

There Be Gods Many: An Exposition of the Latter-day Saint Doctrine on The Plurality of Gods

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Godhead and Trinity

Mormons are often accused of hiding their history and doctrines from the general populace of the church, as well as its investigators, out of fear that in breaching the subjects they will drive away the masses. One such doctrine that is highly susceptible to this unwarranted criticism is the revelation given by Joseph Smith detailing the plurality of Gods.

Joseph prefaced a sermon delivered on June 16, 1844 in Nauvoo, Illinois as follows:

“I will preach on the plurality of Gods. I have selected this text for that express purpose. I wish to declare I have always and in all congregations when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached by the Elders for fifteen years.

“I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit, and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. If this is in accordance with the New Testament, lo and behold! we have three Gods anyhow, and they are plural: and who can contradict it?”¹

The notion that Latter-day Saints wish to sweep this doctrine under the rug is laughable in all of its aspects. Anyone who has ever entertained the missionaries is aware of this doctrine. It is a doctrine that sets the church apart from all the rest of Christendom and that makes the Church of Jesus Christ unique. Without it the church is no more enlightened than all of the rest of modern apostate Christianity. The doctrine is generally taught in the very first missionary discussion when the missionaries teach the nature of God in the context of Joseph Smith’s first vision:

“...I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”²

From the very beginning Joseph Smith knew and taught that God, the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ, were two separate and distinct beings. He saw both of them, together, with Jesus standing on the Father's right hand. So if they are separate beings and God the Father is God and Jesus Christ is God then there are two Gods.

At Jesus' baptism three distinct personages manifested themselves. Jesus was physically present in the flesh. God, the Father, spoke from heaven declaring Jesus to be His son. The Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove. Jesus was not a ventriloquist throwing His voice from the heavens and He was not a magician pulling a dove out of thin air. These were distinct manifestations of three separate entities (*Mark 1:10,11; Luke 3:22*).

However the creeds of men say:

“They are not three Gods, but one God... And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another. But the whole three persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.”³

“We believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father; God of God; Light of light; very God of very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father... .”⁴

Tertullian, who coined the term “Trinity” and was one of the ante-Nicene fathers of the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries A.D., agreed with Joseph Smith and those Nicene and post-Nicene fathers who came after him distorted the true interpretation and meaning of the word. The term “Trinity” was originally coined in response to a false doctrine being circulated by Praxeas (whom Tertullian called a heretic) who taught the Godhead in the same manner in which Athanasius and the council of Nice later taught it. Praxeas taught the sameness of the Father and the Son to which the author of the original definition of the “Trinity” replied:

“My assertion is that the Father is one, and the Son one, and the Spirit one, and that They are distinct from Each Other... Happily the Lord Himself employs this expression of the person of the Paraclete, so as to signify not a division or severance, but a disposition (of mutual relations in the Godhead); for He says, “I will pray the Father, and He shall send you another Comforter...even the Spirit of truth,” thus making the Paraclete distinct from Himself, even as we say that the Son is also distinct from the Father; so that He showed a third degree in the Paraclete, as we believe the second degree is in the Son, by reason of the order observed in the *Economy*. Besides, does not the very fact that they have the distinct names of *Father* and *Son* amount to a declaration that they are distinct in personality?”⁵

“So it is either the Father or the Son, and the day is not the same as the night; nor is the Father the same as the Son, in such a way that Both of them should be One, and One or the Other should be Both,—an opinion which the most conceited “Monarchians” maintain. He Himself, they say, made Himself a Son to Himself. Now a Father makes a

Son, and a Son makes a Father; and they who thus become reciprocally related out of each other to each other cannot in any way by themselves simply become so related to themselves, that the Father can make Himself a Son to Himself, and the Son render Himself a Father to Himself... Now all this must be the device of the devil—this excluding and severing one from the other—since by including both together in one under pretence of the *Monarchy*, he causes neither to be held and acknowledged, so that He is not the Father, since indeed He has not the Son; neither is He the Son, since in like manner He has not the Father: for while He is the Father, He will not be the Son...

“It will be your duty, however, to adduce your proofs out of the Scriptures as plainly as we do, when we prove that He made His Word a Son to Himself. For if He calls Him Son, and if the Son is none other than He who has proceeded from *the Father* Himself, and if the Word has proceeded from *the Father* Himself, He will then be the Son, and not Himself from whom He proceeded. For *the Father* Himself did not proceed from Himself. Now, you who say that the Father is the same as the Son, do really make the same Person both to have sent forth from Himself (and at the same time to have gone out from Himself as) that Being which is God.”⁶

The Bible tells us that these Divine Beings are neither one in substance (material) nor coequal. It is clear that God, the Father, is ultimately in charge for he sent Jesus Christ to Earth to redeem mankind and Jesus followed the order.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved” (*John 3:16,17*).

There are several great truths in this verse, two of which debunk the claims of the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds. 1) Jesus is not coequal with God the Father inasmuch as God the Father “sent” His son to the Earth, and 2) Jesus Christ and God the Father are two separate and distinct personages as shown in the very act of “begetting”. These two principles are later born out once more when Jesus declares, “I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I” (*John 14:28*). Again, Jesus is not going unto Himself and He sets a distinct hierarchy of the Gods.

There are some Protestant faiths, or at least the clergy of these faiths, that do understand the separate nature of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as evidenced by the following in “Morning Star,” a weekly newsletter of Wycliffe College, by Alan L. Hayes, director of the Toronto School of Theology:

“It seems to me preferable for a number of reasons to say clearly that YHWH is (at least in his appearances to human beings) Christ himself — that is, not God the Father, but God the Son.

“The pre-eminent reason for saying so is that, when we pray to God, we do so ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Our trinitarian theology affirms that the only access which any human being can have to God the Father is through the Son. ‘No one knows the Father

except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’ If the Father appeared and spoke to Moses in the burning bush; if he communicated directly to the prophets; if he was worshipped by Israel without the necessity of a mediator, then the Church’s doctrine of the Trinity is mistaken. ...

“The idea of Christ’s divinity [*as it related to Monarchism and the modern Orthodox conception of the Trinity*] and the doctrine of the Trinity were added in later centuries by the ascetic Greek philosophers who by then had taken control of the Church” [*brackets mine*].⁷

Just as Jesus was sent by the Father the third member of the Godhead is sent by Jesus Christ, through permission of the Father, again setting up a divine hierarchy, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (*John 15:26*).

But what of the scriptures that say they are one?

“I and my Father are one” (*John 10:30*).

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (*1 John 5:7*).

Besides the fact that *1 John 5:7* in the original Greek, as well as in the Latin Vulgate, only says, “That there are three witnessing,” and excludes the remainder of the verse that was later introduced by a Trinitarian believing monk,⁸ the scriptures must agree in harmony of doctrine if they are to be believed. One verse cannot cancel out another and so it is necessary to discover what this “oneness” signifies since the scriptures are clear that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinct and separate individuals.

The best explanation of this “oneness” comes from the Bible and from John himself as he details Jesus’ prayer for His disciples:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (*John 17:20-23*).

Jeff Benner, of the Ancient Hebrew Research Center, explains this concept of “oneness” as it relates to the Hebrew mind. After all, Jesus and John were both Hebrew and their thought processes would be those of the Middle Easterner of 2000 years ago.

“The Western mind sees ‘one’ as a singular, void of any connection to something else. For instance, ‘one’ man is an individual entity to himself, just as ‘one’ tree is an entity to itself. To the ancient Hebrew Eastern mind, nothing is ‘one’; all things are dependent upon something else. A man is not ‘one,’ but a unity of body, mind and breath that is

expressed in the Hebrew word ‘נֶפֶשׁ’⁹ (*nephesh*). The man is also in unity with his wife and family as well as with the larger community. Even a tree is a unity of roots, trunk, branches and leaves, which is also in unity with the surrounding landscape. ‘One’ year is a unity of seasons. The first use of the word ‘אֶחָד’ (*ehhad* [– one]) is found in Genesis 1:5 where ‘evening and morning,’ two states of opposite function, are united to form ‘one’ day.” Therefore, Mr. Benner suggests that the Hebrew word translated as “one” would be better translated as “unity”.¹⁰

This makes perfect sense when the context of Jesus’ prayer in John 17 is considered. It would be quite impossible and ridiculous to assume that Jesus wanted all of his disciples to meld into one substance. As Joseph Smith said when explaining the incomprehensibility of such a notion, “All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God—he would be a giant or a monster.”¹¹ So, according to the Bible, the author of the term “Trinity”, and an expert in the field of ancient Hebrew thought and lexicon, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God in unity and purpose but are three Gods in person and individuality each with their own distinct place within the hierarchy of the Gods. If this were not the case, as Alan Hayes of Toronto School of Theology puts it, there would be no need for a mediator.

The dispute between the concept of Godhead and Trinity then comes down to semantics. If the term “Trinity” is used as Tertullian used it, meaning three separate and distinct individuals that are united in one purpose, the end result being to bring about our everlasting salvation, then there is no contradiction of terms. Godhead also has this definition. However, if the term “Trinity” is used as Athanasius defined it, three beings melded into one substance but manifesting Himself in three different forms, then this is *Monarchism* and was decried as heresy in the ante-Nicene church, being an invention of later Greek philosophers and not having any biblical support.

Therefore, Joseph Smith was quite correct in affirming three separate individuals, each with the title of God, making three Gods individually and one God, or Godhead, united in purpose. Thus, there is a plurality of Gods.

Of God, Gods and gods

Even if a plurality of Gods can be shown in the Godhead/Trinity it is clear in the teachings of Joseph Smith that his doctrine went beyond the three beings that comprise it and he taught a multiplicity of gods besides the Holy Triune.

“Paul says there are Gods many and Lords many. I want to set it forth in a plain and simple manner; but to us there is but one God—that is *pertaining to us*; and he is in all and through all. But if Joseph Smith says there are Gods many and Lords many, they cry, ‘Away with him! Crucify him! crucify him!’

“...Paul, if Joseph Smith is a blasphemer, you are. I say there are Gods many and Lords many, but to us only one, and we are to be in subjection to that one, and no man can limit the bounds or the eternal existence of eternal time. Hath he beheld the eternal

world, and is he authorized to say that there is only one God? He makes himself a fool if he thinks or says so, and there is an end of his career or progress in knowledge. He cannot obtain all knowledge, for he has sealed up the gate to it.

“Some say I do not interpret the scripture the same as they do. They say it means the heathen's gods. Paul says there are Gods many and Lords many; and that makes a plurality of Gods, in spite of the whims of all men. Without a revelation, I am not going to give them the knowledge of the God of heaven. You know and I testify that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods. I have it from God, and get over it if you can. I have a witness of the Holy Ghost, and a testimony that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods in the text. I will show from the Hebrew Bible that I am correct, and the first word shows a plurality of Gods; and I want the apostates and learned men to come here and prove to the contrary, if they can. An unlearned boy must give you a little Hebrew. *Berosheit baurau Eloheim ait aushamayeen vehau aurait*, rendered by King James' translators, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." I want to analyze the word *Berosheit*. *Rosh*, the head; *Sheit*, a grammatical termination, The *Baith* was not originally put there when the inspired man wrote it, but it has been since added by an old Jew. *Baurau* signifies to bring forth; *Eloheim* is from the word *Eloi*, God, in the singular number; and by adding the word *heim*, it renders it Gods. It read first, "In the beginning the head of the Gods brought forth the Gods," or, as others have translated it, "The head of the Gods called the Gods together." I want to show a little learning as well as other fools—¹²

Before venturing into an affirmation of Joseph's Hebrew translation a few notes will be necessary to preface the following apology.

First, it is important to recognize that transliteration is not a refined science and Joseph Smith's scribe was transliterating the sounds of the Hebrew into the English alphabet as best he could. Joseph rarely wrote anything himself due to the difficulty he had with the written word but dictated thousands of pages of manuscript, including the Book of Mormon.¹³ This point is only brought up for the benefit of those who are unknowledgeable of other languages with different phonemic representations. As Joseph spoke the first word in the Bible, **בראשית** (generally transliterated as "*bereshith*") his clerk was at the mercy of phonemic recognition and transliterated the sounds as seen in the above text.

Second, the use of Early Semitic Pictographs that were in use at the time of the original Mosaic writings, as well as the modern Hebrew equivalency, will be employed in this defense in order to convey the true meaning of the author of Genesis.

Third, it is important to realize that the mindset of the Middle Easterner was, and still is, very different from that of occidental thinkers. Semitic populations tend to think in concrete terms and are not prone to grasp abstract concepts.

“In order to fully comprehend the original writers' understanding of the texts he created, we must immerse ourselves in his culture and language, training our minds to read the texts through his eyes and mind.”¹⁴

Lastly, The original Alephbet (the Hebrew equivalent of our Alphabet) was a divinely inspired writing system. Not only did each letter, depicted as a pictograph, represent a sound in the language but also each picture had a unique meaning that when combined with the other letters or pictographs painted a picture of what that particular word meant. Therefore it will be necessary to investigate the original meanings through the use of various lexicons of the Hebrew language that delve into the etymology of each word through the ancient pictographic meanings, as well as noted scholars in Biblical Hebrew and their understanding of the words. There are also biblical scholars who insist on a numerological code for each word that gives it an even deeper meaning and clearer understanding. The perfection of such a system makes one scratch the head in amazement and contemplate which came first, the written language or the spoken language. No other language on Earth can match the completeness of the original ancient Hebrew writing system.

With these explanatory notes out of the way it is now possible to launch into the defense of Joseph's words through an in depth analysis of each of the first three words of the Torah, which sets the stage for God's entire plan of salvation as it relates to each and every individual that has ever lived or will live upon this earth.

In most versions of the English Bible the first three words read, "*In the beginning God created.*" The Hebrew Torah uses only three words to say the same (and so much more)

אלהים ברא בראשית "*bereshith bara Elohim.*" One must keep in mind that Hebrew is read right to left instead of left to right, therefore the first word here is בראשית (*bereshith*) and is translated as "in the beginning".

Analysis of בראשית ברא אלהים (bereshith bara Elohim)

This word has three components: a prefix, a root, and a suffix. The prefix -ב (beyt) means "in". The root ראש (resh) literally means "head". The suffix ית- (eith) is a suffix such as the -ness in "faithfulness" or the -ing in "beginning". Affixes generally change the function of a word, for instance, from an adjective to a noun as in "faithful" to "faithfulness." Joseph Smith said, in his King Follet funeral sermon, that the -ב prefix was added by "an old Jew without any authority... he thought it too bad to begin to talk about the head!"¹⁵ The prophet had this information through revelation and the affixation apparently happened many, many years ago, as there is no written record of such an occurrence, although at least one Jewish source alludes to this being the case:

Adding the letter ב (bet) to ראשית (reshith) "forms the first word of the Torah comprised of six letters, corresponding to the unfoldment of the six days of creation."¹⁶

"It was only after the Jews came into contact with Greek philosophy that the symbolism of numbers began to play a really important part in the Jewish interpretation of the Bible,"¹⁷ therefore, it seems only fitting, since these first three words encompass the entirety of the

creation story, that a sixth letter would be added to symbolize the six phases or “days” of creation thus foreshadowing the creation process. There is, then, some substantiation for the knowledge that the prophet expounded upon, and which he came to have, by means of revelation. However, for this purpose the -ב (bet) suffix will be left intact, as it will prove neither a hindrance nor an asset to the apology and will still vindicate Brother Joseph’s claims.

The original Hebrew pictographic alephbet drew a picture meaning of this first word of the Torah in this fashion **בְּרֵאשִׁית**.¹⁸ In order for this to make any sense it will first be necessary to learn what each letter stood for and what the pictographic representation meant. Therefore the following chart and key are provided in order to ease understanding.

Genesis 1:1 word 1 – bereshith (In the beginning)

בְּרֵאשִׁית - פִּי אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ

ב	פ	tent	Family, house, in	b
ר	ר	head	First, beginning, top	r
א	א	ox	Strong, power, leader	a
ש	ש	teeth	Sharp, press, eat, devour, two	sh
י	י	hand	Work, throw, worship	y, i
ת	ת	mark	Sign, mark, signature	t

First column - Modern Hebrew.

Second column - original representation of the letter in pictographic form.

Third column - English name equivalent of the Hebrew letter/pictograph¹⁹.

Fourth column - the original meaning of the letter/pictograph.²⁰

Fifth column – English letter equivalent.

So according to Benner’s meanings of the original pictographs it is possible that this first word signifies, or paints a picture of, a family (פ) where at the top, or head (ר), sits a leader (א) who is pressing/explaining (ש) his work (י) and the purpose thereof (ת). In fact, Benner translates this first word as “In the summit” in his translation.²¹

The Dictionary of the Torah gives a like translation to the original pictographs: “Conveys the capacities to receive/פ... the knowledgeable elevation/ר of the principles/א of wisdom/ש to activate and give significance, values/י to all things/ת.”²²

When these two definitions are taken in context with what is known through modern revelation and the extant scriptures, concerning the primordial state of affairs of all men and the drama that unfolded in the courts on high at that time, it is evident that there was much more going on “in the beginning” than simply a phrase depicting some abstract idea of a point in time. While

Benner’s meanings give us the scene, the Dictionary of the Torah fills in the details. Between the two a clear picture emerges of a loving Father sitting in council with his children in a family setting where he is expounding to them the purposes for the work that He is about to undertake and the ultimate goal in so doing, which is to give them the capacity to increase in knowledge and wisdom, obtaining the principles of godliness so that they may be elevated as He is, thus giving significance to the creation.

These first three words point to a time prior to the beginning of the processes of creation and refer to an intellectual creation, or a planning stage, when the bare materials already existed and were in chaos and unformed.²³ This intellectual creation was, indeed, the first phase of creation and it was planned in coordination and with the assistance and support of others that were present, as will be shown in the exposition of the word “Elohim”.

Genesis 1:1 word 2 – bara (created)

The first item that should be noted in this word is the singular masculine imperfect construct of the verb, which is better translated “he is forming”. There are only two tenses in the Hebrew language and they are related to action, not time. For all completed actions the perfect tense is utilized. For actions that are not completed the imperfect tense is used, therefore this tense correlates most closely to the English present and future tenses.

Utilizing the same formula employed in the analysis of the word “bereshith” (בראשית) the investigation of the word “bara” (ברא) will now be undertaken.

ברא - טאח

ב	ט	tent	Family , house, in	b
ר	א	head	First, beginning, top	r
א	ח	ox	Strong, power, leader	a

Here the first three letters of the first word are repeated, as if for emphasis, a common practice in Hebrew poetry, and the pictographs show that within the tent (ט) (the ancient Semites’ house where the family resides) the head (א) of the household is beginning to lead by virtue of his position as the “strength of the house (ח),” the “ab” or “father” (אח - אט).

The Dictionary of the Torah literally defines this word as “to be with/ט vision/seeing/אח, a primary goal...” and further explains that the use of the word in Genesis 1:1 is to be understood “to formulate, shape,” thus debunking the modern concept of creation *ex nihilo*.²⁴ Arthur McCalla, a proponent of creationism in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University explained that, “Creation signifies not the act of bringing

something into being out of nothing but a process of bringing something from potential being into actual being.”²⁵ That the elements of creation were already present is explicit in the second verse, which states, “The Earth was without form” (*Genesis 1:2*).

Genesis 1:1 word 3 – Elohim (God)

This word, translated as God in places and gods in other places within the Bible, is of interesting construct. God in the singular form is El or Eloah, when the –im suffix is added the word becomes a masculine plural noun. Therefore, Joseph Smith was correct in his interpretation of the noun and it should be translated as a plural. However, in all languages nouns and verbs within a correct grammatical sentence must agree in number and gender. Here they clearly do not; so, the deep meaning of the structure must be investigated, as this sentence, on the surface, seems to be grammatically incorrect.

אלהים - אלהים

א	ל	ox	Strong, power, leader	a
ל	ש	Shepherd Staff	Authority, to, teach, yoke, bind	l
ח	ה	Wall	Separate, outside, divide, half	h
י	ד	Hand	Work, throw, worship	y, i
מ	מ	Water	Chaos, mighty, blood	m

Benner translates the meanings in these pictographs as “strong leaders that are bound to one another.”²⁶ He continues by saying that *elohim* “can be used to identify more than one ‘אלהים’ (eloah) or one ‘אלה’ (eloah) that is qualitatively stronger, more powerful than the average ‘אלה’ (eloah). The God who created the heavens and the earth is not just a god, but the all-powerful God, mightier than any other god.”²⁷ It is for this reason that He is called God of gods (*Deuteronomy 10:17*). How can He be a God to other gods if these gods do not exist?

Moses also understood this to be the case as he demonstrated when he asked the mighty El, “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (*Exodus 15:11*). And the Psalmist admonishes all gods to worship YHWH (*Psalms 97:7*). This makes it clear that in this phrase David is not speaking of the “idols” and “graven images” aforementioned in the very logical fact that an “idol” or “graven image” can worship nothing.

In his Mechanical Translation, Benner translates the first verse of the Bible, thus: “In the summit ‘Elohiym [Powers]’ fattened the sky and land.”²⁸ That *Elohim* means ‘Powers’ is borne out by Edward L. Greenstein of Tel Aviv University, “... the Hebrew connotation of *elohim*, plural of the word *el*, which means ‘powerful,’ is ‘the Powers.’ The world is said in *Genesis 1* to be

created not by the Good One but by the Powers.”²⁹ It will be shown later what or who these ‘Powers’ are.

The Dictionary of the Torah agrees and adds, “the plural form is often used, literally, as, ‘He of the Elohim...’”³⁰ When taken in this context it is clear that the structure is grammatically correct because now “He of the Elohim” is singular and agrees in number and gender with the verb ‘ברא’ (bara).

There have been many scholars who have attempted to explain this beginning passage of the Bible as a nosism (also known as the royal ‘we’). Since the *pluralis majestatis* is of fairly recent invention (around 1189) this argument has no basis when applied to the ancient Hebrew. Bible Professor R. V. Foster, who taught at Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee in the late nineteenth century, wrote:

“That the word Elohim was used as a plural of excellence can never be demonstrated, nor can it ever be proved that it hints even remotely at the doctrine of the trinity. Both hypotheses are extremely improbable conjectures... Elohim really has no singular form. El (or Eloah) denotes, not one god, but one among many gods, in so far as it designates an individual at all.”³¹

Renowned linguist of Semitic languages, Archibald Henry Sayce, speaking of the plurality of *elohim*, penned:

“People do not employ a plural form to express a singular idea unless that singular idea had once been conceived as a plural. We may speak of a ‘means to an end,’ but when the word was first received into English speech, it represented more ‘means’ than one. Words, in fact, are like fossils; they preserve for us older modes of thought and belief embedded within the skeleton of their outward form. Elohim would never have come to denote the singular ‘God’ had it not, first denoted the plural ‘gods.’”³²

Now Genesis 1:26 makes perfect sense in the usage of the plural imperfect masculine and feminine form of the verb to make (נעשה), “He of the Elohim said, we will make man in our image and after our likeness.” It becomes clear that He is speaking to at least one other of the *elohim* that were with him in that primordial council.

The Council of the Gods

“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods...I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High” (*Psalms 82:1,6*). When this verse is viewed in the understanding of the Ancient Hebrew the translation is quite different. “He of the elohim is one among the assembly of the el (singular for god or mighty). He is judging among the elohim... I (He of the elohim) said you are elohim and all of you are sons (children) of the supreme one.”

When Jesus expounded these same truths to the Jews they, much like modern critics, cried blasphemy. “For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because thou art a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (*John 10:33-36*).

In his commentary on the above cited biblical passages, Jerome H. Neyrey, retired Notre Dame professor, said:

“Jesus' reference to "Son of God in 10:36 does not weaken the argument by reducing the claim from ' god to "son of God," because if one continues reading Ps 82:6, the two terms are considered parallel and equivalent there ("I said, 'You are *gods*, all of you, *sons of the Most High*')” In claiming to be the consecrated "Son of God," he does not claim less than what is claimed by being "god according to Ps 82:6. On the contrary, he claims more.”³³

“The focus on holiness, moreover, continues in the application of Ps 82:6 to Jesus in 10:36. If Israel, who became holy, may be called *god*, then it is not blasphemy if Jesus, whom God consecrated and sent as his apostle into the world, is called *god* and *Son of God*. Holiness or sinlessness again serves as the ground for calling someone, Israel or Jesus, *god*.”³⁴

So if the children of God may be called gods then it is prudent to discover who these children of God are:

“In Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring” (*Acts 17:28*).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God...The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (*Romans 8:14-17*).

If an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ then those of us who are children of God then are promised, as is the definition of an heir, all dominions, principalities and titles of the grantor, who in this case is the God of gods, our Father in Heaven. Thus the children of God become gods.

“The Fourth Gospel uses Psalm 82 as a refutation of part of the charge. Jesus' judges judged wrongly when they accused him of *making himself* god or equal to God, because God Himself *makes Jesus* Son of God, just as God *made Israel* god by delivering the Torah to it.”³⁵

God, according to the above biblical citations also, then, makes His followers gods. Men, being created in the image of God, are then expected to practice *imitatio dei*, that is to conduct him or herself, as well, after the image or example of God.³⁶ “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel,” God commanded Moses. “And say unto them, ye shall be holy: for I the Lord


your God am holy” (*Lev 19:2*). Holiness is godliness; therefore one who is holy is a god, or has the title of god.

For those who say that Mormons are polytheists they do not know the meaning of the word. A polytheist is one who worships more than one God. Mormons only worship “He of the elohim”, the mighty God, our Father in Heaven through our mediator and Lord Jesus Christ. Because Mormons recognize that there are other gods within the cosmos it does not make them polytheistic in as much as they do not worship any other entity. Perhaps it would help the critic to understand, as do Latter-day Saints, that the title of *god* is a title of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood and does not diminish the glory of God, our Father. If anything it shows Him to be a benevolent and all-powerful God who can raise His children to be as He is. Paul, too, recognized the same and shows such in his pronouncement, “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him (*1 Cor. 8:5,6*).

The proper term for this philosophy is neither polytheism nor monotheism. The recognition of others that are called gods but are not worshipped along with the worship of only one God is known as henotheism or monolatry, and if Latter-day Saints are monolatrists then so was Paul, for he first laid the doctrine at the door. Therefore, Joseph Smith was again correct by declaring, “Paul, if Joseph Smith is a blasphemer, you are.”

Kolob

As a postscript to the above lengthy tome it is interesting to analyze one last doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, since it deals with the abode of the great El. Mormon doctrine has it that God resides near the star Kolob which is the greatest of all the stars “that thou hast seen, because it is nearest unto me” (*Abraham 3:16*). Kolob governs “all those planets which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest” (*Abraham 3:9*).

Because the Hebrew terms were used in the text of Abraham to render the words for moon, star, sun, eternal, etc. it will be beneficial to return the word “Kolob” to the Hebrew, assuming that Hebrew is its base. Since Kolob is not known in any other Biblical literature the spelling in Hebrew must follow certain Hebraic patterns using the parent and child root models and using the term “kokob” (star) as a model. In following this rationale Kolob is thus rendered as כולב in Modern Hebrew script. כול (kol) in Modern Hebrew means to sustain and when to this is added כ-, Kolob means literally to sustain the tent, thus holding all in place. It is a governing body by its very meaning. The ancient pictographs paint the following picture: , which in the Ancient Hebrew meant the productive order of the house, or in other words the order of the universe, which is God’s house. The interesting detail left out in this entire treatise is that the Ancient Hebrew meanings and script had been lost for over a thousand years and were not rediscovered until sometime in the early twentieth century. Joseph could not have invented this term from the resources then available.

Everything continues to point to Joseph Smith being just what he proclaimed: A prophet of God.

ENDNOTES

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- ² *The Pearl of Great Price: Joseph Smith History*, 1:16,17 (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989).
- ³ Athanasius, *The Athanasian Creed*, 1:16, 25-27.
- ⁴ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Vol. 7. trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1886), 524.
- ⁵ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Vol. 3. ed. Allan Menzies (Edinburgh: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1886), 604.
- ⁶ *Ibid.* 604-605.
- ⁷ Alan L. Hayes, "YHWH isn't God the Father, after all," *Wycliffe College Morning Star*, November 13, 2006, 1-3.
- ⁸ Bart D. Ehrman. *From Jesus to Constantine: A History of Early Christianity: Lecture 23, The Doctrine of the Trinity*. Compact disc. The Teaching Company. 6577. 2004.
- ⁹ *Semitic Modern Font* courtesy Jeff A. Benner and The Ancient Hebrew Research Center.
- ¹⁰ Jeff A. Benner, *His Name is One: An Ancient Hebrew Perspective of the Names of ... God*. (College Station, TX: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, Inc, 2003), 23.
- ¹¹ Roberts, *History*, 476.
- ¹² *Ibid*, 474-75.
- ¹³ Joseph Smith, *The Joseph Smith Papers: Journal, Volume 1: 1832-1839*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard Lyman Bushman, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church Historian's Press, 2008), xxxv-viii.
- ¹⁴ Benner, *His Name is One*, 3.
- ¹⁵ Roberts, *History*, 307.
- ¹⁶ Bet HaShem Midrash, *The Dictionary of the Torah: A Reference Guide to the Minds of Light*, 7th ed. (New Haven, IN: Aleph bet Document Centre, 2005), 212.
- ¹⁷ Maurice H. Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 97.
- ¹⁸ *Semitic Early Font* courtesy of Jeff A. Benner and The Ancient Hebrew Research Center.
- ¹⁹ Jeff A. Benner, *The Ancient Hebrew Language and Alphabet: Understanding the Ancient Hebrew Language of the Bible Based on Ancient Hebrew Culture and Thought*, (College Station, TX: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, 2004), 115.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Jeff A. Benner, *A Mechanical Translation of The Book of Genesis: The Hebrew Text Literally Translated Word for Word*, (College Station, TX: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, 2007), 15.
- ²² Bet HaShem Midrash, *Dictionary*, 40,212.
- ²³ Arnaud Sérandour, "On the Appearance of a Monotheism in the Religion of Israel (3rd Century or Later?)," *Diogenes* 52 (2005): 35-36.
- ²⁴ Bet HaShaem Midrash, *Dictionary*, 49.
- ²⁵ Arthur McCalla, "The Structure of French Romantic Histories of Religion," *Numem* 45, no. 3 (1998): 264.
- ²⁶ Benner, *His Name is One*, 39.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ²⁸ Benner, *Mechanical Translation*, 15.
- ²⁹ Edward L. Greenstein, "Presenting Genesis 1, Constructively and Deconstructively," *Prooftexts* 21 (2001): 13.
- ³⁰ Bet HaShem Midrash, *Dictionary*, 24.
- ³¹ R. V. Foster, "The Word of Elohim in Genesis 1," *The Old Testament Student* 6 (1887): 241.
- ³² A. H. Sayce, "Polytheism in Primitive Israel," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 2 (1889): 25.

³³ Jerome H. Neyrey, “‘I Said: You Are Gods’: Psalm 82:6 and John 10,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108.4 (1989): 653-54.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 659.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 660.

³⁶ Greenstein, *Prooftexts*, 7-8.