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Last year, a dignitary of a great Protestant church visited in Ogden [Utah]. His coming was announced in the press, and an invitation was extended to the public to hear him speak on the subject "Are the Mormons Christians?" I missed his sermon, so I wouldn't know. I mean I wouldn't know what he said.

### Are Mormons Christians?

A visitor on Temple Square turned to a tourist at his side and asked, "Are these Mormons Christians?" Sensing the pressure of the crowd about him and obviously not wishing to be overheard, the tourist answered, almost in a whisper, "Yes, in a way, but they are not orthodox." Then, taking his wife by the arm, he squeezed his way out of the crowd—purposely, I think, to avoid explaining that word orthodox. The visitor who asked the question would probably like to know what an orthodox Christian is. So would I.

Up in Huntsville, Utah, where President McKay was born and reared and where he still resides when he is not in his apartment in Hotel Utah, a monastery has been established. I asked its abbot why his church came to Huntsville to build a monastery in President McKay's backyard, in a community where 90 percent of the residents are Mormons, in a state where Mormons constitute a substantial majority. He replied, "To bring Christianity to the Mormons." And he was not speaking facetiously.

### Characteristics of Christian Creeds

Last year a Protestant minister on the local radio program "Public Pulse" was asked by one of his listeners, "Is there any basic, hard-core concept that is common to, and characteristic of, all Christian creeds?" In substance his answer was, "Yes, there are two. The first is a belief in a God to whom you can ascribe no physical characteristics. The other is a concept of Jesus Christ as a manifestation of God in the flesh, who came to establish his gospel on

the earth." Christian churches are vehicles to spread it around the world.

Thanks to this minister, I think I now know what the tourist on Temple Square meant when he said, "Yes, in a way [the Mormons are Christians], but they are not orthodox." I also have a faint idea of what the minister up Ogden way probably said in this sermon, "Are the Mormons Christians?" Orthodoxy, it seems, is believing a little; unorthodoxy is believing too much.

A Christian, according to my dictionary, is one who "believes, or professes or is assumed to believe, in Jesus Christ, and the truth as taught by him." Under that broad definition there surely ought to be room for the abbot, the ministers, even myself, to qualify as Christians and room also to disagree. God, whoever and wherever he is, would be pleased to have his children, regardless of creed or color, keep the commandments he gave to ancient Israel, and how much happier this world would be if we of Christian faiths would follow the simple teachings of the Christ. I am a Christian. My dictionary sustains me. I believe in Jesus Christ and the truth as taught by him.

My acceptance of him literally as the Son of God, rather than as a manifestation or reincarnation of God, must not rule me out of the Christian society. Nor should my belief in a corporeal—flesh and bones—God affect my Christian status. And because I also accept the Holy Ghost as the third person in the Godhead, I should not be accused of believing too much for an orthodox Christian.

### Characteristics of Latter-day Saint Faith

To the tourist, who may still be pondering the meaning of the word "orthodox," and to all of you listening in, may I submit three really basic, hard-core godhead concepts that truly are characteristic of my Latter-day Saint faith:

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1. I affirm—we affirm—the existence of a true and living God in whose image and likeness man was created. He has “a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s.” (D&C 130:22.) With limbs, he can stand and walk. In his head are eyes to see us, ears to hear us, a mouth to speak to us. Can anyone explain to me how he:

—without a mouth can speak? (John 12:28-29.)

—without eyes can see what his children are doing here on earth?

—without ears can hear my prayers and yours?

My God is capable of emotions and passions, else:

—how can he love? He did so love

“the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16.)

—how can he be angry when his children blaspheme his name and break his commandments?

—how can he be long suffering? merciful and gracious?

From your Bible and mine I quote: “. . . God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . .

“So God created man in his own image,” and then, as if by way of emphasis, is added “in the image of God created he him. . . .” (Gen. 1:26-27.)

This God of mine and yours has been seen and heard. In company with his son Jesus, God the Father appeared to Joseph Smith, the great American prophet. Introducing his son, he said, “—*This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith 2:17.)

The apostle John wrote: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3.)

2. I affirm—we affirm—that Jesus Christ, whom the Father did send, is literally, not figuratively, the Son of God, our Heavenly Father. Jesus said he was. When Caiaphas on that fateful day of our Savior’s trial shouted, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? . . . Jesus said, I am. . . .” (Mark 14:61-62.) His mother so claimed him (Luke 1:30-32); so did his

apostles and others. (John 1:45-49, 11:25-44; Mark 15:39; Matt. 14:33; Acts 9:17-20; D&C 76:15-23.) God the Father left no possible room for doubt about his sonship; four times are recorded in which he, the Father, introduced Jesus as his Son:

1. To Joseph Smith, as I have already related.

2. On the occasion of Christ’s transfiguration on the Mount. (Mark 9:2-7.)

3. When Jesus made a personal visit to the Nephites. (3 Ne. 11:3-7.)

4. At the baptism of Jesus by the hands of John the Baptist. (Matt. 3:13-17.) This particular introduction is narrated by Luke in these words, which are almost identical with those of the other three introductions: “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22.)

There have been fathers without sons, but whoever heard of a son without a father? Jesus is no exception. God is his Father. To him he prayed and to him he counseled us to pray. (Matt. 6:9-13.)

Luke’s narrative introduces my third hard-core concept, namely:

3. I affirm—we affirm—that the Holy Ghost who “descended in a bodily shape like a dove” upon Jesus is the third member of the Godhead. Unlike Jesus and the Father, he does not have a body of flesh and bones but is a personage of spirit—a spirit entity. Like the Father and the Son, his spirit body has size and dimensions and is in the form of a man, not a woman. Whether he, in time, will take to himself a body is sheer speculation.

Some people who are given to speculating suspect that he might follow the example of the Savior, who took upon himself a body and then laid it down that he might take it up again. The Savior said he did the things he saw his Father do before him. (John 5:19-20.) His Father took unto himself a body. I would not dare to deny the Holy Ghost that same privilege; neither would I affirm it so. Some things we do not know; some things we are not now supposed to

know. If evil spirits can enter into and thus influence mortal bodies (Mark 5:1-12), it must be within the power of the Holy Ghost on occasions similarly to contact and influence human souls for good. Perhaps that's why he has not taken upon himself a mortal body.

Spirit matter is too refined to be visible to the physical eye, yet God once permitted John the Baptist to behold the descent of the Holy Ghost "in a bodily shape" when John baptized Jesus. Like a dove the Holy Ghost descended—not in the form of a dove, but rather in the sign of the dove in witness of that administration. In explanation, the Prophet Joseph Smith has said, "The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the devil cannot come in the sign of a dove. The Holy Ghost is a personage, and is in the form of a personage. [He] . . . cannot be transformed into a dove; but the sign of a dove . . . is an emblem or token of truth and innocence." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 276.)

Again, like the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost can only be in one place at a time, and he cannot transform himself into any other form or image. To affirm omnipresence of the personage of the Holy Ghost overstates divine purpose. However, his power and intelligence are omnipresent in perhaps the same way the light of Christ fills the immensity of space and is everywhere present. Who can affirm that the two are not in some way correlated agencies or powers through which the Holy Ghost, in administering his affairs, sends forth his gifts? (Moro. 10:17; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 54.)

His mission is to testify of Christ and to bear record of the Father as well as the Son and to all truth. (John 15:26; *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 38.)

Sometimes he is referred to as the *Messenger* for the Father and the Son. Other times he is called the *Comforter*. As such he assuages sorrow, gives hope to dispirited persons, and soothes wounded hearts and feelings.

He is often called the *Teacher*. The apostle John said, ". . . he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance. . . ." (John 14:26.)

He is also a *Revelator*. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations. The Holy Ghost is a revelator." (*Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 58.)

". . . no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. 12:3; D&C 46:13.)

By his power one may know that the Book of Mormon is true. (Moro. 10:4.)

He is the *Holy Spirit of Promise* who "places the stamp of approval upon every ordinance: baptism, confirmation, ordination, marriage. The promise is that the blessings will be received through faithfulness." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 45. Italics added.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith was told that "all covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations" must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise if they are to have "efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead." (D&C 132:7.) Some of the Saints, I fear, fail to realize that he who places the seal upon the ordinances has power also to remove the seal when covenants are broken. How important it is that we remain faithful Saints to the very end.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed after baptism by the laying on of hands by those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. This priesthood ordinance was carefully preserved from the Adamic dispensation and was fully understood in the meridian of time. ". . . when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." (Acts 19:6.) Once, one Simon Magus made overtures with money, "saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy

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Ghost." Peter's rebuke stunned him: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." (Acts 8:19-20.)

Now, what I have been trying to say in a profusion of words—and I offer it as my witness—is this:

### The basic testimony of a Latter-day Saint

I believe—"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." (First article of faith.)

We believe in God the Father, the Planner, Elohim by name; Jesus the Son, the Creator, the Jehovah of the Old Testament; the Holy Ghost, the Testator, Revelator, Comforter.

The greatest gift God has bestowed upon us, his errant children, is the gift of his Only Begotten Son—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The next precious gift, I think, is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Following that I would rate priesthood—the great power of God.

Crowning these is the gift of eternal life.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## ELDER HOWARD W. HUNTER

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

When the history of our time is written, it might well describe our generation as the one that has increased learning and scientific accomplishment to an extent far beyond the achievement of any preceding generation. We are constantly amazed at modern development, yet we have learned to expect the ever-expanding progress stemming from the mind of man and as the result of his genius.

### "A little lower than the angels"

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." (Ps. 8:4-5.)

The evidence of man's accomplishments has firmly planted in the modern mind the conviction of man's greatness—just a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor.

### Men are free moral agents

Since the beginning, men have been born free moral agents with the freedom to choose between good or evil. Even in the preexistence the spirit children of the father had their choice.

"... for, behold, the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, say-

ing, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency." (D&C 29:36.)

This same choice was given to the first man placed upon the earth, for after he was formed and placed amid the abundance that had been created, the Lord said: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself. . . ." (Moses 3:16-17.)

When the children of Israel stood on the threshold of the Promised Land, they faced the choice that was given to them. Israel was clearly told of the consequences of its decision. There was no neutral ground in the statement of the Lord to them:

"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

### A blessing and a curse

"A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day:

"And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God. . . ." (Deut. 11:26-28.)

In the writings of Nephi we read of the instructions given by Lehi to his