heavenly Father and Mother.... Countless souls, say LDS leaders, have already attained godhood. Orson Pratt theorized: “If we should take a million of worlds like this and number their particles, we should find that there are more Gods than there are particles of matter in those worlds.”<sup>i</sup> Brigham Young, much less willing to calculate the number of gods, admitted: “How many Gods there are, I do not know. But there never was a time when there were not Gods.”<sup>ii</sup> These teachings inspired the popular Mormons couplet: “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become.”<sup>iii</sup> <sup>15</sup>

To make this point further, Francis Beckwith mentions that “[s]ince [g]od the Father of Mormonism was himself organized (or spirit-birthed) by his [g]od, who himself is the offspring of yet another [g]od, and

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<sup>14</sup> James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1959) 465-466. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>15</sup> Richard Abanes, *One Nation Under Gods*, 285, 286-287.

<sup>i</sup> Orson Pratt, February 18, 1855, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool, F.D. Richards, 1855; lithographed reprint of original edition, 1966), vol. 2, 345. In *The Seer*, Pratt wrote: “We were begotten by our Father in Heaven; the person of our Father in Heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by His Father; and again He was begotten by a still more ancient Father, and so on, from generation to generation, from one heavenly world to another still more ancient, until our minds are wearied and lost in the multiplicity of generations and successive worlds, and as a last resort, we wonder in our minds, how far back the genealogy extends, and how the first world was formed, and the first Father was begotten” (Orson Pratt, “The Pre-Existence of Man,” *The Seer*, September 1853, vol. 1, no. 9, 132; cf. Orson Pratt, “The Pre-Existence of Man,” *The Seer*, February, 1853, vol. 1, no. 2, 23-24).

<sup>ii</sup> Brigham Young, October 8, 1859, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: Amass Lyman, 1860; lithographed reprint of original edition, 1966), vol. 7, 333.

<sup>iii</sup> Lorenzo Snow, MS, vol. 54, 404. Quoted in Hunter, 105-106.

These footnotes for the quotes within the quote are taken from *One Nation Under Gods*, 577.

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

so on ad infinitum, Mormon theology therefore implies that the [g]od over this world is a contingent being<sup>16</sup> in an infinite lineage of gods.”<sup>17</sup> Concurring, Mormon theologian B. H. Roberts, a member of the First Council of Seventy, writes:

Not even God may place himself beyond the boundary of space: nor on the outside of duration. Nor is it conceivable to human thought he can create space, or annihilate matter. These are things that limit even God's omnipotence. What then, is meant by the ascription of the attribute of Omnipotence to God? Simply that all that may or can be done by power conditioned by other eternal existences—duration, space, matter, truth, justice—God can do. But even he may not act out of harmony with the other eternal existences which condition or limit him.<sup>18</sup>

This is very important, because it makes the god Mormons here on this world worship contingent on other beings and parameters for his being and godhood, which has deep ethical consequences:

Hence, when a Mormon says that god is omnipresent he is asserting that god's influence, power, and knowledge is all-pervasive, but that the focal point of God's being (that is, his body) exists at a particular place in time and space. Because the Mormons do not believe that the universe is contingent upon God to sustain its continued existence,<sup>19</sup> there is no need for the Mormons to defend the classical view of omnipresence...

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<sup>16</sup> Concept of *contingent being*:

Contingent beings have their explanation or sufficient reason in something other than themselves. A contingent being is anything that depends on something else for its existence.

Ronald H. Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 127.

<sup>17</sup> *The New Mormon Challenge*, 224.

<sup>18</sup> B.H. Roberts, *Seventy's Course in Theology: Third and Fourth Year* (Salt Lake City, UT: Caxton Press, 1910), 4:70; quoted in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 225;

[B.H. Roberts] added that “even [God] may not act out of harmony with the other external existences [such as duration, space, matter, truth, justice] which condition or limit him. “ Mormon theologian John Widtsoe maintains that belief in creation out of nothing does nothing but cause confusion: “Much inconsistency of thought has come from the notion that things may be derived from an immaterial state, that is, from nothingness.” In addition to this assertion, Widtsoe asserts that God cannot create matter [out of nothing] nor can he destroy it: “God, possessing the supreme intelligence of the universe, can cause energy in accomplishing his ends, but create it, or destroy it, he cannot.” The sum of matter and energy, whatever their form, always remains the same.

*The New Mormon Challenge*, 104.

<sup>19</sup> The Bible has a different view on this matter, let's read from **Colossians 1:16-17**, first from the *NASB*, then from the *Message Bible*:

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. **He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.**

*New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995)

We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. **He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment.** And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

Eugene H Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002).

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

*Since God Himself came into being as God (although he existed in some state eternally), He cannot be the source and sanction of values. He Himself obeys laws and affirmed values for whose existence he is not responsible.*<sup>20</sup>

However, this gets beyond even the debate between Christian theology and Mormon theology, as we will soon see. Returning now to the conversation a bit. I often ask these Mormon elders, if the conversation allows, “why they think that whenever an atheist debates the issue of God in a university setting or formal debate, they never debate against the Mormon concept of god?” Of course they do not know because this question is rarely -- if ever -- posed to them. “I will tell you,” continuing, “It is because the atheist would be arguing against himself.” This always gets inquisitive looks and they always will ask why this is.

“Let me explain why this is,” and so I continued. I mentioned that when a person who is a lifelong atheist is born here on earth, matter (atoms, quarks, dirt, water, air, etc) doesn’t then begin to exist at the same time they are conceived; matter predated the birth of any person here on earth. The earth, the stars, and the like were here long before the not *too hypothetical* 45-year old atheist. Not only that, but natural laws such as the law of gravity, the laws of motion were also before this person being born and so, this person *is subject to them*, and in fact, lives under their sway and effects on the entire cosmos. In the same way when Heavenly Father was birthed in his heaven first by his “godley” parents he was born into an environment that worked with laws in place, even granting he was born with a “spiritual body.” (Here one may grant that in the Mormon heaven the laws may be a bit different than here on earth -- hypothetically speaking -- but that laws had to be in place nonetheless, even genetic parameters [DNA, amino acids, etc] were in place and that this god was subject to them, much like the “gods” of Grecian lore, even being controlled by wild emotions.) So here are two important definitions to express to these young men in some form or fashion:

### **Heavenly Father**

Born into an environment that imposes forces on him that are both older than him and because of *there* (these laws) imposing forces on him (gravity, causality, entropy... whatever) while he has to live in a body that can only take up that space where he is, is, well, more powerful than he.

### **Atheist**

Born into an environment that imposes forces on him that are both older than him and because of *their* (these laws) imposing on him (gravity, causality, entropy... whatever) while he has to live in a body that can only take up that space where he is, is, well, more powerful than he.

Again I point to the classical Judeo-Christian theistic thinking on matters such as these: God created even the laws of the weak and strong nuclear force and the like, matter, energy, even the space-time were brought into existence at some point in the finite past by my God. I will right about now mention

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<sup>20</sup> Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 43, 44. (Emphasis added.)

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

that this little presentation I just gave them is what I like to call “the ‘your god is too small’ presentation.” Usually it is at this point they will mention that they have a preexisting (no pun intended) appointment and they must go. Typically at this point as well, one of the elders will want to give you his testimony which is a memorized short presentation of why they believe in Mormonism, it’s their failsafe. You have the choice to wait until they give you this spiel or beat them to the punch. When I wasn’t too familiar with this presentation and hadn’t memorized the testimony we should give (found below), I use to let them have their say first. Now I beat them to the punch -- taking the proverbial wind out of their sails. Here it is:

I too have a testimony... I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus is the Christ and Savior of the world... that He died for my sins and was resurrected. I know that I am saved by grace and not by works and will inherit heaven upon that principle. I also know that God hears and answers prayer. I know all this not only by the feeling I have from the inner witness of the Holy Ghost but by the reliability of God's Word, the Bible, which declares it to be so. And, I also know that because of my relationship with Christ, Jesus has changed my life and continues to bless me!<sup>21</sup>

Emphasize the “I knows” and “Holy Ghost,” these terms hold special meanings in Mormon theology.<sup>22</sup> Now we leave behind application and get into this part of Mormon theology that is closely tied to materialism. In *Doctrines and Covenants* 131:7-8 (Mormon scripture), we find, “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes. We cannot see it, but when our bodies are purified we shall see that all is matter” (Joseph Smith). Beckwith expands on this idea showing that Mormon theology is based in a material worldview that exists eternally and infinitely:

Some thinkers, including LDS scholars, have noticed strong conceptual similarities between Mormon theism and other finite theisms and philosophical positions such as... classical materialism, and process philosophy. Moreover, Mormonism, it appears, is “committed to a thoroughgoing metaphysical materialism.” Because the LDS worldview... “affirms the independence and self-subsistence of material element (mass-energy),” it is therefore “committed to a position of physical realism.” ... Mormonism’s “physicalistic commitment is even more thoroughgoing than this,” for LDS scripture “explicitly repudiates the existence of any non-material substances.” ....<sup>23</sup>

Beckwith continues:

A passage attributed to Elder Parley Pratt reads: “Nothing exists which is not material. The elementary

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<sup>21</sup> Janis Hutchinson, *The Mormon Missionaries: An Inside Look at Their Real Message and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Resources, 1995), 16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> *The New Mormon Challenge*, 225-226. (See side-note.)

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

principles of the material universe are eternal; they never originated from nonentity, and they never can be annihilated. Immateriality is but another name for nonentity—it is the negative of all things, and beings—of all existence.”<sup>24</sup>

This same commitment to physicism as discussed throughout this work is found in the old Soviet philosophers of a bygone era. In fact, when I posted some of these ideas on the Internet, I got a response which led to a conversation of sorts. This gal, Johnna, concurred with my presentation in that she said,

- “I do believe that God (the Father, and the Son) are co-eternal with matter. Actually, I believe in some sense, as a child of God, I am co-eternal with matter, and so are you.”

Johnna didn't realize how close this is to Soviet philosophical materialism. Their application of the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis<sup>25</sup> that the Marxist applied to everything is not as strong in the Mormon application. It is however displayed very mildly in Mormon texts.<sup>26</sup> Again, according to Marxism, and to less of an extent, Mormonism, matter is eternal which, through movement causes all potential possibilities<sup>27</sup> to be realized in this infinite evolution of the thesis and antithesis becoming the synthesis.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. (Side-note) Here I do not put any of the accompanying foot notes from the original text, if one wishes to find them without buying the book here is a PDF of the chapter w/footnotes: <http://homepage.mac.com/francis.beckwith/tmnc.pdf> (last accessed 6-22-09).

<sup>25</sup> “In Marxist philosophy, the theory that primary functioning of nature involves a continuous process of a thesis coming in conflict with its antithesis, resulting in a new synthesis.” .... “Typically, in a Hegelian sense the synthesis is considered of a higher form of truth.” A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews* (Manitou Springs: Summit Press, 2006), 499, 498.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, here we find Talmage documenting the council of the gods to here on how to fashion earth and how the inhabitants would respond:

When the plans for creating and peopling the earth were under discussion in heaven, Lucifer sought to destroy the free agency of man by obtaining power to force the human family to do his will, promising the Father that by such means he would redeem all mankind so that not one of them should be lost [thesis]. This proposition was rejected, while the original purpose of the Father — to use persuasive influences of wholesome precept and sacrificing example with the inhabitants of the earth, then to leave them free to choose for themselves [antithesis] — was agreed upon; and the one to be known as the Only Begotten Son was chosen as the chief instrument in carrying that purpose into effect [synthesis].

Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 55. This has other applications as well. Are there worlds where a Lucifer type deity wins out? The Euthryphro argument is fitting because when it was “penned,” polytheism was envisioned:

...named for Plato's dialogue, the Euthryphro, in which Socrates asks Euthryphro, “Do the gods love what is pious because it is pious, or is it pious because the gods love it?”). ... the dilemma goes like this: either (a) God commands action A because A is moral or (b) A is moral because God commands A. Presumably the theist does not want to accept (a) and admit that the standard of morality is external to God. Nor would the theist want to accept (b). If (b), allegedly, then God could command anything whatever— theft, rape, genocide—and it would be moral. Thus morality is arbitrary.

Garrett J. DeWeese and J.P. Moreland, *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 98. This arbitrary morality is displayed in the Mormon battle for exaltation and the infinite time periods it finds itself in. Of course Dialectical Marxism is easily shown to be self-refuting. If time is infinite, and there is this thesis-antithesis becoming a synthesis in time. Dialectics would have reached its final synthesis an infinite time ago.

<sup>27</sup> Beckwith and Parrish rightly point to this quandary of what I termed “infinite-finitude:”

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

These ideas aside, let us see how the eternality of matter in Mormon theology fits well within an atheistic/Marxist framework:

- .... “The electron is as inexhaustible as the atom, nature is infinite....”<sup>i)</sup> Any form of matter possesses a complex structure and an infinite variety of internal and external connections and properties.<sup>28</sup>
- And again: “The indestructibility of the atom, its inexhaustibility, the mutability of all forms of matter and of its motion, have always been the stronghold of dialectical materialism.”<sup>i)</sup> Proceeding from the scientific facts of the structural heterogeneity and the inexhaustibility of matter, the diversity of the laws of motion, Lenin formulated a generalised philosophical concept of matter.<sup>29 30</sup>
- Time is an objectively real form of the existence of matter in motion.<sup>31</sup> It characterises the sequence of the occurrence of material processes, the separateness of the various stages of these processes, their duration and their development. “There is nothing in the world but matter in motion,” Lenin wrote, “and matter in motion cannot move otherwise than in space and time.”<sup>i) 32</sup>
- The Marxist-Leninist doctrine of the infinitude of the universe is the *fundamental axiom* at the basis of Soviet cosmology. .... it is the first concern of Soviet scientists to refute the conclusions of an unavoidable ‘heat death’, which is often drawn from the second law of thermodynamics. Since, according to this law, energy that has been transformed into heat cannot again be turned back entirely into higher forms of energy, our universe must be tending towards a state of affairs in which all higher forms of energy have been changed into heat and the latter in turn has been equally distributed throughout the entire universe, with the result that all macrophysical processes would have come to a standstill.<sup>33</sup>
- Rozental’s and Yudin’s *Short Philosophical Dictionary* gives the following definition of “substance”: .... For Marxist philosophical materialism, substance, i.e., essence, the ground of all things, consists in self-moving and eternally developing matter.<sup>34</sup>
- The concept of space and time. All material bodies have a certain extension: length, breadth, height. They are variously placed in relation to each other and constitute parts of one or another system. Space is a form of coordination of coexisting objects and states of matter. It consists in the fact that objects are extraposed to one another (alongside, beside, beneath, above, within, behind, in front, etc.) and have certain quantitative relationships. The order of coexistence of these objects and their states forms the

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<sup>28</sup> F. V. Konstantinov, ed., *Marxist-Leninist theory: The Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy* (trans. from the Russian by Robert Daglish; Moscow, U.S.S.R: Progress Publishers, 1974), 76; <sup>i)</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 14, 262.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 74-75; <sup>i)</sup> *Ibid*, 280-81.

<sup>30</sup> All spelling or time-period errors are in the original.

<sup>31</sup> In other words, if matter is eternal, and the atoms motion is eternal, these need places to move and exist, ergo, time is eternal as well.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 85-86; <sup>i)</sup> *Ibid*, 280-81.

<sup>33</sup> Gustav A. Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism: A Historical and Systematic Survey of the Philosophy in the Soviet Union* (trans. from the German by Peter Heath; New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958), 436.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

structure of space.... Space and time are universal forms of the existence of matter, the coordination of objects. The universality of these forms lies in the fact that they are forms of existence of all the objects and processes that have ever existed or will exist in the infinite universe.<sup>35</sup>

- To sum up, all objects and processes in the world are finite. But the totality of finite things and processes is infinite. The universe had no beginning, has no end and is inexhaustible.... The concept of beginning is meaningful when applied not to the universe as a whole but only to separate, specific things and processes, that is to say, to the finite. We can set no limits to the universe as a whole. It categorically forbids us to do so. It is ageless [e.g., matter and motion]. It is infinitely old and eternally young.<sup>36</sup>

The idea of the eternally evolving matter is found in concept at least, in this phrase about Mormon gods, who are not non-material: *With Powers Of Eternal Increase*.<sup>37</sup> Of course, this extreme form of materialism has been discounted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The progression of historical events, if remembered, helps in conversation in regards to this topic. Lee Strobel does a great job in relaying the evidence that we live in a finite cosmos and not an infinite one in his discussion with Dr. William Lane Craig:

When Albert Einstein developed his general theory of relativity in 1915 and started applying it to the universe as a whole, he was shocked to discover it didn't allow for a static universe. According to his equations, the universe should either be exploding or imploding. In order to make the universe static, he had to fudge his equations by putting in a factor that would hold the universe steady.

In the 1920's, the Russian mathematician Alexander Friedman and the Belgium astronomer George Lemaitre were able to develop models based on Einstein's theory. They predicted the universe was expanding. Of course, this meant that if you went backward in time, the universe would go back to a single origin before which it didn't exist. Astronomer Fred Hoyle derisively called this the Big Bang -- and the name stuck!

Starting in the 1920's, scientists began to find empirical evidence that supported these purely mathematical models. For instance, in 1929, the American astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered that the light coming to us from distant galaxies appears redder than it should be, and this is a universal feature of galaxies in all parts of the sky. Hubble explained this red shift as being due to the fact that the galaxies are moving away from us. He concluded that the universe is literally flying apart at enormous velocities. Hubble's astronomical observations were the first empirical confirmation of the predictions by Friedman and Lemaitre.

Then in the 1940's, George Gamow predicted that if the Big Bang really happened, then the background temperature of the universe should be just a few degrees above absolute zero. He said this would be a relic from a very early stage of the universe. Sure enough, in 1965, two scientists accidentally discovered the universe's background radiation -- and it was only about 3.7 degrees above absolute zero. There's no explanation for this apart from the fact that it is a vestige of a very early and a very dense state of the

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Spirkin, *Dialectical Materialism* (trans. from the Russian by Robert Daglish; Moscow, U.S.S.R: Progress Publishers, 1983), 77-78.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

<sup>37</sup> *Achieving Celestial Marriage*, 129.

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

universe, which was predicted by the Big Bang model.

The third main piece of the evidence for the Big Bang is the origin of light elements. Heavy elements, like carbon and iron, are synthesized in the interior of stars and then exploded through supernova into space. But the very, very light elements, like deuterium and helium, cannot have been synthesized in the interior of the stars, because you would need an even more powerful furnace to create them. These elements must have been forged in the furnace of the Big Bang itself at temperatures that were billions of degrees. There's no other explanation.

So predictions about the Big Bang have been consistently verified by the scientific data. Moreover, they have been corroborated by the failure of every attempt to falsify them by alternative models. Unquestionably, the Big Bang model has impressive scientific credentials . . . . Up to this time, it was taken for granted that the universe as a whole was a static, eternally existing object . . . . At the time an agnostic, American astronomer Robert Jastrow was forced to concede that although details may differ, "the essential element in the astronomical and Biblical accounts of Genesis is the same; the chain of events leading to man commenced suddenly and sharply, at a definite moment in time, in a flash of light and energy".... Einstein admitted the idea of the expanding universe "irritates me" (presumably, said one prominent scientist, "because of its theological implications").<sup>38</sup>

This should be put in bullet points for easy memorization:

- Albert Einstein developed his general theory of relativity in 1915;
- In the 1920s using Einstein's theory, a Russian mathematician and Belgium astronomer predicted the universe was expanding;
- In 1929, Hubble discovered the Red-Light shift showing that galaxies are moving away from us;
- In the 1940's, George Gamow predicted a particular temperature to the universe if the Big Bang happened;
- In 1965, two scientists discovered the universe's background radiation -- and it was only about 3.7 degrees above absolute zero.

That should suffice to make clear the scientific evidences for the theological implications of the beginning of the universe.<sup>39</sup> It is clear that atheists, pantheists, and polytheists (Mormons) all have to

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<sup>38</sup> *The Case for a Creator*, 105-106, 112.

<sup>39</sup> Some Mormon scholars will "appeal to eleven-dimensional superstring theory in an attempt to justify the idea that God may exist in dimensions other than those of our four-dimensional space-time manifold," *The New Mormon Challenge*, 149. I am sure that some Mormon apologists will latch onto the many variations of cosmological theorems that litter scientific literature [front-cover article headline & article title]:

"The Future of String Theory," *Scientific American*, Vol 289, num. 5: [11-2003], 68-73. (Front cover of this issue) "Strings & Spacetime With 11 Dimensions: Physicist Brian Greene Talks about String Theory, Quantum Gravity, Parallel Worlds, and More"; Michael D. Lemonick, "Before the Big Bang," *Discover*, vol 25, num 2 [2-2004], 34-41. (Front cover of this issue) "What Existed Before the Big Bang? Perhaps a Nearby Universe Collides with Ours Over and Over In a Never-Ending Dance of Creation"; Corey S. Powell, *A Discover Field Guide: The*

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

account for the scientific<sup>40</sup> and philosophical evidence that has been pointed to in Hebrew Scripture in the Genesis story of creation. A quick treatise on the philosophical evidence against Mormon cosmology seems to be called for here.<sup>41</sup>

The argument that if there were an actual collection of historical events building from an infinite past, we would never have reached this point in history. This argument is called, *the impossibility of traversing the infinite*, and it goes like this:

In order for us to have “arrived” at today, temporal existence has, so to speak, traversed an infinite number of prior events. But before the p[resent event could arrive, the event immediately prior to it would have to arrive, and before that event could arrive, the event prior to it would have to arrive, and so on ad infinitum. No event could ever arrive, since before it could elapse there will always be one more event that had to have happened first. Thus, if the series of past events were beginningless, the present event could not have arrived, which is absurd.<sup>42</sup>

Here is another example so the reader grasps this important refutation of any epistemology that includes an infinite past rather than a past that began to exist:

1. The temporal series of events is a collection formed by successive addition.
2. The collection formed by successive addition cannot be an actual infinite.
3. Therefore the temporal series of events cannot be an actual infinite<sup>43</sup>

It follows that the temporal series of events is finite and therefore has a beginning. Perhaps a simple illustration will help. Suppose that before you, the reader, reached this page in your reading of the present

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<sup>40</sup> An example of this scientific proof comes from the unity of science, to which the Sahakian's speak to:

The modern scientist, who believes in a single system of laws, in one universe, in a unified power, ridicules Polytheism, for he cannot accept the notion of diverse, discordant supreme beings or multiple all-powerful deities. In science there is no separate system of natural laws for biology, another for physics, still another for chemistry, etc., but only one system valid for all branches of science. Actually, the scientist believes, not in many varieties of science, but in one unified science valid for one world, a universe. Consequently, from this point of view, the power (one God) lying behind the universe must be unified. On the other hand, Polytheism envisions many worlds (a "poly-verse" rather than a universe), each with its own god at cross purposes with the others. Scientific order, as we know it today, can find no basis for such a view.

William S. Sahakian and Mable Lewis Sahakian, *Ideas of the Great Philosophers* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 87.

<sup>41</sup> I did not deal too much with the impossibility of an actual regress of historical sequences of events, gods begetting gods. I recommend two books for this in relation to Mormonism however: Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991); and, Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 473-473.

<sup>43</sup> William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (London, England: Macmillan, 1979), 103; found in, Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J.P. Moreland, eds., *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 64.

## Are Mormons Really Dialectical Materialists?

book you had first to read the page before it, and that before you read that page you had to read the one before it, and so on, going all the way back to the first page. Since the book has a first page, your coming to this page requires that you first read only a finite number of pages. More pages could be added to the front of this book to lengthen the time it would take for you to get to this page.

Let us suppose that you are a better than average reader and that it takes only two minutes for you to read each page; and let us suppose that you read continuously until you get to this page. Then, if there are only ten pages to complete before this page, it will take you twenty minutes to get to this page in your reading. How long will it take if you must first read twenty pages, or fifty pages, or a hundred pages, or ten thousand pages?

I'll let you do the math. The important thing to notice is that in every case there is always only a finite amount of time it will take. When will you get to this page if you must first read 200,000 pages? In about 66,667 hours! That's a long but finite amount of time. But suppose we now add an infinity of pages to the front of this book. When will you get to this page if you must first read all of those pages? Answer: never. So if you find yourself reading this page after completing all the pages before it, you know you've read only a finite number of pages.

The same sort of thing holds for the series of events making up the total history of the universe. Take some event in the actual history of the universe, like the birth of my daughter Erin. That event can occur only if a finite number of events must occur first. If an infinite number of events must occur before her birth, then she would never be born. So, either I have hallucinated her birth, or only a finite number of events occurred prior to her birth. If only a finite number of events occurred before her birth, then the universe has not always existed but had a beginning. Since I am not hallucinating, the universe must have had a beginning.<sup>44</sup>

I hope one can see the strength of the Christian worldview when compared to the Mormon worldview. As mentioned before, this is evidence that not only the Mormon has to bow to, but also the atheist and pantheist.<sup>45</sup>

What follows on the next page in the *APPENDIX* is a scan of page 129 from the LDS seminary resource, *Celestial Marriage: Key to Exaltation*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Beckwith, Craig, Moreland, *To Everyone an Answer*, 64-65.

<sup>45</sup> Philippians 2:10 combined with Romans 1:20.

<sup>46</sup> (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Educational System Department of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 1998).

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## Celestial Marriage: Key to Exaltation

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### (1-1) INTRODUCTION

The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches that man is an eternal being, made in the image and likeness of God. It also holds that man is a literal child of God and has the potential, if faithful to divine laws and ordinances, of becoming like his heavenly parent. These truths are generally well understood by Latter-day Saints.

Less well understood, however, is the fact that God is an exalted man who once lived on an earth and underwent experiences of mortality. The Prophet Joseph Smith refers to this as “the great secret.” (*Times and Seasons* 5:613 [15 Aug. 1844]. See also Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345.) The progression of our Father in heaven to godhood, or exaltation, was strictly in accordance with eternal principles, “for he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.” (D&C 88:22.)

By definition, exaltation includes the ability to procreate the family unit throughout eternity. This our Father in heaven has power to do. His marriage partner is our mother in heaven. We are their spirit children, born to them in the bonds of celestial marriage.

The Lord would have all his children attain exaltation, but men must have their agency. Only those who subscribe by ordinance and by faithful adherence to covenant are worthy of “a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.” (D&C 132:19.)

### GOD WAS ONCE A MORTAL MAN

#### (1-2) He Lived on an Earth like Our Own

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 345.)

#### (1-3) He Experienced Conditions Similar to Our Own and Advanced Step by Step

“Remember that God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement; has moved forward and overcome, until He has arrived at the point where He now is. ‘Is this really possible?’ Why, my dear friends, how would you like to be governed by a ruler who had not been through all the vicissitudes of life that are common to mortals? If he had not suffered, how could he sympathise with the distress of others? If he himself had not endured the same, how could he sympathise and be touched with the feelings of our infirmities? He could not, unless he himself had passed through the same ordeal, and overcome step by step.” (Orson Hyde in *JD*, 1:123.)

### GOD IS NOW AN EXALTED MAN WITH POWERS OF ETERNAL INCREASE

#### (1-4) Our Father in Heaven Lives in an Exalted Marriage Relationship

“No matter to what heights God has attained or may attain, he does not stand alone; for side by side with him, in all her glory, a glory like unto his, stands a companion, the Mother of his children. For as we have a Father in heaven, so also we have a Mother there, a glorified, exalted, ennobled Mother.” (Melvin J. Ballard, as quoted in Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin J. Ballard*, pp. 205-6.)

#### (1-5) We Are Literal Children of God, Part of His Family Unit

“We are the children of God, our Heavenly Father. We are members of his family. We are his spirit offspring. We were born in the premortal life as spirit beings, sons and daughters of a glorified, perfected, exalted being. This holy being himself lives in the family unit. He has a fullness of glory and power and might and dominion. . . . We are the literal offspring of the most glorious personage of whom it is possible to conceive. He is God Almighty, our Heavenly Father.” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Households of Faith,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1971, p. 4.)