LATTER-DAY SAINT HISTORY

Was God once a man?

Eternal progression in Latter-day Saint teaching

Joseph Smith taught that the Father had lived as a man. His listeners recorded what he said in Nauvoo. Restoration scripture describes human exaltation, and later leaders differed over whether God continues to gain knowledge.

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01 / EXECUTIVE FINDING

Was God once a man?

Yes, if the question is historical: Joseph Smith taught in Nauvoo that God the Father had lived on an earth as a man. Notes by several people who heard the April 1844 sermon preserve that teaching in different words. The first printed version appeared that August. The familiar polished version is later, but its central claim is already in the earlier records. [S13] [S15] [S16] [S17] [S18] [S19] [S20] [S21]

The answer changes if the question is what the Church asks people to believe about the Father's entire past. Its Gospel Topics essay acknowledges the tradition and says little has been revealed about that part of Lorenzo Snow's couplet. Its General Handbook teaches the other half, human exaltation through Jesus Christ, as part of God's stated purpose. Neither source gives the Father a complete mortal biography. [S27] [S49] [S53]

Three questions behind one phrase

C01 / The Father's past

Did a founding prophet teach that the Father had lived as a man? Yes. This goes beyond saying the Father has a body today or that Jesus lived in Galilee. [S05] [S15] [S16] [S17] [S64]

C02 / Humanity's future

Can women and men become like their Heavenly Parents through Christ? This is a scriptural and current Church teaching. Its scriptural basis does not depend on proving where the Father lived. [S03] [S04] [S06] [S49] [S53] [S82]

C03 / God's present growth

Does an exalted Father keep learning previously unknown truths? Latter-day Saint leaders have given incompatible answers. Growth in dominion, posterity, or glory is a distinct claim. [S33] [S37] [S41] [S42] [S43] [S73] [S74]

Verification here establishes what a document says, when it was made, what kind of authority it has, and what can fairly be inferred from it. Whether it describes divine reality is a theological judgment that historical records cannot independently test.

02 / VOCABULARY AND SCOPE

What does “eternal progression” mean?

The usual term for this subject is eternal progression. The word progression needs an object: who progresses, and in what respect? Snow's two-part saying connects God's past with human destiny. Young, Woodruff, Pratt, and later writers also argued about God's activity now. Those are related questions with different evidence. [S26] [S27] [S33] [S37] [S42] [S73]

Embodiment

Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 describes the Father and Son as having tangible bodies, while distinguishing the Holy Ghost. The verse states what kind of being the Father is. It does not describe how or when he came to possess that body. [S05]

Exaltation

In the Church's usage this is eternal life with God and becoming like him through Christ. Resurrection or immortality alone does not mean that everyone receives exaltation. Scripture, the handbook, and instructional material connect exaltation with grace, covenants, and enduring faithfulness. [S03] [S04] [S06] [S09] [S48] [S49] [S53]

Mortality

A mortal life, a previous lack of godhood, personal sin, and a need to repent are four different assertions. Smith offered a comparison to Jesus. The Church teaches that Jesus was divine before Bethlehem and lived without sin. Mortality therefore cannot, by itself, establish that the Father had sinned. [S11] [S15] [S16] [S20] [S64]

Increase

An omniscient being might be said to increase in creations, posterity, or dominion without discovering a previously unknown fact. Other nineteenth-century speakers explicitly included knowledge among the things that increase. Translating both views into the single word progression hides their disagreement. [S33] [S37] [S42] [S43] [S73] [S74]

Here God means the Father unless the text specifies Jesus Christ, another divine figure, or the Godhead. In the restoration movement as a whole, the word Mormon cannot identify one theology. Even within the Utah church, a signed First Presidency statement, an apostle's letter, and an individual believer's compilation answer different historical questions. [S01] [S40] [S59] [S64] [S67] [S74]

03 / CANONICAL EVIDENCE

What the scriptures say, and what they leave open

God's eternity

Doctrine and Covenants 20:17–19 describes the eternal, unchangeable God whom believers should worship. Moroni 8:18 makes a sweeping claim about God's constancy in an argument against infant baptism. Moses 1:3, 6 connects divine eternity and knowledge. These texts are evidence that a theory of God's development has to explain, not verses to omit. [S07] [S08] [S09]

The Son's growth

Doctrine and Covenants 93:12–20 says the Son advanced from grace to grace and that disciples may receive of his fulness. Verses 26–29 discuss truth and uncreated intelligence. This section offers a pattern of growth without narrating the Father's analogous infancy, ordinances, or heavenly parentage. [S04]

Human exaltation

Doctrine and Covenants 76:55–59 applies the word gods to recipients of celestial glory; verse 69 attributes their perfection to Jesus. Section 132:19–24 places that prospect in the setting of an eternal marriage covenant and continuing increase; verse 37 uses Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as examples. These texts say much more directly what humans may become than how the Father became God. [S03] [S06]

God's body and cosmos

Section 130:18–22 joins the value of acquired intelligence with a statement about divine embodiment. Abraham 3:18–19 describes the eternity and difference of intelligences and God's superiority. In verses 2–3, Kolob is near God's throne. The passage does not identify Kolob as the Father's place of birth or former mortal home. [S05] [S10]

The New Testament

Romans 8:16–17 speaks of joint heirs with Christ; 2 Peter 1:4 of participation in the divine nature; 1 John 3:1–3 of future likeness; Revelation 3:21 of sharing Christ's throne. John 5:19–26 describes the Son acting after the Father's example and receiving life in himself. None explicitly recounts a previous mortal life of the Father. Smith's use of John 5 adds an interpretive step. [S11] [S15] [S20] [S78] [S79] [S80] [S81]

04 / 1830S TO 1843

Before the King Follett discourse

The early record does not open with a ready-made account of God's former life. The revelations now in sections 76 and 93, dated 1832 and 1833, supply strong language about human glory and Christ's fulness. Neither says the Father lived as a mortal on a previous earth. Reading the later sermon into every earlier text makes the history appear more uniform than it was. [S03] [S04] [S13]

Lecture 5 of the Lectures on Faith, published in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, calls the Father a personage of spirit and treats the Son as a personage of tabernacle. Section 130, dated 1843, explicitly gives a body to the Father as well. How readers reconcile the terms is a question of interpretation. The Church's historical account reports uncertainty about authorship, the probable role of Sidney Rigdon, and removal of the lectures from the 1921 edition. It is unsafe to call every line a dictated revelation personally written by Joseph Smith. [S05] [S24] [S25]

A particularly important bridge is the discourse dated January 30, 1842. A record in Wilford Woodruff's Book of Revelations represents Smith as teaching that the Father had redeemed a world and as relating that example to Jesus and the Saints. The Joseph Smith Papers editors explain that Woodruff was away and likely copied another person's notes. This makes it valuable evidence of an early teaching, but it is not a second personal eyewitness account by Woodruff. [S12]

By July 1843 section 132 gave explicit scriptural expression to human godhood and continuing family increase. By April 1844 we have multiple sermon reports explicitly describing the Father's earlier earthly life. These two dates mark different evidentiary thresholds: a text about human destiny and a well-attested public statement about the Father's past. [S06] [S13] [S15] [S16] [S17]

For a website timeline, use the date of the event and the date and nature of its surviving evidence as separate fields. This matters particularly for the 1842 notes and for Snow's much later recollection of an experience dated to 1840. [S12] [S26] [S27] [S84]

05 / COMPARING WITNESSES

April 7, 1844: four records of one sermon

Speaking at a Nauvoo general conference after the death of King Follett, Joseph Smith addressed the character of God and what death meant for the Saints. The Joseph Smith Papers distinguishes four principal contemporary reports. They are separate records of a single address, not four later church votes, and none is a verbatim stenographic transcript. The editors discuss differences in when and how the notes were made. [S13] [S14]

> **Thomas Bullock, page 16**
> *“God himself the father of us all dwelt on a Earth same as J C himself did”* [S15]

> **William Clayton, page 13**
> *“he was once as one of us and was on a planet as Jesus was in the flesh”* [S16]

> **Wilford Woodruff, journal page 135**
> *“he once was man like us and the Father was once on an earth like us”* [S17]

> **Willard Richards, journal page 67**
> *“refute the Idea that God was God from all eternity”* [S18]

Bullock, Clayton, and Woodruff agree on a past life comparable to Jesus's earthly life. Richards preserves a different piece of the argument: a challenge to the idea that God had always been God. Agreement on the first point is especially strong because the reporters phrase it differently. Richards's words matter because a body alone would not establish a change of divine status. [S15] [S16] [S17] [S18]

The sermon also taught that humans could learn to become gods and consoled listeners about the dead. The analogy between Father, Son, and Saints is central to its reasoning. It is fair to say Smith taught a former earthly life; it is a further step to claim that all details of Jesus's life, or of an ordinary believer's life, repeat the Father's experience. [S13] [S15] [S16] [S20]

06 / PRINTING, OPPOSITION, AND THE JUNE SERMON

How the familiar quotation reached us

The Times and Seasons printed the sermon on August 15, 1844, after Smith's death, using a text prepared from Bullock and Clayton. Pages 613–614 are a good early printed citation. A separate, fuller manuscript-history version, compiled in the 1850s, is the source of polished wording widely quoted since. Modern teaching manuals make that wording easy to find. A later editorial sentence is a legitimate quotation when identified as such. In that manuscript history the wording is: “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!” [S13] [S19] [S20] [S21] [S83]

This chain matters in both directions. The edited version cannot establish that every word is exactly as spoken. But its late date cannot explain away a doctrine stated by the earlier reporters. For a quotation card, identify the reporter and page for manuscript language, or label the source as the published or composite version. [S13] [S15] [S16] [S17] [S18] [S19] [S20] [S21]

Before either the August printing or the later composite, dissenters included a resolution against a plurality of gods above the God of this universe in the Nauvoo Expositor on June 7, 1844. This independently dates public controversy over a plurality of higher gods. A hostile resolution is good evidence of what its authors opposed, but it is not a transcript of what Smith said or a guarantee that every accusation was accurate. [S71]

On June 16, 1844, Smith returned to plurality and divine parentage in the sermon often called the Sermon in the Grove. Bullock's notes report an argument that if Jesus had a Father, the Father also had a Father. The Joseph Smith Papers documents Smith's use of the King James wording of Revelation 1:6 and a difference from his earlier Bible revision. Readers should distinguish Smith's interpretation from what this verse explicitly says in other readings. [S22] [S23]

There is evidence here for divine ancestry in Smith's public preaching. It does not settle whether he specified an actually infinite series, a first ancestor, an exact world and calendar, or identical histories for each divine parent. Those are additional models. Treating their logic as a separate question preserves how striking the explicit teaching already was. [S20] [S22] [S23] [S49]

07 / AN EVENT, A MEMORY, A PUBLIC TEACHING

Lorenzo Snow: the couplet and its documentary trail

> The familiar couplet
> *“As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be.”* [S27] [S87]

The two clauses point in opposite directions in time. The first asserts something about the Father's past; the second describes a human possibility. It is possible to stress the second, as contemporary Church materials do, without turning the first into a late invention. The best case does not rest on one recollection. [S26] [S27] [S49] [S72] [S84]

1840, as later remembered

The 1884 Biography and Family Record compiled by Eliza R. Snow Smith presents Lorenzo's account of receiving the insight in 1840. Cite it as a later account assigning the experience to 1840. The story's event date is not the date of a surviving 1840 diary entry. A facsimile of the printed page allows the transcription to be checked. [S26] [S87]

The reported endorsement

A later family account says Joseph Smith recognized Snow's principle as true or revelatory. The Church student manual relays a return-from-England narrative through LeRoi C. Snow's 1919 article. Its January 1843 return chronology conflicts with evidence that Snow left Liverpool in January and reached Nauvoo in April. Richards recorded his arrival on April 12. That corrects the proposed timing without proving or disproving the private conversation. [S27] [S28] [S29] [S30]

October 11, 1857

Snow publicly described the Father's exaltation as the outcome of continued progression. The sermon report was printed during his lifetime and is stronger evidence for what he publicly taught than a twentieth-century recollection about a private exchange. Compare the period sermon with the modern manual's treatment. [S27] [S72]

January 11, 1892

A poem in Snow's record book restates the parallel and places it in the setting of Christ and human purification. It is independent evidence that Snow continued to own the idea late in life. It is not an independent, contemporary report of what happened to him in 1840. [S84]

08 / UTAH PREACHING AND PUBLICATION

Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and John Taylor

On June 22, 1851, Wilford Woodruff recorded Brigham Young speaking about the Father experiencing earthly ordeals, in connection with what humans experience. The journal is Woodruff's record of Young. It should be labeled with both names. In an 1857 published discourse, Young said: “He has been earthly, and is of precisely the same species of being that we are.” The surrounding discussion moves into divine genealogy and Adam. A quotation isolated from those paragraphs can conceal how Young developed the idea. [S31] [S32]

Orson Hyde, an apostle, used a more tentative register in October 1853. In discussing divine development he imagined that God might once have been a child, using the qualifier “perhaps.” Hyde's reasoning shows the possibilities some early leaders entertained. A site should keep his qualification, instead of converting an illustrative possibility into a revelation about the Father's childhood. [S77]

On December 6, 1857, Woodruff himself preached that God increases in knowledge, power, and dominion. The December 16 Deseret News report and the Journal of Discourses preserve the point, with a small variation in wording. Compare the two as printed reports of the same address. This is stronger evidence for his position than inferring it from a single reference to increase in glory. [S36] [S37] [S76]

In The Mediation and Atonement (1882), John Taylor, then Church President, described human advancement toward godhood through the atonement and obedience. A Church teaching manual reproduces the passage and specifies the book pages. Taylor gives strong evidence about human destiny. The cited passage does not by itself supply a detailed biography of the Father. [S38] [S39]

In its 1909 statement The Origin of Man, the First Presidency taught humanity’s divine parentage and potential. Of the Father it said, “God Himself is an exalted man, perfected, enthroned, and supreme.” That makes the text unusually strong evidence for how the institutional leadership characterized God and humans. The statement speaks of God's present condition without specifying the time, place, or sequence of his exaltation. [S40]

09 / THE DISPUTE THAT “PROGRESSION” CAN CONCEAL

Does God keep learning? Read both sides

1852 and 1853: opposing arguments

An unsigned Millennial Star essay reprinted from the Deseret News treated God's development from manhood as an argument for continuing progression in intelligence. In The Seer of August 1853, Orson Pratt wrote: “The Father and the Son do not progress in knowledge and wisdom”. For Pratt the reason was that they already know all things. The split was present within early Utah Mormonism. [S73] [S89]

The First Presidency and Pratt

A First Presidency statement dated July 25, 1860 and reprinted in 1865 rejected a group of positions attributed to Pratt, including the limit he placed on divine increase in knowledge. Read the whole document: it also deals with intelligence, particles, and Pratt's published speculations. A rebuke of several propositions in that setting cannot substitute for a current institutional definition of omniscience. [S41] [S73]

Woodruff and Young

In 1857 Woodruff said, “God himself is increasing and progressing in knowledge, power and dominion”. Young on January 13, 1867 challenged the claim that God could not progress in knowledge, wisdom, or understanding. The original printed Journal of Discourses 11:286 confirms the language and the 1867 date. This is different from saying only that more kingdoms or creations can be added. [S33] [S34] [S35] [S37] [S76]

Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie

In 1971 President Joseph Fielding Smith held that God is complete in knowledge and power yet increases as his kingdoms and dominions multiply. In a 1980 BYU address and a separate general conference talk, apostle Bruce R. McConkie rejected the idea that God is learning new truths. These are direct counterexamples to the claim of historical unanimity. [S42] [S43] [S75]

A candid private letter

In a letter dated February 19, 1981, McConkie addressed Eugene England about Young's teachings. He recognized conflicting statements attributed to Young and gave priority to the position he understood scripture to teach. This document sets out McConkie's own way of resolving the conflict. It was addressed to England, not to Kraut, and it was not a joint First Presidency statement. [S59] [S74]

10 / HOW INTERPRETATIONS WORK

Eternity, perfection, and disagreement

One reconciliation distinguishes existing eternally from holding the station of God eternally. That distinction would allow an eternal intelligence to have a history of development. It draws on the language of intelligence in Doctrine and Covenants 93 and Abraham 3 and the reported sermon in which Smith disputed eternal godhood. It is a reading of these sources together. Neither scripture explicitly defines a date at which our Father assumed his station. [S04] [S07] [S08] [S10] [S18] [S20]

Another reading starts with scripture's description of God as unchangeable and all-knowing. It can interpret eternal increase as a growth in the extent of God's work or in the number of his exalted children. Joseph Fielding Smith made this distinction explicitly. It accounts well for his text and McConkie's addresses, but it does not reproduce the ordinary meaning of Woodruff's 1857 statement or Young's 1867 objection. [S07] [S08] [S09] [S33] [S37] [S42] [S43] [S75]

A third approach considers perfection and continuing progress complementary. Eugene England presented an argument of this sort in BYU Studies, distinguishing kinds or spheres of perfection. His article is a named theologian's constructive proposal. An argument for compatibility should be labeled as an argument; citing it does not establish that the historical speakers intended the same reconciliation. [S44] [S74] [S85]

Matthew Bowman's historical study follows the dispute through later writers, including B. H. Roberts and John A. Widtsoe. It is useful for finding debates that were not confined to Young's lifetime. One date in its note 19 illustrates why the original still matters: compare the sermon heading for Young's January address. The Journal of Discourses volume dates it to 1867. [S33] [S34] [S44]

The fairest unresolved question is narrower than whether God is perfect: does perfect divine knowledge admit any acquisition of previously unknown truth? Report where leaders answered yes and where others answered no. Neither the existence of conflicting answers nor a scholar's explanation proves that the current Church treats every answer as equally authoritative. [S01] [S37] [S41] [S42] [S43] [S49] [S53] [S73] [S74]

11 / PRESIDENTS, TEACHERS, AND INTERVIEWS

What the twentieth-century record shows

In October 1976, President Spencer W. Kimball expressly rejected the Adam-God theory. In April 1977, in another general conference address, he invoked Snow's couplet and spoke of humanity's godly potential, including creative work. Those two addresses are a useful control on interpretation. A president could reject a particular identification of Adam and still speak affirmatively of the broader Father-to-human parallel. [S45] [S65]

In a 1982 Ensign question-and-answer column, Gerald N. Lund considered whether Snow's statement was accepted Church teaching. He affirmed its acceptance while distinguishing that assessment from a specific official First Presidency declaration on the couplet. This is evidence about its reception in Church teaching media. Lund wrote in his capacity at that time; the column is not an addition to scripture. [S01] [S46]

Two 1997 interviews with President Gordon B. Hinckley are often merged. In the San Francisco Chronicle interview he initially resisted the reporter's formulation, then discussed Snow's saying and distinguished the Father's past from human progression. TIME separately quoted a guarded answer about whether the first idea is taught or emphasized. These are different interviews with different questions and edited presentations. Neither text supports a simple claim that Hinckley formally rescinded the sermon. [S54] [S55]

At the October 1997 general conference Hinckley addressed the impression some members had formed from media interviews. He affirmed his grasp of Church doctrine. He did not identify a particular disputed quotation or issue a new account of the Father's prior life. This speech can contextualize both interviews; it cannot be used as a line-by-line correction to either one. [S54] [S55] [S56]

A Church manual on Brigham Young published in 1997 included the idea that the Father once lived on another planet. In chapter 4 that phrasing appears in editorial introductory prose before the selections from Young. Labeling it as the manual's wording, with the chapter citation, avoids putting its sentence in Young's mouth. [S32] [S47]

12 / INSTITUTIONAL LANGUAGE AND ITS BOUNDARIES

What the Church publicly teaches

> Gospel Topics essay, Becoming Like God
> *“Little has been revealed about the first half of this couplet, and consequently little is taught.”* [S49]

The essay, originally published in February 2014, is the clearest institutional framing of the question. It discusses Smith and Snow alongside scriptural and early Christian material. Its notes identify the King Follett discourse's status outside canon. It gives sustained attention to becoming like God through Christ and offers no comparable account of the Father's mortal career. Little taught is a statement about the extent of teaching, not a denial that it has ever been taught. [S13] [S49] [S50]

Church materials illustrate the distinction. Gospel Principles teaches that the Father desires his children's exaltation; the Joseph Smith manual republishes the polished King Follett language. An institute New Testament manual even quotes Smith's reasoning about the Father's Father. These are evidence of what students could encounter in Church curriculum. They do not supply three independent witnesses to an 1844 event. [S21] [S22] [S47] [S48] [S52] [S83]

After the essay, Seventy Larry R. Lawrence wrote explicitly in the March 2016 Ensign that Heavenly Father had been a mortal man who progressed to a fulness of light. The date rules out the claim that the idea vanished from all Church publications after 2014. The author, genre, and authority matter: a named Seventy's magazine article and a collective definition of binding doctrine are different things. A 1995 joint proclamation and Dallin H. Oaks’s 2023 conference address likewise connect divine destiny, family, and exaltation. [S01] [S49] [S51] [S94] [S95]

For a current summary of human destiny, cite the General Handbook, section 1. It centers Jesus Christ and distinguishes immortality from eternal life or exaltation; it places family relationships and covenants in that framework. The Church's essay on Heavenly Mother includes daughters as well as sons in a teaching about Heavenly Parents. The available statements do not authorize filling out an imagined biography of Heavenly Mother by analogy. [S48] [S49] [S53] [S82]

Use the Church's own explanation of how doctrine is established and its history topic on the Journal of Discourses. The latter is historically valuable, but its published sermons are not all official doctrinal statements. An early sermon, a current handbook, and a newspaper interview can all be authentic while answering quite different questions. [S01] [S02] [S33] [S53] [S54]

13 / AUDIT OF THE REQUESTED COLLECTION

Ogden Kraut: what the books actually document

Kraut is valuable in two ways: he preserved leads to difficult historical texts, and he left a direct record of how an independent Mormon writer understood them. Each quotation needs two attributions: the writer who used it and the earlier person or text to which it is ascribed. Eight relevant works or collections from the requested catalog were examined here. [S57] [S58] [S59] [S60] [S61] [S62] [S63] [S88] [S90]

The Only True God and Mysteries of Creation

The first work (winter 1988), chapter 11, sections 5–8, builds a connected argument from God's former manhood to the destiny of humans. Kraut goes further when he extends mortal ordinances to the Father's own history. The second work (December 1989), especially chapters 9 and 12, develops his account of divine identities and the plurality of gods. Compare each inference with what the 1844 sources actually say. [S15] [S20] [S22] [S58] [S60]

Pre-Existence and Reincarnation

The 1985 compilation says its excerpts are selected by subject. For its Young quotation compare the full Journal of Discourses paragraph. Reincarnation (February 1994), chapter 20, distinguishes ordinary repeated mortal births, which Kraut rejects, from his own proposed account of Adam and Eve, resurrection, and mortal posterity. It is inaccurate to collapse these two models or to call Kraut's proposal a contemporary Church teaching. [S32] [S61] [S63] [S64] [S65]

Michael/Adam and Letters and Responses

Michael/Adam specifically defends the disputed identification and acknowledges contemporary rejection. Letters and Responses includes Kraut's October 26, 1980 letter to McConkie; its comparison of Young with McConkie is testable from each man's text. Kraut's assertion about whom McConkie had in mind is an inference. The separate letter to England provides McConkie's own later discussion of Young. [S33] [S43] [S59] [S65] [S74] [S90]

Sermons and Writings, volumes 2 and 3

These compilations provide two especially useful tests. Volume 2 can be checked against Woodruff's June 1851 journal. Volume 3 reprints a newspaper essay that can be checked against the Millennial Star. The next section gives the results and explains why each changes how a website should quote it. [S31] [S62] [S88] [S89]

14 / FROM A COMPILATION BACK TO THE RECORD

Four checks on quotations and attributions

1. Young via Woodruff, June 22, 1851

Volume 2 of Kraut's Sermons and Writings attributes an address to Young as reported by Woodruff. Compare pages 45–46 with Woodruff's journal, page 325. Woodruff's version includes the words “& the fall”; those words are missing in Kraut's rendering of the passage. Cite the journal for its exact wording. The difference alone does not establish why it arose. [S31] [S62]

2. The unsigned 1852 essay

Kraut's volume 3 points to “Knowledge” in the Millennial Star, vol. 14, no. 25, August 14, 1852. The original, pp. 385–387, identifies it as a reprint from the Deseret News. Page 386 says God “from manhood, by continual progression, became God.” The writer links divine knowledge and progression directly. There is no byline identifying a prophet. Attribute it to the unsigned essay and link the scanned page. [S88] [S89] [S91]

3. Young versus McConkie

Kraut's October 1980 comparison does identify a real difference. Young's reported words on printed page 286 challenge the limitation on God's learning. McConkie's June 1980 BYU address rejects a God who is still discovering truths. Young's January sermon actually dates to 1867. These facts survive independent of Kraut's explanation of McConkie's intent. [S33] [S34] [S43] [S44] [S59]

4. Do the ordinances follow?

Kraut connects the Father's manhood with ordinances he thinks that manhood entailed. Scripture explains ordinances and covenants for the Saints, and the April sermon teaches a comparison between the lives of the Father and the Son. The identified texts do not name the Father's baptizer, identify a spouse in a previous life, or document a sequence of saving ordinances he received. Label the extension as Kraut's reasoning. [S04] [S06] [S15] [S16] [S20] [S58]

Source rule: give Kraut credit when his compilation leads to the text. Credit the original witness or publication for what it records. Retain both links when presenting a variant, and distinguish textual disagreement from disagreement about doctrine.

[S31] [S33] [S43] [S59] [S62] [S88] [S89]

15 / A PUBLIC-FACING FAQ

Five questions visitors are likely to ask

Was Jesus once a man, or was the Father once a man?

Christian belief in the incarnation concerns Jesus Christ. Smith's 1844 argument explicitly concerned the Father as well. Latter-day Saint teaching identifies Jesus as the premortal Jehovah who created under the Father's direction. When describing the historical controversy, write “God the Father” on first mention. A joint 1916 exposition explains why scripture can also call Jesus “Father” in several senses while distinguishing him from Elohim. [S11] [S15] [S16] [S17] [S64] [S93]

Did the Father sin, or have a Savior?

The records under review do not establish that he sinned, name his redeemer, or document how anyone atoned for him. An 1842 report actually describes the Father as redeeming a world. The 1844 parallel with Jesus makes a simple inference from mortality to personal sin especially weak. A claim that the Father acted as a redeemer and a claim that he needed redemption are distinct. [S12] [S15] [S16] [S18] [S20] [S64]

Was the Father Adam?

Young's April 9, 1852 sermon identifies Adam as father and God in a striking passage; Kraut defended a reading of it. In 1976 Kimball specifically rejected the Adam-God theory. That rejection does not erase Smith's separate claim that the Father lived as a man on an earth, nor does the King Follett sermon by itself establish Young's identification of Adam. [S15] [S17] [S45] [S65] [S90] [S92]

Do faithful people get their own planets?

The Church's FAQ rejects that slogan and affirms becoming like God. Christian discipleship, relationship with the Father, and participation in divine life are central in its essay. Historical leaders, including Kimball, did speak about creation and worlds. A fair account can acknowledge that language without converting it into a promise assigning every exalted person an individual planet. [S45] [S49] [S53] [S66]

Who was the Father's Father, and where did they live?

Smith preached that the Father had a Father, but the cited sermon does not supply that being's personal name or a location for the Father's former earthly life. Abraham identifies Kolob in relation to God's throne, not as that world. The sources support a claim about ancestry more directly than a specific celestial family tree or map. [S10] [S16] [S22] [S23] [S52]

16 / BOUNDARIES BETWEEN TRADITIONS

Mormondom and the wider Christian comparison

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Community of Christ, and independent Mormon writers should be named separately. The historical scope of the word Mormon is wider than the institutional scope of a statement by a Utah church president. Community of Christ's current Basic Beliefs affirm one living God as Trinity and identify Christ's humanity and divinity. That statement does not present Snow's couplet as a shared Restoration creed. [S27] [S49] [S53] [S57] [S67]

A similar distinction matters when comparing Christian traditions. Second Peter speaks of partaking of the divine nature. Catholic and Orthodox teaching both use participation in divine life to describe what Christ makes possible. The Catholic Catechism also identifies God as without origin or end; Orthodox catechesis places human participation within the life of the Trinity. Their teachings provide parallels to the second half of Snow's couplet without entailing the first. [S68] [S69] [S70] [S79]

The Church's Becoming Like God essay itself draws on early Christian language about deification. This helps explain why a Latter-day Saint can see continuity between Scripture, early Christianity, and exaltation. It does not establish that the Christian writers intended Joseph Smith's account of the Father's past. Distinguish an analogy in religious language from agreement on the nature or history of God. [S15] [S49] [S68] [S69] [S70] [S79]

What difference does this make to readers? Someone can accept becoming more like God while rejecting previous mortality for the Father. Someone else can affirm the Father's previous mortality while denying he is still learning. Both examples are documented. A website with one yes/no switch for all three teachings would misrepresent people on more than one side of the debate. [S42] [S43] [S49] [S68] [S69] [S70] [S73]

For historical context on shifts in reception, Faulconer and Morrison ask how the King Follett discourse could remain widely known while parts of it carried different weight for different generations of Saints. Their essay and Bowman's study are useful guides to interpretation. They belong alongside, rather than in place of, the sermon notes and named writers whose ideas they interpret. [S13] [S15] [S22] [S44] [S86]

17 / EVIDENCE AND LIMITATIONS

How the citations were verified

Manuscript versus printed witness

The four King Follett manuscript pages were compared across reporters, with the Woodruff page also checked against the manuscript image. The August 1844 pages and the later manuscript-history wording were separately identified. Counting those printed versions as additional eyewitnesses would inflate the evidence. [S13] [S14] [S15] [S16] [S17] [S18] [S19] [S20] [S21]

A date and a source chain

Snow's travel was checked against the Joseph Smith Papers introduction and journal. The year of Young's January sermon was checked against the volume heading and printed page. For Woodruff's 1857 statement, both the newspaper record and the Journal of Discourses version were consulted. The wording can vary without the reports becoming evidence of two different occasions. [S28] [S29] [S30] [S33] [S34] [S35] [S36] [S37] [S76]

A periodical traced to an earlier printing

Kraut's “Knowledge” matches the August 1852 Millennial Star reprint. The corresponding February 7 Deseret News text appears under the heading “To the Saints,” p. 26. The chain links one argument across two periodicals and one later compilation. It verifies publication and content, not the identity of the unsigned writer. [S88] [S89] [S91]

A disputed viewpoint checked against its proponent

Pratt's 1853 discussion was checked in The Seer, p. 117, with surrounding numbered paragraphs; the First Presidency's objection was checked separately. McConkie's addresses and the scan of his February 1981 signed letter were distinguished from later accounts and from Kraut's 1980 letter. These checks keep a critic's paraphrase from replacing the author's own claim. [S41] [S43] [S59] [S73] [S74] [S75]

Limits of access and scope

For Taylor's 1882 book the indexed digitization was checked against the Church manual quotation and its print-page attribution; full-text access was intermittent. Later recollections were identified as such. This is a substantial selected corpus, not a claim to have searched every surviving diary or every branch's archives. An unverified detail is identified as unestablished in these sources, not disproved. [S26] [S28] [S38] [S39] [S57] [S67]

18 / EDITORIAL AND TECHNICAL HANDOFF

Building WasGodOnceAMan.com from this PDF

Suggested homepage introduction

Joseph Smith taught that God the Father once lived on an earth as a man. We know this from several accounts of an 1844 sermon, not just from a famous sentence printed later. The Church today teaches that women and men can become like their Heavenly Parents through Jesus Christ. It acknowledges the teaching about the Father's past and says little has been revealed about it. Early and later leaders disagreed on a further question: does God still gain knowledge? [S15] [S16] [S17] [S18] [S20] [S37] [S42] [S49] [S53] [S73]

Keep the evidence attached to the claim

Homepage and manuscripts

Put the historical answer near the top, then link to the four named reporters, early print, and later composite. Label quotation cards by reporter, date, and page. Preserve exact spelling inside quotation marks. For clean contemporary prose, use an attributed paraphrase. [S13] [S15] [S16] [S17] [S18] [S19] [S20] [S21]

A separate route for the debate

On the divine-knowledge page, display opposing texts side by side, with distinct speaker, occasion, and date fields. Give both the early disagreement and the twentieth-century formulations. On the Kraut page, pair each compilation passage with its underlying document and label conclusions Kraut adds. [S33] [S37] [S41] [S42] [S43] [S58] [S59] [S62] [S73] [S74] [S88] [S89] [S91]

A separate route for current teaching

Use the Gospel Topics essay and handbook for the present institutional description. Give the 1997 interviews their own historical setting. Use the 2016 article as a dated example and identify the author's office. Add review dates to changeable pages and keep each numbered source visible from mobile layouts. [S49] [S51] [S53] [S54] [S55] [S56]

For Codex: extract the two attachments, content.md and sources.json, from this PDF using a PDF reader's attachments panel or the command pdfdetach -saveall Was-God-Once-a-Man.pdf. Match source IDs in the Markdown to the JSON register. The reader-facing PDF also contains the full article and source register as searchable text. Do not regenerate quotes from memory or treat a URL as a substitute for its page or verse locator.

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S01 to S07

S01 Church Newsroom, Approaching Latter-day Saint Doctrine

Official explanation / 4 May 2007, paragraphs on authoritative doctrine and isolated statements

Explains how the Church identifies its doctrine and how much weight to give an individual leader's statement.

https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/approaching-mormon-doctrine

S02 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Journal of Discourses

Official explanation / Gospel Topics, entry on the nineteenth-century sermon collection

Describes the collection's unofficial status, the reporters' methods, and the possibility of transcription errors.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/journal-of-discourses?lang=eng

S03 Doctrine and Covenants 76

Scripture / Vision of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, 16 February 1832, verses 50–60, especially 58–59

Calls the celestial heirs gods and describes their relationship to Christ and the Father.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/76?lang=eng

S04 Doctrine and Covenants 93

Scripture / Revelation of 6 May 1833, verses 12–20, 26–36

Describes Christ receiving a fulness, the promise to his followers, and the eternity of intelligence. The account of growth here concerns Christ.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/93?lang=eng

S05 Doctrine and Covenants 130

Scripture / Instruction of 2 April 1843, verses 18–22

Verses 18–19 connect knowledge gained here with resurrection. Verse 22 describes the present bodies of the Father and the Son.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/130?lang=eng

S06 Doctrine and Covenants 132

Scripture / Revelation recorded 12 July 1843, verses 19–24

Places the promise of godhood, a continuing posterity, and exaltation within the covenant described in the passage.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/132?lang=eng

S07 Doctrine and Covenants 20

Scripture / Articles and Covenants, 1830, verses 17–19

Describes God as infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. This passage frames a question that later sermons about divine progression must address.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/20?lang=eng

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S08 to S14

S08 Book of Mormon, Moroni 8

Scripture / Verse 18, in Mormon's letter to Moroni, first published 1830

Affirms the unchangeableness of God within an argument about the salvation of little children.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/moro/8?lang=eng

S09 Pearl of Great Price, Moses 1

Scripture / Verses 3–4, 33–39, revelation dated June 1830

Connects worlds without number with God's work and glory in bringing about human immortality and eternal life.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/pgp/moses/1?lang=eng

S10 Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 3

Scripture / Verses 18–28, first published 1842

Describes intelligences, their differences, and premortal planning. Abraham's reasoning about differences in intelligence recurs in Smith's June sermon.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/pgp/abr/3?lang=eng

S11 New Testament, John 5

Scripture / King James Version, verses 19–26

Jesus describes doing the Father's works, giving life, and receiving life in himself. Smith drew further conclusions about the Father's personal history in 1844.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/john/5?lang=eng

S12 Joseph Smith, Discourse of 30 January 1842

Indirect report / Wilford Woodruff, Book of Revelations, pp. [3]–[4], especially [3]

Woodruff was away from Nauvoo and likely copied someone else's notes. It is the only surviving detailed account of that sermon; Joseph Smith's journal also has a brief entry.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-30-january-1842/1

S13 Joseph Smith Papers, Accounts of the King Follett Sermon

Documentary guide / Editorial guide to the 7 April 1844 discourse, four contemporaneous reports and the composite texts

Explains the reporters' methods, the August 1844 publication, and Jonathan Grimshaw's later compilation.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/site/accounts-of-the-king-follett-sermon

S14 Joseph Smith, King Follett discourse, Thomas Bullock's report

Documentary edition / 7 April 1844, general church minutes, pp. 14–22, historical introduction

Describes all six individual accounts, their dates, and their relationship to the published text. Distinguishes notes taken during the address from later copies.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/1

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S15 to S21

S15 Joseph Smith, King Follett discourse, Thomas Bullock's minutes

Contemporaneous report / 7 April 1844, manuscript p. 16

Records the Father living on an earth as Jesus did and relates the comparison to bodily death and renewed life.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/3

S16 Joseph Smith, King Follett discourse, William Clayton's minutes

Contemporaneous report / 7 April 1844, manuscript p. 13

Describes God as having once been like the hearers and having lived on a planet as Jesus did in the flesh.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-william-clayton/3

S17 Joseph Smith, King Follett discourse, Wilford Woodruff's journal

Contemporaneous report / 7 April 1844, journal vol. 5, p. [135]

Records the Father's earlier earthly existence and a further increase in glory through the Son's kingdom. The surviving journal appears to be a fair copy of Woodruff's notes.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/3

S18 Joseph Smith, King Follett discourse, Willard Richards's notes

Contemporaneous report / 7 April 1844, Joseph Smith's journal, book 4, p. [67]

Records Smith challenging the assumption that God was God from all eternity and discussing the Father's power to lay down and resume his body.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-willard-richards/1

S19 Joseph Smith, King Follett discourse in Times and Seasons

Published reconstruction / 15 August 1844, vol. 5, no. 15, p. 613, in a report spanning pp. 612–617

The first printed account combined Bullock and Clayton. This page describes the enthroned God in human form.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-published-in-times-and-seasons/2

S20 Joseph Smith, King Follett discourse in Times and Seasons

Published reconstruction / 15 August 1844, vol. 5, no. 15, p. 614

The next page of the same report explicitly describes the Father's life on an earth, the comparison with Jesus, and humans advancing toward godhood.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-published-in-times-and-seasons/3

S21 Joseph Smith manuscript history, King Follett discourse

Later reconstruction / History, volume E-1, p. 1970, compiled 1855–1856, recounting 7 April 1844

Contains the familiar polished wording about an exalted man enthroned in heaven. The contemporary reports preserve the substance in different words.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/342

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S22 to S28

S22 Joseph Smith, discourse of 16 June 1844, Thomas Bullock's report

Contemporaneous report / Sermon on the plurality of gods, manuscript p. [3]

Records Smith's reasoning that the Father of Jesus had a father, followed by a comparison of laying down and taking up life.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16-june-1844-a-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/3

S23 Joseph Smith, discourse of 16 June 1844, text and introduction

Documentary edition / Thomas Bullock's report, manuscript p. [1], editorial notes 1–2

Identifies Revelation 1:6 and explains how Smith's earlier revision of the verse differed from the King James wording he used in the sermon.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16-june-1844-a-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/1

S24 Fifth Theological Lecture on Faith

Contemporary publication / Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate, May 1835, 1:122–124, especially p. 122

The early lecture describes the Father as a personage of spirit and the Son as a personage of tabernacle. The text helps date changing descriptions of divine embodiment.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-1-fifth-theological-lecture-on-faith-circa-january-may-1835-as-published-in-latter-day-saints-messenger-and-advocate/1

S25 Church History Topics, Lectures on Faith

Official historical account / Historical entry, sections on authorship, publication in 1835, and removal in 1921

Explains uncertainty about authorship and the relationship between the fifth lecture and the later teaching in Doctrine and Covenants 130.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/lectures-on-faith?lang=eng

S26 Eliza R. Snow Smith, Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow

Retrospective account / Salt Lake City, Deseret News Company, 1884, chapter IX, pp. 46–47

Prints Lorenzo's first-person recollection of an insight he dated to spring 1840 and gives both lines of the couplet. Publication followed the reported experience by about 44 years.

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Biography_and_family_record_of_Lorenzo_Snow/Chapter_IX

S27 Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow

Official instruction / Chapter 5, The Grand Destiny of the Faithful, especially notes 1–4 and 9

Reproduces both halves of the couplet. The notes trace the 1840 recollection to the 1884 biography and the account of the Father's progression to an 1857 newspaper.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-of-presidents-of-the-church-lorenzo-snow/chapter-5-the-grand-destiny-of-the-faithful?lang=eng

S28 Presidents of the Church Student Manual, Lorenzo Snow

Official instruction / 2004 edition, chapter 5, pp. 75–92, passage on Snow's revelation

Repeats the later family account of Joseph's endorsement and places the meeting in January 1843 after Snow returned. The contemporary travel documents in S29 and S30 correct that date.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/presidents-of-the-church-student-manual/chapter-5?lang=eng

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S29 to S35

S29 Thomas Ward and Hiram Clark, recommendation for Lorenzo Snow

Documentary edition / Circa 5 January 1843, Joseph Smith Papers, Documents 11, pp. 315–317, historical introduction

Uses travel records to date Snow's departure from Liverpool to 16 January and his arrival in Nauvoo to 12 April 1843.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/recommendation-from-thomas-ward-and-hiram-clark-for-lorenzo-snow-circa-5-january-1843/1

S30 Joseph Smith's journal, arrival of Lorenzo Snow's company

Contemporaneous journal / 12 April 1843, book 2, pp. [114]–[115], linked page [115] and note 250

Willard Richards recorded the steamer's arrival with the English Saints. The entry provides a contemporary check on later accounts of Snow's return.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843/123

S31 Brigham Young's sermon as recorded by Wilford Woodruff

Contemporaneous journal / Journal entry for Sunday, 22 June 1851, Wilford Woodruff Papers

Records Young teaching about the Father's earlier condition and probation, as well as human advancement to godhood. Compare Kraut's later rendering at S62.

https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/day-in-church-history/1851-06-22

S32 Brigham Young, To Know God Is Eternal Life

Published sermon report / 8 February 1857, reported by G. D. Watt, Journal of Discourses 4:215–221, especially p. 218

Describes the Father as previously living in the flesh and subsequently possessing an exalted body. The sermon also discusses Young's ideas about Adam.

https://jod.mrm.org/4/215/

S33 Brigham Young, Weakness of the Human Mind

Published sermon report / 13 January 1867, reported by Edward L. Sloan, Journal of Discourses 11:282–291, especially p. 286

Young disputed Orson Pratt's view of limits on divine knowledge and power. The text places the claim about God's progress inside a sermon about learning.

https://jod.mrm.org/11/282/

S34 Brigham Young, Weakness of the Human Mind, original printed page

Print facsimile / Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, p. 286, original print facsimile

The original printed page verifies the wording of Young's disagreement with Pratt, including its reference to knowledge and power.

https://cdm15999.contentdm.oclc.org/iiif/2/JournalOfDiscourses3:4473/full/full/0/default.jpg

S35 Brigham Young, Weakness of the Human Mind, BYU page rendering

Typeset reproduction / Journal of Discourses, vol. 11, p. 286, Brigham Young University Scripture Citation Index

Provides a legible second rendering of the same page. Entries S33–S35 reproduce one sermon.

https://scriptures.byu.edu/jod/pdf/save/JoD11/JoD11_0286.pdf

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S36 to S41

S36 Wilford Woodruff, discourse of 6 December 1857

Newspaper record / Deseret News, 16 December 1857, vol. 7, no. 41, p. 324, archival record D-247

The Wilford Woodruff Papers identifies the newspaper issue, printed pagination, and archival source for Woodruff's sermon.

https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/533fb6b1-db8b-4afe-b096-ff43cbdb6a03

S37 Wilford Woodruff, discourse of 6 December 1857, text

Contemporary printed report / Deseret News, 16 December 1857, p. 324, second digital page of D-247

The transcription and underlying newspaper facsimile describe God's continuing increase in knowledge, power, and dominion.

https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/533fb6b1-db8b-4afe-b096-ff43cbdb6a03/page/110513cd-0374-48ee-9c09-b3bfe8baaca7

S38 John Taylor, The Mediation and Atonement of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Authored theological work / 1882 edition, pp. 139–141, digital text in Project Gutenberg

The indexed primary text explains exaltation through Christ's atonement. S39 confirms the passage and its print locator. Access to the full Gutenberg landing page was intermittent.

https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/36327/pg36327.html

S39 Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor

Official instruction / Chapter 1, The Origin and Destiny of Mankind, especially the section on Christ and note 7

Separately attributes Taylor's teachings on divine potential and the need for Christ. Note 7 identifies The Mediation and Atonement, pp. 139–141.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-john-taylor/chapter-1?lang=eng

S40 First Presidency, The Origin of Man

First Presidency statement / Improvement Era, November 1909, pp. 75–81, reprinted in Ensign, February 2002, p. 26 onward

Describes humans as children of heavenly parents with divine potential. The Ensign identifies its standardization of spelling and punctuation.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/02/the-origin-of-man?lang=eng

S41 First Presidency and members of the Twelve, Hearken, O Ye Latter-day Saints

Institutional statement / Deseret News, 23 August 1865, passages on Orson Pratt and his publications

Objects to teachings in Pratt's publications and addresses the authority to present doctrine for the Church. Read the named works and scope in context.

https://bhroberts.org/records/JbqSNh-LJpDrh/a_proclamation_that_doctrine_is_established_by_the_prophet_condemns_some_teachings_of_orson_pratt_and_lucy_mack_smiths_history

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S42 to S48

S42 Joseph Fielding Smith, The Most Important Knowledge

Presidential teaching / Ensign, May 1971, p. 2 onward

Presents the Father as omniscient and describes his attributes as complete. The author was President of the Church at publication.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1971/05/the-most-important-knowledge?lang=eng

S43 Bruce R. McConkie, The Seven Deadly Heresies

Apostolic address / Brigham Young University, 1 June 1980, section on the first heresy

Rejects an increase in God's knowledge and describes divine increase in terms of kingdoms and dominions.

https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/bruce-r-mcconkie/seven-deadly-heresies/

S44 Matthew Bowman, What Is the Nature of God's Progress?

Historical scholarship / BYU Studies Quarterly 60, no. 3 (2021), article 6, beginning on p. 65

Reconstructs disagreements about God's past and present progress. The essay supplies historical interpretation and references to the sources it discusses.

https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/what-is-the-nature-of-gods-progress

S45 Spencer W. Kimball, Our Great Potential

Presidential conference address / General conference, April 1977, passage citing Lorenzo Snow

Quotes both halves of a variant of Snow's couplet while discussing human destiny and perfection.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1977/04/our-great-potential?lang=eng

S46 Gerald N. Lund, Is President Snow's statement accepted as official doctrine?

Signed magazine answer / Ensign, February 1982, pp. 39–40, I Have a Question

Lund argues that Church leaders' use supports acceptance of Snow's teaching. The article identifies its author and relies partly on a later family recollection.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1982/02/i-have-a-question/is-president-snows-statement-as-man-now-is-god-once-was-as-god-now-is-man-may-be-accepted-as-official-doctrine?lang=eng

S47 Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young

Official instruction / 1997, chapter 4, Knowing and Honoring the Godhead, pp. 28–35, editorial introduction and teachings

Both the collected teachings and a discussion question address the Father's earlier experience as a man and his progression.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-brigham-young/chapter-4?lang=eng

S48 Gospel Principles, Exaltation

Official instruction / 2009 edition, chapter 47, especially the closing discussion of the Father's life

Describes human exaltation and quotes a later edited version of Smith's explanation that the Father lived on an earth.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-principles/chapter-47-exaltation?lang=eng

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S49 to S55

S49 Gospel Topics Essays, Becoming Like God

Official doctrinal essay / Essay on deification, especially the King Follett discourse and Lorenzo Snow sections

Affirms human divine potential and says little has been revealed regarding the first half of Snow's couplet. The essay also explains how Latter-day Saints understand eternal worship of the Father.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/becoming-like-god?lang=eng

S50 Church Newsroom, New Essays Address Topics on Women, Priesthood, Mother in Heaven

Official publication notice / 23 October 2015, announcement describing the series of 13 Gospel Topics Essays

Explains how Church scholars prepared the essays and senior Church leaders reviewed them. Provides institutional context for S49.

https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/new-church-essays-women-priesthood-mother-in-heaven

S51 Larry R. Lawrence, The Light of the Perfect Day

Signed magazine article / Ensign, March 2016, pp. 64–68, introductory discussion of spiritual light

The author states that the Father was once mortal and describes gradual progress. Lawrence wrote as a member of the Seventy.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2016/03/the-light-of-the-perfect-day?lang=eng

S52 New Testament Student Manual, Revelation 1–3

Official instruction / 2018 edition, chapter 53, commentary on Revelation 1:6

The commentary quotes Smith's teaching about the Father's father and the polished King Follett wording about the exalted man.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/new-testament-student-manual/revelation/chapter-53-revelation-1-3?lang=eng

S53 General Handbook, God's Plan and Your Role in His Work of Salvation and Exaltation

Official handbook / Online edition, chapter 1, especially sections 1.1–1.3

Defines the Church's contemporary teaching on salvation and exaltation and places it in the context of Christ, ordinances, and covenants.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/1-work-of-salvation-and-exaltation?lang=eng

S54 Don Lattin, Sunday Interview with Gordon B. Hinckley

Published interview / San Francisco Chronicle, 13 April 1997, questions about God and eternal progression

Hinckley declined to elaborate on the Father's past and explicitly affirmed eternal progression. Both question and answer are preserved.

https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/SUNDAY-INTERVIEW-Musings-of-the-Main-Mormon-2846138.php

S55 David Van Biema, Kingdom Come

Reported interview / TIME, 4 August 1997, p. 56, discussion of human divinity and the Father's past

The reporter reproduces Hinckley's qualified answer about teaching or emphasizing the Father's former state, alongside an affirmation of human divine potential.

https://time.com/archive/6731237/kingdom-come-2/

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S56 to S62

S56 Gordon B. Hinckley, Drawing Nearer to the Lord

Presidential conference address / General conference, October 1997, passage discussing the recent media interviews

Hinckley addressed concerns about media impressions and affirmed that he understood Church doctrine. His remarks did not identify a specific disputed quotation.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1997/10/drawing-nearer-to-the-lord?lang=eng

S57 Ogden Kraut collection, Read Books Online

Bibliographic index / Online catalog, entries for books, sermons, and letters

The user's starting point identifies the relevant titles and leads to the digital texts in S58–S63.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=30

S58 Ogden Kraut, Only True God

Independent theological work / Winter 1988, chapter 11, Doctrines of Deity, especially items 5–8, pp. 151–155

Kraut draws a connection between human and divine progression using earlier leaders' statements. His citations to compilations can be traced to the underlying historical documents.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=163

S59 Ogden Kraut, Letters and Responses

Independent commentary / Seven Deadly Heresies, Part II, Did President Brigham Young Teach Deadly Heresies? A Letter to Bruce R. McConkie, October 26, 1980

Collects statements by other speakers alongside Kraut's responses. McConkie's BYU address at S43 supplies an independent text for the position Kraut disputes.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=638

S60 Ogden Kraut, Mysteries of Creation

Independent theological work / December 1989, chapter 9, The Only Begotten, p. 90 onward, and chapter 12, The Plurality of Gods, p. 117 onward

Kraut considers how different figures participate in creation and offers his own account of divine relationships. Compare the claims about Christ's role with S64.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=157

S61 Ogden Kraut, Pre-Existence

Independent compilation / 1985, preface, chapter 2 (p. 5 onward), and chapter 11 (p. 126 onward)

Kraut identifies Orson Pratt's 1853 Seer as a major source and explains that the quotations are organized by topic. The preface documents Kraut's selection method.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=173

S62 Ogden Kraut, Sermons and Writings of the Restoration, vol. 2

Historical compilation / Compiled April 1994, entry for 22 June 1851, pp. 45–46

Reproduces a version of Young's remarks with modernized punctuation and wording. Compare the original journal transcription at S31.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=197

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S63 to S69

S63 Ogden Kraut, Reincarnation

Independent theological work / Pioneer Press, February 1994, chapters 19–20, especially pp. 179–191

The chapters compare reincarnation with Mormon teachings and discuss Adam separately. Useful for establishing Kraut's own distinctions among mortality, resurrection, and repeated earthly lives.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=181

S64 First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, The Living Christ

Joint apostolic testimony / 1 January 2000, The Testimony of the Apostles, opening paragraphs

Identifies Jesus Christ as the premortal Jehovah and affirms that he created the earth under the direction of his Father.

https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/the-living-christ

S65 Spencer W. Kimball, Our Own Liahona

Presidential conference address / General conference, October 1976, passage about the Adam-God theory

Kimball explicitly denounced the Adam-God theory. His statement identifies the specific teaching he was addressing.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1976/10/our-own-liahona?lang=eng

S66 Church Newsroom, Frequently Asked Questions

Official public explanation / Public FAQ, questions on becoming like God and on receiving a planet

Addresses popular descriptions of exaltation and explains the Church's emphasis on following Christ and becoming like Heavenly Father.

https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/frequently-asked-questions

S67 Community of Christ, Our Beliefs

Denominational statement / Official current statement, Basic Beliefs, sections God and Jesus Christ

Identifies the Community of Christ's Trinitarian confession and its account of Christ's humanity and divinity.

https://cofchrist.org/our-beliefs/

S68 Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Incarnation

Catholic catechism / Part 1, section 2, chapter 2, article 3, especially paragraphs 456–460 and 464–469

Explains participation in divine life through the incarnate Son. These paragraphs give the Catholic meaning of patristic language about humans becoming divine.

https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_one/section_two/chapter_two/artcile_3.html

S69 Orthodox Church in America, The Holy Trinity in Christian Life

Orthodox catechesis / The Orthodox Faith, volume I, Doctrine and Scripture, section on the Holy Trinity

Describes becoming divine as participation through Christ and the Spirit in the life of the Trinity.

https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/doctrine-scripture/the-holy-trinity/the-holy-trinity-in-christian-life

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S70 to S76

S70 Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, I Believe in God

Catholic catechism / Part 1, section 2, chapter 1, article 1, especially paragraphs 200–202 and 212–213

Explains the Catholic confession of the one God and God's enduring, unchanging life. Read with S68 for the setting of Catholic teaching about participation in divinity.

https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_one/section_two/chapter_one/article_1.html

S71 Nauvoo Expositor, Resolutions

Contemporary opposition newspaper / June 7, 1844, vol. 1, no. 1, p. [2], resolution 2

The second resolution objects to a plurality of gods above the God of this universe. The original issue documents the dissenters' objection, not Smith's exact words.

https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/nauvoo-expositor-7-june-1844/2

S72 Lorenzo Snow, The Blessings and Privileges of the Saints: Obedience to Counsel

Reported public discourse / October 11, 1857, Journal of Discourses 5:312–317, especially p. 313

Snow explicitly relates the Father's exaltation to continued progression. The sermon is direct evidence of what he publicly taught by 1857, regardless of uncertainty about the date of an earlier private conversation.

https://jod.mrm.org/5/312/

S73 Orson Pratt, The Seer

Original printed doctrinal argument / Vol. 1, no. 8, August 1853, p. 117, paragraphs 95–97, especially 96; PDF p. 125

The scanned printed page expressly distinguishes fullness of knowledge from other forms of increase. It confirms Pratt's position without relying on the later denunciation.

https://archive.org/download/seereditedbyorso01unse/seereditedbyorso01unse.pdf#page=125

S74 Bruce R. McConkie, letter to Eugene England

Private apostolic correspondence, scan / February 19, 1981, especially letter pp. 6–7; date from letterhead

McConkie discusses Young and explains how he resolves conflicting statements. The file name suggests 1980; the dated letter itself establishes 1981. Not a response to Kraut.

https://www.eugeneengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/BRM-to-EE-Feb-80-Combined.pdf

S75 Bruce R. McConkie, The Lord God of the Restoration

Apostolic conference address / General conference, October 1980, discussion of God attending a university to acquire truths

McConkie publicly rejects a God still discovering truths. This is a separate occasion from the June 1980 BYU address.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1980/10/the-lord-god-of-the-restoration?lang=eng

S76 Wilford Woodruff, December 6, 1857 sermon, Journal of Discourses version

Parallel printed sermon report / Journal of Discourses 6:115–121, especially p. 120

Agrees with the Deseret News report regarding continuing knowledge, power, and dominion, with a small wording difference. It is the same occasion as S36–S37.

https://jod.mrm.org/6/115/

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S77 to S83

S77 **Orson Hyde, The Man to Lead God's People (and related topics)**

Reported apostolic discourse / October 6, 1853, Journal of Discourses 1:121–130, especially p. 123

Hyde speaks of the possibility that the Father was once a child. His qualifying word perhaps belongs with that claim.

https://jod.mrm.org/1/121/

S78 **New Testament, Romans 8**

Canon: Bible / King James Version, verses 16–17

Paul links being children of God with being heirs with Christ, in a passage also concerned with suffering and glorification.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/rom/8?lang=eng

S79 **New Testament, 2 Peter 1**

Canon: Bible / King James Version, verses 3–4

The promise of participation in divine nature concerns human disciples. It does not narrate the Father's prior state.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/2-pet/1?lang=eng

S80 **New Testament, 1 John 3**

Canon: Bible / King James Version, verses 1–3

The text connects future likeness with the hope and purification of believers. It does not identify the Father's former world.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/1-jn/3?lang=eng

S81 **New Testament, Revelation 3**

Canon: Bible / King James Version, verse 21

The risen Christ promises a place with him on his throne, comparing it with his own overcoming and place with his Father.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/rev/3?lang=eng

S82 **Gospel Topics Essays, Mother in Heaven**

Official Church essay / Essay on the doctrine of heavenly parents, opening and concluding paragraphs

Describes women and men as beloved spirit children of Heavenly Parents and acknowledges the limited knowledge about Heavenly Mother.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/mother-in-heaven?lang=eng

S83 **Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith**

Official Church teaching manual / Chapter 2, God the Eternal Father, pp. 36–44, especially p. 40

Publishes the familiar compiled rendering of the King Follett teaching about God as an exalted man; compare S15–S21 for the stages of transmission.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-2?lang=eng

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S84 to S89

S84 Lorenzo Snow, record book, poem on divine and human destiny

Record book in scholarly transcription / January 11, 1892, pp. 90–92; transcript in Within These Prison Walls

The dated poem restates Snow's parallel in relation to Christ and purification. It supplies late lifetime evidence, not an 1840 memorandum.

https://rsc.byu.edu/within-these-prison-walls/transcript-lorenzo-snows-record-book

S85 Eugene England, Perfection and Progression: Two Complementary Ways to Talk about God

Theological argument in a scholarly journal / BYU Studies 29, no. 3 (1989), article on divine perfection and continuing progression

England offers his own reconciliation of perfection and progress. The published article and the 1981 letter he received are separate documents.

https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/perfection-and-progression-two-complementary-ways-to-talk-about-god

S86 James E. Faulconer and Susannah Morrison, The King Follett Discourse: Pinnacle or Peripheral?

Historical and theological scholarship / BYU Studies 60, no. 3 (2021), beginning p. 85, Historical Background and discussion of reception

Traces the variable authority and influence assigned to the sermon and distinguishes it from the June 1844 sermon.

https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-king-follett-discourse-pinnacle-or-peripheral

S87 Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow, page image

Facsimile of retrospective biography / Deseret News Company, 1884, p. 46; monochrome scan, digital page 72

Direct image of printed p. 46, checked visually. It confirms the colon between the two lines of Snow's couplet. Use S26 for the full chapter.

https://thumb.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a7/Biography_and_Family_Record_of_Lorenzo_Snow_monochrome.djvu/page72-1280px-Biography_and_Family_Record_of_Lorenzo_Snow_monochrome.djvu.jpg

S88 Ogden Kraut, Sermons and Writings of the Restoration, vol. 3

Historical compilation / Compiled and published September 1994, Knowledge, pp. 34–38

This transcription leads to the unsigned Millennial Star article, S89. Kraut is its compiler, not its 1852 author.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=199

S89 Knowledge, from the Deseret News

Unsigned periodical essay, scanned reprint / Millennial Star 14, no. 25 (August 14, 1852), pp. 385–387, especially p. 386 (PDF p. 2)

The original periodical identifies the earlier newspaper. Page 386 explicitly connects God's former manhood and progression. The text has no personal byline.

https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/api/collection/MStar/id/37670/download#page=2

ANNOTATED SOURCES

Source register

S90 to S95

S90 Ogden Kraut, Michael/Adam

Independent theological work / Online edition, no verified publication date; preface and ch. 2, The Great Announcement, p. 12 onward

Kraut argues for an identification of Adam and God while acknowledging the Church's rejection of that teaching. S65 and S92 document the contrasting official and historical statements.

https://ogdenkraut.com/?page_id=149

S91 To the Saints, Deseret News

Original unsigned newspaper essay / Vol. 2, no. 7 (February 7, 1852), p. 26; University of Utah digital newspaper facsimile

Earlier printing of the argument later headed Knowledge in S89. Matching text and the reprint attribution establish the relationship; neither supplies a personal byline.

https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/udn_files/12/2a/122aae889dfc4f2e16f081d4d946fcf4dab2b17c.pdf

S92 Brigham Young, April 9, 1852 sermon

Reported presidential discourse / Journal of Discourses 1:46–53, especially p. 50, passage about Adam in Eden

Young identifies Adam with the father and God in this passage. Read with S65 for Kimball's later explicit rejection and S90 for Kraut's interpretation.

https://jod.mrm.org/1/46/

S93 First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, The Father and the Son

Joint doctrinal exposition / Improvement Era, August 1916, pp. 934–942; Ensign reprint, April 2002

Explains why Jesus, Jehovah, can be called Father in several scriptural senses while remaining the Son of Elohim. A useful guide to the identity of the subject of historical statements.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/04/the-father-and-the-son?lang=eng

S94 First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, The Family: A Proclamation to the World

Joint proclamation / September 23, 1995, paragraphs 2–3

Locates the divine destiny of sons and daughters in their relationship to heavenly parents; describes progression toward perfection and eternal life.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world?lang=eng

S95 Dallin H. Oaks, Kingdoms of Glory

First Presidency member, conference address / October 2023 general conference, discussion of the highest celestial glory and the family proclamation

Quotes section 76 regarding godhood, explicitly includes daughters, and describes exaltation through the Father's plan and the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2023/10/17oaks?lang=eng