The Nature of God: The King Follett Discourse & the Bible

"Do Mormons worship a different God?" No—we worship the biblical God whose nature is taught in scripture

1. GOD HAS A PHYSICAL BODY

King Follett: "If you were to see God today, you would see him in all the person, image, and very form as a man." —Joseph Smith, 1844

Biblical Evidence:

Gen 1:26-27: "Let us make man in **our image, after our likeness**."
→ Hebrew *tselem* (image) = physical statue/representation (same word for idols in 1 Sam 6:5)

Ex 33:20-23: God has **face, hand, back parts**. Moses couldn't see God's face but saw His "back parts." If metaphorical, what do these symbolize?

Acts 7:55-56: Stephen "saw... **Jesus standing on the right hand of God**."
→ Two separate beings (God + Jesus), both visible, spatial location

Heb 1:3: Christ is the **express image of his [Father's] person**."
→ Greek *charaktēr* = exact imprint/stamp (like coin with king's face)

Luke 24:39: Resurrected Christ: "Handle me... a spirit hath not **flesh and bones**, as ye see me have."
→ Jesus ascended in that body (Acts 1:11), sits at Father's right hand in that body (Acts 7:56)

2. GOD WAS ONCE AS WE ARE

King Follett: "God himself dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did... Jesus did what the Father did."

Biblical Evidence:

John 5:19: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but **what he seeth the Father do**."
→ What did Jesus do? Born, lived, died, resurrected. Jesus said He does "what He saw the Father do."

Phil 2:5-8: Christ was "in the form of God," **made himself of no reputation**, took on mortal form, died, then exalted (v. 9-11).
→ Pattern: Godhood → Condescension → Mortality → Exaltation

Heb 5:8-9: Christ "**learned obedience**... being **made perfect**, he **became** the author of salvation."
→ Christ "became" through learning, suffering, perfection = progression

Rev 3:21: "I grant to sit with me in my throne, **even as I also overcame**, and am set down with my Father in his throne."
→ Christ "overcame" (mortality, temptation, death) to sit in Father's throne. Did Father also "overcome"?

John 20:17: Jesus: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; **and to my God, and your God**."
→ Jesus calls the Father "my God." Does the Father have a God above Him?

3. HUMANS CAN BECOME LIKE GOD

King Follett: "You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves... going from one small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation."

Biblical Evidence:

Psalm 82:6 / John 10:34-36: "I have said, **Ye are gods**."
Jesus quotes this and says "**the scripture cannot be broken**" = affirms it's literally true

2 Peter 1:4: "That ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**."
→ Greek *theias koinonoi physeos* = sharers of God's very nature (not just attributes)

Rom 8:17: "**Joint-heirs with Christ**."
Heb 1:2: Christ is "heir of all things." If we're joint-heirs, we inherit "all things" with Him.

1 John 3:2: "**We shall be like him**."
Not "holy like Him" but "LIKE HIM" in fullest sense.

Matt 5:48: "**Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father** which is in heaven is perfect."
Greek *teleioi* = complete, mature, fully developed. Command to become perfect "even as" the Father.

Acts 17:28-29: "**We are also his offspring**."
Cat's offspring → cat. Human's offspring → human. God's offspring → ?

Rev 3:21: "To him that overcometh will I grant to **sit with me in my throne**."
We sit with Christ in His throne, as Christ sits with Father in His throne.

Early Church Fathers Taught Theosis:
- **Irenaeus (130-202):** "He became what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is"
- **Athanasius (296-373):** "He was made man that we might **be made God**"
- **Augustine (354-430):** "If we have been made sons of God, we have also **been made gods**"

4. MULTIPLE DIVINE BEINGS

King Follett: "In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; they came together and concocted a plan to create the world."

Biblical Evidence:

Gen 1:1: "In the beginning **Elohim** [plural noun] created [singular verb]."
Elohim (-im ending) = grammatically plural

Gen 1:26: "Let **us** make man in **our** image."
Plural pronouns (not "I" or "my")

Psalm 82:1, 6: "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the **gods**... I have said, **Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High**."

Job 1:6: "The **sons of God** came to present themselves before the LORD."

(See "Godhead & Divine Plurality" cheat sheet for full details)

5. GOD ORGANIZED, NOT CREATED FROM NOTHING

King Follett: "The word 'create' (Hebrew *bara*) does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize... God had materials to organize the world out of chaos."

Biblical Evidence:

Gen 1:2: "The earth was **without form, and void**; darkness was upon the face of the **deep**. The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the **waters**."
→ Before creation: earth existed (unorganized), "deep" existed, "waters" existed

Gen 2:7: "The LORD God **formed** man of the **dust of the ground**."
Adam formed from existing material (dust)

Heb 11:3: "The worlds were **framed** by the word of God."
Greek *katartizō* = put in order, arrange, organize (not "create from nothing")

Note: *Creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing) developed in 2nd-3rd century AD to combat Gnosticism. NOT in the Bible.

6. SPIRIT OF MAN IS CO-ETERNAL

King Follett: "The mind of man is as immortal as God himself... Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle... God never had power to create the spirit of man at all."

Biblical Evidence:

Heb 12:9: "The **Father of spirits**."
God is Father of spirits (organized them), not creator from nothing

Jer 1:5: "Before I formed thee in the belly I **knew** thee."
God knew Jeremiah before mortal birth = pre-mortal existence

Job 38:4-7: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?... when all the **sons of God shouted for joy**?"
"Sons of God" present at earth's creation = pre-mortal spirits

Zech 12:1: The LORD "**formeth** the spirit of man within him."
Hebrew *yotser* = forms, fashions (potter shaping clay, Jer 18:4)

RESPONDING TO OBJECTIONS

Objection: "This Makes God Less Than God"
Response:
- God is eternal in divine nature (always divine)
- "Unchanging" = character (Mal 3:6), not experience (God "repented" Gen 6:6; Christ "learned obedience" Heb 5:8)
- Progression from grace to grace doesn't diminish divinity (like prince → king)

Objection: "King Follett Not Canonized"
Response:
- Core principles ARE in D&C (130:22 - God has body; 93:29 - intelligence not created; 132:20 - become gods)
- Not all truth needs canonization (continuing revelation)
- Biblical support validates the principles

Objection: "This Is Polytheism"
Response:
- We worship ONLY the Father (1 Cor 8:6)
- Bible teaches multiple divine beings (Psalm 82, Gen 1:26, John 10:34)
- Exalted humans don't replace God - remain subject to Father (1 Cor 15:28)

THE BOTTOM LINE

We worship the SAME GOD as the Bible.
We just understand His nature more accurately than 4th-century creeds.

Issue	Traditional	LDS	Bible
God's body	No body	Body of flesh & bone	Gen 1:26-27, Acts 7:55-56, Heb 1:3
God's progression	Eternally static	Progressed to exaltation	John 5:19, Phil 2:5-8, Heb 5:8-9
Human potential	Never like God	Partakers of divine nature	2 Pet 1:4, Rom 8:17, 1 John 3:2, Ps 82:6
Creation	From nothing	Organization of matter	Gen 1:2, Gen 2:7, Heb 11:3
Spirit of man	Created from nothing	Co-eternal (organized)	Heb 12:9, Jer 1:5, Job 38:7

What We Agree On:
- ✅ God is Creator, all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly loving
- ✅ God is eternal in nature and existence
- ✅ Father, Son, Holy Ghost are divine
- ✅ Jesus Christ is our Savior; salvation only through Him

Where We Differ:
Traditional: God incomprehensible, no body, created from nothing, humans never become like God
LDS: God has glorified body, experienced mortality (like Christ), organized from eternal matter, humans are His literal children with divine potential

The Real Question:
Which understanding of God's nature is more biblical?
LDS takes Gen 1:26-27, 2 Pet 1:4, Psalm 82:6, Acts 7:55-56 LITERALLY.
Traditional Christianity spiritualizes them to fit 4th-century creeds.

Sources: King Follett Discourse (1844), Holy Bible KJV, Early Church Fathers, D&C