

As man now is God once was, As God now is man may become. Lorenzo Snow

Joseph Smith told the Saints in Nauvoo, Illinois, “[I am] going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined that God was God from all eternity. These [concepts] are incomprehensible to some but are the first principle[s] of the gospel—to know that we may converse with Him as one man with another and that He was once as one of us and was on a planet as Jesus was in the flesh.” (WJS, 357.)

The Samuel W. Richards record of the King Follett discourse reports the Prophet as saying, “God: a man like one of us, even like Adam. Not God from all eternity. Once on a planet with flesh and blood, like Christ” (WJS, 361, emphasis added).

Brigham Young likewise taught that “God, . . . the Father of our spirits, . . . was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an exalted Being” (JD, 7:333).

On another occasion President Young said, “Our Father in heaven is exalted and glorified. . . . While He was in the flesh, as we are, He was as we are” (JD, 4:54).

President Lorenzo Snow’s oft repeated couplet applies here. “As man now is, God once was” (Clyde J. Williams, ed., *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], 2).

Bishop Orson F. Whitney said, “Mormonism teaches that God was once just like ourselves; that the eternal part of Him was enshrined in mortal flesh, subject to mortal ills and earthly pains and toils. I do not now refer to the experience of the Savior in the meridian of time. I mean that in the far away eons of the past God once dwelt upon an earth like this, and that through its trials and vicissitudes and the experience they afforded He became a more intelligent being than before, ascending finally by obedience to certain principles, ennobling and exalting in their nature, to the plane which He now occupies” (Brian H. Stuy, ed., *Collected Discourses* [Burbank, California: B. H. S. Publishing, 1989], 3:45,).

Gospel scholar Stephen E. Robinson writes in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* that “the Father became the Father at some time before ‘the beginning’ as humans know it, by experiencing a mortality similar to that experienced on earth” (Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* [New York: Macmillan, 1992], 2:549, hereafter cited as EM).

The Prophet was even more specific when he declared that “God the Father took life unto Himself precisely as Jesus did.” WJS, 60.

A statement made by President Joseph F. Smith is the most explicit to be found on this topic. He said, “The Son, Jesus Christ, grew and developed into manhood the same as you or I, as likewise did God, His Father, grow and develop to the Supreme Being that He now is. Man was born of woman; Christ, the Savior, was born of woman; and God, the Father, was born of woman.” *Deseret Evening News*, 27 December 1913, section III, 7.

Elder Orson Hyde said, “Remember that God, our Heavenly Father was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of

advancement; has moved forward and overcome, until He has arrived at the point where He now is” (JD, 1:123).

According to President Brigham Young, the great Parent of the human race took part in mortal circumstances that are similar to our own. He “has passed the ordeals we are now passing through; He has received an experience, has suffered and enjoyed, and knows all that we know regarding the toils, sufferings, life and death of this mortality, for He has passed through the whole of it, and has received His crown and exaltation.” (JD, 11:249.)

President Joseph F. Smith expressed the same idea and also pointed out that God’s children take bodies upon themselves in mortality so that they can become like Him. “It is absolutely necessary that we should come to the earth and take upon us tabernacles; because if we did not have tabernacles we could not be like God, nor like Jesus Christ. God has a tabernacle of flesh and bone. He is an organized Being just as we are, who are now in the flesh. Jesus Christ . . . [also] had a fleshly tabernacle. . . . and His body was raised from the dead. . . . You and I have to do the same thing. We must go through the same ordeal in order to attain to the glory and exaltation which God designed we should enjoy with Him in the eternal worlds. In other words, we must become like Him; peradventure to sit upon thrones, to have dominion, power, and eternal increase. God designed this in the beginning. We are the children of God. He is an eternal Being, without beginning of days or end of years. He always was, He is, He always will be. We are precisely in the same condition and under the same circumstances that God our Heavenly Father was when He was passing through this, or a similar ordeal.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 64)

Wilford Woodruff Whoever goes back into the presence of God our Eternal Father, will find that He is a noble man, a noble God, tabernacled in a form similar to ours, for we are created after His own image.” In addition, said President Woodruff, they will learn that God “has placed us here that we may pass through a state of probation and experience, the same as He Himself did in His day of mortality.” (JD, 18:32)

President Daniel H. Wells of the First Presidency said that “[God] is a Being of agency, and has passed along the path which He wishes us to tread, and has attained to His exaltation just as He desires us to attain to ours” (*Millennial Star*, vol. 26, no. 50, 10 December 1864, 786).