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<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1982/02/i-have-a-question/is-president-snows-statement-as-man-now-is-god-once-was-as-god-now-is-man-may-be-accepted-as-official-doctrine?lang=eng>

Is President Lorenzo Snow's oft-repeated statement—"As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be"—accepted as official doctrine by the Church?

Gerald N. Lund, Teacher Support Consultant for the Church Education System. To my knowledge there has been no "official" pronouncement by the First Presidency declaring that President Snow's couplet is to be accepted as doctrine. But that is not a valid criteria for determining whether or not it *is* doctrine.

Generally, the First Presidency issues official doctrinal declarations when there is a general misunderstanding of the doctrine on the part of many people. Therefore, the Church teaches many principles which are accepted as doctrines but which the First Presidency has seen no need to declare in an official pronouncement. This particular doctrine has been taught not only by Lorenzo Snow, fifth President of the Church, but also by others of the Brethren before and since that time.

In her biography of her brother, Eliza R. Snow explains the circumstances which led Lorenzo Snow to pen the famous couplet: "Being present at a 'Blessing Meeting,' in the Temple, previous to his baptism into the Church; after listening to several patriarchal blessings pronounced upon the heads of different individuals with whose history he was acquainted, and of whom he knew the Patriarch was entirely ignorant; he was struck with astonishment to hear the peculiarities of those persons positively and plainly referred to in their blessings. And, as he afterwards expressed, he was convinced that an influence, superior to human prescience, dictated the words of the one who officiated.

"The Patriarch was the father of Joseph, the Prophet. That was the first time Lorenzo had met him. After the services, they were introduced, and Father Smith said to my brother that he would soon be convinced of the truth of the latter-day work, and be baptized; and he said: 'You will become as great as you can possibly wish—EVEN AS GREAT AS GOD, and you cannot wish to be greater.'" (Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1884, pp. 9–10.)

Lorenzo Snow was baptized a short time later and began his service in the Church. In the spring of 1840 he was called to serve a mission in the British Isles. Before his departure he was in the home of a Church member who was preaching a sermon on the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. (See [Matt. 20:1–16](#).) According to Elder Snow, “While attentively listening to his explanation, the Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man. I formed the following couplet which expresses the *revelation*, as it was shown me, and explains Father Smith’s dark saying to me at a blessing meeting in the Kirtland Temple, prior to my baptism. ...

“As man now is, God once was:”

“As God now is, man may be.”

“I felt this to be a sacred communication, which I related to no one except my sister Eliza, until I reached England, when in a confidential private conversation with President Brigham Young, in Manchester, I related to him this extraordinary manifestation.” (Eliza R. Snow, pp. 46–47; italics added. Brigham Young was President of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time.)

President Snow’s son LeRoi later told that the Prophet Joseph Smith confirmed the validity of the revelation Elder Snow had received: “Soon after his return from England, in January, 1843, Lorenzo Snow related to the Prophet Joseph Smith his experience in Elder Sherwood’s home. This was in a confidential interview in Nauvoo. The Prophet’s reply was: ‘Brother Snow, that is a true gospel doctrine, and it is a revelation from God to you.’” (LeRoi C. Snow, *Improvement Era*, June 1919, p. 656.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith himself publicly taught the doctrine the following year, 1844, during a funeral sermon of Elder King Follett: “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! ... 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, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938, pp. 345–46.)

Once the Prophet Joseph had taught the doctrine publicly, Elder Snow also felt free to publicly teach it, and it was a common theme of his teachings throughout his life. About ten years before his death, while serving as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, President Snow incorporated his original couplet into a longer poem. He addressed the poem to the Apostle Paul, who had written the following to the Philippian Saints:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” ([Philip. 2:5–6](#).)

Part of the poem reads:

*The boy, like to his father grown,
Has but attained unto his own;
To grow to sire from state of son,
Is not 'gainst Nature's course to run.
A son of God, like God to be,
Would not be robbing Deity.*

(As cited in LeRoi C. Snow, p. 661.)

Numerous sources could be cited, but one should suffice to show that this doctrine is accepted and taught by the Brethren. In an address in 1971, President Joseph Fielding Smith, then serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said:

“I think I can pay no greater tribute to [President Lorenzo Snow and Elder Erastus Snow] than to preach again *that glorious doctrine* which they taught and which was one of the favorite themes, particularly of President Lorenzo Snow. ...

“We have been promised by the Lord that if we know how to worship, and know what we worship, we may come unto the Father in his name, and in due time receive of his fulness. We have the promise that if we keep his commandments, we shall receive of his fulness and be glorified in him as he is in the Father.

“This is a doctrine which delighted President Snow, *as it does all of us*. Early in his ministry he received by direct, personal revelation the knowledge that (in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s language), ‘God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens,’ and that men ‘have got to learn how to be Gods ... the same as all Gods have done before.’

“After this doctrine had been taught by the Prophet, President Snow felt free to teach it also, and he summarized it in one of the best known couplets in the Church. ...

“This same doctrine has of course been known to the prophets of all the ages, and President Snow wrote an excellent poetic summary of it.” (Address on Snow Day, given at Snow College, 14 May 1971, pp. 1, 3–4; italics added.)

It is clear that the teaching of President Lorenzo Snow is both acceptable and accepted doctrine in the Church today.

