

JAMES E. TALMAGE AND THE NATURE OF THE GODHEAD:  
THE GRADUAL UNFOLDING OF LATTER-DAY  
SAINT THEOLOGY

by

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## ABSTRACT

### JAMES E. TALMAGE AND THE NATURE OF THE GODHEAD THE GRADUAL UNFOLDING OF LATTER-DAY SAINT THEOLOGY

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Since the beginning of Christianity, the debates over the nature of God have been frequent and ardent. Augustine, John Calvin, and John Wesley, with others, supplemented the generally accepted view of the Godhead as established at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Correctly understanding the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is one of the most critical aspects of religious worship. The Savior said, “And this is life eternal, that they may come to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

Joseph Smith, the first Latter-day Saint Prophet, taught a correct understanding of God was required for any man or woman to receive eternal life. The Latter-day Saint teachings regarding the Godhead were fitted into place one piece at a time. Those that followed Joseph Smith, over time, added to the doctrinal foundation that he established from 1820 to 1844.

Elder James E. Talmage added to the foundation left by previous Church leaders. The leaders of the Church utilized James Talmage’s abilities, specifically as a writer, to explain

and clarify important principles of the gospel. The efforts of Elder Talmage resulted in three monumental works. First, his book *Articles of Faith* was published and publicly endorsed by President Lorenzo Snow, the fourth President of the Church. Next, *Jesus the Christ* was published by the Church and endorsed by Lorenzo Snow's successor, President Joseph F. Smith. Finally, at the request of President Joseph F. Smith, Elder Talmage authored "The Father and The Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by The First Presidency and The Twelve" in 1916.

The official declaration is still referred to by Church leaders when they comment on the relationship between Jehovah and Elohim. The document answered questions regarding the Book of Mormon's use of "Father" when referring to Jesus Christ. Generally, members of the Church today understand these teachings. Nearly a century passed before Church leaders taught them in their entirety and they could be compiled into one declaration. Elder Talmage's efforts, as directed and overseen by the First Presidency, assisted in clarifying his predecessors' teachings on the Godhead.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Chapter One

### Introduction and Explanation

“I do not know exactly why, but I feel, and have always felt a deep interest in you. I want you to feel encouraged in your labors, want you to cultivate a love for life and a desire to live, for I tell you . . . you shall attain to the very highest pinnacle of fame, that your heart may aspire toward; and you shall reach a position which very few men in the church will attain. The Lord has wondrously blessed you; you are endowed with talents many and great, – endowments for which many men would give a fortune of millions of dollars.”<sup>1</sup>

These were the words of Apostle Lorenzo Snow – eventually the fifth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1898-1901) – to a young James E. Talmage as they traveled together on a train. James Edward Talmage, a Latter-day Saint Apostle from 1911 to 1933, had and continues to have a major influence on the development of Latter-day Saint theology. Elder Talmage was a teacher and geologist. Scientists in the United States and England recognized him for his incisive mind and thorough research. James Talmage was also a trusted gospel scholar in the LDS Church and its leaders relied on him throughout his life. This thesis will focus on the life and teachings of Elder James E. Talmage and, more particularly, the influence his teachings on the Godhead have had over the last eighty years. This chapter will introduce the thesis

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<sup>1</sup> James E. Talmage Collection, Personal Journals, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, December 16, 1892, (hereafter cited as Talmage Journals).



and provide a literature review for those books and articles that are available on the life of James Talmage.

### **The Need to Know James E. Talmage**

The need to write on Elder Talmage is evident. The writings and teachings of James Talmage may be among the most influential of any LDS Church leader since the time of Joseph Smith, the founder of the faith. Elder Talmage's books, *Articles of Faith* and *Jesus the Christ* were both published officially by the Church, and the First Presidency urged all to read the books as a part of their gospel study both at home as well as at Church. These books provided a Church-approved source for doctrine on major issues such as the nature of God, the need for a Redeemer, and the work of the Spirit. At James Talmage's funeral, fellow Apostle Melvin J. Ballard said that Talmage's writings would "be read until the end of time, because that which he has written is so clear and so impressive that it shall ever be among the cherished treasure of those who love the works of God."<sup>2</sup>

The book *Jesus the Christ*, which was printed for the first time in 1915, was in its third printing only one year after it was first published. It was extremely popular among Latter-day Saints and those of other faiths as well. In January 1916, "the Sturgis and Walton people" who expressed their desire to "list and sell the book *Jesus the Christ* provided satisfactory terms can be made with the Deseret News approached James Talmage."<sup>3</sup> After it was published and made available for the public to purchase, Elder Talmage received an increasing number of requests to speak on the topic of "Jesus the

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<sup>2</sup> See Albert L. Zobell, ed., *The Parables of James E. Talmage* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 71.

<sup>3</sup> Talmage Journals, January 12, 1916.

Christ.” He wrote, “The interest manifest by our people in the study of the life of the Savior is one of the most gratifying evidences of the blessing of the Lord attending our recent publication.”<sup>4</sup>

100 years later *Jesus the Christ* remains a fixture in the LDS missionary library (currently, a set of four books that the Church asks its full-time missionaries to take with them into the mission field). The other three books on the list are not more than fifteen years old. The fact that this book has remained so long on the list of required reading for missionaries is a significant indicator to its value and representation of LDS orthodoxy. *Jesus the Christ* happens to be (as of this writing) the only full book on the Church’s website that is available for members to download (at no cost) and listen to on their personal computer or other device.

Unfortunately, information on this Latter-day Saint leader is difficult to find. Such information is sparse at best. In an effort to make a portion of Elder Talmage’s life and influence available, this thesis will answer the following four questions:

1. What were the influences that nurtured Elder Talmage’s dedication to the LDS Church and its teachings?
2. How did Elder Talmage’s point of view on the nature of God differ from other theologians leading up to his day?
3. What were the major contributions of Elder Talmage’s teachings regarding the Godhead?
4. To what extent can his contributions still be seen in the teachings of current leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and what effect have those contributions had on members of the church?

As an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I am aware of the danger of bias and preconceived notions regarding other faiths. I hold a great appreciation and respect for men and women who have given themselves to God

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<sup>4</sup> Talmage Journals, February 13, 1916.

regardless of specific denomination. I believe that Augustine, John Calvin, John Wesley, Joseph Smith and James Talmage held deep personal spiritual convictions and feel that the Lord's hand was involved in each of their works. Their most earnest desire seems to have been to bring men and women closer to Jesus Christ. Because of this sensitivity, I will avoid using phrases that may shed doubt on the reality of any person's spiritual convictions and experiences. Thus I will not weary the reader with phrases such as: "Joseph Smith's *purported* vision," and "John Wesley *reported* to have had a dream."

### **The Need to Know God**

A majority of Christians, including members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, consider the doctrine of the Godhead fundamental because it is the foundation for receiving eternal life. "Christians have usually insisted that a correct formulation of the doctrines of God and Christ is important because the possibility of eternal life depends on it."<sup>5</sup> The Savior Himself said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Joseph Smith, the founder of the LDS Church, said, "It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another."<sup>6</sup> Brigham Young, the second LDS Prophet, taught, "The more I can know of God, the dearer and more precious he is to me, and the more exalted are my feelings towards him."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 117.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 345-346.

<sup>7</sup> *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widstoe (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 18.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, felt that the Christian faith started with a true understanding of God. Thus, a misunderstanding or false idea regarding God would undermine all faith. In chapter one of his work on the Trinity, he warned, “The reader of these reflections of mine on the Trinity should bear in mind that my pen is on the watch against the sophistries of those who scorn the starting-point of faith [acceptance of and belief in the Trinity], and allow themselves to be deceived through an unseasonable and misguided love of reason.”<sup>8</sup>

In his most valuable sermon on this topic, John Wesley said, “There are some truths more important than others. It seems there are some which are of deep importance. . . . Surely there are some which it nearly concerns us to know, as having a close connexion [sic] with vital religion. And doubtless we may rank among these that are contained in the words above cited: ‘There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these three are one.’”<sup>9</sup> John Wesley was a great defender of the traditional Christian view of the Trinity.

Elder James Talmage felt that learning the correct nature of God was important because a correct knowledge would lead a person to greater faith in and greater love for God.<sup>10</sup> James Talmage recognized that despite all of man’s heartfelt attempts to understand God through “reason, research and prayer,” the conclusions have been varied and the discussions contentious.<sup>11</sup> Talmage wrote:

All truth is of value, above price indeed in its place; yet, with respect to their possible application some truths are of incomparably greater worth than others. A knowledge of

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<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991), 65.

<sup>9</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) 6:200.

<sup>10</sup> James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 40.

<sup>11</sup> James E. Talmage, “What is God Like?” *Sunday Night Talks: A Series of Radio Addresses Relating to Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1931) 18.

the principles of trade is essential to the success of the merchant; an acquaintance with the laws of navigation is demanded of the mariner; familiarity with the relation of soil and crops is indispensable to the farmer; an understanding of the principles of mathematics is necessary to the engineer and the astronomer; so too is a personal knowledge of God essential to the salvation of every human soul that has attained to powers of judgment and discretion. The value of theological knowledge, therefore, ought not to be underrated; it is doubtful if its importance can be overrated.<sup>12</sup>

While many groups agree that the topic is crucial and accuracy is vital, not all agree on what should be considered accurate with regards to the Godhead. Professor Craig Blomberg of Denver Seminary wrote about the similarities and differences in beliefs of modern-day Protestants and Latter-day Saints. He noted that most people concur with regard to what God does. “God is Creator, Revealer, Sustainer of the Universe. God is active in initiating the plan of salvation for humanity and ultimately, through the Holy Spirit, is the power and person behind the redemption, sanctification and glorification of all human beings who trust in Christ.” Despite this common ground among the different faiths, there are some ideas that are still disputed. “The key area of debate . . . has to do with what God is like.”<sup>13</sup> This thesis will touch upon some of those differences in beliefs.

### **Dr. Talmage Begins Writing**

According to Joseph Smith’s official description (1838) of his First Vision in 1820, he explained that the Father and the Son are two separate beings.<sup>14</sup> The young Prophet continued to teach additional truths about the Godhead as the Lord revealed them to him. Today the Church teaches a strict separation of Elohim (as the spiritual Father of all men and women) and Jehovah (the premortal Jesus Christ and Only Begotten Son of

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<sup>12</sup> James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?*, 95.

<sup>14</sup> See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 370.

Elohim). That distinction, however, was not always as clearly defined as it is today. In 1842, Joseph Smith wrote, “O Thou who seest and knowest the hearts of all men – Thou eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent *Jehovah* – God – Thou *Eloheim*.”<sup>15</sup> Elder Franklin D. Richards taught, “The Savior said He could call to His help more than twelve legions of angels; more than the Roman hosts; but He knowing the great purposes of *Jehovah* could go like a lamb to the slaughter.”<sup>16</sup>

Latter-day Saint scripture teaches that Christ was not given a fullness of God’s glory at first. Rather, the Son of God received the glory of the Father “grace for grace” or “line upon line” (See D&C 93:4-13; 2 Nephi 28:30). Thus, the idea of LDS theology undergoing a gradual refinement as the years go on should not cause problems in the minds of scholars and historians. Although there are those who see this as evidence of a doctrinal weakness, a better description would be a doctrinal strengthening. Not only did James Talmage give credence to the teachings of Joseph Smith regarding the image and attributes of God but recognized him as one of those most qualified to teach others about God. He asked, “Who could be better able to describe God than one who has seen Him?”<sup>17</sup>

In the late 1800’s there was debate among members of the Church about the Godhead. Controversial and exploratory comments by both the lay members and the leaders of the Church had caused members of the Church to seek official clarification. Apparently some of those attempts at clarification reached Salt Lake and the office of the

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<sup>15</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1994), 5:127-128, emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup> Franklin D. Richards, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1855-1886), 26:172, emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> James E. Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks: A Series of Radio Addresses Relating to Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1931), 27.

First Presidency. President Wilford Woodruff, third President of the Church of Jesus Christ, said in an 1895 General Conference:

God has revealed Himself, and . . . whether there be one God or many gods they will be revealed to the children of men, as well as all thrones and dominions, principalities, and powers. Then why trouble yourselves about these things? God is God. Christ is Christ. The Holy Ghost is the Holy Ghost. That should be enough for you and me to know. If we want to know any more, wait till we get where God is in person . . . The Lord is the same yesterday, to-day [sic], and forever. He changes not. The Son of God is the same. He is the Savior of the world. He is our advocate with the Father. We have had letter after letter from Elders abroad wanting to know concerning these things . . . God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are the same yesterday, to-day [sic] and forever. That should be sufficient for us to know.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. James Talmage published two of the most influential books of his time. *A Study of the Articles of Faith* and *Jesus the Christ* were both published at the request of the First Presidency of the Church and had similar beginnings. *Articles of Faith* was published first in 1899. When the book was completed, Lorenzo Snow, the President of the LDS Church at the time, wrote a letter of endorsement that appeared in the *Deseret News*. President Snow's letter read as follows:

During the early part of April there will be issued by the *Deseret News* a Church work entitled "The Articles of Faith," the same being a series of lectures on the basic principal doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by Dr. James E. Talmage. The lectures were prepared by appointment of the First Presidency, and the book will be published by the Church. It is intended for use as a text book in the Church schools, Sunday schools, [Mutual] Improvement Associations, quorums of the Priesthood, and other Church organizations in which the study of Theology is pursued, and also for individual use among the members of the Church. The work has been approved by the First Presidency, and I heartily commend it to the members of the Church.<sup>19</sup>

This editorial makes clear President Snow's desire that the members study this book. The First Presidency requested that the work be done, it was published by the Church, and now that it was done and after reviewing its contents, the leadership of the Church gave their full approval to what had been written.

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<sup>18</sup> Eric Bateman, ed., *The Prophets Have Spoken*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1999), 1:1035.

<sup>19</sup> *Deseret Evening News*, March 10, 1899.

Fifteen years later President Joseph F. Smith wrote of *Jesus the Christ*, “We desire that the work ‘Jesus the Christ’ be read and studied by the Latter-day Saints in their families, and in the organizations that are devoted wholly or in part to theological study. We commend it especially for use in our Church Schools, as also, for the advanced theological classes in Sunday Schools and priesthood quorums, for the instruction of our missionaries and for general reading.”<sup>20</sup>

Both books were actually prepared in a classroom in Salt Lake City, Utah, in front of LDS students. In 1891 President Wilford Woodruff discussed the possibility of a book that could be used for general theological studies by members of the Church. Dr. Talmage was selected as the one to author such a book. The work was delayed for more than two years, but on February 20, 1893 Talmage received a letter that officially petitioned his services in writing a book “in the theological and religious subjects.” According to the letter, it was on account of Talmage’s “experience in this direction” that he was receiving the request.<sup>21</sup> In response to the request and as preparation for the writing process, Talmage started the class on the LDS College campus. The result was *Articles of Faith*.

The classes were held on Sunday and attendance was very good. By 1894 the class attendance topped 1300 students. By the time the book was finally published in 1899, it was not a surprise to people. In fact, it had been highly anticipated by many in the Church. The classes were discontinued when James was asked to be the President of the University of Utah. However, in 1898, just one year after resigning the post of

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<sup>20</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc, 1972), 186.

<sup>21</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 155.



University President, the First Presidency asked that James finish the work that had been started years earlier.<sup>22</sup>

The events that led to the publication of *Jesus the Christ* were similar to those leading to *The Articles of Faith*, although the order was somewhat different. From 1904 to 1906 James Talmage delivered Sunday classes to LDS College students on the life of Jesus Christ. James referred to the class in his journals as the “University Sunday School.” In contrast to the earlier experience, James had already started the classes when the First Presidency requested that he compile what he was teaching into a book and make it available to Church members in general.

Due to responsibilities relating to church and his employment, Talmage’s work on the book about the Savior was postponed. However, in 1911 Dr. Talmage was called to be an Apostle. He served in that position for three years when, in 1914, the First Presidency again expressed their desire to see the book take a higher priority and be completed. On September 14, 1914 James was told to go to work on the book with “as little delay as possible.”<sup>23</sup>

The public support of the First Presidency is a direct support of Dr. Talmage’s teachings. They desired that the general membership of the Church have a correct representation of Church doctrine that would be available for study at home and at church. The trust that these men placed in James Talmage is a significant insight into his life and reputation as not only a scientist and a scholar, but also as a faithful and knowledgeable member of his Church.

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<sup>22</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 154-56. See also Talmage Journals, September 14, 1891 and October 29, 1893.

<sup>23</sup> Talmage Journals, September 14, 1914.

The First Presidency turned to Elder Talmage again in June 1916 when members of the Church continued to request clarification on important doctrinal matters with regard to the Godhead. On June 30, 1916, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a doctrinal statement on the “status of Jesus Christ as both the Father and the Son.”<sup>24</sup> The document also clearly distinguished between the Father and the Son as two separate beings. Once again, in an effort to clarify doctrinal matters for the members of the Church, President Joseph F. Smith called on Elder Talmage to write in behalf of the First Presidency. Elder Talmage was largely responsible for the writing of the 1916 document.

## **Literature Review**

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the doctrinal contributions of Elder James E. Talmage. While the specific topic covered herein is the Godhead, a literature review on that general topic would fill multiple libraries alone. For that reason, this review will focus on those books and articles that have been written about the life of Elder James E. Talmage.

There are only two books written about Elder Talmage. The first, *The Talmage Story*, was written by his son, John R. Talmage in the year 1972, and is the only true biography available. *The Essential James E. Talmage*, compiled by James Harris, is the second. It is a selection of writings from Talmage’s journals and other writings. There have been several articles written about different aspects of his life. Many of the articles that are available, however, were nearly identical. Including the two books mentioned above, the following will be reviewed:

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<sup>24</sup> Talmage Journals, June 23, 1916.

1. “Dr. James E. Talmage” by Melvin J. Ballard.
2. “Fishing on the Kennet: The Victorian Boyhood of James E. Talmage, 1862-1876” by Dennis Rowley
3. “Inner Dialogue: James Talmage’s Choice of Science as a Career, 1876-1884,” by Dennis Rowley

### ***The Talmage Story***

Published in 1972, this book is the very best source of information on the life of James Talmage. It is organized in chronological order. John Talmage, the son of Elder Talmage, decided to write the book when he was in a grocery store. An employee asked John Talmage if he was related to “the man who wrote the Church books.”<sup>25</sup> John Talmage was astonished to find that the employee believed James Talmage to be a contemporary with Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball. This book, therefore, was meant to reintroduce the general church to the man everybody already knew, but only through his writings. John Talmage wanted to show the world that “a man is more than his writings.”<sup>26</sup> The strong points of this book are the personal moments. They provide a great insight into the most important events in the life of James Talmage.

John Talmage does a commendable job showing Elder Talmage’s concern for other people. In the early 1890’s the residents of Salt Lake faced difficult times. Financial difficulties were one thing, but illness ravaged the city and surrounding areas. The Talmage family lived near one family that was struck particularly hard by the plague. The Martins were not members of James Talmage’s Church, but when he heard of their plight he hurried to help, despite serious personal risk. When James arrived at the home it was in total disarray. John Talmage quoted in detail from his father’s journal regarding the

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<sup>25</sup> “Books,” *Ensign*, November 1972, 82.

<sup>26</sup> “Books,” *Ensign*, November 1972, 82.

incident, giving the terrible circumstances in which the Martin family found themselves. “One child, two and a half years old, lay dead on a bed, having been dead about four hours and still unwashed. Two other children, one a boy of ten and the other a girl of five, lay writhing in the agonies of the disease. A girl of 13 years [was] still feeble from a recent attack of diphtheria . . . The father, Mr. Abe Martin, and the mother, Marshia Martin [were] dazed with grief and fatigue.”<sup>27</sup>

“The siege of illness had gone on so long that the entire house was in a state of utter filth.”<sup>28</sup> After helping with the needs of the children, Brother Talmage started on the physical tasks. He washed and prepared the “little corpse.” Then he bathed the living children and clothed them in clean clothing provided by the Relief Society. Other neighbors had also sent food. James swept the rooms, carried out the soiled clothing, and burned the accumulation of filthy rags.

James promised the Martin family that he would stay to help, even if no other help arrived. He stayed all that day, and then was replaced by someone who came to sit with the family throughout the night. When James returned the next morning, he discovered that the little boy, ten years old, had died during the night. The little girl was doing well. “She clung to my neck, oftentimes coughing bloody mucus on my face and clothing, and her throat had about it the stench of putrefaction, yet I could not put her from me. During that half hour immediately preceding her death, I walked the floor with the little creature in my arms. She died in agony at 10 a.m.”<sup>29</sup>

The only thing *The Talmage Story* lacks is detail in some of those very important parts of Elder Talmage’s life. This may be more of a representation of James Talmage’s

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<sup>27</sup> See Talmage Journals, July 31, 1893.

<sup>28</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 112.

<sup>29</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story* 112-113.

journals than the writing style of John Talmage. Elder Talmage's journals reflect the mind of a scientist who commented on important events without providing much detail. John Talmage even mentioned his father's journal style. He wrote, "It is sometimes difficult to imagine his having had a boyhood at all. Only occasionally does one get a glimmer of boyish interest and enthusiasm."<sup>30</sup> The lack of enthusiasm is not only evident in the teenage years of his journal, but throughout his life. This book is the essential starting point for any person wanting to understand more about the life of James Talmage. It gives a solid outline of major events in his life.

### ***The Essential James E. Talmage***

This book is not a James Talmage biography. Rather it is a collection of Talmage's writings and teachings. There is a biographical overview in the *Introduction* by the editor, James Harris, but that is the only biographical section. After the *Introduction* the book is comprised of selected entries from Elder Talmage's journals or talks and categorized by topic. Because of the topical organization, this is a great place to start a study of Elder Talmage's teachings. Important chapters include those dealing with the writing of *Articles of Faith* and *Jesus the Christ*, Talmage's thoughts on organic evolution, and the value of scriptures.

The real value of this work is the accessibility of otherwise difficult to find sources. For example, Elder Talmage delivered an address on March 8, 1890 to the Utah County Teacher's Association titled, "The Theory of Evolution." In that talk, Professor Talmage explained that the theories of evolution exist because of man's innate desire to

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<sup>30</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 7.

“search after the first or origin of things.”<sup>31</sup> Talmage defined the field of evolution and then identified those scientists who were then working on the topic. In this talk, James Talmage even addressed himself to Darwin’s *Descent of Man* and Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*. Ultimately, Talmage stated in 1890 what the First Presidency would state almost twenty years later in “The Origin of Man” document of 1909. Professor Talmage wrote, “Man has been created in the image of Deity—the image of his Father. Though he may forget his royal lineage, and at times even disgrace his pedigree, yet he is of Godly descent.”<sup>32</sup>

### **“Dr. James E. Talmage”**

With the exception of the work done by Dennis Rowley, many of the articles that cover biographical information on this LDS Apostle were written shortly after his death as tributes to the great leader. As a result, most contain the same laudatory information. Because of this, I will review Elder Melvin J. Ballard’s article “Dr. James E. Talmage.” Although several articles offer a particular gem or precious insight on the life or contributions of James Talmage, their similarities really result in one article review being the same as another.

Melvin J. Ballard wrote, “A great prince in the house of Israel departed this life on July 27 [1933], when Dr. James Edward Talmage of the Council of the Twelve passed from this mortal life.”<sup>33</sup> Such was the respect that was paid to this intellectual giant at his passing. Elder Ballard, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, briefly

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<sup>31</sup> James E. Talmage, “The Theory of Evolution,” in *The Essential James E. Talmage*, ed. James Harris, (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1997), 15.

<sup>32</sup> James E. Talmage, “The Theory of Evolution,” in *The Essential James E. Talmage*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Melvin J. Ballard, “Dr. James E. Talmage,” in *The Improvement Era*, 36, no. 11, September 1933, 647.

reviewed Talmage's academic accomplishments and his spiritual dedication to the Savior and the LDS Church. Some of Talmage's work as a member of the Twelve is outlined in this short article. It is very much the kind of epitaph one would expect from a man who had served so closely with Elder Talmage for so many years.

### **“Fishing on the Kennet: The Victorian Boyhood of James E. Talmage”**

Dennis Rowley has left behind the most recent and most comprehensive work on Elder Talmage's earlier life. *Fishing on the Kennet: The Victorian Boyhood of James E. Talmage* was published in 1993 and provides an in-depth look at not only the boyhood experiences of James Talmage, but also a detailed image of what his neighborhood may have been like and the religious climate of the area at the time. The article contains a great description of the school system that James Talmage attended before coming to the United States.

The difficulty in recreating the childhood of James Talmage is the lack of information regarding James himself as well as his parents and grandparents. “Were there sufficient sources, we would do well to study the elder Talmage [James' grandfather] more closely.”<sup>34</sup> James Talmage did not start keeping a personal journal until his teenage years. At the beginning of those journals there is a quick overview of the important events in his life leading up to that time, but without many details. Rowley summarized Talmage's upbringing in England with these words: “Overall, mid-Victorian

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<sup>34</sup> Dennis Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet: The Victorian Boyhood of James E. Talmage," *BYU Studies* 33, no. 3 (1993), 486.

southwestern England was a stimulating environment for a boy and an idyllic inculcator of the character traits James E. Talmage would exhibit as a man.”<sup>35</sup>

Rowley has done a noteworthy job researching the time period and historic details of both Hungerford and Ramsbury, where Talmage spent his youthful years before coming to the United States. That research is coupled with not only good, clear writing, but also detailed maps of the area and significant landmarks at that time. By the time Talmage reached Utah, he was already an exceptional young man. His performance at the Brigham Young Academy is evidence of his previously developed abilities. Talmage’s excellence in school did not start at the Brigham Young Academy; his records in the schools of Hungerford, England so that young Talmage was an excellent student. “When we analyze James’s extant schoolwork, the picture that emerges is one of an earnest, hardworking child.”<sup>36</sup> Rowley also points out that his schooling would have included Anglican teachings regarding God and religion.<sup>37</sup> This article may be the very best obtainable research we have to date on this era of Talmage’s life.

### **“James Talmage’s Choice of Science as a Career”**

“James E. Talmage was born to be a scientist.” Another Rowley article that I relied upon in researching the life of James Talmage was “James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career, 1876-1884.” In this article, Rowley picked up where he left off in *Fishing on the Kennet* (even though it was written nine years earlier). This article follows Talmage through his short career as a student at the Brigham Young Academy and then as a teacher at the same institution by the time he was eighteen. Rowley provides an

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<sup>35</sup> Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 508.

<sup>36</sup> Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 502.

<sup>37</sup> See Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 503.



interesting suggestion to the number of possible pressures that could have led the BYA teacher to want to study in the larger and more prestigious universities in the East. Rowley suggests that important individuals, expectations of his students, criticism regarding his limitations and diminishing opportunities for study all played a part in his desire to broaden his background and abilities as a scientist and teacher.<sup>38</sup>

Dr. Talmage's work in the eastern universities played an important role in the later life of this future leader. While in the east, James overcame the temptation to forget his purpose and pursue multiple avenues that would have led him to an official degree, which in turn would have earned him the respect of his peers in the world of science, and likely the attention of scientists throughout the nation. Despite the temptation to seek such worldly titles and attention, Talmage stayed true to his faith, his purpose and his Church.<sup>39</sup>

James Talmage had the opportunity to practice the fields of science at an entirely different level when he went to study in the East. He loved working in the laboratory from the very beginning.<sup>40</sup> While he was at Johns Hopkins, James had the opportunity to study with two renowned scientists: Ira Remsen and Harmon N. Morse. The experience with these men, unfortunately, did not have the results that Talmage had initially hoped for. After three months working with Remsen and Morse, James Talmage had to admit dejectedly, that it would be better to give up on the subject.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Rowley, "Inner Dialogue: James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career, 1876-1884," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 no. 2 (1984), 121.

<sup>39</sup> See Rowley, "James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career," 129.

<sup>40</sup> Rowley, "Inner Dialogue: James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career, 1876-1884," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 no. 2 (1984), 125.

<sup>41</sup> Rowley, "James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career," 128.

There have been many other small articles written about this great man, but their focus is limited and proved less helpful in preparing this thesis. This is another evidence of the need that exists for more thoughtful research and publication on the life of James Edward Talmage.

## Chapter Two

### Biographical Sketch of Elder James E. Talmage

In order to appreciate the extent of Elder James E. Talmage's influence in his own day, it is necessary to look at the accomplishments that turned the Utah schoolteacher into a world-renowned scientist and faithful Latter-day Saint leader. Other leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints developed a deep confidence in the British immigrant that they requested that he author several key books on Mormon doctrine, books that have had a significant impact on LDS theology over the last 100 years. This chapter will give an overview of what led to his dedication in the LDS faith and his status as a scholar in the scientific community.

#### Early Influences in the Life of James Talmage

On September 21, 1862, Susannah Preater and James Joyce Talmage welcomed their first son into the world. James Edward Talmage was born in Hungerford, Berkshire, England at the Bell Inn. His parents were the managers of the Bell Inn and James was presumably born in his parents' living quarters.<sup>42</sup> Young James E. Talmage had eleven brothers and sisters, although his only older sibling, a sister, died near the time that he was born.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Dennis Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet: The Victorian Boyhood of James E. Talmage," *BYU Studies* 33, no. 3 (1993), 481, 484.

<sup>43</sup> LDS Family History Center microfilm 422323 and James E. Talmage Papers, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Box 24 [hereafter cited as Talmage Papers].

An early and significant crossroad in young Talmage's life happened when he was two years old. His parents sent him to live with his grandparents, James and Mary Talmage in Ramsbury, Wiltshire, England.<sup>44</sup> While he was with his grandfather, James gained an appreciation for nature that never died. Together, the two of them took several trips into the woods to collect botanical and mineralogical specimens.<sup>45</sup> This provided James with his first "laboratory" experiences in the world around him.

James' opportunities for public education before the age of eight "left something to be desired."<sup>46</sup> Until he was eight, James occasionally attended the local infant schools.<sup>47</sup> Because of the infant school's association with the Church of England, James' public education included lessons in Anglican theology. Such lessons usually included "memorization of hymns, scriptures and the Lord's Prayer."<sup>48</sup>

When James turned eight, he entered elementary school. In addition to the religion classes, his education took a more rigid secular focus. Reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and geography were the five standard subjects. James received the highest certificate offered by the school at twelve years of age for graduating from

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<sup>44</sup> Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 486.

<sup>45</sup> That collection made its way across the Atlantic Ocean with the Talmage family and was eventually donated to the museum at the Brigham Young Academy (Dennis Rowley, "Inner Dialogue: James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career, 1876-1884," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 no. 2 (1984), 113).

<sup>46</sup> Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 488.

<sup>47</sup> "Infant schools, also called dame schools, were sponsored by the National Society of the Church of England. They were attended by children ages two to seven and were usually taught by women. The schools were very common in the 1860s in the country as well as the towns although 'on the whole dame schools were little more than baby minding establishments and . . . the education which they gave was extremely rudimentary.' These schools could hardly have been otherwise as they consisted of a group of twenty or more children at widely varying stages of development, all entrusted to the care of one elderly woman. The weekly fee of a few pence she received for each pupil would have been well earned in simply maintaining order and assisting the smaller children with their personal needs. Depictions of life for the children in the dame schools are usually either grim or idyllic, the quality of a child's experience usually depending on the disposition of the teacher" (see Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 487-88).

<sup>48</sup> Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 499.

elementary school.<sup>49</sup> One indication of James' native abilities in school was that in 1880, as an instructor at the Brigham Young Academy in Provo, James copied notes from his 1872 class on English history and used them to teach his course. Historian Dennis Rowley put this into perspective. "By way of comparison, this task would be comparable to a college freshman of today copying his fifth-grade notes into his college notebook to use in his job as a tutor to high-school students."<sup>50</sup>

One of the most influential experiences in Talmage's life was his baptism. Although baptism is usually memorable, James' baptism was significant for different reasons. Because of the local persecution, the members of his Church had become accustomed to performing their baptisms at night.<sup>51</sup> Following is James' own recollection of the night he was baptized:

Ellen Gilbert, also in the eleventh year of her age, a faithful daughter of a devoted mother, was to be baptized at the same time. Ellen Gilbert's brother was a deacon in the Branch. On June 15, 1873, my father and Elijah Gilbert left our house shortly before midnight, traversed the Kennet bridge back and forth, looked around the neighborhood, and returned to the house telling us that all seemed clear, and that Ellen and I were to prepare to enter the water. In the interest of caution they went out once more, and returned with the same report. Ellen and I accompanied father and Brother Elijah to the place selected in the millrace for our immersion.

I was to be baptized first. As father stood in the water and took my hand, I being on the bank with Ellen and her brother, we were veritably horror-stricken by a combined shriek, yell, scream, howl – I know not how to describe the awful noise – such as none of us had ever heard. It seemed to be a combination of every fiendish ejaculation we could conceive of. I remember how I trembled at the awful manifestation, which had about it the sharpness and volume of a thunderclap followed by an angry roar, which died away as a hopeless groan.

The fearsome sound seemed to come from a point not more than fifty yards from us, near the end of the great bridge. The night was one of bright starlight, and we could have seen anyone on the bridge, which was built of white stone with low walls. Elijah Gilbert, with courage unusual for so young a man, started to investigate, but father called him back. Father, who was also trembling, as were the others, then asked me if I was too frightened to be baptized; I was much too terrified to speak, so I answered by stepping into the water. I was baptized, and Ellen Gilbert was baptized immediately afterward.

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<sup>49</sup> Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 503-04.

<sup>50</sup> Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 503.

<sup>51</sup> Rowley, "Fishing on the Kennet," 488.

As we started back to the house, not more than three hundred yards from the spot at which we had been immersed, father and Elijah went toward the bridge, surveyed the immediate vicinity, but failed to find any person abroad besides ourselves.

The frightening noise had sounded to us as loud enough to be heard over a great area; but none except ourselves seemed to have heard it, as not even a window was opened by anybody in the neighborhood, and no mention or inquiry concerning the matter was later made by others. Neighborly gossip was quite the order of the time; and surely, if that blood curdling shriek had been heard by others than ourselves it would have been the subject of talk for many a day.

But we heard it, as we shall never forget.<sup>52</sup>

Later in his life James confirmed the circumstances of the strange events, and each time those who had also been there that night reaffirmed his memory. Some thirty years later both the young woman who was baptized that same night and her older brother, on separate occasions and without correlating stories, retold even the minor details.

Just months after his baptism, another life changing event happened in the life of James Talmage. Young James was out working with a digging fork on a very dark night. Albert, James' five year-old brother, quietly approached his older brother to tell him it was time to come in. James wrote, "Until he screamed I had not an idea he was near."<sup>53</sup> To his horror James found that he had punctured the left eyeball of his little brother. The damaged eye had to be removed, and eventually, the right eye became "sympathetically affected" leaving little Albert almost entirely blind.

James Talmage's son wrote, "More than any other event, or series of events, this awful occurrence may account for the deep, almost fanatical dedication to work, to Church duties and to all the serious adult responsibilities that marked the life of young

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<sup>52</sup> Typescript in Gilbert Family Biographical Materials, mss/SC 272, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

<sup>53</sup> See Talmage Journals, p 1.

James E. Talmage from that terrible day forward.”<sup>54</sup> Although Albert spent the rest of his life blind, he never lacked for support. James became a strong advocate for his younger brother and was devoted to assisting him even later in life when he was so busy with church and employment. Later in life, James even became a president of the Society for Aid of the Sightless in Utah.<sup>55</sup>

In 1876 the Talmage family immigrated to America to be with the Saints and settled in Provo, Utah. James immediately enrolled at Brigham Young Academy (BYA) where he met Karl G. Maeser, both the principal and a teacher at BYA.<sup>56</sup> Both men profited from the association. Dr. Maeser had found a student with a seemingly limitless desire for knowledge and education. James Talmage had found an accomplished teacher with a motivation to teach that matched his own. Their lives would intertwine for years. In his private journals, James referred to Brother Maeser as “my second father, firm counsellor [sic], and true friend.”<sup>57</sup> When Karl G. Maeser died, James Talmage wrote,

This day is marked by an event of sad importance. While on the train I first heard a report afterward confirmed that our friend and brother, –almost my parent in affection indeed, - Dr. Karl G. Maeser, departed this life at 4 a.m. today. . . . There are few men in Israel whose demise would be mourned by a larger circle. Brother Maeser’s students are numbered by the many thousands, and he has endeared himself to the hearts of the Latter-day Saints throughout the world. His work has been a great one, and nobly has it been accomplished. I feel that he was assuredly foreordained to his labor as a teacher in Zion. His place is not to be taken by another.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972), 7 (hereafter cited as *The Talmage Story*).

<sup>55</sup> James Harris, ed., *The Essential James E. Talmage*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997) xv.

<sup>56</sup> John R. *The Talmage Story*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Talmage Journals, January 11, 1893.

<sup>58</sup> Talmage Journals, February 15, 1901. James Talmage is buried not far from the gravesite of Dr. Maeser.

## College in the East

In June 1879 James graduated from BYA as the valedictorian of his class.<sup>59</sup> The following school year he returned to the academy, this time as both student and instructor. At seventeen years old, James taught “academic grammar, academic penmanship, and drawing; and before the end of the school term there were added to his teaching responsibilities classes in physiology, Latin reading, and phonography.”<sup>60</sup>

All of these duties as well as those of secretary to the faculty, curator of the Academy museum and laboratory, school librarian, and chairman of the Scientific Section of the Academy's Polysophical Society earned James the salary of \$1.25 per week. Even for the 1880's this was an insignificant sum when compared to his job description, since the pay was so small he felt unable to save and get a head start. Several times he considered leaving BYA, but after discussing the matter with Brother Maeser he consented to stay.

My own feelings on the subject [his low pay] are these: I do not like the vocation of teaching that is, as a District School teacher, and do not think I could make money following that course. Here in the Academy I am teaching all higher scientific or philological branches in order to do which I am necessitated to work up on the study ect. myself – thereby opening up to me a field of research which is, almost as beneficial as regularly attending school. I have no desire to get rich, that is not my object at all, but, I would sustain myself properly. Most boys of my age have gathered around them property of some kind, but I have neglected all, raising all my energy to continue at school.<sup>61</sup>

In an attempt to engage his students, James would often read about the experiments of well-known scientists and attempt to replicate their work, however his attempts were often hampered because of inadequate supplies.<sup>62</sup> In his second year at

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<sup>59</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Phonography is a system of shorthand writing based on sound (John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 13).

<sup>61</sup> Talmage Journals, November 6, 1880.

<sup>62</sup> Being the scientist that he was, it frustrated Professor Talmage that his students required such experiments to get excited about the material in his classes. Perhaps he hoped that everyone would have the



BYA he was given the responsibility to teach all of the science classes. After just one year with Talmage holding the reigns of the science department, the Principal and the Board were pleased with his progress and granted a request for additional funds with an invitation to submit a budget up to \$150. James stayed up that same night and compiled his requests.<sup>63</sup>

The love of science that had been planted so many years ago in England had now blossomed. It was evident, however, that this love would not grow to its full potential if he stayed in Utah. On November 13, 1881 James wrote, “Opportunities for study and research will not last long. I may be sent on a mission before winter or my occupation may be varied as to admit of but little time for private study.”<sup>64</sup> In light of these limitations, the budding scientist started to have thoughts of studying at the larger universities in the east.

I endeavor as truly as possible to give my mind to my scientific studies . . . I have for myself harbored a vague idea of making an effort to raise sufficient means to pass a year in a prominent science school or college. This but an idea til time, and *I have asked no council [sic] upon the subject*, so I say it is decidedly uncertain what another year may bring forth . . . I may be counseled however to remain among my own people and as I hold myself as on neutral ground willing to follow council implicitly in this important step, I can only refer to such as a vague idea.<sup>65</sup>

Important individuals, student expectations, diminishing opportunities, equipment limitations all played a part in his desire to increase his background and abilities as a scientist and teacher.<sup>66</sup> Eventually James sought the advice of John Taylor, the president of his Church. “Visited Prest. Taylor at his residence; explained to him my desires. He kept me in a long consultation, asking many questions as to the purposes of my desired

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same love and attraction to science without the attention grabbing experiments. (see Rowley, “James Talmage’s Choice of Science as a Career,” 119-20 and John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 29.)

<sup>63</sup> Talmage Journals, January 21, 1882.

<sup>64</sup> Talmage Journals, November 13, 1881.

<sup>65</sup> Talmage Journals, January 23, 1882 (emphasis added).

<sup>66</sup> Rowley, “James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career,” 121.

trip, and closed by giving his decided advice that I proceed to some leading institution there to pursue a course of studying the Sciences. Returned to Provo in afternoon and reported at once my intended withdrawal to the Principal [Karl G. Maeser].”<sup>67</sup> So, with the support of both Brother Maeser and President Taylor, James sent a letter of application to Lehigh University in South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. On June 2, 1882 James received an acceptance letter and almost two months later submitted his official letter of resignation to the academy.<sup>68</sup>

At an age when many Latter-day Saint young men were leaving their Utah homes in an effort to gain converts to the LDS faith, James Talmage was sent out in an effort to acquire knowledge. James received a letter from Brother Maeser and Abraham O. Smoot, the president of BYA. The letter said, “May you fully realize the benefits which you anticipate from your contemplated efforts and sacrifices, and *return to us in due time still more qualified to assist us in the advancement of the educational interests of our Mountain Home.*”<sup>69</sup> One can sense the concern and anxiety about losing such a qualified teacher from BYA. It was anticipated that James would leave Utah to gather skills and knowledge from eastern universities. The concern, however, was that the eastern opportunities would keep James from returning.<sup>70</sup>

Before leaving for Pennsylvania, James noted in his journal that he had spent considerable time reflecting on his role in life. He wrote:

I have many times contemplated my probable destiny and mission in life without obtaining a satisfactory conclusion; but I have for some time past felt an intense desire to become familiar with the walks of Science for the Sciences have to be redeemed from their present position of infidelity & skepticism. The idea has been a favorite one of my meditations of late, and has formed the theme of my public speaking. I conclude that this

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<sup>67</sup> Talmage Journals, May 15, 1882.

<sup>68</sup> Talmage Journals, June 2, 1882 and July 25, 1882.

<sup>69</sup> Talmage Journals, August 25, 1882 (emphasis added).

<sup>70</sup> see Rowley, "James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career," 124.

great mission has to be performed by the Priesthood of God, and to lay a single stone in such a work is perhaps my mission in life.<sup>71</sup>

There were challenges for a man of faith studying science. Conflicts that Talmage pointed out were very common for those in his field.<sup>72</sup> In a rare, introspective moment, James provided an insight into the conflict early in his education, as well as his personal solution to the dilemma. While he was studying in the east, the disciple and the scholar inside of James Talmage collided. Brother Maeser warned him about trusting too much in the learning of the world. Yet, James worried about being so tied to theological ideas that he might miss opportunities to benefit from those with whom he was studying. “I am between two fires in my own conscience—what shall I do? Rely upon my priesthood, as a touchstone, to detect at all times truth from error.”<sup>73</sup>

James relied upon that “touchstone” throughout his life, not only to help him with the science versus faith question, but also to assist him in making other major decisions. In the east Talmage was recognized for his excellence in the laboratory and classroom. There were opportunities to forget the hive and obtain personal recognition in the scientific community, and there was no doubt in his mind that he would have excelled in such pursuits.

When he first got to Bethlehem, he wrote in his journal, “What do the A.C., A.B., M.A., or Ph.D. etc. avail behind one’s name? I work for knowledge, and leave the name

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<sup>71</sup> Talmage Journals, June 17, 1872.

<sup>72</sup> See Talmage Journals, March 16, 1884.

<sup>73</sup> Talmage Journals, January 21, 1883. In the LDS perspective, the ‘priesthood’ is the authority to act in the name of Deity. Here, James Talmage is referring to the sense of responsibility that rests on those who hold this authority—the responsibility to feel and act as God would act in every situation. Talmage recorded in his journal, that many of the great minds in the field of science struggled with the science/theology debate. During the years of university study James resolved the debate within himself and in his last year in the east wrote, “I have feared that my investigation of the subject was highly superficial, for when such great men, as most of the writers upon this subject are, find a puzzle, ‘twould be high egotism for me to say ‘I find no puzzle’” (Talmage Journals, March 16, 1884).

for others to pamper after. If it is destined that my name shall be known widely at some far distant day, I want that name to be known among my own people, where men must be thought of before a title.”<sup>74</sup> Talmage would eventually receive titles to follow his name, as he had been promised before coming to school.<sup>75</sup> Unbeknownst to James, those titles would eventually be a great assistance to him later in his life. For now, however, James Talmage was on a special mission, a mission that he filled honorably.

The faculty at Lehigh University immediately noticed the impressive abilities of the young Utah student in the classroom and the laboratories. James’ advisor suggested a list of classes that would allow him to finish a degree in one year. The only problem was that the list included classes that James either did not want to take, or could have taken in Utah under the tutelage of Professor Maeser.<sup>76</sup> James considered this to be a poor use of his time. Again, at the end of his first year, he was promised a degree if he would stay only one more year. Then the young Talmage was tempted with yet another degree from a very prestigious school. The President of Yale University sent a letter to James promising him the opportunity to test out of some classes and then finish a Chemistry degree in one year. Ultimately, he chose to forego the many offers for degrees and attended Johns Hopkins University.<sup>77</sup>

At school James endeared himself to those around him, due in part to his ability to teach. At Lehigh James gave instructions in Phonography, a form of shorthand, to other students at the request of one of the professors. As the time for James to leave for Johns

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<sup>74</sup> Talmage Journals, September 8, 1882.

<sup>75</sup> When James left for school, he was given a blessing by some official authorities in his church. In that blessing, James was counseled not to seek for a degree at this time, and that if he would follow that counsel degrees and honors would be bestowed upon him later in life (see John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 32).

<sup>76</sup> Talmage Journals, September 8, 1882.

<sup>77</sup> Talmage Journals, August 17, 1883. See also Talmage Journals, June 23, 1883, July 8, 1883, March 24, 1884, and May 2, 1884. See also Rowley, "James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career," 129.

Hopkins grew nearer, he ended the classes. During the final meeting, the class gave him a “heavy, ebony, gold headed cane with the following engraving: Presented to J. E.

Talmage, Aug. 17, 1883 by the Phonography Class, Bethlehem, Pa.”<sup>78</sup>

After one year at Lehigh University and another at Johns Hopkins, it was time to return home. James left Baltimore on June 18, 1884 by boat down the Chesapeake Bay to Philadelphia.<sup>79</sup> He arrived in Utah on June 25, 1884. He first reported to President John Taylor and then the Church Historian’s Office. Next was a visit with Brother Maeser who was preparing for a trip to California. James surprised his family when he arrived in Provo that night at 5:30 p.m.<sup>80</sup>

### **LDS College in Salt Lake City**

Beginning in the summer of 1884, almost immediately upon his return from John Hopkins University, James is asked to speak at Teachers Conventions. J.C. Moffitt wrote, “James E. Talmage was another prominent institute speaker to the teachers of Provo in the years following 1880. His discussions usually were concerned with some phase of the sciences.”<sup>81</sup>

When James returned to Provo, he came back as more of an equal to those he worked under before. His salary was raised to one thousand dollars for a year. Perhaps his greatest thrill of being back at home was his opportunity to work beside his mentor Professor Maeser again. At the end of James’ first school year back, he and Professor

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<sup>78</sup> Talmage Journals, August 17, 1883.

<sup>79</sup> see Talmage Journals, June 18, 1884.

<sup>80</sup> see Talmage Journals, June 25, 1884.

<sup>81</sup> J.C. Moffitt, *A Century of Public Education in Provo, Utah*, (Provo, Utah: 1944), 103.

Maeser spent time studying the geological features of some parts of Spanish Fork Canyon.<sup>82</sup>

From there, his promotions came quickly. By the time James Talmage reached the age of 23 he had received the trust and respect of those much older than himself. By this time, three of the original Board of Trustees of BYA had passed away. The existing members selected Don Carlos Young, James E. Talmage, and John Q. Cannon (in that order of seniority) to fill the vacancies.<sup>83</sup>

In June of 1888 a Church Board of Education was established and Dr. Karl G. Maeser was asked to serve as the general supervisor of Church schools under the direction of the new board. The new board announced its intentions to open a number of academies, with the central academy in Salt Lake. The Church Board of Education questioned a newly married James Talmage if he would be willing to taking charge of the Salt Lake Academy.<sup>84</sup> Those at BYA did all they could to convince him to stay. Eventually President Wilford Woodruff officially requested that James take the position in Salt Lake. James resigned from his positions at BYA and prepared to move to Salt Lake City.<sup>85</sup>

Not only was James asked to open a new school, but he was only given two months to be ready for students. In addition to all the normal duties of principal, James was responsible to write an introductory book on science for the younger students and a

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<sup>82</sup> Talmage Journals, June, 16 1885.

<sup>83</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 60.

<sup>84</sup> James E. Talmage and Merry May Booth were married May 14, 1888 (see Talmage Journals, May 14, 1888). The Academy's name was later changed to "Latter-day Saints College" and for a short time "Latter-day Saints University." However, in the 1920's, the title of university was deemed unjustified and the name was changed back to "Latter-day Saints College." Although the purely academic branches of the school have been dropped, the school is still used today and known as the LDS Business College (see John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 81).

<sup>85</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 73-75.

second science book for some of the more advanced students. The results were *First Book of Nature and Domestic Science*.<sup>86</sup>

In 1889, the Church General Board of Education created an Examining Board, consisting of Dr. Karl G. Maeser, Professor J. M. Tanner of BYA, and Professor Talmage of the Salt Lake Academy. In May the Board also conferred upon the three members of the board special titles indicating each members' personal area of expertise. Maeser became "Doctor of Letters and Didactics" (D.L.D), Tanner was "Doctor of Mathematics and Didactics" (D.M.D), and Talmage became "Doctor of Science and Didactics" (D.S.D). Dr. Talmage was 27 years old. While the members of the Church were asked to use the newly conferred names, those in the academic and scientific communities were not ready to accept James as Doctor Talmage just yet. Unbeknownst to James, however, there would be titles conferred upon him by other organizations that would be recognized and respected by the scholarly community.

In 1891, James received a wonderful surprise that came by way of a letter from England. He had been elected to an elite society of scientists in London, the Royal Microscopical Society of London.<sup>87</sup> In May of the same year he traveled to England to receive the honor. When He got off the *Alaska* on June 7, 1891 there was a slight confrontation with a perturbed customs official. In an effort to be prepared in case he was asked to speak at the scientific meetings that were the purpose for the trip, James packed a cigar box filled with two horned toads and a whiskey bottle with salt water and brine shrimp from the Great Salt Lake.

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<sup>86</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 80.

<sup>87</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 87.

James told the official at the port that he had nothing of taxable value to declare. The official was irritated and became bent on proving to James that everyone had something to declare even if it was just alcohol or cigarettes. James had informed the man that he was neither a smoker nor a drinker, however upon inspection of the bags, the official found the cigar box and the frogs. In certain victory, the official opened the cigar box and one of the frogs jumped onto the man's hand. Victory quickly turned to fright and irritation became anger.

The official started to tear through Talmage's bag, tossing clothing around, until he found the whiskey bottle. He opened the bottle and took a healthy drink. Anyone who has tasted the salty water from the Great Salt Lake can imagine the shock when the briny taste touched his lips and then burnt his throat. He staggered back and James quickly grabbed the bottle to avoid spilling the object of a possible lecture. When all he could muster was a strangled choke, he marked all remaining bags as having passed his inspections without checking a single bag.<sup>88</sup>

Once James had met with the Microscopical Society, he returned to Ramsbury and Hungerford where he had spent his childhood days. He found everything there as he had remembered it when he left for the United States as a thirteen year-old boy. The first stop in Ramsbury was his grandfather's burial site. He then turned his efforts to genealogical work with the Talmage line.<sup>89</sup>

Everywhere that James Talmage went, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had a voice that was willing to stand up and declare a shameless testimony in behalf of its belief. When he first returned to his hometown, he was not received with

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<sup>88</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 93-96.

<sup>89</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 100-103.



open arms. Evidently the hard feelings against Mormonism persisted as even family refused him a place to stay when he first arrived. “On his last Sunday in Ramsbury, Dr. Talmage delivered an address on ‘Utah and the Mormons’ at the public hall.”<sup>90</sup> The hall was filled to capacity as James explained the story of his Church and shared with his distant family and former neighbors his firm belief in its tenets. As he prepared to leave, those who refused him a place to stay when he first arrived showered him with farewells. Apology followed apology. Family and past friends that had treated him roughly upon his arrival issued invitations to return and stay on future visits.

It was also likely, that on this trip Professor Talmage had an experience he later retold as a parable. Although Elder Talmage never admits that the experience was his own, and despite the third person narrative regarding a Mr. Romanes, the parable does describe his trip to England to receive the fellowship in the Microscopical Society:

A certain English student of Natural History, as I have heard, once upon a time had the experience described below.

Mr. Romanes, in the course of his daily walk, came to a mill-pond. At the edge of the water he saw two boys with a basket. They were obviously engaged in a diverting occupation. As he came up to them Mr. Romanes observed that the youths were well dressed and evidently somewhat refined and cultured. Inquiry elicited the fact that they were upper servants in a family of wealth and social quality. In the basket were three whining kittens; two others were drowning in the pond; and the mother cat was running about on the bank, rampant in her distress.

To the naturalist’s inquiry the boys responded with a straight-forward statement, respectfully addressed. They said their mistress had instructed them to drown the kittens, as she wanted no other cat than the old one about the house. The mother cat, as the boys explained, was the lady’s particular pet. Mr. Romanes assured the boys that he was a personal friend of their employer, and that he would be responsible for any apparent dereliction in their obedience to the orders of their mistress. He gave the boys a shilling apiece, and took the three living kittens in charge. The two in the pond had already sunk to their doom.

The mother cat evinced more than the measure of intelligence usually attributed to the animal world. She recognized the man as the deliverer of her three children, who but for him would have been drowned. As he carried the kittens she trotted along—sometimes following, sometimes alongside, occasionally rubbing against him with grateful yet mournful purrs. At his home Mr. Romanes proved the kittens with comfortable quarters and left the mother cat in joyful content. She seemed to have forgotten the death of the two in her joy over the rescue of the three.

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<sup>90</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 104.

Next day, the gentleman was seated in his parlor on the ground floor, in the midst of a notable company. Many people had gathered to do honor to the distinguished naturalist. The cat came in. In her mouth she carried a large, fat mouse, not dead, but still feebly struggling under the pains of tortuous capture. She laid her panting and well-nigh expiring prey at the feet of the man who had saved her kittens.

What think you of the offering, and of the purpose that prompted the act? A live mouse, fleshy and fat! Within the cat's power of possible estimation and judgment it was a superlative gift. To her limited understanding no rational creature could feel otherwise than pleased over the present of a meaty mouse. Every sensible cat would be ravenously joyful with such an offering. Beings unable to appreciate a mouse for a meal were unknown to the cat.

Are not our offerings to the Lord—our tithes and our free-will gifts—as thoroughly unnecessary to His needs as was the mouse to the scientist? But remember that the grateful and sacrificing nature of the cat was enlarged, and in a measure sanctified, by her offering. Thanks be to God that He gauges the offerings and sacrifices of His children by the standard of their physical ability and honest intent rather than by the gradation of His exalted station. Verily He is God with us; and He both understands and accepts our motives and righteous desires. Our need to serve God is incalculably greater than His need for our service.<sup>91</sup>

Even early in James Talmage's life, he was conscious of the greatness of Jesus Christ and found ways to explain that greatness in the otherwise common experiences of his own life. His writing abilities allowed him to expound upon those incidents and then help others further their own relationship with the Savior through greater understanding of Him. The "Parable of the Grateful Cat" is only one example of such an experience.

### **Young University and Another Trip to England**

On December 30, 1891, the Church Board of Education decided to start a Church University in Salt Lake City, and, not surprisingly, they unanimously expressed a desire that James E. Talmage take charge of the new institution.<sup>92</sup> This idea was not well accepted by the Salt Lake Stake Board of Education, which oversaw the LDS College. They insisted that to take President Talmage at this point, in December or January, would not only disrupt the smooth operation of the school but would also deter students from enrolling the following year.

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<sup>91</sup> As quoted in Zobel, *Parables of James E. Talmage*, 37-39.

<sup>92</sup> "The Latter-day Saints College," *Deseret News*, January 11, 1902.

Talmage did not share the fears of the Stake Board of Education. Rather, he wrote in his journal, “Students and patrons will discover that with the College, as with all other institutions of the church, success of such an institution depends not on Brother Talmage or on any other man. By the close of the school year, any signs of disappointment will have been lived down and students will leave with feelings of confidence and will reenter with redoubled energy.”<sup>93</sup>

However, despite his confidence that the school would succeed without him, the change was not without his own emotional struggles. At a final meeting with the faculty of the LDS College, Talmage was “almost robbed of speech by the pressure of [his] feelings.”<sup>94</sup> With that, the change was made in early January of 1892, and Principal Talmage was once again in charge of organizing a new school—this time Young University in Salt Lake City.

Later that same year the Church commissioned James to investigate some reported Indian drawings on some rocks in southeastern Utah.<sup>95</sup> James found that the drawings were, in every case, either fraudulent or non-existent. However, the trip was not a total loss. James took a side trip to what is called today Capitol Reef National Park. The purpose of the trip was to investigate unusual mineral deposits called selenite geodes. This ended up being one of the most significant selenite deposits in the world. The deposits were in a wash almost three and one half miles above the Dirty Devil River. He

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<sup>93</sup> Talmage Journals, January 8, 1892.

<sup>94</sup> Talmage Journals, January 11, 1892.

<sup>95</sup> In 1909 James Talmage was asked to make a similar excursion to evaluate the validity of supposed Indian relics that had been dug up in Michigan. In an interview with the granddaughter of the man that had supposedly dug up the relics, James discovered that they were frauds (“James E. Talmage and the Fraudulent ‘Michigan Relics,’” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 7, no. 1, [Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998].

reached the site on April 12, 1892.<sup>96</sup> The young scientist and his group spent the next month exhuming specimens of the geological find. Eventually museums throughout North America and Europe sought to secure samples from this find. Through this discovery, James E. Talmage eventually put Utah in the scientific discussions throughout the United States and Great Britain.<sup>97</sup>

The First Presidency hoped that the Deseret Museum in Salt Lake City could gain membership in the Museum Association, which was located in England. They urged James Talmage, therefore, to travel to England again. This time he would take specimens of the selenite geodes to European museums and then personally select items for an inter-museum exchange with the Deseret Museum. It was also suggested that he attend meetings of different scientific societies including the Museum Association.<sup>98</sup> The Royal Society of Edinburgh was especially pleased with his visit. The selenite exhibit literally took center stage as it was placed on the table at the center of the room; the chairman, Lord M'Laren, interrupted the ordinary agenda to request a speech by the visitor from Utah.

When James arrived home from his trip to England, the financial situation in Utah had taken a turn for the worse. In just three months the situation had become so bad that James felt like he had returned to a different home. He wrote in his journal: "I find that the painful stringency in the money market is felt here in Utah as elsewhere . . . I have never known a stronger current of financial difficulty than seems now to have swept over

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<sup>96</sup> Talmage Journals, April 12, 1892.

<sup>97</sup> See *Deseret Evening News*, August 26, 1898.

<sup>98</sup> See Talmage Journals, July 7, 1893, note in the margin says that a few weeks after his visit with this association, the Deseret Museum was admitted into full membership.

the land.”<sup>99</sup> He continued, “From every side arises the cry of hard times. I have never witnessed a greater stagnation in business enterprises than has manifested itself during the last month. Money is not to be had, confidence seems to have disappeared and credit is denied to nearly all tradesmen. Public works are stopped and in this city alone thousands of men are out of employment.”<sup>100</sup>

### **The University of Utah**

As a result of the financial pinch, the Church Board of Education made a decision that would again personally impact James and his family. It was decided that the Church could not afford to continue funding the Church schools and nearly twenty were closed. It also meant that the opening of Young University would be indefinitely postponed.<sup>101</sup>

Rather than feel sorry for himself, James took the initiative to solve his unemployment problem. He went to the First Presidency with an idea that would take advantage of the buildings that were being built for the Young University and were nearly completed. He suggested that those buildings be made available for the LDS College. Additionally, he offered to return to the classroom as an instructor. He would teach chemistry and natural philosophy at no charge to any qualified student at LDS College. James offered to take care of all the work that would be associated with the class with the exception of what could be done by those already employed by the Church.<sup>102</sup>

In the winter of 1893–1894, the financial situation of the valley would cause another Church school to close. This time there was some pressure from the public–

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<sup>99</sup> Talmage Journals, July 31, 1893.

<sup>100</sup> Talmage Journals, August 23, 1893.

<sup>101</sup> See Talmage Journals, August 23, 1893.

<sup>102</sup> See Talmage Journals, August 26, 1893.

specifically the public university that operated in Salt Lake City. Joseph T. Kingsbury, acting President of the University of Utah, and Professor William M. Stewart approached President Wilford Woodruff, President of the LDS Church, and requested that the Church close the Salt Lake extension of its academy system. The two men offered President Woodruff an exchange. If the Church would close the LDS College then James Talmage would be appointed the President. It was insurance to the Church that the only university in Salt Lake would not fall under the influence of the Church's enemies.

On January 9, 1894, President Woodruff called James into his office to inform him of the First Presidency's decision to close the school, and their desire that he take the position of president at the University of Utah. August 18, 1894, President Wilford Woodruff officially announced the closing of the Latter-day Saint College and encouraged all to support the University of Utah.<sup>103</sup>

By this time there was no question about the new university president's qualifications to hold the position. His reputation as qualified scientist reached as far as London, and people in Salt Lake, members of his Church and those not of his faith, all respected the selection of James Talmage.<sup>104</sup> In order to further secure the confidence of the community as a whole, President Talmage demonstrated his belief in the principle of separation of Church and State. In an attempt to show that leaders of his Church would not have a significant influence on his administration at the university he cancelled "all public activity which would mark him as a leader in Church affairs" with the exception of normal church member duties.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> See Talmage Journals, August 18, 1894.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph Horne Jeppson, "The Secularization of the University of Utah to 1920," Dissertation, University of California, 1973, 103-110.

<sup>105</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 125.

Progress for the university during the tenure of James Talmage was obvious. Some of those advancements included adding the departments of Philosophy, Economics and Sociology, History and Civics, English Language and Literature, and Natural History. Some very important faculty members also came on board in this crucial period of the University of Utah's history: Joseph F. Merrill, Byron Cummings and Richard R. Lyman to name but a few.

While James served as President, he received many personal honors. It was during his tenure at the University of Utah that he was elected a Fellow in the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Somehow the Society's requirements that its members be citizens of Britain had been waived.<sup>106</sup> While serving as the President of the University of Utah, he was also elected a Fellow of the Geological Society of London and elected to the Tau Beta Pi Society of Lehigh University, "an honorary organization of graduates of that institution who achieved unusual prominence in any field of professional endeavor."<sup>107</sup>

By 1897 the economic depression had passed and the Utah Legislature gave \$73,000 to the University. Professors were excited about the prospect of a raise – all except one. James Talmage would be the one professor to take a serious cut in pay. He had been receiving \$2,400 a year for his position as a professor of Geology. He received an additional \$2,500 as the President of the University. With the appropriation of the money, the Legislature also put a \$2,500 ceiling on combined salaries of University

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<sup>106</sup> Although James was born in England, he became an American citizen on September 15, 1884. Therefore he had been unable to receive this recognition earlier. The work to overcome the technicality was likely accomplished through the efforts of Professors Peter Guthrie Tait and James Giekie. Talmage met these two professors on his first trip to England and the three spent enough time together to form what became life-long friendships. Before James returned to the United States, the two professors expressed their desires to him that he become a Fellow in this elite Society and that they would find a way to overcome the citizenship requirement. Professor Giekie sent James a letter again expressing his desires that James become a member and expressing the feeling that such requirements would "eventually pass away" (see Talmage Journals, June 19 and December 13, 1903).

<sup>107</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 137-138.

employees. Thus, James reasoned that if he were to keep both positions he would be performing the labors of University President for only \$100 a year. James relinquished his position as President and retained his position as a professor and started a transition into a new stage in his career as a scientist.<sup>108</sup>

### **The Professional Years**

As the mining industry grew in the West, and especially in Utah, the demand for reliable geologists capable of evaluating mineral claims and deposits also grew, along with a need for legal counsel. Talmage's reputation flourished as he became known as one of the most competent and reliable geologists in the area. As that reputation spread beyond Utah, requests for his services multiplied.<sup>109</sup>

The role of a courtroom geological consultant required extensive traveling. Talmage spent time in every mining district of Utah as well as parts of Idaho, Montana, eastern Nevada, and even Oregon. During this period of his life, nearly every weekend James took the Saturday night train home. "Not infrequently he arrived with just time to bathe, shave, change clothes and hurry to the first of the Church assignments that filled his Sabbath."<sup>110</sup> Then he would again board a train on Monday morning and return to wherever he had been working the week before.

As Talmage's new profession began to require more and more time it became increasingly difficult to maintain his teaching schedule at the University of Utah. In 1903,

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<sup>108</sup> Jeppson, "The Secularization of the University of Utah to 1920," 119-120.

<sup>109</sup> For examples entries from Talmage's journal in 1903 on January 9, January 20-22, January 28, February 14, February 19, and April 4. On the January 9, Dr. Talmage comments that "during my absence from the University my classes have been conducted by an assistant. He conducts classes on January 16, mentions the start of the second semester on February 2, and then rarely mentions school again.

<sup>110</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 165.



James submitted a letter of resignation from his post as professor.<sup>111</sup> He was asked not to resign at that time; a copy of his letter was kept “in abeyance until the time should be judged ripe for its acceptance and publication.”<sup>112</sup> Business continued to grow for the popular consultant and time became even more limited. Finally in 1907, James’ resignation was accepted. His last contribution as Professor of Geology was the installation of the first seismograph at the University of Utah.<sup>113</sup> James Talmage had almost single handedly convinced the Board of the University to purchase and install the device with over a year of petitions and explanations of why it would be beneficial.<sup>114</sup>

As his profession grew, so did the requests to publicly write on behalf of his Church. In addition to *Articles of Faith* and *Jesus the Christ*, Dr. Talmage was asked to participate in multiple writing and revision assignments for the Church. In 1900, James was asked to help prepare a revision of the *Pearl of Great Price*.<sup>115</sup> The purpose was simply to take a document that was formatted for paragraphs, similar to common book style, and turn it into a chapter and verse format, matching that of other scripture formats. In July 1909, James was asked to prepare another book for the membership of the Church on the period following the life of Christ and the lives of His Apostles. The book was titled *The Great Apostasy* and was used in the Mutual Improvement Associations (Youth Groups) of the Church.<sup>116</sup>

In 1911, the First Presidency received a set of pictures that had been taken of the inside of the Salt Lake Temple. The pictures had been taken during the summer when the

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<sup>111</sup> James discussed that option with the First Presidency, not because they were the leaders of the Church, but in “their capacity of assigns of the Salt Lake Literary and Scientific Society who had the nominating power for the Deseret Professorship of Geology” (John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 165-66).

<sup>112</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 166.

<sup>113</sup> See *Deseret Evening News*, June 27, 1907.

<sup>114</sup> See Talmage Journals, June 29, 1907.

<sup>115</sup> *The Pearl of Great Price* is a part of the Latter-day Saint standard works, or canon of scripture.

<sup>116</sup> See John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 170-71.

Temple was closed for cleaning and renovation. With the pictures was a letter demanding \$100,000 or the author would send the pictures to newspapers in the East and allow them to be published. The First Presidency immediately published the letter and the pictures in Deseret News. James Talmage suggested that the Church publish a book that described for those that did not belong to the Church the purpose of the LDS Temples and that they include in the book high quality photographs. So James was chosen to author the book that would invite the world into the LDS Temple. Ralph Savage was commissioned to take the photographs.<sup>117</sup> The result was *The House of the Lord*.

### **Talmage's Years as a Latter-day Saint Apostle**

On December 7, 1911, Talmage's professional career changed drastically. Elder Anthony W. Ivins of the Council of the Twelve Apostles informed James that he had been chosen to fill a vacancy in the same council. The following day, James Edward Talmage was ordained an apostle under the hands of Joseph F. Smith, sixth president of the Church, along with his counselors in the First Presidency, Anthon H. Lund and Charles W. Penrose.<sup>118</sup> President Francis M. Lyman, President of the Council of Twelve Apostles, and Elders Hyrum M. Smith, George F. Richards, and Joseph Fielding Smith also assisted in the ordination.

Elder Talmage's own words described his overwhelming feelings upon receiving such an assignment within the Church. He wrote, "Were such a position offered me, as a

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<sup>117</sup> See Talmage Journals, September 22 and 26, 1911.

<sup>118</sup> The fifth Article of Faith, written by Joseph Smith in 1842, reads, "We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof." (*Articles of Faith*, 1:5). James Talmage wrote, "Ordination of men to the Ministry, as sanctioned by scriptural precedent and established by direct revelation of God's will, is to be effected through the gift of prophecy and by the imposition of hands by those who are in authority." James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1984), 166-67.

position in secular life might be tendered, I feel that I would shrink from the responsibility and hesitate even if I did not actually decline, but I hold myself ready to respond to any call made upon me by and in the priesthood.”<sup>119</sup> He received great support from those in and out of the Church. “It is an interesting and somewhat remarkable fact that many non-members of the Church bring or send their tribute of good will. Among the early callers who came to give me assurances of good feeling and to offer congratulation, was Judge Geo. W. Bartch, formerly Chief Justice of Utah. Many attorneys with whom I have been associated in a professional capacity, and others with whom I have had friendly though non-official relationships—not members of our Church—have called or telephoned or written, and all evince the most sincere interest.”<sup>120</sup>

If those that did not belong to his Church were happy for him, then the members of the Church were elated. According to John Henry Evans, when she found out that James Talmage had been called as an Apostle, one woman exclaimed, “I’m so tickled over it I don’t what to do!”<sup>121</sup> Other responses were similar throughout the Church. James Talmage was well known throughout the LDS Church and was dearly loved by all.

One thing that would remain constant as an apostle would be the responsibility to represent the Church. For years, James had done this through his pen and other official assignments from the First Presidency. Now, when he would fill these requests he would do so with the added influence of an official authority in the LDS Church. Two such assignments that merit discussion took place in 1915 and 1919 in San Francisco and Pittsburgh, respectively.

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<sup>119</sup> Talmage Journals, December 7, 1911.

<sup>120</sup> Talmage Journals, December 14, 1911.

<sup>121</sup> John Henry Evans, “Elder James Edward Talmage,” *The Juvenile Instructor*, January 1912, 7.

In July of 1915 James Talmage was asked to represent the Mormon faith at World Congress of Religious Philosophies in San Francisco. A similar meeting had taken place a decade earlier in Chicago. However, Elder B. H. Roberts was denied the opportunity to represent the LDS Church in that assembly.<sup>122</sup> In San Francisco, Roman and Orthodox Catholicism and a single spokesman for the Protestant sects were the only other Christian faiths represented that year. Non-Christian faiths represented at the meetings included Brahmanism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and Hinduism.<sup>123</sup> Elder Talmage delivered a masterpiece of a talk in California. Back home they printed the talk in full and then commented, “Any attempt at synopsis would be inadequate and unjust.”<sup>124</sup>

Four years later Elder Talmage was in Pittsburgh and where he received a much colder reception. The First Presidency asked Elder Talmage to attend a series of meetings sponsored by the National Reform Association. The title of the meetings was “Third World’s Christian Citizenship Conference.” In total, twenty-seven sessions were held under different sub-titles: “The Kingship of Christ,” “The World Conscience,” and “The Moral Element in Public Education” were only a few. On November 12, 1919, Elder Talmage attended the session titled, “The World Commission on Mormonism.”

He quickly realized that the hearings at this session were not to be objective. The chairman for the session openly denounced the LDS faith. Following the chairman’s comments were more of the same from many people in attendance. “Trite and frequently-disproved charges against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were repeated in violent terms by the early speakers, and some new charges were brought that should

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<sup>122</sup> See *Deseret News*, July 31, 1915.

<sup>123</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 180-81.

<sup>124</sup> *Deseret News*, July 31, 1915.

have collapsed from the weight of their own absurdity but which were accepted as true by a large part of the hostile audience.”<sup>125</sup>

Elder Talmage had filed written requests to be heard, all in accordance with the published rules of the conference. Even still, he was initially told that his request would be denied because the gathering was to be of Christians only, and “Mormonism was definitely un-Christian.” Ultimately, James was allowed five minutes to speak, with which, he simply read a letter that had been endorsed by Simon Bamberger, Utah’s first non-Mormon governor. The letter attempted to correct “certain press reports calculated to cast odium upon a church which comprises a majority of the citizens of Utah.”<sup>126</sup> Elder Talmage was ridiculed, and at one point felt that “the evil one had determined to arouse the mob to a murderous pitch, and specifically bring about my death.”<sup>127</sup>

### **Changing the Public Opinion of Mormonism in Europe**

In 1924, James, his wife, and their two youngest children, Helen and John, left for a Church assignment in Europe. Elder Talmage was assigned by the First Presidency to

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<sup>125</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 197.

<sup>126</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*. 198.

<sup>127</sup> In a letter to the First Presidency describing the violent scenes, Elder Talmage wrote, “If hatred, bitterness, malicious falsehood and malignity in general can ever be associated with perfection – then we have just about reached the end of a well-nigh perfect day. By ‘we’ I mean Pres. Geo. W. McCune, Major Wesley E. King, both of whom arrived this morning, and myself . . . I was on the stage when the ‘benediction’ was pronounced at 5:50 o’clock; but it was nearly an hour later before I was able to descend; for I was first surrounded, then crowded, pressed and literally hustled by ‘ministers of the gospel’ and others, who kept on hurling questions at me but giving me little or no chance to answer, while from an elevated position at the rear of the great stage a couple o female viragos went wild in their demoniacal yells and accusations. ‘Ministers,’ two particularly, shook their fists within a few inches of my face. Neither Brother McCune nor any other friendly person could get near me, as the crazy mob stood about me in a circle six or more deep; but after about 40 minutes of this experience, I heard one man telling me in a half-whisper close to my head to spirit myself away if I could, as there was a crowd forming below to seize and strip me. At this point one of the officers called on all to leave, as the stage had to be prepared for the night meeting.” For a much more detailed description of the events that night, see Talmage Journals, November 12, 1919.

preside over the European Missions.<sup>128</sup> The Church was having difficulty with its proselytizing efforts in Europe. In part, this was due to the negative press that the Church had received, especially in the British papers.<sup>129</sup> In this instance, the First Presidency altered their normal pattern of sending senior Apostles to assume this assignment. It was anticipated, with his prestigious connections with important British organizations, that he might have some persuasive influence with the men who operated the newspapers responsible for the bad press.

Initially, Elder Talmage found it difficult to get past the front desk in order to talk with someone in charge. On one trip, Elder Talmage gave someone in the front office his personal card, only to have it returned moments later with an excuse that the editor-in-chief could not be seen at that time. Elder Talmage returned the card to the messenger, this time having written the following initials after his name: F.R.S.E., F.R.M.S., F.R.G.S. (signifying Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, and Fellow of the Royal Geological Society). With one look, the messenger returned behind closed doors. It was a strategy that only Talmage could have employed and it had the desired affect. Before long, Elder Talmage found himself face to face with the man who had the power to make changes in the papers.<sup>130</sup>

This strategy worked over and over again for the new mission president. Even in the United States, President Heber J. Grant recognized the success that James Talmage

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<sup>128</sup> See Talmage Journals, August 21, 1924 and *Deseret News*, August 22, 1924.

<sup>129</sup> Following is an excerpt of kind the articles then being published: “‘An abominable thing’ is the . . . commentary upon Mormonism uttered by a prominent social worker who has devoted much time to opposing the machinations of its missionaries, and the condemnation is not a whit too severe. Mormonism is a covert challenge to the social ethics of the country, and an insidious attempt to sow the seed of licence [sic] in the receptive minds of immaturity. It should be stamped out ruthlessly. Mormon agents [missionaries] ought to be rounded up and given their passports—or something more materially illustrative of the country’s displeasure” (*The Evening Argus*, Bradford, England, November 18, 1924).

<sup>130</sup> See John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 206-209.

was having and even credited it to his association with important British organizations. In the April General Conference of 1925, President Grant said:

Let me mention the splendid work Elder James E. Talmage is doing presiding over the European mission. The fact that he is a member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh gives him a standing in Europe that perhaps none of the rest of us could possibly have. He is receiving excellent consideration from newspapers there, and is working early and late, as he has done all his life. He is one of the most industrious, energetic men I have ever known, and is making a very splendid successor to President David O. McKay.<sup>131</sup>

Slowly the tide started to change in the British newspapers. In April 1927, President Grant commented again on President Talmage's success with the British press. He seemed extremely pleased with the changes in public opinion about the Church. He said, "Brother James E. Talmage is also getting splendid publicity in the European papers. He has extensive notices and there seems to be no prejudice in the press of Great Britain at the present time."<sup>132</sup>

On June 5, 1927, the *World Pictorial News* published a story based on falsified information it had received from a man claiming to be a member of the Church. The article was anti-Mormon in nature and when the truth was discovered about the author, the publisher requested that President Talmage write an article refuting the false claims. James Talmage wrote in his journal, "Perhaps this is the first time in the history of the British Mission that the chief official of a great newspaper syndicate has sent a

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<sup>131</sup> Heber J. Grant, *Conference Report*, April 1925, 5. President Grant also made similar comments a year later in the same setting (see Heber J. Grant, *Conference Report*, April 1926, 11-12, and *Conference Report*, October 1926, 155).

<sup>132</sup> Heber J. Grant, *Conference Report*, April 1927, 6. This tide continued to change after President Talmage returned to the United States. Under the watchful eye of President John A. Widstoe, the European Mission continued having success in the British newspapers. President Grant commented in 1930, "What a wonderful change! When Brother Talmage who is sitting upon this stand presided over the European mission, and today while Brother John A. Widstoe is presiding over that mission, we have been able to get practically anything and everything that we desire printed in the newspapers. They give us the best kind of notices regarding our conferences there, favorable and honorable notices" (Heber J. Grant, *Conference Report*, April 1930, 182).

representative to the Mission president really asking for conciliation and expressing deep regret for what has been said against us in their newspapers.”<sup>133</sup>

The European Mission President noted the evidence of change in his journals. “In addition to the good accounts of our late conference given in the papers of Glasgow we find yesterday’s issue of *The Scotsman*, published in Edinburgh, giving yet fuller space, and possibly bore favorable accounts than appeared in other papers.”<sup>134</sup> Also, “The *Morgenposten* printed a very good account of our meetings of yesterday, incorporating several important items of our doctrine.”<sup>135</sup> In 1932 Bryant Hinckley commented on President Talmage’s work with the British newspapers. He wrote, “As a result [of President Talmage’s connections to important British organizations] the attitude of the newspapers throughout England was entirely changed. In this way Dr. Talmage has been able to give a service which probably no other man thus far has been able to give.”<sup>136</sup>

In the winter of 1927, Elder James Talmage slipped on a patch of ice and seriously injured his left knee. The extent of the injury would not be known until he returned to the United States later that year. The Mission President refused to rest, perhaps because he did not want to take time from the labors of the mission. With the opinion that what he needed was more exercise until a doctor could look at it in Salt Lake, Elder Talmage forced himself to take long walks, even though the exercise caused him extreme pain.<sup>137</sup>

On Christmas Eve, 1927 Elder John A. Widstoe arrived in England. Elder Widstoe was assigned to take Elder Talmage’s place as President of the European

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<sup>133</sup> Talmage Journals, June 24, 1927.

<sup>134</sup> Talmage Journals, June 7, 1927.

<sup>135</sup> Talmage Journals, August 22, 1927.

<sup>136</sup> Bryant S. Hinckley, “Greatness in Men: James E. Talmage,” *The Improvement Era*, July 1932, 525.

<sup>137</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 212.



Mission.<sup>138</sup> James and Maia set sail for home on January 5, 1928 on the SS *President Roosevelt*.<sup>139</sup> When James returned to Salt Lake and finally visited the doctors at the LDS Hospital, the news regarding his left knee was not good. It seemed that Elder Talmage's long walks had done more harm than good, despite his intentions. The muscle in the left thigh had "largely worn away and gave him very little support."<sup>140</sup>

### **An Influence to the End**

Elder Talmage's legs never regained their strength. Despite his inability to travel a great deal in the later years of his life, Elder Talmage continued to have a powerful influence on members of his Church. Through the modern miracle of the radio, he continued to deliver powerful lectures to those in and out of the Church. In September 1928, "Mormon Hour" was first aired on KSL, a radio station originating in Salt Lake City. Later it was decided that the show would be used to deliver talks following a specific theme.<sup>141</sup>

Elder James Talmage was assigned to give the very first series of lectures on "Mormon Hour." His topic, appropriately enough, was on the life and mission of the Savior, Jesus Christ. This series was so successful at the end of 1928 that Elder Talmage was assigned to give a second series of lectures in the beginning of 1929. Later that same year he traveled to Los Angeles to deliver those first series of radio lectures on KEJK. Those lectures were largely successful in introducing the LDS teachings to those of other

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<sup>138</sup> See Talmage Journals, December 24, 1927.

<sup>139</sup> See Talmage Journals, January 5, 1928.

<sup>140</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 220.

<sup>141</sup> See Talmage Journals, September 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1928.

faiths.<sup>142</sup> Elder Talmage started another radio series on KSL in the early part of 1930, and continued in that effort for the remainder of the year. In 1931, Elder Talmage's place on the radio was taken over by Elder Bryant S. Hinckley. One last series of lectures were delivered in 1933. James Talmage's last radio talk was delivered just days before he passed away. Collectively, Elder Talmage's radio lectures were bound together in a book titled, *Sunday Night Talks* and became very useful to full-time LDS missionaries.<sup>143</sup>

Elder Talmage was known to spend two or three days at the office without leaving. He would sleep on the couch in his office and have food brought to him in the same black satchel that he carried his lunch in so many times to the Salt Lake Temple while writing *Jesus the Christ* so many years earlier.<sup>144</sup> He was forced to do this because the Church Administration Office Building had no ground level entrance, and thus required a journey up or down stairs, which at this stage in his life were dangerous trips, even when others assisted him.

On the evening of July 23, 1933, after Elder Talmage delivered his scheduled KSL radio talk, he and his son-in-law Harold Brandley stopped for a rootbeer to soothe a "tickle" in Elder Talmage's throat. The drink at the A&W Root Beer drive-in seemed to fix the uncomfortable itch. Harold took his father-in-law to the office where it had been planned for him to stay for the next several days while the rest of the family celebrated the state holiday, "Pioneer Day," on July 24. Harold helped Elder Talmage up to his room and made sure he was comfortable. That night though, the throat irritation returned and

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<sup>142</sup> See Joseph W. McMurrin, *Conference Report*, October 1929, 16.

<sup>143</sup> See John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 221-22.

<sup>144</sup> See John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 221-22.

disturbed his sleep. By morning the irritation had worsened, but he did not want to disturb his family during the holiday celebrations. Yet he still “toiled on at his desk.”<sup>145</sup>

By the morning of July 25, James knew that he was very sick. His ailment was now very painful, and he had developed a fever. Elder Melvin J. Ballard, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, found James that morning. In his journal, Elder Ballard recorded, “July 25, 1933—This morning I found Dr. Talmage in his office with a fever, and assisted him home.”<sup>146</sup> Once James was home, a doctor came to see him. The diagnosis was “severe streptococcus infection.”<sup>147</sup> Strep throat is not a scary or even major illness today, but in 1933, there was no penicillin or other antibiotics to control the spread of the infection once it reached the blood stream. In 1933, this sickness was a serious threat to life.

James Talmage passed away at home on Thursday, July 27, 1933 as a result of “acute myocarditis, following a throat infection.”<sup>148</sup> At the time of his passing, 8:45 a.m., James had by his side Maia, his beloved sweetheart of so many years and two of his three living daughters. Sterling was en route from New Mexico and John was returning home from France after three years of serving a mission for the Church. Also present were Harold, Talmage’s son-in-law, and J. Reuben Clark, a student and long time friend.

The *Deseret News* ran a headline that carried the simple, sad news truth: “DOCTOR JAMES E. TALMAGE IS DEAD.” Even the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the counterpoint to the LDS audience, paid great respect to the man that had passed on.

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<sup>145</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 28, 1933.

<sup>146</sup> Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin J. Ballard*, (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1949), 113.

<sup>147</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 235.

<sup>148</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 237.

No creed, no group, no individual, appreciative of the value of public service and cognizant of the sterling character and ability of this man, is spared a portion of the widespread grief attending the departure of Dr. Talmage for the realm of the unknown. This forceful personality left a mark in local history which must remain not for sentimental reasons, but for meritorious contribution to humanity. . . . Few have equaled him as a champion for the L.D.S. faith. It is not ungrateful to others to say that none have surpassed him in the period during which he lived as an exponent of Mormon theology. In the field of public service, beyond the scope of religious activity, this esteemed and respected character attained national and international recognition. He commanded attention as a scientist, an educator, and as a writer. . . . The record of deeds well done left by Dr. Talmage eases the pain of the final parting with one who not only assisted in the struggle of life, but pointed out the way.<sup>149</sup>

The funeral services were held on Sunday, July 30. The message of the speakers that day may well be summed up with something stated by President Anthony W. Ivins. He said, "There will never be any other man to take his place, so far as I am concerned. There may be other men just as good, there may be other men just as wise, but his particular place in the Church and in the lives of those with whom he came in contact, will never be filled again until we meet him."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 28, 1933.

<sup>150</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 239.

## Chapter Three

### Historical Background to the Christian Teachings on God

Long before James Talmage addressed the topic of the Godhead, many other theologians addressed the matter. Over the centuries the argument over orthodoxy has been heated and at times has even cost people their lives. It would be impossible to cover every contribution of every theologian and writer. In this chapter, I will first outline the debates surrounding the Nicene Creed and the Arian Controversy. Then I will briefly review the teachings of Augustine, John Calvin and John Wesley with regard to doctrines such as: the nature and attributes of God, the role of Christ as the Redeemer, and the duties of the Holy Ghost.<sup>151</sup>

#### Debates to Define the Godhead

It is well known that Christianity started as an offshoot of Judaism and eventually flourished into the official Roman religion by the fourth century. The Judeo-Christian

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<sup>151</sup> Of the many influential theologians since the time of Christianity, one might question why I chose to discuss the teachings of these three specific men. Augustine seemed an obvious choice being that he is considered the Father of orthodoxy to both the Catholic and Protestant religions (see *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers: The Confessions and Letters of Augustine, With a Sketch of His Life and Work*, Phillip Schaff, ed. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995] 19). The great theological debate in the area where Joseph Smith spent his youth was between the Calvinistic Presbyterians and the Armenian Methodists. Joseph Smith himself was torn between the two religions. Many of his family had joined the Presbyterian Church, however, Joseph himself, although he never did, felt inclined to join the Methodists (see Joseph Smith—History 1:8). In the area of grace, for example, Joseph Smith ended up on the “road between” the Methodists and the Protestants (see Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 338, hereafter cited as *Teachings*; see also Michael J. Fear, “*In Christ . . . A New Creature: The Teachings of John Calvin, John Wesley, and Joseph Smith on the New Birth* [Master’s Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2006], 1, hereafter cited as *In Christ . . . a New Creature*).

image of God, therefore, had roots dating back to Moses. Jehovah said to Moses on Mount Sinai, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Moses also said, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4). Because of that background converted Jews were strictly monotheistic.<sup>152</sup>

Following the death of Christ, new Christian converts came from the pagan worship of the Roman Empire and brought with them a hellenistic (Greek) way of thinking. Eventually, these converts outnumbered those with Jewish backgrounds.<sup>153</sup> It quickly became apparent that a major doctrinal challenge for the young Church would be to define its view of the Godhead in the face of diverse understandings about God and His Son, Jesus Christ. How could monotheism within Christianity embrace its new converts without being swallowed up itself?

The struggle to define its own Christology would produce multiple councils and debates. Inevitably, the Christian Church would keep some of its Jewish roots and eliminate others.<sup>154</sup> The definition of orthodoxy regarding Jesus of Nazareth was a major issue for the Church for several centuries. Four general councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon) would attempt to answer the questions raised by false teachers. One of the first of these doctrinal councils, and perhaps the most familiar, was the Council at Nicaea.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 28.

<sup>153</sup> Mark Humphries, *Early Christianity*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 106.

<sup>154</sup> Humphries, *Early Christianity*, 98.

<sup>155</sup> See Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 46-48.

## Arius and Alexander

In the third and fourth centuries, Alexandria was a center for theological movements. In the early part of the third century, Arius, an Alexandrian priest, was teaching that Jesus Christ was “as a kind of divine hero: greater than an ordinary human being, but of a lower rank than the eternal God.”<sup>156</sup> Christ, or the Word, was not the true God, according to the priest. The Father and Christ were entirely different beings. A century earlier, Origen declared, “The Son was eternal like the Father and united with Him, [but] he was separate from and less than God.”<sup>157</sup> By teaching that Christ was neither eternal nor omnipotent, Arius took this view much farther than Origen.

Bishop Alexander, disapproved of Arius’ teachings, claiming that he had insulted Christ by claiming that he was not divine and had been created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). The providential “straw that broke the camel’s back” may have been Arius’ *The Banquet*.

The Unbegun made the Son a beginning of things made and advanced him as His Son by adoption.  
Understand that the Monad was, but the Dyad was not, before it came to exist.  
Thus there is the Triad, but not in equal glories, Not intermingling with each other are their substances.  
One equal to the Son, the Superior is able to beget, but one more excellent or superior or greater, He is not able.  
At God’s will the Son is what and whatsoever he is.  
God is incomprehensible to His Son. He is what He is to Himself: Unspeakable.  
The Father knows the Son, but the Son does not know himself.<sup>158</sup>

According to Arius, there was a time when Christ did not exist, Christ was limited to whatever God willed him to be and the Father could create more sons, like Christ, if He wished. The Bishop of Alexandria considered each of those statements blasphemy

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<sup>156</sup> Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 100.

<sup>157</sup> Richard Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God: The Struggle to Define Christianity During the Last Days of Rome* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1999), 53.

<sup>158</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 55.

and insisted that Arius cease teaching them. Arius refused and was exiled from the city.<sup>159</sup>

Alexander taught that Jesus Christ had to be both human and divine. The death of a mere human could never resurrect the dead, redeem all humanity, and grant eternal life. God, however, could not suffer the pains of death, which would be necessary to make such a redemptive sacrifice? So, despite the humiliation for an omnipotent God to do so, the Lord Jesus condescended—He became embodied in a fleshy tabernacle and lived among mere mortals. Athanasius insisted, “Jesus Christ was both true man *and* true God.”<sup>160</sup>

Arius left and sought the help of Eusebius, the Bishop of Nicomedia. Eusebius supported Arius and thus the Alexandrian debate over the Godhead became a debate between the two most important cities in the Roman Empire: Nicomedia and Alexandria.<sup>161</sup> Eusebius called a council at Nicomedia, which overturned the decision of the Alexandrian council and immediately sent a letter to Bishop Alexander demanding that he readmit Arius to communion.<sup>162</sup> For a season, the Arian Controversy split the Christian church—it was the East versus the West—and hampered Emperor Constantine’s hope of a united Roman Empire. He could never unite the empire under a single faith if the faith itself was splintered over doctrinal issues.

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<sup>159</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 57.

<sup>160</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 63-64.

<sup>161</sup> Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 100-101.

<sup>162</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 59.



## Council at Nicaea

In AD 325, Constantine determined to defuse the situation with a council of Bishops to be held at Nicaea.<sup>163</sup> “Constantine’s great hope was to convene a conference that would end the bishops’ bitter wrangling and usher in an era of harmony in the Church.” Richard Rubenstein suggested that Constantine and his theological advisor, Bishop Hosius of Cordova, had already decided “that the dispute should be ended on terms favorable to Alexander and the anti-Arians.”<sup>164</sup> The challenge would be to convince the bishops that the decision had been theirs rather than Constantine’s, thus avoiding a greater division.

Arius was called as a defendant and permitted to state his views. He did so boldly. “The Son of God was a created being, made from nothing; there was a time when he had no existence and he was capable of change and of alternating between good and evil.”<sup>165</sup> The assembly denounced the priest’s views and expelled him from the council. Three months passed, however, before a statement of belief, or a creed, could be agreed upon.<sup>166</sup>

At the center of the debate was a single Greek word: *Homoousios*. The expression means “one essence” or “one substance.” The word had been used in the previous century and “so it was in circulation for Constantine to hear it and thrust it into the Nicene deliberations.” According to MacMullen, Constantine’s purpose for using this phrase,

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<sup>163</sup> Many bishops saw Nicaea as being inspired by God. In the end 318 bishops sign the creed. The number was seen as significant because that was exactly how many people assisted Abraham against his enemies (see Genesis 14:14). Also the number 318 in Roman numerals is TIIH: The first letter, the *T*, represented the Savior’s cross and the last two letters were the first two letters in the Savior’s name in Greek. “Hence it was argued that the number of bishops at Nicaea was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy” (Humphries, *Early Christianity*, 146).

<sup>164</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 69, 71.

<sup>165</sup> Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 102.

<sup>166</sup> Humphries, *Early Christianity*, 143.

and ultimately calling the council in the first place, was “to end all arguing about the ‘god-ness’ of Christ.”<sup>167</sup> It was inserted into a proposed creed in an attempt to “exclude the possibility of Arian heresy.”<sup>168</sup> The word had been heard in theological discussion for some time, but because it had been associated with Sabellianism many churchmen were nervous about its use.<sup>169</sup> After three months of discussion regarding the substance of God and Jesus Christ, the phrase “one substance” was added and the result was the Nicene Creed:

I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds. God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And I believe in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.<sup>170</sup>

The Nicene Creed failed, however, to unite the East and the West. Moderate-Arians interpreted *homoousios* to mean “of the same ‘substance,’ ‘reality,’ ‘being,’ or even ‘type.’”<sup>171</sup> Arians believed that both God and Christ were divine, that Christ was

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<sup>167</sup> Ramsay MacMullen, *Voting About God*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 27. It is thought that Constantine favored a God that the people had to rely on in order to be saved rather than a God that people could imitate in order to receive salvation. The anti-Arian God seemed to assist the purposes of the Roman government (see Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 85-87).

<sup>168</sup> Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 102.

<sup>169</sup> Sabellius taught “that Jesus Christ was an aspect of God lacking any real existence of his own.” The group was declared heretical. (Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 80). Even centuries later, Sabellius was placed along side of Arius as an early heretic (see Ralph Keen, *Divine and Human Authority in Reformation Thought: German Theologians on Political Order 1520–1555* [Nieuwkoop: De Graaf Publishers, 1997], 173).

<sup>170</sup> Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 102.

<sup>171</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 81.

just less divine than God. Even the extreme Arians found a way to use the phrase to fit their view of the Godhead. For example, because humans are created in the image of God, they too are *homoousios* with Him.

Two parties arose from the council of Nicaea. The semi-Arians were less fanatical than Arius but still held to subordinationist ideas regarding the Godhead: Jesus was not equally divine with the Father. The semi-Arians argued to replace *homoousios* with *homoiousios*. The latter emphasized that Jesus was “like” or “similar to” God rather than being the “same” as God. The anti-Arians, led by Athanasius, continued to teach that Jesus was equally eternal and divine with the Father. Athanasius believed that had the Arians succeeded in changing the word, indeed just the simple addition of one letter, Christianity would have been degraded to paganism.<sup>172</sup>

### **Your Jesus or Mine?**

Both groups faced a similar challenge. The more precisely one tried to define Christ’s relationship to the Father, the more one was open to the accusation of heresy. If one tended to deny Christ’s shared divinity with God, they were accused of extreme Arianism. On the other hand, to deny Christ’s mortality was akin to the heresy of Sabellianism. Both sides of the argument agreed that Christ was divine (although the nature of his divinity was strongly disputed), ruled at the right hand of God, was begotten before time, and would return in glory to rule over the earth.<sup>173</sup> So why was there such animosity and hatred between the groups?

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<sup>172</sup> Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 104.

<sup>173</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 115.

Athanasius argued that the Arian view of Jesus demoted Christ to nothing more than a glorified man. The role of Jesus Christ as Savior required the attributes and abilities of God. Arians were therefore anti-Christian. If the Arians argued for a Christ that was not human, but still less than God the Father, he became a demigod or a second God, which sounded too much like paganism's polytheistic religions. To negotiate with the Arians, according to Athanasius, was to negotiate with the devil himself.<sup>174</sup>

The issue between Arians and anti-Arians seems to have become so serious because it dealt with "a figure with whom they had developed an intense personal relationship: Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>175</sup> Each group had an internalized image of Jesus Christ that represented what they needed in a Savior. The anti-Arians were in need of an all-powerful being that would redeem them from the consequences of sins. The Arians, on the other hand sought to emphasize a loving role model they could follow. The struggle was extremely intense because each group perceived the other as attempting to eliminate "their" Jesus.

Constantine's actions are evidence of the fourth century struggles over this doctrinal matter. Bishops who supported the Nicene Creed in 325, found themselves outside of Constantine's favor during the last twelve years of his life. On the other hand, those who faced exile as a result of Nicaea, Arius for example, found themselves in the emperor's graces during that same time.<sup>176</sup> Constantine's changing sides explains the persuasive powers of those involved. The debate, however, was between the bishops and members of the Church. It was difficult for Constantine to understand why the discussion raised such violent reactions. MacMullen believed that Constantine saw the argument as

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<sup>174</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 116-117.

<sup>175</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 146-149.

<sup>176</sup> Humphries, *Early Christianity*, 145.

trivial and unimportant.<sup>177</sup> Constantine died May 22, 327. His son and successor, Constantius, was close to Eusebius and was a bitter rival with some of Athanasius' friends. This seemed to guarantee the success of the Arian movement to separate the Father and the Son.

### **Creeds to Correct Creeds**

In 357, a group of Arian bishops met together at Sirmium. This council produced a creed that was obviously Arian. It professed belief in “one almighty God and Father . . . and his only Son Jesus Christ the Lord, our Savior, born [or generated] from him before the ages.” The controversial part of this creed was found in the attempt to distinguish between *homoousios* (identity of essence) and *homoiousios* (similarity of essence). They excluded the word *homoousios* because the idea of essence was not found in the scriptures. This creed received extreme criticism from staunch Nicenes and anti-Arians who came to the defense of *homoousios*. They denounced the creed as the “Blasphemy of Sirmium.”<sup>178</sup>

On December 31, 359, yet another creed was signed at Arminum.<sup>179</sup> This one substituted more ambiguity than the conservative Arians and the Nicenes could accept. The Creed of Rimini-Seleucia was signed and the Roman Empire finally found itself officially Arian. But the victory for the Arian side was short-lived. Constantius became seriously ill and just before dying declared his nephew, Julian, the emperor of Rome.

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<sup>177</sup> MacMullen, *Voting About God*, 27.

<sup>178</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 140.

<sup>179</sup> MacMullen, *Voting About God*, 3. According to Ramsay MacMullen, there were 255 councils held from 253 to 553. The vast majority of the councils did not deal with theological issues. Instead, they focused on organizational concerns. Of those 255, only five are considered ecumenical: Nicaea in 325, Constantinople in 381, Ephesus I in 431, Chalcedon in 451, and Constantinople in 553 (see MacMullen, *Voting about God*, 2). See the complete list of councils in Appendix V.

Constantius assumed that Julian would move forward with the Arian-Christianity that had finally been established. Julian had different plans.

Julian had appeared to be Christian throughout most of his life but harbored secret desires to return Rome to the days of pagan worship. His goal as emperor was not to wage an open war on Christianity but to reignite the flames of the Arian controversy and allow the “Galilean” faith to destroy itself with inner strife. He recalled the exiled anti-Arians and restored them to their cities and their posts of authority. However, Athanasius and other anti-Arians surprised the new emperor.

Athanasius changed his approach towards the group he had once referred to as the “Ariomaniacs.” He now insisted that those who accepted Christ as fully divine, but who maintained concerns over the use of *homoousios* should no longer be treated as the enemy. Julian’s vision for the Christian Church, however, did prove prophetic for the radical Arians. Athanasius’ new attitude created a shift in the dividing line between Arian and Nicene bishops. The shift united the conservative Arians with those that supported the creed of 325. The radical Arians were universally declared heretics and this time they were outnumbered.<sup>180</sup>

The public was also involved with the debates.<sup>181</sup> In 390 a new bishop was to be ordained in Constantinople. A throng of people presented themselves at his ordination and rather than chanting “Worthy,” as was expected, shouted “Unworthy.” The reason for the unrest: The newly ordained bishop had differing views on the substance of Christ from those of the previous bishop, Eleusinius. Even after the ordination, the public

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<sup>180</sup> See Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 191-97.

<sup>181</sup> MacMullen, *Voting About God*, 26.

required that the bishop and his supporters “produce public statements and anathemas so as to satisfy the people about his doctrinal position.”<sup>182</sup>

When Julian was killed in battle, it is stated in one tale that he lifted his hands to the heavens and declared, “Galilean, you have conquered!”<sup>183</sup> Despite its unlikely validity, the story bears a truth. Anti-Arian/pro-Nicene Christianity had won a major victory. It only now had to deliver a statement of orthodoxy for all of Christianity to embrace.

### **The Athanasian Creed**

As vital as Athanasius had been throughout the battle against Arianism, ultimately, the “three so-called Cappadocian Fathers”—Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil the Great—at the second general council in Constantinople delivered the key to an agreed orthodoxy. The Nicene Creed had made one mistake with its use of *homoousios*. It did not distinguish between *homoousios* (essence) and *hypostases* (being).<sup>184</sup> The word that had caused so many problems over the previous decades now seemed to have a healing quality. Basil adopted an idea from Origen when he said that Christ was a “sharer of [God’s] nature, not created by fiat, but shining out continuously from his *ousia*.”<sup>185</sup> Thus the Godhead was defined as three (including the Holy Ghost) distinct *hypostases* while still belonging to the same *ousia*.

Four ecumenical councils were held between 325 and 451 with the purpose of deciding issues related to the nature of God or the Incarnation of Jesus Christ—Nicaea

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<sup>182</sup> MacMullen, *Voting About God*, 21-22.

<sup>183</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 201.

<sup>184</sup> Mark Humphries suggests that the Nicene Creed was rewritten at the time of the Constantinople Council to fit the theological agendas of that later council (see Humphries, *Early Christianity*, 144-46).

<sup>185</sup> Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*, 206-207.

(325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451). Each council responded to emerging false teachings about Christ and assisted in developing the Church's official answer to the question: "Who was Jesus Christ?"<sup>186</sup> Nicaea clearly defined that Christ was fully divine. In 381, the convened bishops declared that Christ was also fully human added the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Constantinople I reaffirmed the Nicene Creed and established the declaration of 325 as the "foundation of Trinitarian orthodoxy."<sup>187</sup> Those present at Constantinople I were later considered in the same light as the '318' fathers of Nicaea. The bishops at the Council of Ephesus united the natures of Christ in one being in order to contradict Nestorius' claim that Mary could not be the "Mother of God" any more than God could only be three days old because the divine nature could not be united. Eutyches carried Nestorius' claim to the opposite. He taught that the two natures were so closely intertwined that the human was "completely absorbed by the divine."<sup>188</sup> The Council of Chalcedon definitively declared that Christ was both divine and human.<sup>189</sup> Despite the hesitancy of some bishops, Chalcedon added to the creeds and councils that preceded it.<sup>190</sup> Jesus Christ was "at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, . . . the distinction of

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<sup>186</sup> Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 114-115.

<sup>187</sup> Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, trans., *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3 vols., (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), I:7.

<sup>188</sup> Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 113.

<sup>189</sup> See Appendix IV.

<sup>190</sup> The concern of these bishops was related to the condemnation placed on any who attempted to create any additional "formulary of faith beyond the Nicene Creed." For that reason, the Definition of Faith started with a direct recitation of the Creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople. It was an attempt to say that the Nicene Creed had already established Eutyches a heretic even before he was born. As such, the bishops were not creating a new creed, simply restating what the Nicene Creed has already established. The greatest resistance to the Definition of Faith came from the Roman delegates attending the council (see Price and Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, I:57-59; II:188).



natures being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and coming together to form one person.”<sup>191</sup>

Bruce Shelley wrote, “If the Semi-Arians had succeeded . . . their point of view would have become orthodox Christianity . . . The Christian faith would have had two gods and a Jesus who was neither God nor man. It would have meant that God himself was unapproachable and totally removed from man. The result would have been a Christianity like a host of pagan religions.” For Shelley, and other Christians today, it is not about which side was right but about how long it would take the anti-Arian side to find an effective way to explain the truth. Shelley concluded, “In the Arian struggle accuracy was everything. But how does one speak of three in one without spouting nonsense?”<sup>192</sup> The limitations of humanity placed serious obstacles in the ability to accurately describe divinity. Simply said, mortal humans cannot comprehend the divine mind of God. Isaiah said, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). Augustine said, “God can be thought about more truly than he can be talked about, and he is more truly than he can be thought about.”<sup>193</sup> “God is greater and truer in our thoughts than in our words; he is greater and truer in reality than in our thoughts.”

The orthodoxy of Christianity had been declared and in the end, the doctrine that Athanasius had fought for since Nicaea was accepted as orthodox. The Athanasian Creed reaffirmed that the correct teachings regarding the Godhead was established in the Nicene

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<sup>191</sup> From *The Definition of Faith* established at Chalcedon as quoted in Shelly, *Church History*, 114-115.

<sup>192</sup> Shelley, *Church History*, 104.

<sup>193</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991), 225. Another translation reads, “God is greater and truer in our thoughts than in our words; he is greater and truer in reality than in our thoughts” (as quoted in Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, I:38).

Creed.<sup>194</sup> So what did it all mean? So many councils, so many bishops, and so many creeds. What would the theologians-to-come teach about the Godhead based on the arguments and discussions of the fourth and fifth centuries? Who would stand out as the defenders of the truth for Christianity now that the truth had been clearly defined?

### **Augustine and His Orthodoxy**

Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354-430) has been considered one of those who helped cement the Nicene idea of God.<sup>195</sup> According to Eugene TeSelle, it was while Augustine was in Thagaste that he developed his own understanding of the Trinity. TeSelle suggested that it was the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus around 413 that pointed Augustine toward the correct view of the Godhead. While Augustine relied on earlier philosophical and theological thinkers, he was given credit as being one of the first to actually work through and successfully explain the difficult topic.<sup>196</sup> Augustine's earlier writings did not delve into the "intra-Trinitarian relations, as in [his] later writings, but solely [demonstrated] how three distinct things can belong to a single substance."<sup>197</sup>

Multiple analogies have been used to explain the Christian idea of the Trinity.

Among others, Augustine used the analogy of the tree:

But in the case of that Trinity, we have affirmed it to be impossible that the Father should be sometime the Son, and sometime the Holy Spirit: just as, in a tree, the root is nothing else than the root, and the trunk is nothing else than the trunk and we cannot call the branches anything else than branches; for what is called the root cannot be called trunk and branches; and the wood which belongs to the root cannot by any sort of transference be now in the root, and again in the trunk, and yet again in the branches, but only in the root; since this rule of designation stands fast, so that the root is wood, and the

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<sup>194</sup> See Phillip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, 3 vol., 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), I:35. See the Athanasian Creed in full in Appendix V.

<sup>195</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991), 190.

<sup>196</sup> Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 116-117.

<sup>197</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, 123.

trunk is wood, and the branches are wood, while never-the-less it is not three woods that are thus spoken of, but only one.<sup>198</sup>

### **Co-Eternal and Equal**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). It was very apparent to Augustine that John was referring to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. These verses are interpreted by the Bishop of Hippo to testify of the fact that both the Word and the Father are of the same substance and exist coeternally.<sup>199</sup>

Augustine pointed out that some saw Christ as less than the Father, since Christ had been “sent” to earth to atone for man by the Father. Therefore the sender had authority over the sent. However, the Word was equal to the Father before all things were created and before He was sent. Therefore the Word is both less than and equal to the Father. The reason the Word was sent was because of His role as the Son, not because He is un-equal with God, but simply fulfilling a function within the role of Son.<sup>200</sup>

Augustine also wrote, “The Son is of course the Father’s Word, which is also called his Wisdom. Is there anything strange, then, in his being sent, not because he is unequal to the Father, but because he is a certain pure outflow of the glory of almighty God? But in this case what flows out and what it flows out from are of one and the same substance. It is not like water flowing out from a hole in the ground or in the rock, but

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<sup>198</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1892) 359.

<sup>199</sup> Kim Paffenroth and Robert P. Kennedy, *A Reader’s Companion to Augustine’s Confessions*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 113.

<sup>200</sup> See Augustine, *The Trinity*, 171-72.

like light flowing from light. . . . Therefore it is co-eternal with the light from which it comes as light.”<sup>201</sup>

Augustine believed that whatever attribute was given to God was given to each of the members of the Godhead. One cannot think of the Trinity as three separate beings. Augustine pointed out that to do this would mean that one could make the Father less by removing the Son. Thus Father alone or Son alone would be less than Father and Son together.<sup>202</sup> He wrote, “So whatever God is called with reference to self is both said three times over about each of the persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and at the same time is said in the singular and not the plural about the trinity.” Augustine and others simply described the trinity as “one being, three substances.”<sup>203</sup>

“All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing” (John 1:2). If there is something that was not created by God, reasoned Augustine, then it is not a creature of God. The only thing that is not creature is the Creator himself, because “all things were made through him.”<sup>204</sup> Therefore if there is something that is not created of God, it must be part of the same substance as God, because God created all other substance. Therefore the Son cannot be anything other than the Father, being that the Son was not created but is co-eternal with the Father.

### **Physical Nature of God**

There has always been discussion about the corporeality of God. For centuries the orthodox teachings have held that God is incorporeal. Without reserve, Augustine sided

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<sup>201</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 172.

<sup>202</sup> See Augustine, *The Trinity*, 211.

<sup>203</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 195-96.

<sup>204</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 71.

with that accepted orthodoxy. He declared that the body of God is incorporeal and inseparable. “These three in the unequal image may not indeed be separated from each other by space, since they are not bodies.”<sup>205</sup> In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine addressed the issue of whether or not God has a body like that of humans. He wrote that where the scriptures refer to man being created in the image of God, they simply refer to the soul of humankind. God himself is definitely immaterial and eternal.<sup>206</sup>

“The nature, substance, or essence, or whatever else you may call that which God is, whatever it may be, cannot be physically seen; but on the other hand we must believe that by creature control the Father, as well as the Son and the Holy Spirit, could offer the senses of mortal men a token representation of himself in bodily guise or likeness.”<sup>207</sup> It would, therefore, be possible for the Holy Ghost to appear in the physical form of a dove and be seen by John the Baptist at Christ’s baptism, if God willed it so (see Matthew 3:16).

### **Need for a Mediator**

Augustine saw man as being in a hopeless pit from which he could not escape on his own. Because of sin, man was unable to attain eternal things. Man needed an outside source to purify him.<sup>208</sup> Even in himself, Augustine saw the need for something divine to lift him out of the sinful state in which Adam’s Fall had left him. He wrote, “Accordingly I looked for a way to gain the strength I needed to enjoy you [God], but I did not find it

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<sup>205</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 428-429.

<sup>206</sup> Frederick J. Crosson, “Book Five: The Disclosure of Hidden Providence,” *A Reader’s Companion to Augustine’s Confessions*, eds. Kim Paffenroth and Robert P. Kennedy, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 82.

<sup>207</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 122.

<sup>208</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 169.

until I embraced the mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus.”<sup>209</sup> As mediator, Christ’s mission on earth was to nurture and strengthen us and through his grace, lift us back in to the presence of the Father.

The mission of the Word Incarnate, therefore, was to overcome two kinds of death: death of the spirit and death of the body. Both were a result of Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden. “Now the death of the soul is ungodliness and the death of the body is perishability [sic], which ends in the soul’s departure from the body. Just as the soul dies when God leaves it, so does the body when the soul leaves it.”<sup>210</sup> The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes repentance possible and thus overcomes the spiritual death. It also, through the resurrection, will overcome the physical death for men and women.

Augustine believed that God and Christ simultaneously manifested themselves to mankind in two forms, or two parts in one form. There was the divine—that part of Jesus Christ that was co-eternal with God. Then there was the human—that part of Jesus Christ that took on flesh through the Incarnation to become humankind’s mediator. It was the act of taking upon himself flesh that made Christ one with men, or “our fellow,” as Augustine wrote. So Christ was the bridge between God and man. “So from the heights of the Godhead he came down to the inferior region of matter, took on flesh, and became obedient to death on the cross. Canceling by his blood the debt-laden charge against man, he bonded together man and God.”<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Maria Boulding (New York: New City Press, 1997), 178.

<sup>210</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 155.

<sup>211</sup> John M. Quinn, *A Companion to the Confessions of St. Augustine*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002), 648.

## Augustine on the Holy Spirit

According to Augustine, all of his arguments for the unity of the Father and the Son also serve for the unity of the Holy Ghost within the Godhead. Like the Son, the Holy Spirit is not a creature, and therefore the Spirit must be of the same substance as God. “If He is not a creature then he is not only God – for even men have been called gods (Ps. 82:6) – but also true God; therefore absolutely equal to the Father and the Son, and consubstantial (same substance with) and co-eternal in the oneness of the three.”<sup>212</sup>

Augustine pointed out that the Spirit not only came from the Father but from the Father and the Son as well. For Augustine, each of the titles came with individual roles or responsibilities. “Here is an example: when I name my memory, understanding, and will, each name refers to a single thing, and yet each of these single names is the product of all three; there is not one of these three names which my memory and understanding will have not produced together.”<sup>213</sup> Thus Paul could say, “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts” (Gal. 4:6).

The Holy Spirit is both God’s and ours: God’s because He sent it to us and ours because we received it from Him. It is ours in the sense that anything else that God has given us is ours. When Augustine taught this he differentiated between the member of the Godhead and the spirit that God gave us to give us life. They are two different entities according to Augustine. The latter was given to us to make us live. The former was given to make us holy.<sup>214</sup>

The teachings of Augustine eventually became the touchstone for Christian theologians in later centuries. Reformers like John Calvin and Martin Luther looked to

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<sup>212</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 73.

<sup>213</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 174-175.

<sup>214</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 199.

Augustine as a source for truth and used his teachings as a measuring stick for orthodoxy in the doctrinal teachings of the Church.

### **John Calvin and Reformed Doctrine**

It is hard to pinpoint one specific doctrine that can be called Calvin's central theme or favorite topic. He was thoroughly convinced of the necessity to preach and teach the sovereignty of God, as well as Jesus Christ as God in the flesh among men, and to show those themes in the Bible. B. B. Warfield, an influential professor of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary believed that Calvin was the theologian of the Holy Spirit.<sup>215</sup> Considering such an assessment and Calvin's focus on understanding God, one thing stands out from his writings: Calvin was strictly Trinitarian. Calvin has been described as being very traditional and orthodox in his views on the Trinity.<sup>216</sup> That traditional view, according to Philip Butin, "gives a particular contextuality, comprehensiveness, and coherence to his larger Christian vision."<sup>217</sup>

John Calvin wrote, "Nearly the whole of sacred doctrine consists of these two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."<sup>218</sup> Any attempt to alter the understanding of the Trinity—to completely separate or completely blend the three members of the Godhead—was seen as a satanic attack on the truth that sustained Christianity. "Moreover,

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<sup>215</sup> B. B. Warfield, "Calvin the Theologian," in *Calvin and Augustine*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1956), 484-485.

<sup>216</sup> I. John Hesselink, "Calvin's Theology," *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 79. John Calvin was accused by Peter Caroli of supporting heretical teachings on the Trinity based on the former's refusal to declare acceptance of the Athanasian and Nicene creeds. However, it is assumed that there was no "heretical intent." (see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vol., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967], 1:129 n23).

<sup>217</sup> Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 132.

<sup>218</sup> Hesselink, "Calvin's Theology," 69.



Satan, in order to tear our faith from its very roots, has always been instigating great battles, partly concerning the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit, partly concerning the distinction of the persons. He has during nearly all ages stirred up ungodly spirits to harry orthodox teachers over this matter and today also is trying to kindle a new fire from the old embers.”<sup>219</sup> Because he saw the debate as being one with the devil himself, an Athanasius-like thought, John Calvin took up the fight against anti-Trinitarian doctrine with Athanasius-like zeal.

### **Calvin on the Relationship Between the Father and the Son**

Calvin relied heavily upon the Apostles’ Creed throughout his teachings.<sup>220</sup> It has been suggested by many that the division of Calvin’s most important work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, was organized according to the Apostles’ Creed. The Creed clearly pointed to three distinct titles: God the Father Almighty, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. God was referred to as Father because of the title given to Jesus Christ when He came into the world: The Son of God.<sup>221</sup>

According to Calvin, one reason for explaining God as three in one is to assist man in understanding the manner in which God brings about salvation in man’s behalf. Without these three distinctions, “only the bare and empty name of God flits about in our brains, to the exclusion of the true God.”<sup>222</sup> Calvin saw expressed purpose in the way the scriptures and the early Church fathers described the nature of God. It is necessary for Christians to think of the Son and the Holy Ghost as “other than the Father.” Within one

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<sup>219</sup> see John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:145.

<sup>220</sup> See the *Apostles’ Creed* in full in Appendix I.

<sup>221</sup> John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), II:39.

<sup>222</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:122.

God, there are not three distinct persons, but three distinct hypostases. Thus the distinction was not in the essence, but a distinction of being.<sup>223</sup>

Each hypostasi had its specific title, and each title had its own purpose for instructing mankind. It is important to point out that Calvinistic teachings “do not separate the persons from the essence, but . . . distinguish among them while they remain within it.”<sup>224</sup> Calvin referenced his readers to Augustine’s book, *On the Trinity*. He felt that to attempt further explanation than is found in that early book would be to attempt to dive too deeply into the mystery of God.<sup>225</sup> The miracle of the four great creeds was that they explained as much as they did while leaving the mystery perfectly intact.

### **Calvin on the Body of God**

Despite scriptures that mention God’s body parts such as mouth, ears, eyes, face, feet and hands, John Calvin taught that God exists as a being of spirit. He wrote that such scriptures are easily explained based on the fact that God, and those who wrote the scriptures were simply describing God in terms that men and women could understand; they are anthropomorphic expressions.

Calvin said, “For who of even slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to ‘lisp’ in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness.”<sup>226</sup> Therefore, when the scriptures speak of man being created in

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<sup>223</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:122-123.

<sup>224</sup> See John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:154.

<sup>225</sup> See John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:142-143.

<sup>226</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:121.

the image of God (see Gen. 1:27), Calvin explained that the reference to the image of God is referring to that which “is seen or glows” from within man. It is the soul or spiritual side of man that was created in God’s image, because God is a spiritual being.<sup>227</sup> John Calvin believed that there was no visible form that could be attributed to God. Even the Greeks who attributed a human form to God, Calvin thought, were wrong. Rather, God “repudiates all likenesses, pictures, and other signs by which the superstitions have thought he will be near them . . . every statue man erect, or every image he paints to represent God, simply displeases God as something dishonorable to his majesty.”<sup>228</sup>

### **Calvin on the Eternal Word and Mediator**

It is necessary to understand Calvin’s feelings about the nature of men and women in order to understand the Reformer’s adoration of God the Redeemer. From the position of a fallen and inherently evil man or woman, faith in God must translate into faith in the redeeming Jesus Christ. “Although faith rests in God, it will gradually disappear unless he who retains it in perfect firmness intercedes as Mediator. Otherwise, God’s majesty is too lofty to be attained by mortal men, who are like grubs crawling upon the earth.”<sup>229</sup>

Calvin summed up his teachings on Christ this way: “What we have said so far concerning Christ must be referred to this one objective: condemned, dead, and lost in ourselves, we should seek righteousness, liberation, life and salvation in him.”<sup>230</sup> In order

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<sup>227</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:186.

<sup>228</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:100-101.

<sup>229</sup> see John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:346.

<sup>230</sup> see John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:503.

for Christ to perform His role as Mediator, not only did he have to be divine, but the Son also had to be clothed with our flesh, meaning the flesh of a mortal man.

That flesh came because of his being born of woman (see Galatians 4:4) and being descended from the Jews (see Romans 9:5). Paul wrote to the Hebrews that Christ took our flesh so that “in flesh and blood . . . he might through death destroy him who had the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14). Calvin relied on another verse in the same chapter. “He had to made like his brethren . . . so that he might be a merciful and faithful intercessor” (Hebrews 2:17). Calvin pointed to the fact that Christ knew “hunger, thirst, cold and other infirmities of our nature” as evidence that he had a literal human nature.<sup>231</sup>

To those who assumed Christ could not share in human nature because of its limitations, Calvin said, “For even if the Word in his immeasurable essence united with the nature of man into one person, we do not imagine that he was confined therein. Here is something marvelous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin’s womb, to go about the earth, and to hang on the cross; yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!”<sup>232</sup>

In his debate with Michael Servetus, John Calvin refuted the claim that the Word became the Son of God at the birth, thus becoming a new creature.<sup>233</sup> Rather, according

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<sup>231</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:474-475.

<sup>232</sup> see John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:481.

<sup>233</sup> Michael Servetus was a physician and a self-taught theologian. He taught that there were not three persons in God, but three “modes of acting.” He denied that Christ was the “Son of God” and that He was the second member of the Godhead. Servetus’ teachings echoed Sabellianism, which the Church fathers had declared heretical over 1000 years earlier. John Calvin saw these teachings as a “deadly threat” to the true faith in Christ. He felt that anyone who deviated from the established doctrine of the Trinity had departed from the entire faith of Christianity. Calvin strongly defended the orthodox Christian view of the Trinity in his *Defensio orthodoxae fidei de sacra Trinitate, contra prodigiosos errores Michaelis Serveti Hispani*. Servetus was declared to be a heretic and atheist because of his anti-Trinitarian doctrine and the city of Geneva carried out a death sentence that had previously been declared on Servetus in Vienna. He

to Calvin, the Incarnation of the Word of God was when “He was manifested among men in order that they might know Him to be the One who had been promised before.”<sup>234</sup>

Therefore the Incarnation was not a beginning, but simply a manifestation of the Being who had existed since before time.

It was apparent, to Calvin at least, that in order for Christ to accomplish the atoning sacrifice He would have to be God. To call Christ created would be to strip Christ of his deity because God is not the creature but rather the Creator. “Therefore nothing should be more intolerable to us than to fancy a beginning of that Word who both was always with God and afterward was the artificer of the universe. . . . Therefore we again state that the Word, conceived beyond the beginning of time by God, has perpetually resided with him. By this, his eternity, his true essence, and his divinity are proved.”<sup>235</sup>

### **Calvin on the Holy Spirit**

In John Calvin’s teachings, the role of the Holy Ghost is vital for the salvation of humanity. The Holy Ghost testifies to man regarding the truthfulness of religion. Despite the lack of tangible evidence, man can still know the truth. Calvin pointed out the confirming influence of the Holy Spirit in response to those that claimed that religion was merely driven by human opinion or those who required tangible proof for religious claims. He wrote, “The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as

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was burned at the stake for heresy (see Alexandre Ganoczy, “Calvin’s Life,” *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004] 17-18; Wulfert de Greef, “Calvin’s Writings,” *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004] 55; and William G. Naphy, “Calvin’s Geneva,” *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004] 32-33).

<sup>234</sup> T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959) 63.

<sup>235</sup> see John Calvin, *Institutes*, 130-131.

God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit."<sup>236</sup>

God the Third is the energy of God that is "diffused indeed over all things, but still perpetually resident in himself."<sup>237</sup> That influence allows humankind to partake in the salvation that Christ offers. Persons cannot be drawn to the blessings of Christ without the illuminating persuasion of the Spirit. Thus it is ultimately the work of Christ to save man and woman, but it is the work of the Spirit to make men and women capable of receiving that salvation.<sup>238</sup>

### **John Wesley and the Methodists**

It is not easy to find John Wesley's teachings on the Godhead. This may be because he was comfortable with the established orthodoxy of the Church regarding the topic, and thus felt no need to comment any further. Another explanation may be that John was not responsible for what modern commentary anyway. Rather, many people credit his brother Charles with what additional commentary we find on this topic. Thus, when John Wesley was questioned on issues regarding the Trinity, he would refer them to Charles' hymns.<sup>239</sup> John Wesley's sermons and other commentaries must be studied with those hymns in mind.<sup>240</sup> However, there is even doubt regarding the originality of what Charles wrote. Some accuse him of taking doctrinal context from others of the day.

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<sup>236</sup> I. John Hesselink, "Calvin's Theology," 80.

<sup>237</sup> Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises*, 39.

<sup>238</sup> Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises*, 39.

<sup>239</sup> A letter from Jason Vickers, Professor of Theology at United Theological Seminary, in possession of the author.

<sup>240</sup> Seng-Kong Tan, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in John Wesley's Prose and Poetic Works," in *Journal for Christian Theological Research*, 7 (2002), 3.

The origin of the Wesley brothers' teachings on God is a debated topic. Thomas Langford suggested that the brilliance of Charles Wesley was not in the originality of his theology, but the way he observed the theology of others and then added his touch as he put the doctrines to rhyme. He saw Charles' role as supportive, taking John's sermons and putting them into prose.<sup>241</sup> Wilma Quantrille suggested that it was an Anglican priest that inspired the hymns of Charles Wesley. She believed that Charles relied on William Jones' book, *The Catholic Doctrine of A Trinity* to stimulate the writing of his hymns.<sup>242</sup> Still others credited the seventeenth century with the Wesleyan theology. According to David Naglee, John Wesley added insights to the traditional thoughts of men such as Galileo, Copernicus, Harvey, Newton and others. Therefore, Naglee concludes that Wesley "inherited [the basis of his theology] from the previous century."<sup>243</sup>

It should not seem a big surprise that the Wesley's referred to others for their teachings on the Trinity. John and Charles Wesley never considered themselves as fathers of a great movement from orthodox teachings regarding the Godhead. In fact, John seemed quite content to stay with what had already been written. David Naglee called John Wesley "a very late witness to the dynamic relationship [between the scriptures and the divine attributes ascribed to the Trinity]."<sup>244</sup> John Wesley agreed with what early Church fathers had written and as such followed their methodology to explain scripture passages. All of the discussion aside, based simply on his dynamic arguments with

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<sup>241</sup> See Thomas A. Langford, "Charles Wesley as Theologian," in *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*, ed. S T Kimbrough, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954/1992), 102.

<sup>242</sup> Wilma Quantrille, "Introduction," in *Charles Wesley, Hymns on the Trinity*, ed. S T Kimbrough, Jr. (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1998), vii.

<sup>243</sup> David Ingersoll Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting: John Wesley on Eternity and Time*, 2 vols. (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), I:48.

<sup>244</sup> David Ingersoll Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting*, 99.

Arians, Socinians and Deists of his day, it is obvious that John Wesley, along with Augustine and Calvin, was a strict Trinitarian.<sup>245</sup>

### **John's Hymns and Sermons on the Trinity**

While the well-known author of hymns was the younger brother Charles, John also took up the pen to author a hymn that praised the attributes of the Trinity. As one reads the words, his affirmation of the early Christian creeds is obvious.<sup>246</sup>

Wisdom, and might, and love are thine;  
Prostrate before thy face we fall,  
Confess thine attributes divine,  
And hail thee sovereign Lord of All.

Blessing and honor, praise and love,  
Co-equal, co-eternal Three,  
In earth below, and heaven above,  
By all thy works be paid to thee.<sup>247</sup>

In his most famous sermon on the topic, John Wesley distinguished between the interactions that each member of the Godhead has with man. He said, "God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of God the Son."<sup>248</sup> He separated those roles without separating the being. He also wrote, "But there are some truths more important than others . . . And doubtless we may rank among these that contained in the words above cited: 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these three are one.'"<sup>249</sup>

Taking the Articles of Religion of the Church of England, John Wesley abbreviated the first Article to read as follows: "There is but one living and true God,

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<sup>245</sup> See Geoffrey Wainwright, "Why Wesley Was a Trinitarian," in *The Drew Gateway* 59/2 (Spring 1990), 26-7.

<sup>246</sup> Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting*, 103-104.

<sup>247</sup> *Hymnal of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1884), 139, as quoted in Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting*, 126-127.

<sup>248</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, VI:205.

<sup>249</sup> Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, VI:200,



everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible, and in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”<sup>250</sup>

By his own admission, John Wesley was not as fierce a defender of the vocabulary surrounding the Trinity and creeds of the early fathers as was John Calvin. He refers specifically to the Calvin and Servetus debate two hundred years earlier. Wesley wrote, “Much less would I burn a man alive, and that with moist, green wood” for disagreeing with the specific vocabulary such as “Trinity” and “Persons.”<sup>251</sup>

While he believed the doctrine of the Trinity to be a vital truth for Christianity, he did not see the necessity to be able to understand or explain the inner workings of the Three in One. Rather he felt that attempts to explain that which God never intended us to understand only led people off the paths of righteousness. “It was in an evil hour that these *explainers* began their fruitless work.”<sup>252</sup>

Men of his day knew for a fact that the sun warmed the earth, but they were not sure of the manner in which it did it. Wesley mentioned the different ideas about planetary movements in the solar system. He mentioned Ptolemy, Tycho Brahe and Copernicus and said he was “sick of them” and their discussions. For Wesley it was enough to know that the sun warmed the earth. Equally important was that men accept

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<sup>250</sup> Henry Wheeler, *History and Exposition of the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1908), 9

<sup>251</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, VI:201.

<sup>252</sup> Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, VI:200, emphasis added.

the facts about the Godhead as they were laid out in the scriptures and not lose faith because God had chosen not to reveal the manner in how those truths came to be.<sup>253</sup>

### **Wesley on the Body of God**

The incorporeal nature of God is another example of how Wesley continued to teach the doctrines as previously established by the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. In a sermon on the spiritual nature of God, John Wesley said, “This God is a Spirit; not having such a body, such parts or passions as men have. It was the opinion of both the ancient Jews and the ancient Christians, that he alone is a pure Spirit, totally separate from all matter.”<sup>254</sup>

Wesley saw space in two parts. The first part was that which was a part of the material universe, being created. Material is unable to extend into the second space. However, the space that material bodies occupy, according to Wesley, cannot block out the presence of God because God is entirely “spiritual *ousia*,” or spiritual substance. Therefore, because God is a being or spirit, John Wesley taught that God filled the immensity of space.<sup>255</sup>

According to Wesley, many of the appearances or interactions of men in the Old Testament with God, or Jehovah, were actually the Word of God rather than the Father. Even early fathers of the Church in the second and third centuries believed that when Jehovah appeared unto man, that it was actually the Word appearing in the place of Jehovah.<sup>256</sup> Wesley even believed that the angel of the Lord that appeared unto Abraham

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<sup>253</sup> Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, VI:200.

<sup>254</sup> Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, VII:274.

<sup>255</sup> Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting*, 103-104.

<sup>256</sup> Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting*, 143.

to announce the finish of his great trial just before the actual sacrifice of Isaac was actually the Word of God, “that is, God himself, the eternal Word, the Angel of the Covenant, who was to be the great Redeemer and Comforter.”<sup>257</sup>

### **Wesley on the Fall and the Role of the Savior**

The Fifty-two Sermons, Explanatory Notes, and Articles of Religion were designated by John Wesley to make up the basic doctrinal structure of the Methodist Church. The Articles of Religion at first contained thirty-nine, but were later condensed by Wesley to twenty-five. Article II is about the role and nature of the Word, or Son of God. “The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the blessed virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhood and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, died, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men.”<sup>258</sup>

Predestination was a major difference in Calvinistic and Wesleyan theologies. Calvin focused on the sovereign power of God and thus the predestined future of humankind. Wesley, on the other hand, followed an Armenian line of thought. In 1738, John Wesley started teaching “justification and sanctification by faith in Christ.” Justification is the work of God *on* a person and sanctification is that which God works *in* a person. Justification—forgiveness of sin—is only possible because of the Atonement of Christ. The process of sanctification was the process through which men and women

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<sup>257</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Old Testament*, (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishers, 1975) I:87; VII:455; XIII:67.

<sup>258</sup> Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting*, 142.

incrementally grow in spirituality and holiness through faith in Christ. Sanctification only takes place after a person is justified, or forgiven of their sins.<sup>259</sup> Sanctification and justification together make salvation possible now and eternal life possible in the hereafter.<sup>260</sup>

John Wesley spent more time speaking about what humankind is offered through the Son of God than about specific characteristics of the Son of God Himself. In reference to the fallen condition of humanity on the earth, Wesley said, “Man in his natural state, unassisted by the grace of God . . . [is] still ‘evil, only evil,’ and that ‘continually.’”<sup>261</sup> This focus does not, however, limit nor take away from the important role that Christ had in Wesleyan teachings. Christ is central to all that Wesley preached.<sup>262</sup> Everything regarding the possibilities of salvation was made possible through Jesus Christ.

Following his Armenian counterparts, free will became the focus of Wesley’s teachings. Although he believed in “original sin,” Wesley believed that all men and women are saved through the Atonement of Christ to some degree at birth, thus allowing each to choose to follow Christ. Without such grace of God, no man or woman can choose a righteous or holy path. John Calvin believed in unconditional election, at other

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<sup>259</sup> Michael J. Fear, *In Christ . . . A New Creature*, 6-7, 36. “And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, *sanctification* begins. In that instant . . . there is a *real* as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the ‘love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,’ producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, . . . in a word, changing the ‘earthly, sensual, devilish’ mind unto ‘the mind which was in Christ Jesus’” (John Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation” [1765] in *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*, eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 373).

<sup>260</sup> John Wesley taught, “The salvation . . . is not a blessing which lies on the other side of death . . . It is a present thing, a blessing which through the mercy of God, ye are now in possession of” (Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation” (1765), in *Sermons*, 372).

<sup>261</sup> Wesley, “Original Sins” (1759), in *Sermons*, 329.

<sup>262</sup> John Wesley, *A Compend of Wesley’s Theology*, Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles, eds., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954) 71-73.

times called predestination. In contrast, Wesley held that God and humanity worked together, creating a sort of synergy, to accomplish mankind's redemption from their fallen condition.<sup>263</sup>

### **Wesley on the Important Work of the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Ghost was a vital part of John Wesley's theology. The Holy Ghost is the "cause of all holiness in us, enlightening our understandings, rectifying our wills and affections, renewing our natures, uniting our persons to Christ, assuring us of the adoption of sons, leading us in our actions, purifying and sanctifying our souls and bodies, to a full and eternal enjoyment of God."<sup>264</sup> When men and women feel prompted to improve and become more righteous, it is the Spirit of God working on the soul of that man or woman.

The Spirit works as a type of interpreter for humankind thus making it possible to understand the higher, and otherwise indiscernible, mind and will of God. Mortals cannot comprehend the mind of God. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). "God speaks, not as man, but as God. His thoughts are very deep, and thence His words are of inexhaustible virtue. And the language of His words which are given them accurately answered the impression made upon their minds."<sup>265</sup> Because mortals cannot understand the ways of the Lord on their own, Wesley taught, the Holy Spirit translates those higher, divine thoughts into thoughts that they can understand, and yet those translations merely scratch the surface of what

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<sup>263</sup> Michael J. Fear, *In Christ . . . A New Creature*, 6-7.

<sup>264</sup> Wesley, *A Compend of Wesley's Theology*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954) 91.

<sup>265</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 9.

God actually thinks and comprehends.<sup>266</sup> Wesley taught that the Spirit would teach people of the Lord's ways just as Isaiah prophesied (see Isaiah 2:3). Without the Spirit people would be left to their own, incorrect understandings of God's will.

Before man can have faith unto salvation, it is necessary to have received the Holy Ghost. Its influence leads all who follow its promptings to the Father's presence. Through that influence it is possible for man to receive the image of God. The holy influence of the Spirit of God is removal of stains left by the residue of sins. Ultimately the Holy Ghost is responsible for preparing man for the blessings of Christ's sacrifice and trip to the kingdom of God.<sup>267</sup>

For Wesley, the value of the influence of the Holy Ghost was that it brought a confirmation and assurance that sins had been blotted out and that he had been accepted of God. That presence allows sinners to feel assured of their reconciliation with God. It is through the Holy Ghost according to Wesley that men are "created anew." The Spirit of God brings about the change in men's hearts that allows them to have faith and believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.<sup>268</sup>

## **Conclusion**

These great theologians added something to the general understanding of the scriptures and the teachings of those that went before them. As general Christianity changed its view on the Godhead, the general public also tweaked. Such adjustments set the stage for Mormonism to take the stage. Joseph Smith would have only known what he had been taught when he went to the to the Sacred Grove as a fourteen year-old boy. As

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<sup>266</sup> Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting*, 9.

<sup>267</sup> Wesley, *A Compend of Wesley's Theology*, 93.

<sup>268</sup> Wesley, *A Compend of Wesley's Theology*, 94.

converts joined the Mormon Church, they brought with them, just as the Hellenized Saints, preconceived ideas about God. What teachings would the LDS faith leave alone, and which ones would they abandon?

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Teachings of Elder James E. Talmage**

As Elder James E. Talmage started to write, he did not start with a blank page. He had studied the teachings of earlier LDS Church leaders. He knew the writings and teachings of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and others. He was not, however, limited to the LDS teachings. As a boy in England, he had studied at Anglican sponsored schools and thus had been taught Anglican theology regarding the Godhead. The purpose of this chapter is first to outline the LDS foundation from which Elder Talmage started and then to explore in greater detail some of Elder Talmage's teachings specifically related to the Godhead. This chapter will show that James Talmage was not creating or recreating LDS thought, simply moving it along by extrapolating upon the principles that had previously been taught.

#### **Corporeal Nature of God and Jesus Christ**

Joseph Smith declared what became the official stand of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 2, 1843: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us" (Doctrine & Covenants 130:22). This may be one of the most distinctive of the LDS teachings on



this topic. It clearly stands in direct opposition to everything that the major Christian contributors taught as outlined in the previous chapter.

We cannot pinpoint exactly when Joseph learned some of the pivotal LDS doctrines regarding the Godhead. It is even difficult to determine when he began teaching them in private circles. While it is not clear whether or not Joseph Smith understood the corporeal nature of God as a result of his First Vision in 1820, it is clear that he was teaching that God the Father had a body of flesh and bone at least as early as 1836.<sup>269</sup> Reaffirming the Latter-day Saint scripture and the message of Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young said later, “Our God and Father in Heaven, is a being of tabernacle, or, in other words, he has a body, with parts the same as you and I have . . . His Son Jesus Christ has become a personage of tabernacle, and has a body like his Father.”<sup>270</sup> And Parley Pratt taught that both Father and Son possess “a perfect organization of spirit, flesh and bones.”<sup>271</sup>

### **The Divinity of Jesus Christ**

The divinity of Jesus Christ was established early for the Latter-day Saints in the Book of Mormon. The title page of the book declares that one of its purposes is to convince men and women that “Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.” Scriptural texts from that book assist in that purpose. “God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called

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<sup>269</sup> See Milton V. Backman, Jr., “Truman Coe’s 1836 Description of Mormonism,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, 17 [Spring 1977]: 347, 354. See also, Robert L. Millet, “The Ministry of the Father and the Son,” *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988).

<sup>270</sup> *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 24.

<sup>271</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915), 34.

the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son. He is the Father because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus the Father and the Son. And they are one God, yea the very Eternal Father of heaven and earth” (Mosiah 15:3-4).

According to LDS theology, Elohim is the Father of the spirits of every man and woman, including Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 12:9). Christ is also identified occasionally as Father.<sup>272</sup> The titles of the Savior describe his mission and his position in the heavens. Jesus Christ shares some of those titles with the Father. The “Eternal Father” is one example. John Taylor clarified that sharing the same title “Eternal Father” does not make Christ the same being as Elohim, although the two share the same attributes and powers. “He is not only called the Son of God, the First Begotten of the Father, the Well Beloved, the Head, and Ruler, and Dictator of all things, Jehovah, the I Am, the Alpha and Omega, but He is also called the Very Eternal Father. Does not this mean that in Him were the attributes and power of the Very Eternal Father?”<sup>273</sup>

Since Joseph Smith’s experience in 1820, in which he saw God the Father and Jesus Christ as two distinct personages, he always taught of a distinction between the two divine beings. He explained only days before his death, “I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from the God the

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<sup>272</sup> Based upon the 1916 doctrinal declaration, *The Father and The Son*, Robert L. Millet suggests several reasons that Jesus Christ can be considered the “Father” in LDS theology. First, he is the Father because of his role as the creator. Second, Jesus Christ is the Father of the spiritual rebirth that takes place at baptism. Third, He is the Father because of divine investiture, or in other words, Elohim has authorized Him to speak in His (Elohim’s) behalf. Fourth, having been conceived by the Father, Jesus Christ inherited the Father’s attributes and powers. And finally, Jesus Christ can be called the Father because of His role as Jehovah. For a more complete discussion about Jesus Christ as the Father, see Robert L. Millet, “The Ministry of the Father and the Son,” *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 55-64.

<sup>273</sup> John Taylor, *Mediation and the Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1882), 138.

Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.”<sup>274</sup>

In 1835, William W. Phelps wrote a letter that was published in the Church’s newspaper, *The Latter-day Saints Messenger and Advocate* that described his inclinations as relating to the distinct nature of God and Jesus Christ before his conversion to the LDS faith. He wrote, “I was not a professor at the time, nor a believer in sectarian religion, but a believer in God, and the Son of God, as two distinct characters, and a believer in sacred scripture.”<sup>275</sup> Robert Millet suggested that the fact that the Church newspaper did not refute or correct Phelps’ statement suggests that his statement was in line with the 1835 teachings of the Church.<sup>276</sup>

Elder Orson Pratt, an early member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, used the Genesis account of the creation as evidence. He said, “The work of creation was performed by a plurality of persons, as is evident from the description of Moses.”<sup>277</sup> First, the scripture reads, “Let *US* make man in *OUR* image, after *OUR* likeness” (Genesis 2:26; emphasis in the original). Again, after the fall of Adam and Eve, the scriptures read, “The Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man is become as *ONE OF US*, to know good and evil’” (Genesis 3:22). Finally, in reference to the “spirit of God” in Genesis 1:1, Elder Pratt said, “This ‘Spirit of God’ is throughout Scripture distinguished from the Father and the Son, so as to be viewed in the light of a distinct agent.”<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 194.

<sup>275</sup> William W. Phelps, *The Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, no. 8 (May 1835), 115.

<sup>276</sup> See Robert L. Millet, “The Book of Mormon and the Nature of God,” in *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 115.

<sup>277</sup> Orson Pratt, *Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt*, N.B. Lundwall ed., (Salt Lake City: N.B. Lundwall, 1946), 202.

<sup>278</sup> Orson Pratt, *Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt*, 206.

## The Role of the Holy Ghost

The prophet Joseph Smith taught, “It is not to be wondered at that men should be ignorant, in a great measure, of the principle of salvation, and more especially of the nature, office, power, influence, gifts and blessings of the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>279</sup> Latter-day Saints believe that the “Holy Spirit is necessary to sanctify and purify the affections of men, and also to dwell in them as a teacher of truth.”<sup>280</sup> The Spirit is necessary for men and women to come to know God. It is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about the Father and the Son to men and women. “There is no other way or means of attaining to this knowledge.”<sup>281</sup>

The Father and the Son have bodies of physical flesh and bone. “Therefore the omnipresence of God must therefore be understood in some other way than of His bodily or personal presence.”<sup>282</sup> However, “the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (D&C 130:22). Joseph F. Smith taught that even though the Spirit does not have a corporeal body, it does have a body of spiritual matter (see D&C 131:7). Omnipresence is possible, however, through “his intelligence, his knowledge, his power and influence, over and through the laws of nature.”<sup>283</sup> The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to maintain communication with the Father and Son with all the creations of God.<sup>284</sup> Brigham Young taught, “The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the Lord, and issues forth from himself, and may properly be called God’s minister to execute his will in immensity; being called to govern

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<sup>279</sup> *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 242.

<sup>280</sup> Orson Pratt, *Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt*, 296.

<sup>281</sup> Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel doctrine : selections from the sermons and writings of Joseph F. Smith, sixth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, John A. Widstoe, ed., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 59.

<sup>282</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *The Key to the Science of Theology*, 38.

<sup>283</sup> Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 61.

<sup>284</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 42.

by his influence and power; but he is not a person of flesh as we are, and as our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ are.”<sup>285</sup>

The Savior told his Apostles that the mission of the Holy Ghost was to testify of Christ and that the Spirit would “guide you unto all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak” (John 15:26; 16:13). The Holy Spirit is the messenger between the Father and His children on earth.<sup>286</sup> Joseph Smith explained, “We believe in its [the Spirit] being a comforter and a witness bearer, that it brings things past to our remembrance, leads us to all truth, and shows us of things to come; we believe that ‘no man can know that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost.’”<sup>287</sup>

### **Progression in Understanding**

There are those who have been critical of Joseph Smith for what they perceive to be changes in his teachings with regard to the Godhead. One statement often used to point out inconsistencies in the Prophet’s teachings was made during in 1835 from the Lectures on Faith. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made . . . They are the Father and the Son – the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fullness, the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man.”<sup>288</sup> Some critics of early LDS leaders

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<sup>285</sup> *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 24.

<sup>286</sup> *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 323. See also, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 19.

<sup>287</sup> *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 243.

<sup>288</sup> Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2000), 5:2.

have used this quote in contrast with the 1843 revelation that sets forth the teaching that God the Father has a body of flesh and bone. One modern Latter-day Saint leader has offered a possible interpretation of the Lectures on Faith quote that would suggest that Joseph did not change positions.<sup>289</sup>

The seeds of Joseph Smith’s teachings regarding the Godhead were planted in 1820 with his first vision. Joseph Smith “learned from the First Vision that not all truth [was] in the Bible.”<sup>290</sup> Ten years later, Joseph Smith began a translation of the Bible in which he made changes and additions as the Lord directed him.<sup>291</sup> The result was the “Joseph Smith Translation,” or the “New Translation” as Joseph Smith called it. The work on the *New Translation* was finished in 1833, almost three years after the project started. During this process, Joseph Smith revealed some important truths regarding the body of God. First, Joseph Smith could be seen. He made changes to verses such as Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; and 1 John 4:12, in each case establishing that it is possible for men and women to see God if they are properly prepared.<sup>292</sup> Moses 6 (translation of Genesis 5), for example reads, “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; In the image of *his own body*, male and female created he them” (Moses

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<sup>289</sup> Bruce R. McConkie explained that the Prophet was not wrong in his description of God because each personage, the Father and the Son, is a personage of both spirit and tabernacle. Elder McConkie wrote, “A personage of spirit, as here used [in the *Lectures on Faith* 5:2] and as distinguished from the spirit children of the Father, is a resurrected personage. Resurrected bodies, as contrasted with mortal bodies, are in fact spiritual bodies” (see Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985], 72-73).

<sup>290</sup> Kent P. Jackson, “The Scriptural Restoration,” in *Joseph Smith and the Doctrinal Restoration: The 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2005), 222.

<sup>291</sup> Kent P. Jackson, “The Scriptural Restoration,” 226. This translation process was “a unique revelatory experience” in that the King James Version was already in English and in the hands of people in Joseph Smith’s day. It was not a process of revealing new scripture from ancient texts. Rather, it was an exercise of clarifying what was already in the English version of the King James Bible.

<sup>292</sup> See Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 701, 443, and 563 respectively.

6:7-8, emphasis added). So, regardless of how the Lectures on Faith were worded in 1835, the Joseph Smith Translation clearly established that as early as 1830 Joseph was beginning to understand more about the corporeal nature of the Godhead, even if that understanding was not fully developed. It is apparent that at least by 1836 Joseph Smith was preaching about a totally material God.<sup>293</sup>

Joseph Smith's position on the Godhead developed as time passed. With each revelation regarding the nature of God, Joseph Smith's understanding increased. Does that progress destroy his credibility? Does a growing understanding signify that Joseph Smith was not a prophet? James E. Talmage and other Church leaders' contributions do not constitute a recreation of LDS theology regarding the Godhead? Joseph Smith never claimed to possess all truth. The scriptures that Joseph Smith gave to the Church make allowances for such growth and progression (see D&C 1:30; D&C 98:12; 2 Nephi 28:30). The Ninth Article of Faith states, "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

The Prophet Joseph Smith and the others laid a foundation of knowledge that they had received by revelation. It was from that foundation that Elder James E. Talmage wrote his books and prepared his sermons on the Godhead. There can be no question regarding the level of James Talmage's respect for and trust in the early LDS leaders, especially Joseph Smith. In *Articles of Faith*, Talmage wrote, "The question of [Joseph Smith's] divine commission is a challenging one to the world today. If his claims to a divine appointment be false, forming as they do the foundation of the Church in this the last dispensation, the superstructure cannot be stable; if, however, his avowed ordination

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<sup>293</sup> See Milton V. Backman, Jr., "Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism," 347, 354.

under the hands of heavenly personages be fact, one need search no farther for the cause of the phenomenal vitality and continuous development of the restored Church.”<sup>294</sup>

### **The Trinity in the Teachings of James E. Talmage**

“We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:1). This is the first Article of Faith as set forth in 1842 by Joseph Smith in his communication with John Wentworth of Chicago. James E. Talmage described why that statement came first. He felt that a correct understanding of the Godhead was essential for men and women to correctly worship the members of the Godhead. He said that faith in God was the foundation of all religious belief.<sup>295</sup>

“The scriptures specify three personages in the Godhead: (1) God the Eternal Father, (2) His Son Jesus Christ, and (3) the Holy Ghost. These constitute the Holy Trinity, comprising three physically separate and distinct individuals, who together constitute the presiding council of the heavens.”<sup>296</sup> James Talmage helped clarify the teachings of those who preceded him by clearly stating the position of the Church on the matter of the Trinity: Three distinct beings who are physically separate from each other.

The baptism of Jesus Christ is a scripture that most members of the LDS Church refer to when teaching the distinct nature and persons of the Godhead. Talmage believed that without any other evidence, that one experience should be enough to convince everyone that the members of the Godhead are not one undivided substance, but three distinct and separate beings.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 6-7.

<sup>295</sup> See Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 26.

<sup>296</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 30.

<sup>297</sup> See Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks*, 44-45.



Talmage pointed out, however, that the baptism of Christ is not the only evidence found in the scriptures that support teachings of physical distinction. For example, during that fateful Passover week, when Christ prayed to the Father there “came a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it [God’s name], and will glorify it again” (John 12:27-28). Here “the Father and the Son [are] again [seen] as distinct Personages . . . To whom did he pray? Certainly not to Himself, but to the Supreme Being whose Son He was and is.”<sup>298</sup>

These and other scriptures were “absolute” in their testimony that God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son of God were in fact two separate and distinct beings.<sup>299</sup> The scriptures clearly speak of the Father and the Son as being One (see John 10:30). How did Elder Talmage deal with such verses when he so clearly distinguished between the persons? He also found this answer in the Bible.

Christ prayed to the Father that His disciples would become “one” just as the Father and the Son were “one.” This scripture could not mean one essence, certainly Christ was not praying for His followers to give up their individual identity and become one essence with the Father and the Son. Such a change in nature was not even possible, let alone desirable.<sup>300</sup> Therefore the answer had to be that God the Father and Jesus Christ were “one” without being the same substance or essence. There had to be another way to explain the unity described in that and other scriptural passages.

Elder Talmage explained that Christ was praying for His disciples to become unified in purpose, will and desire. He wrote:

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<sup>298</sup> See Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks*, 47-48.

<sup>299</sup> See Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks*, 50.

<sup>300</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 36.

The unity is a type of completeness; the mind of any one member of the Trinity is the mind of the others; seeing as each of them does with the eye of perfection, they see and understand alike. Under any given conditions each would act in the same way, guided by the same principles of unerring justice and equity. The one-ness of the Godhead, to which the scriptures so abundantly testify, implies no mystical union of substance, nor any unnatural and therefore impossible blending of personality. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are as distinct in their persons and individualities as are any three personages in mortality. Yet their unity of purpose and operation is such as to make their edicts one, and their will the will of God.<sup>301</sup>

The Master told His Apostles just hours before the trials of Gethsemane and Calvary that to know the Son was to know the Father. Phillip then asked to see the Father. Christ mildly rebuked the eager disciple (see John 14:7-9). After so many teaching moments, they still did not understand. If the Father had been in their presence, He would have done exactly as Christ had done. The will of the Son was so perfectly aligned with the will of the Father that Christ never deviated from that which the Father had sent Him to do, as He was about to prove so perfectly in Gethsemane and on Calvary.<sup>302</sup> However, that unity should not be confused for singleness of being as theologians of the past had done.

The Nicene and Athanasian creeds confused Elder Talmage. Neither creed brings the sons and daughters of God closer to understanding Him. James Talmage said, “It would be difficult to conceive of a greater number of inconsistencies and contradictions expressed in words as few.”<sup>303</sup> In a radio broadcast, Elder Talmage said, “Can you understand it [the Athanasian Creed]? I freely confess that it is beyond my power of comprehension.”<sup>304</sup> Thus, Talmage stood openly opposed to the generally accepted Christian orthodoxy of his day.

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<sup>301</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 37.

<sup>302</sup> See Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 558-559.

<sup>303</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 44.

<sup>304</sup> Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks*, 26.

Rather than to seek greater understanding of God through these established Christian creeds, Elder Talmage looked to the men who led the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints up to his day. He trusted the prophets of the latter-days and the revelations they received to guide and instruct. He said:

When I see how often the theories and conceptions of men have gone astray, have fallen short of the truth, yea, have even contradicted the truth directly, I am thankful in my heart that we have an iron rod to which we can cling—the iron rod of revealed truth. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints welcomes all truth, but it distinguishes most carefully between fact and fancy, between truth and theory, between premises and deductions, and it is willing to leave some questions in abeyance until the Lord in his wisdom shall see fit to speak more plainly.<sup>305</sup>

### **The Physical Nature and Image of Father and Son**

What does God look like? In an attempt to reverently address that question, James E. Talmage referred to the account of the Creation found in the Holy Bible. “And God said, Let us make man in *our image*, after *our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26, emphasis added). Later, in reference to Adam and his son Seth, the scriptures say, “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in the own *likeness*, after his *image*; and called his name Seth” (Genesis 5:3, emphasis added). The LDS Apostle rejected the idea that this referred solely to the spiritual part of men and women. He taught that it was the physical form that the author of Genesis was referring to when quoting the divine dialogue.

Talmage pointed out that the Hebrew words for “image” and “likeness” in both Genesis 1:26 and 5:3 are the same.<sup>306</sup> He summarized, “It is therefore consistent to hold that they have one and the same meaning. Such also is the original of ‘image’ as

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<sup>305</sup> Talmage, Conference Report, October 1916, 75.

<sup>306</sup> The word “image” in both verses is *tselem*, meaning “a replica” or “statue.” The word for “likeness” is *d<sup>e</sup>muwth*. “The word means ‘pattern,’ in the sense that the specifications from which an actual item is made,” and “‘shape’ or ‘form,’ the thing(s) made after a given pattern.” (See James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

descriptive of the golden effigy set up by Nebuchadnezzar, and of other uses of the term as applied to idols.”<sup>307</sup> Talmage felt that because man is in the image and likeness of God, God must look like man in shape and form.

Talmage asserted that not only do the Father and the Son both look like men (or, better said, that men look like the Father and the Son), but they also have “immortalized [bodies] of flesh and bones.” Latter-day Saint scripture reads, “When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves” (D&C 130:1). As Jehovah, Christ did not possess a physical body, this being the only “essential difference between the Father and the Son [before Christ came to earth, died and was resurrected] . . . Through His death and subsequent resurrection Jesus the Christ is today a Being like unto the Father in all essential characteristics.”<sup>308</sup>

After the resurrection of Christ the eleven remaining Apostles gathered together with a few of the faithful disciples, the Master “appeared in the midst of them” (Luke 24:36; see also John 20:26-31). Thomas was given the chance to touch and feel for himself the wounds in the Savior’s hands and feet, just as he said he would require in order to believe the others. Then the Lord asked for something to eat. He was given fish and honeycomb and He ate them. This was “to further assure them that He was no shadowy form, no immaterial being of tenuous substance, but a living Personage with bodily organs internal as well as outward.”<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks*, 19.

<sup>308</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 36.

<sup>309</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 639.

## **The Foreknowledge of God**

Elder Talmage feared that many of God's children lived "relatively Godless lives."<sup>310</sup> He assured the members of the Church that God's hand was in their lives. All they needed to do was to reach after Him. Rather than reaching for Him, however, many people on the earth forget all that He has done for us. The Apostle John wrote, "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). The Father made the ultimate sacrifice so that the rest of His children would have the opportunity to return to live with Him.

In addition to the love that God feels for His children on earth, Elder Talmage described His other characteristics. Terms such as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent have been used to describe God for centuries and were not original to Talmage. His descriptions of those attributes are important to the Latter-day Saints today because they assist in coming to know God and ultimately in worshipping Him.

The omniscience of God has to do with the fact that He has an infinite knowledge of things, from beginning to end. "All things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord" (D&C 130:7). While many people understand that God has knowledge of all things, some have been misled and thus assumed that men and women are not accountable for their sins. Some assume that because God has a foreknowledge of all things that He must determine the outcome of all things. Elder Talmage pointed out several times that just because God knows, does not mean that He can be held responsible. "It is not fair to blame the Lord . . . It is most

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<sup>310</sup> Talmage, Conference Report, October 1914, 100-101.

irrational and illogical so to do. He, with his omniscience, knows what is to come to individuals and nations, and he gives warnings. Many of us take that warning to be an expression of divine determination to punish and to afflict.”<sup>311</sup> Such people would place the guilt of their sins at the feet of God.

This line of reasoning, Talmage affirmed by analogy, is like holding a father who has spent considerable amounts of time with each of his children—so much that he knows them inside and out. He knows them so well that, given certain circumstances and settings, the father knows beforehand what choices the child will make. That father might see in a child’s future the painful consequences of the decisions that the child has made, but to say that the father is accountable for those consequences, or even worse, determined that his child would suffer said consequences, is absurd. “To reason otherwise would be to say that a neglectful father, who takes not the trouble to study the nature and character of his son, who shuts his eyes to sinful tendencies, and rests in careless indifference as to the probable future, will by his very heartlessness be benefiting his child, because his lack of forethought cannot operate as a contributory cause to dereliction.”<sup>312</sup> Ultimately, Elder Talmage reminded the Latter-day Saints, God is not a God of vengeance, but a God of love.<sup>313</sup>

### **Eternal and Created**

James Talmage opened his masterwork on the life of Jesus Christ with the following: “We affirm, on the authority of Holy Scripture, that the Being who is known among men as Jesus of Nazareth, and by all who acknowledge His Godhood as Jesus the

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<sup>311</sup> Talmage, Conference Report, April 1933, 109.

<sup>312</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 27 n. 1.

<sup>313</sup> Talmage, Conference Report, April 1933, 109-110.

Christ, existed with the Father prior to birth in the flesh; and that in the preexistent state He was chosen and ordained to be the one and only Savior and Redeemer of the human race.”<sup>314</sup>

Much of the argument surrounding the discussion of God in the third, fourth and fifth centuries revolved around the fact that the Word of God existed before the world was created. Augustine and others since him used John 1:1-2 to establish the fact that Christ had been co-divine, or co-eternal, with the Father. James E. Talmage at the very beginning of *Jesus the Christ* affirmed that LDS theology also held that Christ antedated the creation of the world and its inhabitants. In fact, the entire first chapter of *Jesus the Christ* is dedicated to scriptural evidences and discussion on that important truth.<sup>315</sup>

Talmage referenced many of the same scriptures that the theologians had relied upon centuries before him. Christ declared His own premortal authority in the statement to the Jews about their father Abraham. Christ said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58), or, as Elder Talmage rendered it, “Before Abraham, was I AM.”<sup>316</sup> Since Abraham lived almost two thousand years before Christ, the seniority that Christ is referring to must have been based on some position that was held in a time that predated mortality.<sup>317</sup>

In reference to John 1:1, Talmage wrote that it was “simple, precise and unambiguous.” This scripture alone affirms the fact that Christ existed at a time antecedent to the earliest of human life on this earth. It also declares that not only was

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<sup>314</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 6.

<sup>315</sup> Among some of the Biblical scriptures that Elder Talmage relied upon as evidence for his statement “on authority of Holy Scripture” were: Revelation 12:4, 7-9; John 1:1-3; and 1 John 1:1-3. Specifically LDS scripture also declares Christ’s existence before His incarnation in the flesh (i.e. Moses 1:32-33; D&C 93:1-17, 21).

<sup>316</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*,

<sup>317</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 11.

Christ with the Father but He was also “invested with powers and rank of Godship, and that He [as a God] came into the world and dwelt among men.”<sup>318</sup>

Elder Talmage viewed the birth of Christ as a miracle, “not a miracle in the sense of a happening contrary to nature’s law, nevertheless a miracle through the operation of higher law, such as the human mind ordinarily fails to comprehend or regard as possible.”<sup>319</sup> The merging of the divine and the mortal to create a tabernacle of flesh that would house the divine spirit of Jehovah would allow Him to perform the necessary work in behalf of humankind. This union of manhood and godhood in Jesus Christ was required for that work. The LDS General Authority taught that Christ would have both mortal and immortal capabilities: the mortal capability to die, which would be required for His atoning sacrifice, as well as the powers of Godhood and the ability to take up His life again and perform the resurrection.<sup>320</sup>

Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God, both in body and spirit. Just as every man and woman is either a spirit son or spirit daughter of God, so Jesus Christ is as well. Christ on the other hand is the Only Begotten in the flesh. He shared those attributes of immortality with His Father. On the other hand, from his mortal mother He inherited mortality, the capacity to know human thirst, fatigue, pain and death. Thus throughout scripture, Christ declared that no man had the power to take His life, but rather He would lay it down voluntarily (see John 10:17).<sup>321</sup>

Talmage pointed to the experience of Mary and Joseph’s trip to Jerusalem for the Passover when Jesus the twelve year-old boy got left behind as an occasion when Jesus

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<sup>318</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 9-10.

<sup>319</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 76.

<sup>320</sup> See Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 77.

<sup>321</sup> See Talmage, Conference Report, April 1915, 122.



reminded his mother of the special relationship He shared with Elohim. Mary and Joseph left Jesus in Jerusalem and started on their journey home. When they realized that Jesus was not with the rest of the group they were traveling with, they returned to Jerusalem to search for the boy. They found Him in the Temple in discussions with learned men. Mary asked, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing” (Luke 2:48).

“How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). Talmage pointed out that Jesus’ Father had not been seeking Him. His Father knew exactly where He had been and what He had been doing. Christ recognized even at that young age that His Father was the God of Heaven, not Joseph the carpenter.<sup>322</sup>

### **Christ as Creator**

Through the use of scriptures, Talmage taught that Christ was the Creator of the world and all things that are in it.<sup>323</sup> Sine John clearly stated that the Word, or Jehovah created all things, then what was the role of the Eternal Father? Elder Talmage believed that the Word of God was just that, His word: whatever the Father spoke, the Son carried out.<sup>324</sup>

The role of Jesus Christ as Creator is plainly set forth in the words of ancient prophets and apostles. Isaiah wrote, “Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things” (Isaiah 44:24). Paul wrote, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God”

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<sup>322</sup> See Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 108-09.

<sup>323</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 30.

<sup>324</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 31.

(Hebrews 11:3). One Book of Mormon prophet, Samuel, declared, “And also [I have been sent to preach to you] that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, [who is] the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning” (Helaman 14:12).

Although Christ can be referred to appropriately as the “Father and Creator of heaven and earth,” it is still evident that Elohim, the Eternal Father was involved. Other scriptures record that God “created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9) and “God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . . by whom [Christ] also [God the Father] made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Talmage explained, “It is evident that before His embodiment in the flesh, the Being known to us as Jesus Christ received from the Father power and authority to organize the elements and frame the world whereon the spirit-children of God should receive the training and experiences incident to earth-life.”<sup>325</sup>

### **A Redeemer for Mankind**

The doctrine of the Atonement is the one common thread that ties Christian faiths together. While they may each have differing views regarding manner or method, the fact that Christ paid for the sins of humankind while in Gethsemane and/or on Calvary causes every professing Christian to look to the Savior Jesus Christ with awe and appreciation. Talmage saw that transcendent act as proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ. He wrote, “The doctrine of the atonement comprises proof of the divinity of Christ’s earthly ministry, and the vicarious nature of His death as a foreordained and voluntary sacrifice,

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<sup>325</sup> Talmage, *Sunday Night Talks*, 43.

intended for and efficacious as a propitiation for the sins of mankind, thus becoming the means whereby salvation may be secured.”<sup>326</sup>

LDS teachings agree with the ancient writings of ancient apostles regarding the existence of Christ before the world was created. They also agree with other Christian faiths that every man and woman is dependent on the divine Redeemer. “Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer” (1 Nephi 10:6). “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19). “For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, *not a sacrifice of man*, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall *not be a human sacrifice*; but it must be an *infinite and eternal sacrifice*” (Alma 34:10, emphasis added).

Jesus Christ was the first man on earth, since Adam left the Garden of Eden, not to be born of two mortal parents. Because of His parents, Christ had within Him the powers to suffer for the sins of mankind, die an ignominious and tortuous death and then, after three days in the realm of the dead, take his body back from the tomb. Elder Talmage asked, “How else can we explain his own declaration that he had life in himself?”<sup>327</sup> The Savior said, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17-18).

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<sup>326</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 67.

<sup>327</sup> Talmage, Conference Report, April 1928, 94-95.

James Talmage wrote that there had to be a “means of redemption” provided to men and women who were in a hopeless state.<sup>328</sup> Adam’s transgression in the Garden of Eden is viewed in LDS doctrine as a necessary step forward in God’s plan to exalt His children and bring them back to His presence.<sup>329</sup> That step moved them closer to returning to the Father’s presence through introducing the need for the atoning assistance of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Talmage taught that the Fall of Adam brought the death of the spirit (separation of man from God) and also the death of the physical body (separation of man’s spirit from man’s body). “The atonement wrought by Jesus the Christ was ordained to overcome death and to provide a means of ransom from the power of Satan.”<sup>330</sup> Just as the sin of one man had allowed these two deaths to haunt mankind, it would be through the efforts of one being that would free mankind from their evil consequences (see Romans 5:12-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

Like theologians before him, Elder Talmage tried to explain his faith on evidences found in the natural world. He compared the journey of man from mortality to immortality to something from the “vegetable kingdom.” He wrote that a “plant is unable to advance its own tissue to the animal plane [a plane above that of its own] . . . the substance of the plant may become part of the animal organism only as the latter reaches

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<sup>328</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 16.

<sup>329</sup> Orson F. Whitney, a general authority for the LDS Church wrote, “The Fall had a two-fold direction—downward but forward.” (Matthias F. Cowley, ed., *Cowley & Whitney on Doctrine*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963], 287). More recently, Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said, “[Adam and Eve] could not fulfill the Father’s first commandment without transgressing the barrier between the bliss of the Garden of Eden and the terrible trials and wonderful opportunities of mortal life” (Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, November 1993 [Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1993], 73).

<sup>330</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 26.

down from its higher plane and by its own vital action incorporates the vegetable compounds with itself.”<sup>331</sup>

He then made this connection:

So, for the advancement of man from his present fallen and relatively degenerate state to the high condition of spiritual life, a power above his own must cooperate. Through the operation of the laws obtaining in the higher kingdom man may be reached and lifted; himself he cannot save by his own unaided effort. A Redeemer and Savior of mankind is beyond all question essential to the realization of the plan of the Eternal Father . . . and that Redeemer and Savior is Jesus the Christ, beside whom there is and can be none other.<sup>332</sup>

Talmage viewed the atonement as bringing man back to a presence that man had once been privileged to occupy: the presence of God. “The structure of the word in its present form is suggestive of the true meaning; it is literally *at-one-ment*, ‘denoting reconciliation, or the bringing into agreement of those who have been estranged.’ And such is the significance of the saving sacrifice of the Redeemer, whereby He expiated the transgression of the fall.”<sup>333</sup>

### **The Expedient Resurrection**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was by James Talmage as the scriptures and early Apostles of Jesus Christ taught it. LDS scripture teaches, “And if Christ had not risen *from the dead*, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection” (Mosiah 16:7, emphasis added). The early Apostles testified to the Jewish leaders, “But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And *killed the Prince of life*, whom God hath *raised from the dead*; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts

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<sup>331</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 26.

<sup>332</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 26-27.

<sup>333</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 68.

3:14-15, emphasis added).

As the Savior of all humankind hung on the cross, there was a moment when He was alone. This, according to Talmage, was to allow the Son the complete victory over death and hell. “It seems, that in addition to the fearful suffering incident to crucifixion, the agony of Gethsemane had recurred, intensified beyond human power to endure. In that bitterest hour the dying Christ was alone, alone in most terrible reality. That the supreme sacrifice of the Son might be consummated in all its fullness, the Father seems to have withdrawn the support of His immediate Presence, leaving to the Savior of men the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death.”<sup>334</sup> With the words, “It is finished; they will is done”<sup>335</sup> the Redeemer died. He had not been killed or murdered, as those words suggest some degree of force. There was no force that could have taken the life of the Lord Omnipotent without His voluntary consent. He lived until everything was in order for the salvation of men and women. When the Father’s will was completely satisfied, Jesus permitted Himself to die. The debt was paid.

When Christ died on the cross, He died. His spirit left His body and spent three days in the world of the spirits (see 1 Peter 3:18-19). Elder Talmage rejected some of the analogies tied with the Easter season that were meant to represent the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He felt that to use an egg or the budding branches of trees as a symbol of Christ’s resurrection failed to recognize an important truth. An egg that hatches was never dead. A tree whose branches bring forth leaves was always alive. Christ had not been in a comma, trance or anything of the kind. His resurrection was “absolutely

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<sup>334</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 613-614.

<sup>335</sup> The Joseph Smith Translation adds this phrase to Matthew 27:50. See *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 313.

literal.”<sup>336</sup> “Jesus died upon the cross. His spirit was literally and actually separated from His body,” declared Elder Talmage. He was dead, and now He lives.<sup>337</sup>

The resurrection and the atonement are vital and irreplaceable. Talmage called the Atonement the “greatest miracle and the most glorious fact of history.”<sup>338</sup> The Church has always taught both were literal events and were, above all others, the most important events in the history of the world. Elder Talmage taught that not only did Jesus Christ resurrect with a perfect body of flesh and bone, but that He would return with that same perfect, immortalized body that the Apostles witnessed in the old world as He ascended to Heaven. “This Church proclaims the doctrine of the impending return of the Christ to earth in literal simplicity, without mental or other reservation in our interpretation of the scriptural predictions. He will come with the body of flesh and bones in which His Spirit was tabernacled when He ascended from Mount Olivet.”<sup>339</sup>

### **Talmage on the Personage of the Holy Ghost**

Unlike the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit. He is not housed in a body of flesh, thus allowing Him to “dwell in us” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). It is through the Holy Ghost that God is constantly in communion with all things, thus allowing him to be omnipresent, despite the location limitations of a physical body with its “definite proportions and therefore . . . limited extension in space.”<sup>340</sup> Even though he is a personage of spirit, the Holy Ghost is able to take on “the form and figure

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<sup>336</sup> Talmage, Conference Report, April 1928, 95.

<sup>337</sup> See Talmage, Conference Report, April 1912, 125.

<sup>338</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 649.

<sup>339</sup> Talmage, Conference Report, October 1916, 126.

<sup>340</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 39.

of man.”<sup>341</sup> The actual personage of the Holy Ghost, like God the Father, may also only be in one place at one time even though His influence and power may operate on multiple people at the same time even if they are on opposite sides of the world from each other.<sup>342</sup>

Despite His titles of Holy Ghost, Spirit of the Lord, or just Spirit, the Holy Spirit is a “being endowed with the attributes and powers of Deity, and not a mere force, or essence.” Some of the duties of the Holy Ghost include testifying of the Father and the Son and making intercession for sinners (see John 16:8). He also speaks, commands and commissions in behalf of the Father and the Son. He teaches, guides, and entices. He grieves, reminds and chastises. Each of these duties is carried out in perfect harmony with the will and desire of the Father and the Son. Ultimately, James Talmage saw the Holy Ghost as the “minister of the Godhead, carrying into effect the decision of the Supreme Council.”<sup>343</sup>

Dr. Talmage wrote that the Holy Ghost serves men and women by enlightening and ennobling their minds, purifying and sanctifying their souls, inciting them to good deeds and revealing the things of God.<sup>344</sup> These seem very similar to the duties of the Holy Ghost as witnessed by the Apostle John. John taught that the Holy Ghost teaches, reminds, testifies, reproves, guides, reveals, and glorifies (see John 14:26; 15:26; and 16:8, 13-14).

The forces of nature and the laws common to man follow the direction of the Holy Ghost. Laws such as gravity, electrical currents, and others are all the “servants of the Holy Ghost in His operations.” Each of these laws operates under the order of the

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<sup>341</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 144.

<sup>342</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 145.

<sup>343</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 144-145.

<sup>344</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 167.



Holy Ghost because of His place in the Godhead and His divine attributes. This is because the Holy Ghost is the emissary of the Father and the Son; thus the Father and the Son authorize or send the Holy Ghost to do their bidding.

Perhaps even more mysterious than the Holy Ghost's ability to control the natural forces is His work with the hearts and minds of men and women throughout the world. It is through the Holy Ghost that men and women are prepared for the blessings of the Atonement. The Spirit of God assists them in removing the obstacles that block spiritual conduits connecting them to divine communications and blessings. As those obstacles are removed, the soul becomes more pure and is brought into contact with the higher powers of heaven that can forgive and overcome sin and death. His role in the Godhead is to reveal such things are required for men and women to advance in spirituality.<sup>345</sup>

Not only does the Holy Spirit reveal those things that humankind needs in order to receive blessings of heaven, but He also warns against things that might impede our progress. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit men and women are given the gift of discernment to help identify good and evil (see Isaiah 5:20). Elder Talmage said, "We need the power of discernment. We need the inspiration of the Lord, that we may know the spirits with whom we have to deal, and recognize those who are speaking and acting under the influence of heaven, and those who are the emissaries of hell."<sup>346</sup>

The Savior expressed the vital role of the Spirit in the salvation of humankind when He met with Nicodemus (see John 3:1-5). The Savior told the Jewish leader that baptism in water was not enough to grant a person's entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

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<sup>345</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 146-147.

<sup>346</sup> Talmage, Conference Report, April 1931, 27.

An additional baptism was required, one of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier—He burns dross and evil out of the human soul as though by fire.<sup>347</sup>

In addition to sanctifying the soul, the Holy Ghost is also responsible for revelatory communication between God and His children. The Lord said, “Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, *by the Holy Ghost*, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (D&C 8:2, emphasis added). Some things cannot be effectively taught with the limitations of the human senses. Seeing is not always believing, and neither is hearing, touching, or smelling. The influence with the Holy Spirit enlightens the spiritual eyes and instructs the minds of men and women in a way that is more powerful; more indelible, more clear.<sup>348</sup> That kind of instruction only comes “through close association with God and His Spirit.”<sup>349</sup>

## **Conclusion**

James E. Talmage taught the Latter-day Saints and brought even greater clarity to Restoration doctrine at a time when they needed clarification on very important doctrines. At times those teachings were given of his own volition. At other times, however, he was specifically chosen by the leaders of the Church to address specific topics such as the case with the publication of *Jesus the Christ* and *Articles of Faith*. Church leaders were very aware of the needs and problems facing the members of the Church at that time. James Edward Talmage was chosen by the leaders of the LDS Church to address the misunderstandings regarding the Godhead in his day, and as a result, almost 100 years

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<sup>347</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 147.

<sup>348</sup> See Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 147.

<sup>349</sup> Robert L. Millet, “Ministry of the Holy Ghost,” in *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet*, 199.

later, members of the Church still rely on his teachings, sometimes without even knowing it.

## Chapter Five

### Further Illustrations of His Impact

Frank Fox referred to James E. Talmage as the “lion of Mormon intelligentsia.”<sup>350</sup> The purpose of the previous chapter was to clearly set forth some of Elder Talmage’s teachings on the topic the Godhead. James Talmage, at the request of the First Presidency, wrote about key principles of the gospel for Latter-day Saints in the early twentieth century. This chapter will point out Elder Talmage’s influence in the current Latter-day Saint teachings. The challenge is to state accurately Elder Talmage’s influence without overstating the case. To do so would be just as inappropriate as stating that his writings and teachings have no impact on the Church today. It is necessary to recognize the difference between a theological “loose canon” and well-equipped instrument.

When considering the previous chapter, it is relatively impossible to ignore the fact that James Talmage had a major role in the explanation of doctrinal issues of his day. One cannot study the journals of Elder Talmage without seeing reverence and respect for men like Joseph Smith and Brigham Young as well as their teachings. There are those, however, that see Talmage as being the force that created an intellectual tradition within Mormonism.<sup>351</sup> Such exaggerations, however, only show a lack of understanding of the

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<sup>350</sup> Frank W. Fox, *J. Reuben Clark: The Public Years*, ed. David H. Yarn, Jr. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 12.

<sup>351</sup> See Kurt Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 2000), 7. It should be noted that I disagree with the conclusion of Widmer’s book that James Talmage gave birth to a “new Mormonism.” While Elder Talmage did play an important role in the defining of LDS Christology, his role was certainly not as an originator of doctrinal positions. However, Widmer is not alone in teaching that Mormonism started mainstream Trinitarian perspective and the Elder Talmage is responsible for

man and his Church. Such claims simply fail to recognize Talmage's role as an instrument in the hands of the First Presidency.

### **What Did Mormons Believe?**

In the early history of the LDS Church it may have been easier to identify what Mormons did not believe rather than what they did believe.<sup>352</sup> This is not unique to the Latter-day Saints. Chapter three of this work established that the same could be said of Christianity in the early fourth and fifth centuries. Throughout Christian history, theologians have reached their understanding through a process of eliminating false teachings and heresy. What was left became the accepted doctrine. The history of the Latter-day Saint theology is similar.

The first heavenly revelation in the Church's history was Joseph Smith's "First Vision." In a grove of trees in Palmyra, New York, the young 14 year-old Joseph Smith offered a prayer to ask which of the denominations in his area he should join. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, revealed themselves to the young Joseph Smith. He was surprised to learn that the creeds of the other faiths were unacceptable to the Lord and that he was to join none of them (see Joseph Smith--History 1:15-19). As He left the grove, he did not know what Church to join, but he knew which Churches not to join. And so that process continued one revelation at a time.

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completing the change away from that with a view of God. For other views that Joseph Smith began his ministry as a Trinitarian see Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," *Sunstone* 5 (July-August 1980), 25; Boyd Kirkland, "Jehovah as Father," *Sunstone* (Autumn 1984), 37. See also Robert L. Millet, "The Ministry of the Father and the Son," and Van Hale, "Defining the Mormon Doctrine of Deity," *Sunstone* 10 (1985), for arguments that Joseph never taught Trinitarian doctrine.

<sup>352</sup> Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 21.

Certainly as one begins to explore the beliefs of early Latter-day Saints, there is a migration from mainstream Protestant, and even some Arminian beliefs to the current LDS view of God. This can be attributed to the fact that the early Mormon Church was simply that: the *early* Mormon Church. The integration of people from different belief systems, some with Calvinist backgrounds and others Arminian, came together to form one new religion. At times the Arminian, Calvinist or other belief systems manifested themselves in the teachings of some of the LDS leaders and members. This fact is magnified because there were no professional clergy and no seminaries to train those who were asked to be the leaders. There is no way to whitewash a convert's way of thinking at baptism. Therefore, when these early converts came from their various religious backgrounds they maintained previous religious views.

Leman Copely was an example of such a member. In March of 1831 Joseph Smith wrote, "At about this time came Leman Copely, one of the sect called Shaking Quakers, and embraced the fulness of the everlasting Gospel, apparently honest-hearted, but still retaining the idea that the Shakers were right in some particulars of their faith."<sup>353</sup> He was corrected by the Prophet Joseph Smith for maintaining beliefs that were not in line with the teachings of the LDS Church. Leman was reprov'd on matters such as the Savior's second coming, baptism and eating habits (see D&C 49).<sup>354</sup> This is only one example of how a convert maintained his beliefs after baptism until the Lord addressed the issue through revelation to His prophet.

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<sup>353</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* 1:167.

<sup>354</sup> The Shakers, or the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, originated in England in the 1700s. Ann Lee became the leader of the group sometime around 1744. They professed that the Savior of men first appeared as Jesus Christ and then a second time in the form of Ann Lee. In addition to their beliefs that the second coming of the Savior had occurred, it was believed that there was no need for baptism, that eating pork was a sin, and denied the doctrines of "trinity, vicarious atonement, and resurrection of the flesh" (see Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, *A commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 4 vol. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000], 90-91.

The Latter-day Saint leaders have never taught that their teachings encompassed all that God would ever teach His children. In fact, Joseph Smith wrote, “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that *He will yet reveal* many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9, emphasis added). The process of divine instruction operates through the principle of “a little here and a little there.” Although the Prophet Joseph Smith was introduced to God and the Son as separate beings during his first vision in 1820, it should not surprise scholars to discover a gradual unfolding in the theological understanding of Joseph Smith from 1820 to 1844. It is one thing to experience an event, and an entirely different thing to totally comprehend its meaning. As James Talmage explained, Latter-day Saints believe in an open canon, and look forward to greater enlightenment in the future:

In view of the demonstrated facts that revelation between God and man has ever been and is a characteristic of the Church of Jesus Christ, it is reasonable to await with confident expectation the coming of other messages from heaven, even until the end of man’s probation on earth. The Church is, and shall continue to be, as truly founded on the rock of revelation as it was in the day of Christ’s prophetic blessing upon Peter, who through this gift of God was able to testify of his Lord’s divinity. Current revelation is equally plain with that of former days in predicting the yet future manifestations of God through this appointed channel. The canon of scripture is still open; many lines, many precepts, are yet to be added; revelation, surpassing in importance and glorious fullness any that has been recorded, is yet to be given to the Church and declared to the world.<sup>355</sup>

The Book of Mormon not only teaches progression of understanding but explains how that progression takes place and what limitations the Lord has placed on obtaining such understanding. Alma, a prophet in the Book of Mormon, taught, “It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the

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<sup>355</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 231-32.

word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full” (Alma 12:10-11). Thus, some men are given knowledge while others have it hidden from them due to lack of spiritual preparedness. As men humble themselves and live according to what God has already given them, and thus prepare themselves spiritually, they are given more and more knowledge of God’s plan.

Another example of gradual unfolding in doctrinal understanding is Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Through a vision in February 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon learned truths about the life to come that completely contradicted what had previously been taught regarding two states hereafter—heaven and hell. Joseph learned that rather than just one heaven and one hell, there would be three major degrees of glory for the children of God. Those who attained the highest of the three, or the Celestial Kingdom, will be “made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant,” and will “dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever” (see D&C 76:62, 69).

This change in doctrine was not easy for all the members of the Church. Brigham Young said, “It was a new doctrine to this generation, and many stumbled at it.”<sup>356</sup> He later commented, “My traditions were such, that when the Vision [Section 76] came first to me, it was directly contrary and opposed to my former education. I said, Wait a little. I did not reject it; but I could not understand it.” With time, Brigham said that it was “one of the best doctrines ever proclaimed to any people.”<sup>357</sup> Joseph knew that many of the Saints did not accept change especially well. He wrote, “There has been great difficulty

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<sup>356</sup> Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 391.

<sup>357</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 6:281.



getting anything into the heads of this generation. Even the Saints are slow to understand. I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the word of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions.”<sup>358</sup>

As the Church grew, past theological misunderstandings were corrected and confusion was clarified. This took place over decades of learning “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30). Talmage built upon an existing foundation of truth that had been laid by previous LDS leaders. Certain speculations had to be cleared up and errors corrected, but, in the words of another Mormon prophet, such errors “[were] the mistakes of men” (Book of Mormon Title Page). Brigham Young said, “The revelations of God contain correct doctrine and principles, so far as they go; but it is impossible for the poor, weak, low, groveling, sinful inhabitants of the earth to receive a revelation from the Almighty in all its perfections. He has to speak to us in a manner to meet the extent of our capacities.”<sup>359</sup>

James Talmage declared that the Church believed all that had been revealed about Jesus Christ in centuries past—at least all that had been revealed through proper channels, meaning the prophets and Apostles. However, neither the Church nor Christ was restricted to only that revealed truth. It was conceivable within the parameters of Church government, within its established doctrine that more information could be received. In fact, members of the Church should have expected it. The Prophet and President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can, according to established scripture,

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<sup>358</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:184-185.

<sup>359</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 2:314.

receive further revelation to increase the understanding of the Saints.<sup>360</sup> James Talmage never saw himself as revealing new truths or establishing new doctrines for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>361</sup> That was the role of the prophet. Talmage had gifts and talents, however, which enabled him to speak and write in such a manner that important topics, according to the words of past and current prophets, were clarified for members of his Church.

### **Elder Talmage and “The Father and the Son”**

As early as 1905, James Talmage received written requests from the First Presidency to publish in book form the lectures on the life of Christ that he was then delivering at the University Sunday School.<sup>362</sup> However, the project never really received much attention. Then in 1914, Elder Talmage was called into the office of the First Presidency to discuss completing the project that had been suggested nine years earlier. In September of the same year, Elder Talmage was asked to prepare the proposed book “with as little delay as possible.”<sup>363</sup>

The First Presidency was very involved during the writing process. As Elder Talmage finished chapters he read them aloud to the First Presidency and selected members of the Twelve Apostles to seek their feedback and approval.<sup>364</sup> To assist him in his labors, Elder Talmage was assigned a room in the Salt Lake Temple where he could write without any interruptions.

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<sup>360</sup> James E. Talmage, Conference Report, October 1916,

<sup>361</sup> [The book *Jesus the Christ*] presents . . . the writer’s personal belief and profoundest conviction as to the truth of what he has written” (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, iv).

<sup>362</sup> Talmage Journals, August 9, 1905.

<sup>363</sup> Talmage Journals, September 14, 1914.

<sup>364</sup> See Talmage Journals, November 9, 1914.

Myths have circulated regarding Elder Talmage's experiences during this time. For example some have suggested that Elder Talmage never left the Temple while writing *Jesus the Christ*, and that Jesus Christ Himself visited Elder Talmage in the Temple to accept and approve of his book. In fact, Elder Talmage went home every night after working on the book, although he arrived home late. His son remembered being allowed to stay up late and wait for his father's arrival and eat a late dinner with him. The sacred nature of the topic of the book weighed heavily on Talmage. He mentioned to his secretary, after its completion, that he felt it had been a great responsibility and burden.<sup>365</sup>

Talmage finished the writing in April 1915, only seven months after the actual writing began. Upon completion, Elder Talmage recorded:

Finished the actual writing on the book 'Jesus the Christ', to which I have devoted every spare hour since settling down to the work of composition on September 14<sup>th</sup> last. Had it not been that I was privileged to do this work in the Temple it would be at present far from completion. I have felt the inspiration of the place and have appreciated the privacy and quietness incident thereto. I hope to proceed with the work of revision without delay.<sup>366</sup>

Although he had written both *Jesus the Christ* and *Articles of Faith* and despite the First Presidency's requests that all members of the Church study them, confusion still existed among the members of the LDS Church regarding the Godhead. Even in 1916, the First Presidency continued to receive letters requesting clarification on doctrinal matters related to the Godhead. If the leaders of the Church had hoped that Talmage's books would resolve the doctrinal confusion, their hope was in vain.

In response to these questions the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a major doctrinal statement on June 30, 1916. The document was titled,

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<sup>365</sup> In a recorded interview with Helga Augusta Elizabeth Pedersen Tingey in Orem, Utah, 1976, in James E. Talmage Collection, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives, folder 168.

<sup>366</sup> Talmage Journals, April 19, 1915.

“The Father and the Son.”<sup>367</sup> This document is still referred to today in defining the relationship between God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ as well as Christ’s role as Father in relation to men and women’s salvation. Many of the important declarations set forth in the document had already been set forth in Talmage’s books.

Elder Talmage’s journals mention several exclusive discussions with the First Presidency leading up to June 30. Nevertheless, there are no explanations regarding a topic to most of them. On Wednesday, April 26, for example, Talmage recorded, “Had an important consultation with the First Presidency.”<sup>368</sup> Yet he never mentions why it was important. He then took a trip to the east on Church business. When he returned, he wrote, ““Had an extended interview with the First Presidency and made a fairly full report of my recent journey.” Two days later he commented, “Yesterday and today I have been engaged in the President’s office a good portion of the time.”<sup>369</sup> Then a week later he mentioned why he has been meeting with President Joseph F. Smith. “I . . . had an interview with the First Presidency and presented to them an outline for proposed publication relating to the status of Jesus Christ as both the Father and the Son.”<sup>370</sup>

The fact that Elder Talmage was asked to write the document should not be a surprise. According to James R. Clark, the minutes of the First Presidency meetings do not even mention the document.<sup>371</sup> That may suggest that the topic was not being discussed in their formal meetings, rather, it was being discussed in personally with Elder Talmage. Additionally, President Joseph F. Smith had used the pen of James Talmage to

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<sup>367</sup> See the document in its entirety in Appendix II.

<sup>368</sup> Talmage Journals, May 11, 1916.

<sup>369</sup> Talmage Journals, June 12 and 14, 1916.

<sup>370</sup> Talmage Journals, June 23, 1916.

<sup>371</sup> James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vol. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 5:24-26

write on heated topics before. Talmage was the instrument through which a previous landmark doctrinal declaration was made in 1909. Dr. Talmage recorded in his journals that he met with the First Presidency to discuss the publication of a document titled “The Origin of Man.”<sup>372</sup> Dr. Talmage was not even a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at the time and yet “The Origin of Man” was a major doctrinal statement that addressed, to some extent, the heated topic of organic evolution.

The document itself references Talmage’s *Jesus the Christ* in regard to Christ’s role as the Creator of heaven and earth. Also, there is at least one phrase that is used in the document seems to be uniquely used by James Talmage in writing as well as speaking. The official declaration stated that the Being “whom we designate by the exalted name-title ‘Elohim,’ is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior.” James Talmage wrote in *Jesus the Christ*, “*Elohim*, as understood and used in the restored Church of Jesus Christ, is the *name-title* of God the Eternal Father, whose firstborn Son in the spirit is *Jehovah*.”<sup>373</sup> The phrase has been used only one time in over 300 general conferences of the Church, and that was in 1922 by Elder James E. Talmage. In that instance, however, he was referring to the title of the Church.

“The Father and the Son” has played a fundamental role in clarifying the Latter-day Saint thought regarding the Godhead. Perhaps the document’s greatest contribution at the time was the clarification of titles as given to the first two members of the Godhead—God the Eternal Father and His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, Jesus Christ. The leaders of the Church established with certainty the distinction between the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ. They clarified that “God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by

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<sup>372</sup> See Talmage Journals, November 1909.

<sup>373</sup> Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 35, emphasis added.

the exalted name-title ‘Elohim,’ is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race.”<sup>374</sup> Thus the Savior’s command to pray to our “Father in Heaven” (see Matthew 6:9 or 3 Nephi 13:9). Men and women share the claim with Christ that Elohim is the Father of their spirits.

There is, however, a major difference between mortals born into the world to two mortal parents and the Son of God. The First Presidency declared that Christ is the Son of God both spiritually and physically; “that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh . . . No extended explanation of the title ‘Son of God’ as applied to Jesus Christ appears necessary.”<sup>375</sup> Christ is referred to as the Firstborn because of his position among the spirit children of our Heavenly Father, Elohim. Thus, it is not inappropriate to refer to Christ as the Elder Brother of the human race. His title, “Only Begotten” is granted, however, because of His being the only Child literally begotten “after the manner of the flesh” (1 Nephi 11:18). Not only is Elohim the Father of Christ’s spirit, but the “body [that] died on the cross and was afterward taken up by the process of resurrection, and is now the immortalized tabernacle of the eternal spirit of our Lord and Savior.”<sup>376</sup>

Jesus Christ was a member of the Godhead before His birth, and He was known to the ancient Israelites as Jehovah. “Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ, [is also] the Son of Elohim.” Here the line is again established between God the Father and God the Son. This was clearly, and quickly, explained in the 1916 document. The remainder of the

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<sup>374</sup> First Presidency, “The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve”, as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 420-25, hereafter cited as “The Father and the Son.”

<sup>375</sup> “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 421. James Talmage added the entire document to the appendix of *Articles of Faith* in 1924 with the 12<sup>th</sup> printing of the book.

<sup>376</sup> “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 421.

declaration dealt with another title confusion. If Christ was not Elohim, then why did the Book of Mormon refer to both Christ and Elohim as “Father?”

As Talmage noted in his journal, the main purpose of the document was to explain the “status of Jesus Christ as both the Father and the Son.” There are multiple references to Christ in the Book of Mormon as “the Father” (see Mosiah 3:8; 7:27; and 16:27). Some today have commented on the Book of Mormon’s Trinitarian-like language.<sup>377</sup> Such verses, along with various speculations on the nature of the Godhead at that time, may have created questions in the minds of Latter-day Saints. The official proclamation explained how the Book of Mormon and other scripture could use modalistic-like language without subscribing to classic Trinitarian beliefs regarding the Father (Elohim) and the Son (Christ).

### **Christ as Both Father and Son**

The word father can mean many things in the scriptures. The use of the word father does not have to refer to being a parent. “The term ‘Father’ as applied to Deity occurs in sacred write with plainly different meanings.”<sup>378</sup> George Washington and others are referred to as the “fathers” of the United States. Calling Christ both “Father” and “Son” does not, according to LDS doctrine, suggest that God the Father and Jesus Christ

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<sup>377</sup> Craig Blomberg noted this impression the first time he read the Book of Mormon. He wrote, “I already had learned that the LDS rejected the orthodox doctrine of Trinity. I was surprised, therefore, as I found more instances of seemingly clear Trinitarian language in the Book of Mormon than in the Old and New Testaments put together. I am still perplexed by this phenomenon as I read texts like 1 Nephi 19:10; 2 Nephi 10:3; 11:7; 25:12; 31:21; Mosiah 3:5-8; 7:27; 13:34; Alma 11:29-44; Helaman 14:12; 3 Nephi 9:15; and Mormon 7:7. If anything, it is *clearer* in several of these texts that it was the same God who was God the Father who became the incarnate in the Son. Indeed, in several of these places the Son seems to be identified with the Father, as he is called ‘the Eternal Father,’ a direct equation the Bible never makes” (Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide*, 124).

<sup>378</sup> “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 421. For a current discussion about Jesus Christ as the Father, see Robert L. Millet, “The Ministry of the Father and the Son,” *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, 55-64.

are the same being or essence. In 1916, the leaders of the LDS Church clarified what the lay members had misunderstood for years. They offered three reasons why it is correct to use the title “Father” in reference to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

The word Father, as it is used in reference to God the Father, or Elohim, pertains to His being a literal parent. “God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title ‘Elohim,’ is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race.”<sup>379</sup> In this sense, it is clearly acceptable to refer to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, being both spiritually and physically begotten of the Father. Nevertheless, scriptures such as Ether 4:7, which reads, “Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heaven and of the earth, and all things that in them are,” refer to a relationship other than that of literal parent.

The Savior, speaking to a Book of Mormon Prophet in the Book of Ether, said, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son” (Ether 3:14). An earlier prophet, Abinadi taught that Christ would be “the Father because he was conceived of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and the Son. And they are one God [one being with two titles, yet separate from Elohim], yea the very Eternal Father of heaven and earth” (Mosiah 15:3-4). “The Father and the Son” explained how Christ is considered both the Father and the Son while maintaining a separate identity from His Father.

First, Christ is known as “Father” because of his role as the great Creator, just as the “fathers of a nation” are known because of their role in creating or organizing that nation. The Book of Mormon refers to this role when calling Jesus Christ the Father (see 2 Nephi 9:5; Jacob 4:9). “He shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of

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<sup>379</sup> “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 420.



heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning” (Mosiah 3:8). “Scriptures that refer to God in any way as the Father of the heavens and the earth are to be understood as signifying that God is the Maker, the Organizer, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.”<sup>380</sup>

John the Apostle made it clear that the Creator, or Organizer, was Jesus Christ, or Jehovah. “In the beginning was the Word [Christ] and the Word was with God [Elohim] and the Word was God [Christ]. The same was in the beginning with God [Elohim]. All things were made by him [the Word, or Christ] and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3). Paul said wrote to the Hebrews, “God . . . hath spoken unto us by his Son . . . by whom also he made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Christ was the Creator and “since his creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father.”<sup>381</sup>

Second, Christ is the Father of mankind’s spiritual rebirth.<sup>382</sup> Christ taught Nicodemus about the requirement of being spiritually reborn. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). The rebirth that Christ referred to included baptism. “By the new birth—that of water and the Spirit—mankind may become children of Jesus Christ.”<sup>383</sup> It is necessary to be baptized by water and the Spirit because only those who become the children of Christ will be granted eternal life. John wrote,

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<sup>380</sup> “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 421.

<sup>381</sup> “The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve”, as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 421.

<sup>382</sup> Christ is the Father of the baptismal covenant and the author of the person’s salvation (see Hebrews 5:9). When men and women are reborn, Christ becomes the Father of their new spiritual life. Benjamin, a Book of Mormon king, taught his people about this spiritual adoption. “And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.” The rebirth process is so complete that it even includes a new name – the name of Christ. Benjamin taught his people that as a result of their covenant they were to take upon themselves the name of Christ.

<sup>383</sup> “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 424.

“As many as received him [Jehovah or Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God [Jehovah or Christ], even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). All men and women are children of God (Elohim) as the scriptures clearly state. Nothing additional is required to become sons and daughters of Elohim. Baptism by water and the Spirit, however are essential steps to becoming children of Christ.

Consider this revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1831: “Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I AM, even Jesus Christ . . . The same which came in the meridian of time unto mine own, and mine own received me not; But to as many as received me, gave I power *to become my* sons; even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power *to become my* sons” (D&C 39:1-4, emphasis added). In this sense, Satan also has the ability to become a father because all who do not follow Christ, and thus become children of Christ, will in contrast become the children of the devil (see Matthew 13:38). “Thus Satan is designated as the father of the wicked, though we cannot assume any personal relationship of parent and children as existing between him and them.”<sup>384</sup>

Third, Christ is known as the Father because of divine investiture of authority. Throughout LDS scripture, Christ speaks in behalf of Elohim. Talmage wrote, “It is to be remembered that the Personage most generally designated in the Old Testament as God or Lord, He who in the mortal state was known as Jesus Christ, and in the antemortal state as Jehovah.”<sup>385</sup> When Jehovah spoke to Moses, he said, “I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of *mine Only Begotten*; and *mine Only*

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<sup>384</sup> “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 424.

<sup>385</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 420.

*Begotten is and shall be the Savior*” (Moses 1:6, emphasis added). Christ said to those at Jerusalem, “I am come in my Father’s name” (John 5:43).

Similarly, in the Book of Revelation, the angel speaking to John is his “fellowservant” (see Revelation 22:9). That fellow servant spoke in the first person with regards to what the Lord would do. He said, “Behold, I come quickly,” “Behold, I come quickly,” and “I am Alpha and Omega” (Revelation 22:7, 12-13). The same authorizing process gave Jehovah the right to speak in the first person on behalf of Elohim. Thus we refer to Christ as the Father because in “all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority.”<sup>386</sup>

James Talmage stated, “That Jesus Christ or Jehovah is designated in certain scriptures as the Father in no wise justifies an assumption of identity between Him and His Father, Elohim. This matter has been explained by the presiding authorities of the Church in a special publication [‘The Father and the Son’].”<sup>387</sup> The influence of that document on members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, past and present, cannot be underestimated. As an official document from the First Presidency, the orthodoxy of the Church regarding the Godhead was established. What Nicaea and Alexandria accomplished for the Catholic Church, this document accomplished for the Latter-day Saints. Regardless of what had been said before, this was the new standard for doctrinal accuracy.

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<sup>386</sup> “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 424.

<sup>387</sup> Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 420.

## Talmage's Modern Influence

In addition to Talmage's major influence on the 1916 doctrinal statement, there are other indicators that help us determine the extent to which Talmage's teachings influence the Church today.<sup>388</sup> (1) How many times did LDS leaders quote him in the conferences of the Church? (2) How do other leaders of the Church interpret and teach the doctrine of the Godhead/Trinity, and how closely do they align with the 1916 document and the teachings of James Talmage?

One hundred and thirty-seven. That is how many times Elder Talmage has been quoted (as of this writing) in the general conferences of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since his death in 1933. Of those 137 times, *Jesus the Christ* was quoted 39 times and *Articles of Faith* was quoted 37 times. The interesting thing is that nearly all of the references to Talmage's teachings were made after 1960.

What caused the increase in the use of Elder Talmage's writings? In 1960 there was a major effort to correlate official materials. President David O. McKay, the ninth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1951-1970), initiated the correlation labors for several reasons, one of which was to ensure doctrinal accuracy. President McKay assigned Elder Harold B. Lee to oversee the task. The result was the organization of correlation committees at the Church, ward, and stake levels in 1961, 1964, and 1967 respectively.<sup>389</sup> The fact that Elder Talmage's teachings are used more

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<sup>388</sup> Chapter four expounded on the teachings of Elder Talmage regarding the Holy Ghost. The remainder of this chapter will focus primarily on the First Presidency document "The Father and the Son." While the Holy Ghost plays a major role in the theology of the Latter-day Saints, it is certainly common to focus discussions on God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ when dealing with the Godhead. And so here the focus will follow that trend.

<sup>389</sup> Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 250.

frequently since that effort to correlate Church materials reinforces the suggestion that his teachings still represent the official doctrine of the Church even after so many years.

In addition to quoting the First Presidency statement from 1916 and James Talmage's historic books, LDS leaders commonly refer to the scriptures to describe the characteristics or nature of God and Jesus Christ and then interpret them in a similar vein as the "The Father and the Son." This is an indirect influence of "The Father and the Son" and Talmage's writings. The interpretations given to specific verses of scriptures have been accepted and taught directly from the scriptures without referencing the original thought.

There is a point when what has been taught becomes so ingrained that the learner owns the knowledge. At that point, determining where or when the knowledge originated is difficult. Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Twelve Apostles said, "In speaking of these wondrous things [the Atonement] I shall use my own words, though you may think they are the words of scripture, words spoken by other Apostles and prophets. True it is they were first proclaimed by others, but they are now mine, for the Holy Spirit of God has borne witness to me that they are true, and it is now as though the Lord had revealed them to me in the first instance. I have thereby heard his voice and know his word."<sup>390</sup> Teachings on the Godhead have become a personal part of most Latter-day Saints. Over the years leaders of the LDS Church have taught the doctrine of the Godhead as it was taught in 1916. As a result of the unity in teachings since that time, many Latter-day Saint leaders today teach about the Godhead without reference to the original source because it has become "theirs."

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<sup>390</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, "The Purifying Power of Gethsemane," *Conference Report*, April 1985, 9.

## Modern Glimpses of the “The Father and the Son”

The prophets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have continued to build on the foundation left by their predecessors. The 1916 document was not the last thing said on the Godhead, although it has become the touchstone for doctrinal matters dealing with the topic. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young did not reveal everything that God intended for men and women to understand regarding His nature. Others have continued the conversation, building on the truths that were taught in the early twentieth century, just as James E. Talmage built on the foundation left by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and others in the nineteenth century.

Many in Church leadership positions, as well as lay members, recognize Elder Talmage for his significant role in the unfolding of LDS doctrine. Elder Bruce R. McConkie authored the second major LDS work on the life of Jesus Christ: a four-volume work entitled *The Mortal Messiah*. The Messiah series was published from 1979-1981. At that time, Elder McConkie wrote, “I have a deep respect for *Jesus the Christ*, the scholarly work of Elder James E. Talmage, one of my most prominent predecessors.”<sup>391</sup>

As time passes, additional levels are added to the foundation of LDS theology. At each level one who looks closely will recognize the influence of “The Father and the Son.” President Joseph Fielding Smith, tenth president of the Church (1970-1972), taught that God the Father is literally the Father of the human race, and thus the race of man and the race of God is the same.<sup>392</sup> President James E. Faust, second counselor in the First

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<sup>391</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979-1981), 1:xvii

<sup>392</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Selections from Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 77.

Presidency, taught that if men and women would just grasp one truth, that they are the “offspring of God,” they would have the basic needs of self-esteem, peace of mind and personal contentment met beyond measure.<sup>393</sup> President Boyd K. Packer said, “We are the children of the God. That doctrine is not hidden away in an obscure verse. It is taught over and over again in scripture.”<sup>394</sup> President Packer then cited Psalms 82:6 and Acts 17:29 as examples.

LDS Apostles often refer to the role of the Savior in the Creation of the earth. Elder Russell M. Nelson said, “Jesus is the Christ and the Creator! He is Lord over all the earth.”<sup>395</sup> Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, “I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer and Creator.”<sup>396</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley pointed out that Christ created the earth “under the His Father’s direction.”<sup>397</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Church from 1985 to 1994, declared simply that the Jesus Christ who was baptized in the Jordan, who taught in Jerusalem, who suffered in Gethsemane, who was crucified on Golgotha, and finally who resurrected on the third day was the same “all-powerful Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the source of life and light to all things.”<sup>398</sup> Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that “Jehovah-Christ . . . did in fact create the earth and all forms of plant and animal life on the face thereof.”<sup>399</sup>

Elder Jeffery R. Holland, who became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve in 1995, is another example of a current leader relying on “The Father and the Son” to explain Book of Mormon passages. He commented:

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<sup>393</sup> James E. Faust, “Heirs to the Kingdom of God,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 61-62.

<sup>394</sup> Boyd K. Packer, in *Conference Report*, October 1984, 82.

<sup>395</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “The Creation,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 84.

<sup>396</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, “Give Thanks in All Things,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 95.

<sup>397</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “Testimony,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 69.

<sup>398</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, *Sermons and Writings of Ezra Taft Benson*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 20.

<sup>399</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, 62.

What may at first seem less obvious [than Christ's title of Son] is also taught in the scriptures—that there are ways in which Christ is so united with the Father that in some assignments he rightfully plays a fatherly role and rightfully bears the title of Father in doing so.

This fundamentally—and admittedly deep—doctrine of the Son-as-Father is illuminated more definitively in the Book of Mormon than in any other revelation ever given to man. Repeated references in this sacred record teach that, under the direction of and with authority given by the Father (Elohim), the Son (Jehovah/Jesus) may act as the Father in several ways.

First and foremost, as Abinadi taught, Christ was “conceived by the power of God” and therefore has the powers of the Father within him. In addition to that divine lineal relationship, Christ also acts as the Father in that he is the Creator of heaven and earth, is the father of our spiritual rebirth and salvation, and is faithful in honoring—and therefore claiming the power of—the will of his Father above that of his own will. Because of this inseparable relationship and uncompromised trust between them, Christ can at any time and in any place speak and act for the Father by virtue of the “divine investiture of authority” the Father has given him.<sup>400</sup>

Elder Holland also wrote regarding the baptismal covenant, “This is one way in which that title [Father] is appropriately applied to [Christ] who is customarily referred to as ‘Son.’ He is the Father of redeemed, restored, spiritual life—in short, eternal life. The faithful are born again—of Christ and by Christ and through Christ—when this mighty change wrought by him comes into their hearts. As is appropriate at the time of a new birth, a name is given, and the name the redeemed take upon themselves is ‘the name of Christ.’”<sup>401</sup>

Bruce R. McConkie taught that people change when they come unto Christ and He becomes their Father through the ordinance of baptism and when they receive of the Holy Spirit. He said, “No more will they walk in the ways of the world; no more will they wallow in the mire of Babylon; no more will they delight in the passions and lusts of carnal men . . . Their sins will be washed away in the waters of baptism; they will be born again; and they will become the children of Christ, his sons and daughters.”<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Jeffery R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 183-84.

<sup>401</sup> Jeffery R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 102.

<sup>402</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 606.



Joseph Fielding Smith wrote, “In giving revelations our Savior speaks at times for himself; at other times for the Father, and in the Father’s name, as though he were the Father, and yet it is Jesus Christ, our Redeemer who gives the message . . . for the Father has put his name on him for that purpose.”<sup>403</sup> Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve (1981-2004), taught, “Most of the words of our Heavenly Father have come to us through His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>404</sup>

Elder Maxwell later expounded on the doctrine of “divine investiture.” Through this installment of authority, the Redeemer would be not only the advocate of men, but also their judge, thus giving Him the ability both to plead on behalf of humankind and also pass judgment.<sup>405</sup> Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “The Father, Elohim, has placed his name upon the Son, has given him his own power and authority, and has authorized him to speak in the first person as though he were the original or primal Father.”<sup>406</sup>

With regard to the appearances of God to man, President Joseph Fielding Smith said that the Father has never appeared to man except to introduce and bear record of the Son (for example, the baptism of Christ and the Mount of Transfiguration). In every scriptural instance where God has appeared to man it was Jehovah–Jesus Christ–that spoke. The last time that the Father interacted directly with man was when Adam was still in the Garden of Eden.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Selections from Doctrines of Salvation*, 19. The last phrase is a direct quote from (See “The Father and the Son,” as cited in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 424).

<sup>404</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *Sermons Not Spoken* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), 21. Later, Elder Maxwell defined divine investiture and quoted Elder Talmage’s definition from *Articles of Faith* (see Maxwell, *Sermons not Spoken*, 22).

<sup>405</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *One More Strain of Praise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 33.

<sup>406</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 63; see also *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 69.

<sup>407</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956), I:27.

While speaking to Latter-day Saints in Ghana, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the fifteenth president of the Church, said, “Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven. His Father in Heaven spoke at the time of His baptism. There was a vision of His Father at the time of Transfiguration. And in that great, classic prayer, He said, ‘Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name’ (Matthew 6:9). He [Christ] said, ‘I will be your access to the Father’ (John 14:6). They are two beings, entirely separate.”<sup>408</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Latter-day Saints expect revelation to continue; it is the foundation, the rock upon which Christ’s Church is to be built upon (see Matthew 16:18). They expect their understanding to increase. As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints look forward to future revelation and increased understanding, they must never forget those who have paid a significant price to assist in laying the foundation of doctrinal understanding that they currently possess.

Elder James Edward Talmage was one of those men who gave his life to the establishment of the LDS doctrinal foundation. He took what had already been delivered and then, as an instrument in the hands of his Church leaders, clarified and expounded previous prophetic teachings. Through his writings and sermons the doctrines of the nineteenth century were correlated, clarified, and dispensed to the Latter-day Saints in such a way as to help lay members of the Church understand and recognize the LDS doctrine on God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

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<sup>408</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, *Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley*, 2 vol., (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004) 1:513.

Men and women are the spiritual offspring of God the Father. Those are not idle words, and the knowledge of God is not to be idle knowledge. It should change the way people think, the way people talk, and the way people act. A true understanding of God will cause us to desire to be more like Him.<sup>409</sup> President Howard W. Hunter, fourteenth president of the LDS Church (1994-1995), taught that once men and women understand that they are all children of God, the way they treat each other would improve. People would see each other without regard to nationality, race, or color: just as our Father in Heaven sees them.<sup>410</sup>

Elder James Talmage's efforts clarified the LDS stand on the Godhead for those in and out of that Church. Although it may be impossible to explain to what extent Talmage influenced the early twentieth century Mormonism with precision, it is evident that his influence was felt. As a result, the imprint of Talmage's clear thinking and effective writing will inevitably remain a part of the LDS teachings.

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<sup>409</sup> See James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 40.

<sup>410</sup> Howard W. Hunter, *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002), 97.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusion and Suggestion for Further Studies**

Where is the Christian world after nearly 1700 years of discussion about the Godhead? This discussion (Nature of God) is at the heart of every religious movement. As previously demonstrated, theologians through the centuries have felt the need to describe the God they worship. Similarly, leaders in the LDS Church have described the Father, explained the role of the Son and defined the work of the Holy Ghost. This chapter will review the major points of this thesis, namely: the conversation that lead to current understanding of the Godhead before Talmage's day (in the LDS Church and other major Christian faiths), James Talmage's important role in the development of the LDS concept of God, and what current LDS leaders done with Talmage's contributions.

### **Review of Doctrinal Development**

The exchange between Arius and Athanasius and the argument over the divinity of Christ led to the development of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.<sup>411</sup> These creeds established an "orthodoxy" that was given added support by the writings of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. Beyond the scriptures, Augustine has generally been accepted as the primary source for Christian theologians beyond the scriptures. During the Reformation, men such as John Calvin and Martin Luther accepted Augustine's approach to God. They turned to his teachings in their effort to correct their perceived wanderings of the Christian Church.

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<sup>411</sup> See both creeds in their entirety in Appendices I and II respectively.

Acceptance of Nicene, Athanasian, and Augustinian teachings led to an almost unanimous acceptance of the current Christian doctrine on the Godhead: God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost constituting the triune God – three persons but one being, one God, without body, parts, or passions. The Nicene and post-Nicene God was a divine essence without form. Christ had been sent by the Father to suffer for the sins of humankind and save them from the Fall of Adam. The role of the Holy Ghost was one of bearing witness or testifying of the other members of the Godhead. The three separate roles and missions, however, did not suggest three distinct beings. For Calvin the three titles and missions actually benefit men and women in their quest to understand how God saves his children. Each title – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – are teaching devices. The distinct titles did not represent distinction in essences but rather distinction of responsibilities within one God.

By 1820, the doctrine of the Trinity was well established. Joseph Smith, a 14 year-old farm boy, went into a grove of trees and offered an earnest prayer. The result was a visit from God the Father *and* His Son, Jesus Christ. Despite Joseph's encounter and its departure from the orthodox description of three in one, much of the early criticism of that vision involved the general religious feeling that the heavens were closed and that no longer happened. Perhaps two separate beings was explained by Augustine's explanation that says if God chose to do so, He could appear to man or woman in whatever form, or forms, that He felt best for the situation. Augustine wrote, "We must believe that by creature control the Father, as well as the Son and the Holy Spirit, could offer the senses of mortal men a token representation of himself in bodily guise or

likeness.”<sup>412</sup> Joseph’s experience was not different from that of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. As Stephen was being stoned, he looked into heaven and said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of God standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56).

### **Latter-day Saint Growth versus Change**

The extent of Joseph’s understanding when he left the grove is not clear. What is clear, however, is that the development of LDS teachings took place over a process of time. Just as Moses was not told to break the rock for water (see Numbers 20:8-11) while he was at the burning bush, Joseph Smith was not taught everything regarding the Godhead in the grove of trees in Palmyra, New York. The revelations about God and Jesus Christ came over the years between 1820-1844. As Latter-day Saint converts joined the Church, they brought their previous understanding of God. Such misunderstandings or misconceptions were corrected “line upon line.” Many times, as in the case of Lemman Copely, it was the misconception itself that prompted the Prophet Joseph Smith to ask the Lord for clarification. The resulting explanations established, revelation by revelation, the Latter-day Saint understanding of the Godhead.

When Joseph went into the grove, he left knowing things he “never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). He entered the grove asking which Church to join, because “at [that] time it had never entered into [his] heart that all were wrong” (Joseph Smith–History 1:18). It is possible that he had never thought of God the Father and the Son as being separate beings. His understanding was expanded at that moment. Each experience with the Lord thereafter stretched Joseph Smith’s comprehension and thus his teachings.

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<sup>412</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 122.

Although we cannot be sure exactly when Joseph understood all that he was teaching in 1844, we know that the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible established by 1830 that God had a body. While the official revelation, which declared that God has a body of flesh and bone (see Doctrine and Covenants 130:20), is dated 1843, there is a record of a local Presbyterian minister, Truman Coe, who reported in 1836 that Joseph Smith and the Saints believed in a material God. The doctrinal progression from 1820 to 1830 to 1836 and to 1843 all finally reached its apex with the King Follet Sermon in 1844, only months before his death. “Thus, only a little more than two months before his death, Joseph Smith was continuing to clarify many things for the Saints, and laid the basis for the broadened understanding of the Godhead they hold today.”<sup>413</sup>

Periodic insights regarding the nature of the Godhead continued to expand the Latter-day Saint understanding after the death of Joseph Smith through the work of his successors. The role of James E. Talmage in this gradual unfolding was one of distribution and clarification. In *Jesus the Christ* and *Articles of Faith*, James Talmage published the accepted basic doctrines of the LDS Church. Elder Talmage was asked to publish the books, possibly with the intent to answer questions about the Godhead that members of the Church were asking the First Presidency. Talmage’s publications covered the basic teachings of the Church (*The Articles of Faith*) and the life of the Savior (*Jesus the Christ*) and placed valuable resources within the reach of the lay members of the Church.

In his books, Elder Talmage expounded on ideas such as: Christ acting in the name of the Father during the Creation; the three separate beings that make up the Godhead; the purpose of the Holy Ghost to teach, instruct, guide, and protect God’s spirit

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<sup>413</sup> James B. Allen, “Line upon Line,” *Ensign*, July 1979, 34.

children; and the role of continuing revelation in the development of Church doctrine. *Articles of Faith* and *Jesus the Christ* were made available to members of the Church in large quantities and then recommended by the First Presidency in such a way that perhaps only the scriptures were had in more houses than these two books.<sup>414</sup>

Despite the general accessibility, however, members of the LDS faith continued to send questions regarding the subject to the First Presidency. Despite the accessibility of Talmage's books and the approval of the First Presidency, it seems that the members of the Church required something more official. So in 1916, members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve (which included Talmage) issued the document "The Father and the Son." Some of the concerns that this document addressed included:

1. Who is Elohim and who is Jehovah?
2. What was the pre-mortal relationship between God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the rest of humankind?
3. Who was the Creator of earth?
4. How can Jesus Christ be called both the Father and the Son and still be separate from Elohim?

From Talmage's journals we learn of the major role he had in writing this important document. Yet, it is also important to remember that his role was that of an instrument. The First Presidency ultimately approved his writings. Thus the work was not his alone. His efforts as an instrument clearly establish that that Elder James E. Talmage holds an important place in the history of LDS theology. Talmage, however, has been just one of many that have assisted in establishing the Latter-day Saint theology regarding the Godhead. While his influence should be recognized, it should not be over emphasized to the point of some recent claims that credit him with recreating a new twentieth century Mormonism. James Talmage's efforts have blended together with similar efforts of

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<sup>414</sup> John Henry Evans, "Elder James Edward Talmage," 7.



many, many Latter-day Saint leaders to establish what the LDS people often refer to as “a great and a marvelous work” (1 Nephi 14:7; see also 1 Nephi 22:8; 2 Nephi 27:26; and 3 Nephi 21:9).

LDS leaders have continued to build on the Church’s theological foundation, just as Elder Talmage built on the foundation of knowledge and revelation available in his day. Common names among Latter-day Saint homes such as B. H. Roberts, John A. Widstoe, Joseph F. Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R. McConkie and Gordon B. Hinckley have contributed to the LDS concept of the Godhead. The line upon line progression continues. As the Latter-day Saint theology continues to develop and more clarification is revealed through the appropriate lines of authority, it is important to remember those who, like James E. Talmage, have assisted along the way.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

There are so many areas of Dr. James E. Talmage’s life that still need to be studied and published. A valuable study that should be done is the influence of James Talmage as an educator. Was his influence equally powerful in the field of public education as it was in theology? It is well documented that he frequently spoke to the public school boards and teachers throughout Utah.<sup>415</sup> Along with Karl G. Maeser, Dr. Talmage visited and offered suggestions to teachers and principals throughout the State. Many times, Dr. Talmage was approached by local school districts and asked to run for or assume administrative positions. Each time, however, Talmage declined the opportunity.

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<sup>415</sup> See Harris, *The Essential James E. Talmage*, 14-29.

As much as Talmage may have influenced other teachers, especially as President of the University of Utah, his greatest influence was in the classroom and in the lives of those he taught. J. Reuben Clark was a student at the LDS College when Talmage was the school's Principal. The influence of President Talmage helped motivate Clark to higher aspirations. It was suggested that, without that motivating influence, Clark would have received a degree in education and returned to his home in Grantsville, Utah, and spent his life teaching.<sup>416</sup> Instead, J. Reuben Clark went on to law school in the east, became a lawyer in Washington D.C., became the United States Ambassador to Mexico, and eventually was called as a member of the First Presidency in the LDS Church. How many other students, prominent and not so, are indebted to the teaching experience of Dr. Talmage?

President James Talmage's work in Europe as the European Mission President provides another rich field for new research. What were the reasons the Church faced such difficult press in that time? What persons and/or parties were responsible for the negative press and what reasons may they have had for such feelings toward the LDS Church? What were the long-term results of Talmage's efforts in that mission years later? Did the positive results last, or were they temporary? How did the newspaper opinion change and/or affect missionary efforts and conversion rates of the LDS Church before and after Talmage's mission? With great efforts in research and writing, each of these questions could be answered.

The final suggestion, although there are many more, is that a study of the home life of the Talmage family be considered. The countless sacrifice of Elder Talmage's

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<sup>416</sup> Fox, *J. Reuben Clark: The Public Years*, 12.

family, and his concern for them emerge as one reads through his journals and the book that was written by his son, John Talmage. One account from his journals describes his feelings about being separated from his loved one in Utah. “The new year finds me at Washington D. C., not a little depressed by the thought of the many miles separating me from the loved ones at home. Within half an hour after the midnight that marked the passing of 1915, as we reckon time, I was in my room at the Raleigh Hotel writing to my distant dear ones. At 2 a.m. Eastern time, I penned an addendum to the letter, this being the moment of the new year’s advent in Utah (Mountain time).”<sup>417</sup>

What was James Talmage like as a father? How did his wife Maia manage with her husband being gone so frequently? How did he interact with his children? What family stories have been passed down to living Talmage descendents? The LDS Church owes a great deal to Maia, and their children (Sterling, Paul, Zella, Elsie, James Karl, Lucile, Helen, and John). Without their support much of what Elder James E. Talmage accomplished would have been impossible.

## **Conclusion**

The influence of James Edward Talmage will always affect the people of the Latter-day Saint faith. Whenever topics such as the nature of God, the need for a Redeemer, and the role of the Holy Ghost, are discussed at home or at church, the influence of Elder Talmage will be felt. The headstone that marks the resting place of James E. Talmage contains a xenolith. That xenolith is representative of his lasting influence. John Talmage wrote:

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<sup>417</sup> Talmage Journals, January 1, 1916.

A simple monument was placed over his grave, of Utah granite rough-hewn to preserve the rugged, natural look . . . Centered near the top of the face of the stone is a xenolith, or “rock within a rock,” a piece of darker sedimentary limestone which was engulfed in the igneous granite when it was still molten in a long-past geological age. The xenolith is not there by chance, nor was the stone containing it selected for its decorative effect. It symbolized a contribution of Dr. Talmage, the geologist. It had earlier been thought that the Utah granite was older than the nearby sedimentary rocks. Dr. Talmage’s observation of the numerous xenoliths and the deduction that the limestone must have existed while the granite was still in a molten state was instrumental in fixing the Utah rock formations in their proper places in the geological tables.<sup>418</sup>

As it was with his contributions to the geology of Utah, so it was with his contributions to the theology of the Church whose headquarters are located in Utah.

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<sup>418</sup> John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 240. See photo of Elder Talmage’s headstone in Appendix G.

## Appendix A

### The Apostles' Creed (cir. 338 A.D.)

The Old Roman Form	The Received Form
1. I believe in God the Father Almighty;	1. I believe in God the Father Almighty [Maker of heaven and earth].
2. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;	2. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;
3. Who was born by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary;	3. Who was [conceived] by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;
4. Was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried;	4. [Suffered] under Pontius Pilate, was crucified [dead], and buried [He descended into Hades (Hell)];
5. The third day he rose from the dead;	5. The third day he rose from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;	6. He ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of [God] the Father [Almighty];
7. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.	7. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
8. And in the Holy Ghost;	8. [I believe] in the Holy Ghost.

The “Old Roman Form” is the Creed as Marcellus (in Greek) and Rufinus (in Latin) gave it near 338 A.D. and 390 A.D. respectively. The “Received Form” contains those things that were added over the centuries. Such additions are in the brackets.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Phillip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, 3 vol., 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), I:19-21.

## Appendix B

### The Nicene Creed (325 A.D.)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, The Son of God *the only begotten; that I of the essence of the Father, God of God*, begotten of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made *both in heaven and on earth*; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

*But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.*<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, I:28-29. The italics represent those comments that were later deleted from the Creed.

## Appendix C

### The Creed of Constantinople (381 A.D.)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of [heaven and earth, and of] all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the [only begotten] Son of God, begotten of the Father [before all worlds], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down [from heaven,] and was incarnate [by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary], and was made man; he [was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and] suffered, [and was buried,] and the third day he rose again, [according to the Scriptures,] and ascended into heaven, [and sitteth on the right hand of the Father]; from thence he shall come [again, with glory], to judge the quick and the dead [; whose kingdom shall have no end].

And in the Holy Ghost [, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen].<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, I:28-29. Here the brackets represent those comments that were added later to the Creed.

## Appendix D

### “The Definition of Faith”

The symbol of the 318 fathers at Nicaea

We believe in one God, Father; Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ the only-begotten Son of God, who was begotten from the Father before all ages, true God from true God; begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down, was enfleshed and became man, suffered, rose on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is coming to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit. Those who say, ‘There was when he was not’, and ‘Before being begotten he was not’, and that he came into being from things that are not, or assert that the Son of God is from another hypostasis or substance or is changeable or alterable, these the catholic and apostolic church anathematizes.

The same of the 150 holy fathers who assembled at Constantinople

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, who was begotten from the Father before all ages, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through whom all things came into being, who for us men and for our salvation, came down, was enfleshed from the Holy Spirit and Mary the virgin and became man, was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and was buried, rose on the third day and ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father and is coming again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there will be no end; and in the Holy Spirit, the lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified together, who spoke through the prophets; and in one holy catholic and apostolic church; we confess one baptism for the remission of sins. We await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

This wise and saving symbol of divine grace sufficed for the perfect knowledge and confirmation of piety, for on the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit its teaching is complete, while to those who receive it faithfully it also sets forth the incarnation of the Lord. Nevertheless those who try set at naught the preaching of the truth by heresies of their own have propagated nonsense, some daring to destroy the mystery of the dispensation of the Lord on our behalf and denying to the Virgin the name of Theotokos, and others introducing confusion and mixture, mindlessly inventing that there is one nature of flesh and Godhead, and through confusion [of natures] fantasizing that the divine nature of the Only-begotten is passible; for which reason this holy, great and ecumenical council now present, wishing to close off for them every device against the



truth and expound the firmness of the proclamation from the old, has decreed first and foremost that the creed of the 318 holy fathers is to remain inviolate. Furthermore, it confirms the teaching on the essence of the Holy Spirit that was handed down at a later date by the 150 fathers who assembled in the imperial city because of those who were making war on the holy Spirit; this teaching they made known to all, not as though they were inserting something omitted by their predecessors, but rather making clear by written testimony their conception of the Holy Spirit against those who were trying to deny his sovereignty. And because of those who attempt to destroy the mystery of the dispensation, shamelessly blathering that he who was born of the Holy Virgin Mary is a mere human being, the council has accepted as in keeping [with these creeds] the conciliar letters of the blessed Cyril, then shepherd of the church of Alexandria, to Nestorius and to those of the Orient, for the refutation of the madness of Nestorius and for the instruction of those who with pious zeal seek the meaning of the saving creed. To these letters it has attached appropriately, for the confirmation of the true doctrines, the letter written by the president of the great and senior Rome, the most blessed and holy Archbishop Leo, to Archbishop Flavion, [now] among the saints, for the confutation of the perversity of Eutyches, since it agrees with the confession of the great Peter and is a universal pillar against those with false beliefs. For the council sets itself against those who attempt to dissolve the mystery of the dispensation into a duality of sons, and it removes from the list of priests those who dare to say that the Godhead of the Only-begotten is passible; it opposes those who imagine a mixing or confusing in the case of the two natures of Christ, it expels those who rave that the form of a servant which he took from us was heavenly or of some other substance, and it anathematizes those who invent two natures of the Lord before the union and imagine one nature after the union.

Following, therefore, the holy fathers, we all in harmony teach confession of one and the same Son our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and the same truly man, of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in respect of the Godhead, and the same consubstantial with us in respect of the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin, begotten from the Father before the ages in respect of the Godhead, and the same in the last days for us and for our salvation from the Virgin Mary the Theotokos in respect of the manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation (the difference of the natures being in no way destroyed by the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved and coming together into one person and one hypostasis), not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, Only-begotten, God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ, even as the prophets from of old and Jesus Christ himself taught us about him and the symbol of the fathers has handed down to us.

Now that these matters have been formulated by us with all possible care and precision, the holy and ecumenical council has decreed that no one is allowed to produce or compose or construct another creed or to think or to teach otherwise. As for those who presume either to construct another creed or to publish or teach or deliver another symbol to those wishing to convert to the knowledge of the truth from paganism or Judaism or from any heresy whatsoever, the council decrees that, if they are bishops or clerics, they

are to be deposed, bishops from the episcopate and clerics from the clerical state, while, if they are monks or laymen, they are to be anathematized.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> As quoted in Price and Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, II:205.

## Appendix E

### The Athanasian Creed

We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is all one; the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty; and yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> As quoted in Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 44.

## Appendix F

### “The Father and the Son”

The Father and The Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by The First Presidency and The Twelve-

The scriptures plainly and repeatedly affirm that God is the Creator of the earth and the heavens and all things that in them are. In the sense so expressed, the Creator is an Organizer. God created the earth as an organized sphere; but He certainly did not create, in the sense of bringing into primal existence, the ultimate elements of the materials of which the earth consists, for "the elements are eternal" (D&C 93:33).

So also life is eternal, and not created; but life, or the vital force, may be infused into organized matter, though the details of the process have not been revealed unto man. For illustrative instances see Genesis 2:7; Moses 3:7; and Abraham 5:7. Each of these scriptures states that God breathed into the body of man the breath of life. See further Moses 3:19, for the statement that God breathed the breath of life into the bodies of the beasts and birds. God showed unto Abraham "the intelligences that were organized before the world was"; and by "intelligences" we are to understand personal "spirits" (Abraham 3:22, 23); nevertheless, we are expressly told that "Intelligence" that is, "the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29).

The term "Father" as applied to Deity occurs in sacred writ with plainly different meanings. Each of the four significations specified in the following treatment should be carefully segregated.

1. "Father" as Literal Parent-Scriptures embodying the ordinary signification-literally that of Parent-are too numerous and specific to require citation. The purport of these scriptures is to the effect that God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title "Elohim," is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race. Elohim is the Father in every sense in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Hebrews 12:9). In view of this fact we are taught by Jesus Christ to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." Jesus Christ applies to Himself both titles, "Son" and "Father." Indeed, he specifically said to the brother of Jared: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son" (Ether 3:14). Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and bodily offspring; that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh, and which body died on the cross and was afterward taken up by the process of resurrection, and is now the immortalized

tabernacle of the eternal spirit of our Lord and Savior. No extended explanation of the title "Son of God" as applied to Jesus Christ seems necessary.

2. "Father" as Creator-A second scriptural meaning of "Father" is that of Creator, e.g. in passages referring to any one of the Godhead as "The Father of the heavens and of the earth and all things that in them are" (Ether 4:7; see also Alma 11:38, 39 and Mosiah 15:4).

God is not the Father of the earth as one of the worlds in space, nor of the heavenly bodies in whole or in part, nor of the inanimate objects and the plants and the animals upon the earth, in the literal sense in which He is the Father of the spirits of mankind. Therefore, scriptures that refer to God in any way as the Father of the heavens and the earth are to be understood as signifying that God is the Maker, the Organizer, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

With this meaning, as the context shows in every case, Jehovah who is Jesus Christ the Son of Elohim, is called "the Father," and even "the very eternal Father of heaven and of earth" (see passages before cited, and also Mosiah 16:15). With analogous meaning Jesus Christ is called "The Everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6; compare 2 Nephi 19:6). The descriptive titles "Everlasting" and "Eternal" in the foregoing texts are synonymous.

That Jesus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation is set forth in the book Jesus the Christ, chapter 4. Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is consistently called the Father of heaven and earth in the sense explained above; and since His creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth.

3. Jesus Christ the "Father" of Those Who Abide in His Gospel-A third sense in which Jesus Christ is regarded as the "Father" has reference to the relationship between Him and those who accept His Gospel and thereby become heirs of eternal life. Following are a few of the scriptures illustrating this meaning.

In the fervent prayer offered just prior to His entrance into Gethsemane, Jesus Christ supplicated His Father in behalf of those whom the Father had given unto Him, specifically the apostles, and, more generally, all who would accept and abide in the Gospel through the ministry of the apostles. Read in the Lord's own words the solemn affirmation that those for whom He particularly prayed were His own, and that His Father had given them unto Him: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be filled" (John 17:6-12).

And further: "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, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:20-24).

To His faithful servants in the present dispensation the Lord has said: "Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me" (D&C 50:41).

Salvation is attainable only through compliance with the laws and ordinances of the Gospel; and all who are thus saved become sons and daughters unto God in a distinctive sense. In a revelation given through Joseph the Prophet to Emma Smith the Lord Jesus addressed the woman as "My daughter," and said: "for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom" (D&C 25:1). In many instances the Lord has addressed men as His sons (e.g. D&C 9:1; 34:3; 121:7).

That by obedience to the Gospel men may become sons of God, both as sons of Jesus Christ, and, through Him, as sons of His Father, is set forth in many revelations given in the current dispensation. Thus we read in an utterance of the Lord Jesus Christ to Hyrum Smith in 1829: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world. I am the same who came unto mine own and mine own received me not; But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. Amen." (D&C 11:28-30). To Orson Pratt the Lord spoke through Joseph the Seer, in 1830: "My son Orson, hearken and hear and behold what I, the Lord God, shall say unto you, even Jesus Christ your Redeemer; The light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not; Who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God. Wherefore you are my son." (D&C 34:1-3). In 1830 the Lord thus addressed Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon: "Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever. I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one" (D&C 35:1-2). Consider also the following given in 1831: "Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I AM, even Jesus Christ-The light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not; The same which came in the meridian of time unto mine own, and mine own received me not; But to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons; and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons" (D&C 39:1-4). In a revelation given through Joseph Smith in March, 1831, we read: "For verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world-a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not; but unto as many as received me, gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God, and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life" (D&C 45:7-8).

A forceful exposition of this relationship between Jesus Christ as the Father and those who comply with the requirements of the Gospel as His children was given by Abinadi, centuries before our Lord's birth in the flesh: "And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed? Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord-I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God. For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed? Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed" (Mosiah 15:10-13).

In tragic contrast with the blessed state of those who become children of God through obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that of the unregenerate, who are specifically called the children of the devil. Note the words of Christ, while in the flesh, to certain wicked Jews who boasted of their Abrahamic lineage: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. \* \* \* Ye do the deeds of your father \* \* \* If God were your Father, ye would love me. \* \* \* Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:39, 41, 42, 44). Thus Satan is designated as the father of the wicked, though we cannot assume any personal relationship of parent and children as existing between him and them. A combined illustration showing that the righteous are the children of God and the wicked the children of the devil appears in the parable of the Tares: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matt. 13:38).

Men may become children of Jesus Christ by being born anew—born of God, as the inspired word states: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 John 3:8-10).

Those who have been born unto God through obedience to the Gospel may by valiant devotion to righteousness obtain exaltation and even reach the status of godhood. Of such we read: "Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God" (D&C 76:58; compare 132:20, and contrast paragraph 17 in same section; see also paragraph 37). Yet, though they be gods they are still subject to Jesus Christ as their Father in this exalted relationship; and so we read in the paragraph following the above quotation: "and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (76:59).

By the new birth—that of water and the Spirit—mankind may become children of Jesus Christ, being through the means by Him provided "begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:24). This solemn truth is further emphasized in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ given through Joseph Smith in 1833: "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn; And all those who are

begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21, 22). For such figurative use of the term "begotten" in application to those who are born unto God see Paul's explanation: "for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). An analogous instance of sonship attained by righteous service is found in the revelation relating to the order and functions of Priesthood, given in 1832: "For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining of these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God" (D&C 84:33, 34).

If it be proper to speak of those who accept and abide in the Gospel as Christ's sons and daughters-and upon this matter the scriptures are explicit and cannot be gainsaid nor denied-it is consistently proper to speak of Jesus Christ as the Father of the righteous, they having become His children and He having been made their Father through the second birth-the baptismal regeneration.

4. Jesus Christ the "Father" by Divine Investiture of Authority-A fourth reason for applying the title "Father" to Jesus Christ is found in the fact that in all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This is true of Christ in His preexistent, antemortal, or unembodied state, in the which He was known as Jehovah; also during His embodiment in the flesh; and during His labors as a disembodied spirit in the realm of the dead; and since that period in His resurrected state. To the Jews He said: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30; see also 17:11, 22); yet He declared "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28); and further, "I am come in my Father's name" (John 5:43; see also 10:25). The same truth was declared by Christ Himself to the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 20:35 and 28:10), and has been reaffirmed by revelation in the present dispensation (D&C 50:43). Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father's name; and so far as power, authority, and Godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father.

We read, by way of analogy, that God placed His name upon or in the Angel who was assigned to special ministry unto the people of Israel during the exodus. Of that Angel the Lord said: "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him" (Exodus 23:21).

The ancient apostle, John, was visited by an angel who ministered and spoke in the name of Jesus Christ. As we read: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Revelation 1:1). John was about to worship the angelic being who spoke in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but was forbidden: "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Rev. 22:8, 9). And then the angel continued to speak as though he were the Lord Himself: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (verses 12, 13). The resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, who had been exalted to the right



hand of God His Father, had placed His name upon the angel sent to John, and the angel spoke in the first person, saying "I come quickly," "I am Alpha and Omega" though he meant that Jesus Christ would come, and that Jesus Christ was Alpha and Omega.

None of these considerations, however, can change in the least degree the solemn fact of the literal relationship of Father and Son between Elohim and Jesus Christ. Among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors. Following are affirmative scriptures bearing upon this great truth. Paul, writing to the Colossians, says of Jesus Christ: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Colossians 1:15-19). From this scripture we learn that Jesus Christ was "the firstborn of every creature" and it is evident that the seniority here expressed must be with respect to antemortal existence, for Christ was not the senior of all mortals in the flesh. He is further designated as "the firstborn from the dead," this having reference to Him as the first to be resurrected from the dead, or as elsewhere written "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20, see also verse 23); and "the first begotten of the dead" (Revelation 1:5; compare Acts 26:23). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms the status of Jesus Christ as the firstborn of the spirit children of His Father, and extols the preeminence of the Christ when tabernacled in flesh: "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6; read the preceding verses). That the spirits who were juniors to Christ were predestined to be born in the image of their Elder Brother is thus attested by Paul: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:28, 29). John the Revelator was commanded to write to the head of the Laodicean church, as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14). In the course of a revelation given through Joseph Smith in May, 1833, the Lord Jesus Christ said as before cited: "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21). A later verse makes plain the fact that human beings generally were similarly existent in spirit state prior to their embodiment in the flesh: "Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth" (verse 23).

There is no impropriety, therefore, in speaking of Jesus Christ as the Elder Brother of the rest of human kind. That He is by spiritual birth Brother to the rest of us is indicated in Hebrews: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any and all others, by reason (1) of His seniority as the oldest or firstborn; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father; (3) of His

selection and foreordination as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of the race; and (4) of His transcendent sinlessness.

Jesus Christ is not the Father of the spirits who have taken or yet shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of them. He is The Son, as they are sons and daughters of Elohim. So far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring. Only such exalted souls have reached maturity in the appointed course of eternal life; and the spirits born to them in the eternal worlds will pass in due sequence through the several stages or estates by which the glorified parents have attained exaltation.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND THE COUNCIL  
OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH  
OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> As quoted in Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 420-26.

**Appendix G**

**Selected Photos**



Figure 1. Elder James E. Talmage as a young man. Picture courtesy of Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections.



Figure 2. The headstone of Elder James Talmage. Picture courtesy of Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

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