

LDS God "Functionally Atheistic" — Cheat Sheet

THEIR BEST ARGUMENTS (KNOW THESE)

- **Cosmological argument** — The chain of causes must terminate in a necessary, self-existent being (Aquinas's First Cause)
- **Divine simplicity** — If God has parts (a body), He is composite, therefore contingent, therefore not ultimate
- **Immutability** — A God who was once human changed; a God who changes is not the ground of being
- **Infinite regress** — If God was exalted by another God, the chain never terminates — no ultimate explanation
- **"God is Spirit" (John 4:24)** — God is immaterial by nature
- **"I Am That I Am" (Exodus 3:14)** — God is "being itself" (*ipsum esse subsistens*)
- **Conciliar consensus** — Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon, Fourth Lateran Council all affirm transcendent, incorporeal God

CORE RESPONSE: CLASSICAL THEISM IS PHILOSOPHY, NOT BIBLE

The Biblical God Is Personal, Embodied, and Relational

- **Genesis 1:26-27** — Man made in God's "image" and "likeness"
- **Exodus 24:9-11** — Moses and 70 elders **see** God; under His feet: sapphire pavement
- **Exodus 33:11** — God speaks to Moses **face to face**
- **Exodus 33:20-23** — God has a face, "back parts" — bodily language
- **Daniel 7:9** — Ancient of Days sits, wears garments, has white hair
- **Acts 7:55-56** — Stephen sees Father and Son as **two distinct beings** in heaven
- **Philippians 3:21** — Christ has a **glorified body**
- **Hebrews 1:3** — Son is the "express image" of the Father's person

The Biblical God Changes and Responds

- **Genesis 6:6** — God grieves
- **Exodus 32:14** — God "repented" in response to Moses
- **Jonah 3:10** — God changes course when Nineveh repents
- **Jeremiah 18:7-10** — God explicitly says He adjusts plans based on human response

Classical theism must allegorize all of these. LDS theology reads them as written.

"I Am That I Am" Is Not Thomistic Metaphysics

- Hebrew: *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* = "I will be what I will be" — covenantal promise, not ontological definition
- The Platonic/Aristotelian reading was introduced through the Greek Septuagint, not the Hebrew original

EARLY CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE

- **Tertullian** — "Who will deny that God is a body?" (*Against Praxeas* 7)
- **Irenaeus** — "The glory of God is man fully alive" (*Against Heresies* 4.20.1)
- **Justin Martyr** — Father and Son numerically distinct; not yet classical theism

- Divine simplicity/immutability developed through centuries of Greek philosophical synthesis (Augustine, Cappadocians, Aquinas) — not from the apostles

ONE-LINE OBJECTION RESPONSES

Objection	Response
"A bodily God is finite and limited"	Christ's resurrected body passed through walls, appeared/disappeared — glorified embodiment transcends mortal limits (John 20:19; Luke 24:31, 39-43)
"Without divine simplicity God is contingent"	Simplicity is Aristotelian philosophy, not biblical doctrine. Plantinga, Craig, and Swinburne all reject it while affirming robust theism
"God is Spirit means immaterial"	"Spiritual body" in 1 Cor 15:44 shows "spiritual" ≠ immaterial. Christ: "a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39)
"Infinite regress = no ultimate answer"	Classical theism also can't explain <i>why</i> the necessary being exists. Both systems locate mystery somewhere. LDS: matter and intelligence are co-eternal (D&C 93:29)
"Aquinas proved God must be uncaused cause"	Aquinas's Five Ways are philosophical arguments resting on contested Aristotelian premises — not scripture
"Your God is just a powerful alien"	A being who is all-knowing, all-powerful, perfectly loving, creator of worlds, Father of spirits, object of all worship = God, not "alien." The label is rhetoric, not argument
"Councils settled this"	Councils used Greek philosophy to interpret scripture; LDS theology uses scripture to evaluate philosophy. Different starting point, not atheism

LDS DOCTRINAL ANCHORS

- **D&C 130:22** — "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's"
- **D&C 20:17** — God is "infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God"
- **D&C 93:29, 33** — Intelligence and matter are co-eternal with God
- **Abraham 3:18** — God is "more intelligent than they all"
- **Lectures on Faith 5** — The Father is a "personage of glory and of power"

THE REAL QUESTION

The critic's framework: *Is the LDS God the "ground of being" in Aristotelian/Thomistic metaphysics?*

The better question: *Does the LDS God match the God described in the Bible — personal, embodied, relational, responsive, supreme, and worthy of worship?*

The answer is yes. "Functional atheism" is a label derived from philosophy, not from scripture.

Resources:

- [FAIR: LDS Concept of God](#)
- [Gospel Topics: Becoming Like God](#)