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The Ministry of the Father and the Son

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Robert L. Millet

*T*he Prophet Joseph Smith identified the Book of Mormon as the “most correct of any book on earth.”¹ A modern Apostle has observed, “As far as learning the gospel and teaching the gospel are concerned, the Book of Mormon, by all odds, is the most important of the standard works, because in simplicity and in plainness it sets forth in a definitive manner the doctrines of the gospel.”² The Book of Mormon is that “portion of the word” given in our day to declare and prove the truthfulness of the Restoration. It also establishes a theological foundation in the Church and, in conjunction with the Bible, aids men in “confounding . . . false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace” among those who will give heed to its words (2 Nephi 3:12).

“And They Are One God”

Joseph Smith taught in 1844, “I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.”³ Here was sound and solid doctrine, doctrine which the

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Prophet assures us he had always taught, doctrine which was consistent and in harmony with the teachings of the Book of Mormon. Neither Joseph Smith nor the prophets in the Book of Mormon taught “trinitarian” doctrines,⁴ for such were false and a part of those religious creeds which the Lord himself declared to be “an abomination in his sight” (JS—H 1:19).

From the time of the First Vision on, Joseph the Prophet knew that the Father and Son were separate individuals. Whether he understood from that experience in the Sacred Grove that the Father had a body of flesh and bones is uncertain; we do know that the Saints were teaching the materiality of God as early as 1836.⁵ Regarding the nature of God, Joseph Smith instructed the School of the Prophets (in the winter of 1834-35): “God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell; and that he is the Father of lights.”⁶ In April of 1843 Joseph the Prophet gave a simple explanation which has profound theological implications: “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” (D&C 130:22). By 1844 the Prophet was able to deliver the crowning pronouncements of his ministry regarding the person and nature of God. In the famous King Follett Discourse, Joseph Smith taught: “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret.” Continuing: “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.”⁷

In this paper we will refer to the two central characters of the Godhead as *Elohim*, “the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race,”⁸ and *Jehovah*, the premortal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who became the mortal Messiah, Jesus

Christ. President Joseph Fielding Smith has given the following insightful information regarding the ministries of Elohim and Jehovah:

After Adam's transgression he was shut out of the presence of the Father who has remained hidden from his children to this day, with few exceptions wherein righteous men have been privileged with the glorious privilege of seeing him. The withdrawal of the Father did not break the communication between men and God, for another means of approach was instituted and that is through the ministry of his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.⁹

President Smith has further explained: "All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In all of the scriptures, where God is mentioned and where he has appeared, it was Jehovah. . . . The Father has never dealt with man directly and personally since the fall, and he has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son."¹⁰

It is very clear from the scriptures that while Jehovah-Christ is the God who deals directly with man, Elohim, the Eternal Father, is the ultimate object of man's worship. A modern revelation at the time of the organization of the Restored Church explained:

By these things [specifically the teachings of the Book of Mormon and modern revelations] we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them;

And that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them;

And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship (D&C 20:17-19; cf. JST, John 4:25-26).

That Elohim is our Father in Heaven and thus the God of Jesus Christ is particularly clear in the Book of Mormon. Lehi spoke of God the Eternal Father as the "Lord God" who would raise up a Messiah among the Jews, even a Savior of the world (1 Nephi 10:4). Nearly fifty years later, Nephi spoke of the scattering and gathering of Israel, and especially the Jews:

And after they have been scattered, and the *Lord God* hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations,

yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind—and when that day shall come that *they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name*, . . . the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men (2 Nephi 25:16-17; emphasis added).

Indeed, the Book of Mormon record is replete with references regarding the distinct personalities of Elohim the Father and Jehovah or Jesus Christ the Son (see, for example, 2 Nephi 30:2; 31:7-21; 32:9; 33:12; Jacob 4:5; Alma 5:48; 12:33-34; Moroni 4:3; 5:2; 7:22-27, 32, 48).

The Book of Mormon prophets most often made reference to “God” or “the Lord” without any indication of whether Elohim or Jehovah was intended. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has observed:

Most scriptures that speak of God or of the Lord do not even bother to distinguish the Father from the Son, simply because it doesn't make any difference which God is involved. They are one. The words or deeds of either of them would be the words and deeds of the other in the same circumstance.

Further, if a revelation comes from, or by the power of the Holy Ghost, ordinarily the words will be those of the Son, though what the Son says will be what the Father would say, and the words may thus be considered as the Father's.¹¹

Sometimes in our zeal to declare and establish the distinction between the two personages, we overlook the fact that Elohim and Jehovah are infinitely more one than they are separate! In the words of the risen Lord to the Nephites: “Ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one” (3 Nephi 28:10; cf. 11:27, 36).

Jesus Christ: The Eternal God

On the title page of the Book of Mormon we learn of the major purposes of the sacred volume. Moroni explained that the records had been kept and preserved “to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gen-

tile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.” The Book of Mormon is obviously another testament of Jesus Christ: it establishes the historical veracity of Jesus of Nazareth, bears witness of his divine Sonship, and serves as an accompanying testament with the Bible that he “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). The Book of Mormon helps, of course, to sustain and reinforce the messianic testimonies of the New Testament prophets and apostles. But it does more than this. Nephi explained, “And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God” (2 Nephi 26:12). The Book of Mormon prophets certify that Jesus Christ is the Eternal God. That is, the Book of Mormon is a witness to the fact that Christ is God, the Eternal One, that he is the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the God of the ancient patriarchs, the Holy One of Israel. Had we access to all of the records of all the prophets who knew God from the beginning, undoubtedly we would see in their experiences and in their writings the unmistakable witness that Christ was and is the Eternal God. The Book of Mormon has come to us untainted and unhampered, and thus we find within its covers this repeated announcement. In stressing the importance of Latter-day Saints viewing Christ for who and what he really is, Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written:

Christ-Messiah is God!

Such is the plain and pure pronouncement of all the prophets of all the ages. In our desire to avoid the false and absurd conclusions contained in the creeds of Christendom, we are wont to shy away from this pure and unadorned verity; we go to great lengths to use language that shows there is both a Father and a Son, that they are separate Persons and are not somehow mystically intertwined as an essence or spirit that is everywhere present. Such an approach is perhaps essential in reasoning with the Gentiles of sectarianism; it helps to overthrow the fallacies formulated in their creeds.

But having so done, if we are to envision our Lord’s true status and glory, we must come back to the pronouncement of pronouncements, the doctrine of doctrines, the message of messages, which is that Christ is God. And if it were not so, he could not save us.¹²

One of the strongest sections of the Book of Mormon with regard to the role of Christ as the Eternal God is 1 Nephi 11. Nephi's pondering and prayer in response to his father's dream resulted in a remarkable vision (1 Nephi 11-14). In chapter 11 Nephi's divinely sent guide began the explanation of the tree which Lehi had seen. Nephi was caught away into vision: "And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white" (1 Nephi 11:13). Nephi was asked by the angel, "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" He answered, "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:16-17). Nephi seemed to grasp the fact that the great God has love and compassion for his earthly children, that he condescends in the sense that he who is infinite and perfect has tender regard for those who are so very finite and imperfect. But the angel had much more in mind. "And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is *the mother of God*, after the manner of the flesh." Nephi witnessed as Mary was "carried away in the Spirit." "And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even *the Eternal Father!*" (See 1 Nephi 11:13-21, 1830 edition; emphasis added).¹³ Nephi observed while the Eternal One—Jehovah, who would come to be known as Jesus Christ—went forth among the children of men "ministering unto the people, in power and great glory; and the multitudes were gathered together to hear him; and I beheld that they cast him out from among them." Nephi thereafter bore witness of the irony of the ages—the greatest contradiction of eternity:¹⁴ "And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, *the Everlasting God* was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record. And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world" (1830 edition, 1 Nephi, chapter 3, p. 26; emphasis added. Compare with 1981 edition, 1 Nephi 11:32-33).

Jacob bore a similar testimony: "I know that ye

know that in the body he [Christ] shall show himself unto those at Jerusalem, from whence we came; for it is expedient that it should be among them; for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him" (2 Nephi 9:5). In similar fashion an angel explained to King Benjamin concerning the condescension of God:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, *the Lord Omnipotent* who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and *shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay*. . . .

And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, *even more than man can suffer*, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this *they shall consider him a man*, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him (Mosiah 3:5, 7, 9; emphasis added; cf. 1 Nephi 19:7-10; 2 Nephi 1:10).¹⁵

Indeed, nothing is more plain in the Book of Mormon than the fact that the God of ancient Israel, the God of the Fathers, would come to earth as the mortal Messiah, would "descend from his throne divine" ("I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City, 1985], p. 193) to rescue rebellious souls and thus make salvation available to the penitent.¹⁶

The confrontation between Amulek and Zeezrom provides invaluable insights into the role of Jehovah as premortal God and mortal Savior. Zeezrom, crafty and skilled in his rhetorical devices, sought to cross and embarrass Amulek "that he might destroy that which was good." Zeezrom asked, "Thou sayest there is a true and living God?" to which Amulek responded, "Yea, there is a true and living God." Zeezrom followed up: "Is there more than one God?" to which the Nephite missionary answered simply, "No." Amulek had answered correctly on two counts. There is only *one Godhead*, as this inspired spokesman would shortly observe: "Every thing shall be restored

to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of *Christ the Son, and God the Father and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God*, to be judged according to their works.” At the same time, *Jehovah* is the one true God—the God known to men from the beginning. Zeezrom, anxious to trap the servant of the Lord, asked: “Who is he that shall come? Is it the Son of God?” Amulek appropriately replied, “Yea.” His answer was perfect, and perfectly understandable to those with eyes of faith: Christ-Jehovah is both God and Son of God, and, as we shall note shortly, both Father and Son. The deceptive lawyer’s questions simply provided a forum for the truth, an occasion for the declaration of deep and penetrating doctrine. Jehovah is the one true and living God, “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.” This God would come down to earth, take a body of flesh and bones, and offer salvation from sin to the truly repentant (Alma 11:21-44; emphasis added).¹⁷

Because men must believe this dimension of the “doctrine of Christ” to be saved—the doctrine that the premortal Lord Omnipotent would take a mortal and then an immortal body in working out the infinite and eternal atonement—Satan has labored incessantly to deny and stamp out the true message with regard to the coming of the Messiah. And so it is that in the Nephite record we find repeatedly the haughty assertion of the anti-Christ: “There shall be no Christ!” Sherem (Jacob 7), Nehor (Alma 1), and Korihor (Alma 30) were among the most vocal and visible of the anti-Christes in the Book of Mormon. Skilled orators like Sherem and Korihor contended that things of the future (and essentially things of the Spirit) *could not be known* (Jacob 7:1-9; Alma 30:13-15, 24-26, 48). There was also another group of anti-Christes who proved to be particularly interesting: the Zoramites. The Zoramites had, as a result of their false traditions and idolatry, rejected the law of Moses and the ordinances of the true church. Alma and his missionary companions discovered that these people had “built synagogues, and that they did gather themselves together on one day of the week.” The Nephite missionaries noted also that the Zoramites

“had a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a place for standing” where each person would utter the same prayer (Alma 31:1, 8-14). The words of the prayer are most instructive in assessing the extent of their apostasy:

Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that *thou wilt be a spirit forever*.

Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also *thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ* (Alma 31:15-16; emphasis added).

This group of apostates seemed to be caught up in a type of predestination, a doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation. Most interesting for the purposes of this discussion, however, is the fact that they had come to deny the coming Messiah by denying the coming condescension and incarnation of Jehovah; stated simply, to say that their God would always be a spirit was equivalent to saying that there would be no Christ.

The belief that the Eternal God would come to earth as a mortal Messiah was often very unpopular among those who needed a Messiah most. Lehi bore witness to the people of Jerusalem of the need for repentance, and of the impending doom should spiritual change not take place. He also spoke of “the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world.” Note the reaction of the people: “And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and *they also sought his life, that they might take it away*” (1 Nephi 1:20; emphasis added; cf. Alma 21:9-10).¹⁸ Limhi explained to Ammon concerning the wickedness of King Noah and the atrocities committed during his abominable reign:

And a prophet of the Lord [Abinadi] have they slain; yea, a chosen man of God, who told them of their wickedness and abominations, and prophesied of many things which are to come, yea, even the coming of Christ.

And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the

image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth—

And now, because he said this, they did put him to death (Mosiah 7:26-28; emphasis added; cf. 17:7-8).

In summary, Christ was and is THE ETERNAL GOD. The Lamb of God is also the one true Shepherd over all the earth, the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world (1830 edition, 1 Nephi, chapter 3, p. 32; cf. 1 Nephi 13:40-41). In the words of Nephi: “And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish. For *if there be no Christ there be no God*; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But *there is a God and he is Christ*, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time” (2 Nephi 11:6-7; emphasis added).¹⁹

The Name of Christ Known Anciently

One of the greatest contributions of modern revelation (and in this category we include the Book of Mormon) is an insight into the nature of Christ’s eternal gospel, the revelation to the Church and to the world that Christian doctrine and Christian ordinances have been taught by Christian prophets since the days of Adam. The Book of Mormon is a powerful witness of the fact that the ancient prophets eagerly anticipated the coming of Jesus Christ and worshipped the Father in the name of the Son, as they had been commanded from the beginning (see Moses 5:7-8). At the time of the confusion of tongues, the brother of Jared penetrated the veil and entered the realm of divine experience. He beheld the spirit body of the Lord, received the assurance that he was redeemed from the Fall, and heard the following from the mouth of Jehovah: “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, *I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son*. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name” (Ether 3:14; emphasis added; cf. 4:7-8).²⁰

While Nephi was in the midst of his remarkable vision, the angel began to explain the various meanings of objects in Lehi's dream, such as the fountain of filthy water and the mists of darkness. Then the angel spoke: "And the large and spacious building, which thy father saw, is vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men. And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, *and Jesus Christ which is the Lamb of God* of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record" (1830 ed., 1 Nephi, chapter 3, p. 28; emphasis added; cf. 1 Nephi 12:18).²¹ Jacob, the brother of Nephi, rejoiced in the assurance which he had that his posterity would eventually come to "the true knowledge of their Redeemer." "Wherefore," he continued, "as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that *Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world*" (2 Nephi 10:2-3; emphasis added). It is difficult to know exactly what Jacob had in mind in the preceding statement. Did he mean that this was the first occasion whereby he came to know that the name of the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah, would be Christ? Did he mean that the angel had simply confirmed in his mind the specific name of the Messiah, something which he already knew? The question here is largely one of language: we know the Lord Jehovah as Jesus Christ, names which literally mean "the Lord is salvation" and "the Messiah or anointed one," respectively. The exact name by which Christ was known to other peoples of the past (and of different languages) is unknown to us. Elder Theodore M. Burton has written by way of explanation:

We do not know the language or the exact words used by the Book of Mormon prophets. Certainly they did not speak English. A good translator translates meanings and not just words. The reader of the translation must be able to understand the thought expressed in the original work and understand the meaning thereof. If Joseph Smith, in translating the words actually used, had written down the original words, no one would have understood what was meant. Even if he had used the English equivalents and had written "the Redeemer, the Anointed," not everyone would have understood whom he referred to. But when he translated those words as *Jesus Christ*, everyone understood, and that very quickly. It is a good translation. . . .

Thus, the ancient Book of Mormon prophets and the prophets of the Old Testament were all speaking of the same person, though they used the words their people would understand. They referred to the same person we refer to as "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Regardless of the language they used, the meaning is clear. Joseph Smith, in translating the Book of Mormon, used the words "Jesus Christ" because they gave a clear-cut understanding of what was written by the original scribe.²²

Nephi similarly spoke of the coming of the anointed one, bearing a confirmatory witness (of that of his prophetic predecessors and of the word of angels): "For according to the words of the prophets, the Messiah cometh in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem; and *according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God*" (2 Nephi 25:19; emphasis added). An angel also explained to King Benjamin concerning the condescension of God, and attested to his infinite anguish and suffering. The angel then taught, "And *he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . and his mother shall be called Mary*" (Mosiah 3:8; emphasis added). Even as Adam was counseled by an angel to do all that he did in the name of the Son (Moses 5:8), so the Nephite prophets affirmed that "as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which [has been] spoken, whereby man can be saved" (2 Nephi 25:20; cf. 31:21; Mosiah 3:17; Moses 6:52; Acts 4:12).

Jesus Christ: Father by Creation

As indicated earlier, Elohim is the Father of the spirits of all men, including Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:9; Numbers 16:22), and is thus the ultimate object of our worship. "True worshipers," Jesus taught the woman at the well in Samaria, "shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (JST, John 4:25). Elohim is our Father because he gave us life—provided a spirit birth for each of us. Jesus Christ is also known by the title of *Father*, and is so designated in scripture.²³ We shall consider the ways in which the Lord Jehovah—Jesus the Christ—is called Father, and shall spe-

cifically note the contribution of the Book of Mormon to our understanding of these matters.

Jesus Christ is known as Father by virtue of his role as Creator. Eons before he ever became mortal he was directly involved in creation. "While yet in the premortal existence Jehovah advanced and progressed until he became like unto God. Under the direction of the Father he became the Creator of worlds without number, and thus was himself the Lord Omnipotent."²⁴ Enoch expressed the grandeur of the Lord's creative enterprise when he exclaimed: "Were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations" (Moses 7:30). To Moses the Lord explained how it was that he had created the world: "For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me. And *by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son*, who is full of grace and truth. And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and *by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten*" (Moses 1:31-33; emphasis added; cf. Hebrews 1:1-3).

Because Jehovah-Christ created the heavens and the earth, he is appropriately known in the Book of Mormon as "the Father of heaven and of earth." The Nephite and Jaredite prophets came to know full well that the Messiah, the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh, was the same being who had created all things (see 2 Nephi 25:12). The angel explained to King Benjamin that "he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning*" (Mosiah 3:8; emphasis added). Zeezrom asked Amulek: "Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father?" "And Amulek said unto him: Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Alma 11:38-39). Finally, the words and testimony of the Lord himself seem appropriate in this regard. Just prior to his ministry to the Nephites, and immediately following the destruction in the New World, Jehovah spoke: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the

heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name" (3 Nephi 9:15).

Jesus Christ: Father through Spiritual Rebirth

In the premortal world, Jehovah became the chief advocate of the plan of the Eternal Father (Moses 4:2), a plan which called for redemption to be made available through the shedding of the blood of an innocent and Only Begotten Son. As the Savior and foreordained Messiah, Jesus Christ thus became "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9), and the Father's gospel became his by adoption—the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus became the advocate and intercessor for fallen man, the way to the Father (John 14:6). Under the Almighty Elohim, Jehovah became the Father of salvation, the Father of eternal life (see Ether 3:14).

Things on earth are patterned after that which is in heaven. God dwells in the family unit, and so the order of heaven is patriarchal. Those on earth who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ enter the family of Jesus Christ, take upon them the family name, and thus become inheritors of family obligations and family privileges. Inasmuch as one was not originally a member of the family of the Lord Jesus prior to the time of accountability (or conversion), he must be adopted into that family; one must "subscribe the articles of adoption"—have faith in Christ, repent of all sins, be baptized by immersion by a legal administrator, and receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost—meet the legal requirements of the kingdom of God to properly qualify and be received into the new family relationship.²⁵

Spiritual rebirth is an absolute necessity for one who aspires to the celestial kingdom. Even as one may enter mortality only through mortal birth, so also may one qualify for life in the spiritual realm—eternal life—only after spiritual rebirth, through being born again as to things of righteousness. The Lord commanded Adam to teach these things freely unto his children, saying "that by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death,

and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory” (Moses 6: 59). Jesus Christ becomes the Covenant Father of all who receive and abide by the terms and conditions of his new and everlasting covenant, the fulness of his gospel (D&C 66:2; 133:57). That person who enters the gospel covenant and strives thereafter to live worthy of the directions and purifying powers of the Spirit is born again into this new family relationship; he “becometh as a child” in the sense of becoming “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19). As it is with the physical creation of the heavens and the earth, so it is with the human character and personality: Christ is the Father of creation, and through applying his atoning blood men and women become “new creations,” “new creatures of Christ” through the medium of the Holy Ghost.

After a stirring and inspiring sermon by their noble king and spiritual leader, Benjamin, the Nephites were overcome by the Spirit of the Lord, such that they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). Further, they entered into a sacred covenant to keep the commandments of God all the remainder of their days. King Benjamin was delighted by the people’s response and added, “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.*” King Benjamin then enjoined upon his people the responsibility to take upon them the family name—the name of Christ—that they might know both the voice and the name by which the Lord could eventually call them home (Mosiah 5:1-15; emphasis added).

The “new creation” associated with spiritual rebirth generally involves the gradual crucifixion and death of the “old man of sin” and the birth of the new person. Occasionally that rebirth entails a sudden and dramatic renovation of character, as in the case of Alma the Younger. Described as “a very wicked and an idolatrous man” (Mosiah 27:8), a member of a group characterized as “the very vilest of sinners” (Mosiah 28:4), Alma rebelled against the teachings of his righteous father; he and the sons of Mosiah became a significant stumbling block to the growth of the Church. But the fasting and prayers of a righteous father and concerned members of the Church availed much, and an angel was sent to Alma to awaken his immortal soul from the sleep of spiritual death and open his eyes to the truth. Rising from three days of bitterness associated with pain and sorrow and repentance, a new Alma stood before the Church, bade them “to be of good comfort,” and said: “I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold *I am born of the Spirit*. And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that *all mankind*, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, *must be born again*; yea, born of God, *changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters*; and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:8-26; emphasis added). This same Alma would later ask the people of Zarahemla: “And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, *have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?*” (Alma 5:14; emphasis added).

Abinadi challenged the life-styles of wicked King Noah and his priests. In the process of delivering a scathing denunciation, he also delivered a penetrating commentary on Isaiah’s greatest Messianic utterance (Isaiah 53). Isaiah had said of the coming Messiah, “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed” (Isaiah 53:10). Abinadi explained:

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? (Mosiah 15:11-12; emphasis added).

When he had finished his work on Calvary, the Lord of the living and the dead entered the world of spirits. Having made his soul “an offering for sin” in Gethsemane and on the cross, the Master was greeted in the spirit world by his seed, “an innumerable company of the spirits of the just,” the righteous dead from the days of Adam to the meridian of time. To these persons—his seed—he taught the principles of his gospel and prepared them to come forth in a glorious resurrection (See D&C 138:12-19).²⁶

Finally, let us consider the words of Christ himself to the Nephites prior to his visit to America: “I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. And *as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God*; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled” (3 Nephi 9:16-17; emphasis added; cf. Ether 3:14).²⁷

Jesus Christ: Father by Divine Investiture of Authority

Jesus Christ explained to a group during his Palestinian ministry, “I am come in my Father’s name” (John 5:43). Our Lord acted and spoke on behalf of Elohim, such that he could proclaim, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me” (John 7:16). Christ is therefore known as Father “by divine investiture of authority,”²⁸ meaning that “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.”²⁹

There are numerous instances throughout the standard works wherein we can see this principle in operation. "And [Jehovah] called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh. And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, *in the name of mine Only Begotten Son*, who is full of grace and truth, *which is Jesus Christ*, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Moses 6:51-52; emphasis added). To Enoch the Lord spoke: "And *That* which I have chosen [the Savior] hath pled before my face. Wherefore, he suffereth for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent in the day that *my Chosen* shall return unto me, and until that day they [those in "prison" in the spirit world] shall be in torment; Wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep, yea, and all the workmanship of mine hands" (Moses 7:39-40; emphasis added). Another dramatic occasion wherein the premortal Christ spoke on behalf of his Father is found in the experience of Moses on an unnamed mountain. Jehovah said, "My works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease." And then he continued: "And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth" (Moses 1:4, 6; cf. vv. 32-33).³⁰

We find the principle of divine investiture of authority particularly prevalent in the Doctrine and Covenants. In fact, there were a number of occasions on which the Lord chose to speak as both Christ and Elohim in the same revelation. For example, in section 29 of the Doctrine and Covenants we read the following verse: "Listen to *the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, the Great I AM*, whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins" (D&C 29:1; emphasis added). But now note verse 42 of the same section: "I, the Lord God, gave unto Adam and unto his seed, that they should not die as to the temporal death, until I, the Lord God, should send forth angels to declare unto them repentance and redemption, *through faith on*

the name of mine *Only Begotten Son*” (emphasis added). In Doctrine and Covenants 49 the same principle is at work, this time in an opposite sequence. “Thus saith the Lord; for I am God, and have sent *mine Only Begotten Son* into the world for the redemption of the world” (v. 5; emphasis added). Now note the last verse of the revelation: “Behold, *I am Jesus Christ*, and I come quickly” (D&C 49:28; emphasis added). What better way is there to establish firmly in the minds of the Saints that the words of Jehovah are the very same words as those of Elohim; that they have the same mind and thoughts; that they are totally and completely *one*?³¹

The Book of Mormon demonstrates investiture of authority in yet other ways than those we have considered so far. One of the powerful witnesses of the Nephite and Jaredite records is that Jesus Christ is Father because Elohim has literally *invested* his Son with his own attributes and powers; in this sense, Christ is Father *by inheritance*. In the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “How is our Lord the Father? It is because of the atonement, because he received power from his Father to do that which is infinite and eternal. This is a matter of his Eternal Parent investing him with power from on high so that he becomes the Father because he exercises the power of that Eternal Being.”³² In like manner, President John Taylor wrote that Christ “is also called the Very Eternal Father. Does not this mean that in Him were the attributes and power of the very Eternal Father?”³³

One of the grandest messianic sermons ever delivered was Abinadi’s defense before King Noah and his wicked priests. The doctrine of this sermon is deep and profound. Abinadi had just quoted from Isaiah’s great messianic prophecy (Isaiah 53).

And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that 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 the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—

The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and the Son—

And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged and cast out, and disowned by his people (Mosiah 15: 1-5).

A number of key doctrinal matters are given in the foregoing text:

1. God himself—Jehovah, the God of ancient Israel—would come to earth, take a body of flesh and bones, and accomplish the work of redemption for all mankind.
2. Because Jehovah-Christ would have a physical body and dwell in the *flesh*—like every other mortal son and daughter of God—he would be known as the *Son* of God. At the same time, because he would be conceived by the power of God, and would thus have within him the powers of the *Spirit*, he would be known as the *Father*. In a modern revelation given in 1833, the Savior explained to the Prophet Joseph Smith that he is “the Father because he [Elohim] gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men.” Christ is thus known as the Son of God because in mortality his growth and development—like that of all the sons of God—were gradual, taking place line upon line and precept upon precept. That is, he received “grace for grace” and continued “from grace to grace” until he eventually received in the resurrection a fulness of the glory of the Father. “And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first” (D&C 93:4, 12-14).
3. The will of the Son was to be swallowed up in the will of the Father. That is, the *flesh* would become subject to the *Spirit*, the mortal subject to the immortal. “I seek not mine own will,” Jesus explained, “but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). Also, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of

him that sent me” (John 6:38). In short, Jesus would do what Elohim would have him do. And since the will of Elohim was also the will of the premortal Jehovah, Jesus Christ the mortal would carry out the will of Jehovah the immortal. In 3 Nephi 1:13-14 Nephi received comfort the night before Jesus was to be born. Note the unusual use of words to refer to the will of the Father and the will of the Son: “Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and *to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh.* And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given” (3 Nephi 1:14; emphasis added).³⁴ A related passage is to be found in the book of Ether. In conversing with the Brother of Jared, the Lord said: “And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe *the Father who sent me.* For behold, *I am the Father,* I am the light and the life, and the truth of the world” (Ether 4:12; emphasis added). Again, the mortal Jesus would carry out the designs of the premortal Jehovah; Christ would carry out to the full extent the terms and conditions of the plan of Elohim, of which he (Christ) was the chief advocate and proponent in premortality.³⁵

4. Thus Christ would be both the Father and the Son. He would be called the Father because he was conceived by the power of God, and inherited all of the divine endowments, particularly immortality, from his exalted sire. He would be called the Son because of his flesh—his mortal inheritance from his mother, Mary. Therefore, Christ would be both *flesh* and *spirit*, both *man* and *God*, both *Son* and *Father* (cf. Alma 7:12-13). And they—the Father

and the Son, the man and the God, the flesh and the spirit—are to be blended wondrously in one being, Jesus Christ, “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.” Indeed, the Book of Mormon is an additional witness of the fact that in Christ “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

A final matter which might be mentioned briefly in this regard is the manner in which Christ spoke repeatedly of Elohim the Father during his Nephite ministry. This is a most interesting example of divine investiture of authority: on these occasions Jesus ascribed his words to Elohim, which, as we have noted already, are also the words and feelings of Jehovah. He spoke of the doctrine of the Father (3 Nephi 11:31-32); the law and commandments of the Father (3 Nephi 12:19); the Father granting the land of America as an inheritance (3 Nephi 15:13; 16:16); the Father making covenants with Abraham and the house of Israel (3 Nephi 16:5; 20:27); the mercies and judgments of the Father (3 Nephi 16:9); and the words given by the Father to Malachi (3 Nephi 24:1). Christ here showed deference and total commitment to Elohim, for the Lord Jesus also made clear to the Nephites that he (Christ) was the God of ancient Israel, the God who made covenant with Abraham, the God who gave the law of Moses, the God of the whole earth (3 Nephi 11:14; 15:5). As we have sought to establish, the words of one (Jehovah-Christ) are the words of the other (Elohim), and thus reference to *the Father* will frequently include (and intend) reference to both Elohim and the premortal Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Less than two months before his death, Joseph Smith said to the Saints in Nauvoo: “The Savior has the words of eternal life. Nothing else can profit us.” He then counseled his people, “I advise all to go on to perfection, and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness.”³⁶ One of the greatest mysteries in the Christian world is the matter of the Godhead, the relationship of the Father and the Son. If it is truly life eternal to know God and his Son

(John 17:3; D&C 132:24), then surely God does not seek to remain unknown, nor to have his children glory in the mystery of his incomprehensibility. As the modern seer taught in 1844, "It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God."³⁷ Thus, we conclude that the first principle of revealed religion focuses on God—who he is, how he is related to Jesus Christ, and what we must do to know and be like them.

Joseph Smith taught us that a man could "get nearer to God by abiding by" the precepts of the Book of Mormon than by adhering to the teachings of any other book.³⁸ This is certainly true because of the sublime spirit which accompanies the reading of the Book of Mormon, as well as the marvelous lessons on life which flow from the pages of this ancient but timely record. But a person can also get nearer to God by a prayerful search of the Book of Mormon because the Book of Mormon is a book about God, a sacred volume kept and preserved by a people who had come to know him. Through diligently searching the Book of Mormon we are able to grasp the essential reality that Elohim is the Father of Jesus Christ and of all men, and is thus the ultimate object of our worship. Further, we come to sense the scriptural verity that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, and that he manifests himself to those who will receive the words of his appointed servants. We learn that Jesus Christ is called *Father*, being so designated because of his creative labors, his work of renewing and regenerating souls, and his ability to speak for and in behalf of the Almighty Elohim. Christ is Father because he has inherited through conception the powers and attributes of his exalted parent.³⁹ But we also learn from the Book of Mormon that these two beings who "constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things"⁴⁰ are *one*; Jesus Christ represents the Father, the Man of Holiness, and Elohim "is the Father in every sense in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits."⁴¹

God has revealed himself anew in our day. But the "restitution of all things" is still under way, and the doctrinal restoration (certainly including many more truths concerning God and his nature) will continue into the Millennium.⁴²

God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now;

Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory;

A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest.

All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ (D&C 121:26-29).

Until that glorious day, we have available to us a priceless volume of scripture which contains a veritable flood of intelligence regarding the nature of God and particularly the ministry of the Father and the Son. If one is sincere in his efforts to know God and embrace his gospel truths, then surely he must make the study of the Book of Mormon a lifetime pursuit. "And now," the prophet Moroni beckoned, "I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen" (Ether 12:41).

Notes

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), p. 194.

2. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Foolishness of Teaching," Address to LDS Church Educational System (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), p. 6.

3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 370.

4. For statements that Joseph Smith's "early theology" (including the teachings of the Book of Mormon) reflect trinitarian doctrine, 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 the Father," *Sunstone* 9 (Autumn 1984):37; Jan Shippo, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 80. See also Van Hale, "Defining the Mormon Doctrine of Deity," *Sunstone* 10 (1985): 27, for an argument that Mormon doctrine has never been trinitarian.

5. One of the statements most often used as an evidence that

Joseph Smith did not understand the corporeality of God during the pre-1835 era is from the *Lectures on Faith*. Note the following: "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" (*Lectures on Faith* 5:2; emphasis added). It is always difficult for us to read the minds of prophets and thus to conclude *now* what they had in mind or understood *then*. A modern Apostle has written concerning the Father and Son: "Each is a personage of spirit; each is a personage of tabernacle. Both of them have bodies, tangible bodies of flesh and bones. They are resurrected beings." Further: "A personage of spirit, as here used [in *Lectures on Faith*] 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." (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], pp. 72, 73.)

The Reverend Truman Coe, a Presbyterian minister who had lived among the Saints in Kirtland for four years, published the following regarding the Mormons in the 11 August 1836 *Ohio Observer*: "They contend that the God worshipped by the Presbyterians and all other sectarians is no better than a wooden god. They believe that the true God is a material being, composed of body and parts; and that when the Creator formed Adam in his own image, he made him about the size and shape of God himself." (See Milton V. Backman, Jr., "Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 [Spring 1977]: 347, 354.)

6. *Lectures on Faith* 2:2.

7. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 345-46.

8. See "The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve," 30 June 1916; cited in James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975), pp. 465-73; quotation on p. 466.

9. *Man: His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954), p. 304.

10. *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:27; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-66), 1:13-21; 3:58.

11. "Our Relationship with the Lord," in *Brigham Young University 1981-82 Fireside and Devotional Speeches* (Provo: Brigham Young University Publications, 1982), p. 101.

12. *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978), p. 98.

13. In the 1837 and 1840 editions of the Book of Mormon, the

Prophet Joseph Smith altered 1 Nephi 11:18, 21, 32 to read “the mother of *the Son of God*,” “the *Son of the Eternal Father*,” and “*the Son of the Everlasting God*,” respectively. In the same editions, 1 Nephi 13:40 was likewise altered to read “*the Son of the Eternal Father*, and the Savior of the world.” The most recent printings of the Book of Mormon (1981) follow the 1840 readings. One careful student of the text of the Book of Mormon has suggested that the Prophet made the change in 11:18 “as a clarification possibly to avoid the Catholic-sounding formula mother of God, that had been objected to by early critics of the Book of Mormon.” (Stanley R. Larson, “A Study of Some Textual Variations in the Book of Mormon Comparing the Original and the Printer’s Manuscripts and the 1830, the 1837, and the 1840 Editions” [Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974], p. 269; Larson cites Oliver Cowdery, “Trouble in the West,” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 1 (April 1835): 105, to show the prevalence of anti-Catholic sentiment at the time.)

14. Joseph Smith taught that Christ had “descended in suffering below that which man can suffer; or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions [cf. Hebrews 12:3] than any man can be” (*Lectures on Faith* 5:2).

15. Note also the teaching of Amulek regarding the “infinite atonement” of Christ: “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.” Amulek further explained that the atonement is infinite because the Atoner himself is an infinite being: “This is the whole meaning of the law [of Moses], every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be *the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal*” (Alma 34:10, 14; emphasis added).

16. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has described the condescension of God as a dual matter: (1) the condescension of God the Father—Elohim; and (2) the condescension of God the Son—Christ (see *The Promised Messiah*, p. 367; cf. *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-81), 1:314-15; *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 155).

17. See a brief but excellent discussion of the nature of the Godhead in the Book of Mormon (and specific reference to the encounter in Alma 11) in Roy W. Doxey, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, August 1985, pp. 11-13.

18. Note in Alma 33:14-17 that the prophet Zenock was martyred because he had “testified of the Son of God, and because the people would not understand his words.” See also Helaman 8:13-23.

19. For a discussion of “Why Messiah Became Mortal,” see McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, chapter 25.

20. One of the most interesting verses in the Book of Mormon is Ether 3:15. The Lord said to the Brother of Jared, “And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has a man believed in me as thou hast.” Both Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R.

McConkie have suggested that this verse refers to the fact that the Lord had never yet revealed himself to man in such a total and complete manner (*Doctrines of Salvation* 1:37; *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 47, 599-600). For additional explanations see Sidney B. Sperry, *Problems of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), pp. 49-51; *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), pp. 467-68; Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), pp. 317-19. Perhaps one other possibility could exist with regard to Ether 3:15. Could it be that this appearance of the Lord Jehovah was the first occasion (it seems to be the first, at least according to the scriptural records we now possess) when Jehovah manifested himself unto man in the role of *Jesus Christ, the Son of God*? It appears that every other scriptural account that we have of theophanies before this experience involve such prophetic personalities as Adam, Enoch, and Noah encountering the Lord in the role of *Father*, wherein the Lord always speaks (by divine investiture of authority—to be discussed hereafter) of the coming of his “Only Begotten Son.”

21. Subsequent editions of the Book of Mormon (1837, 1840 to 1981) read, “Yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and *the Messiah*, who is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record.” Why the Prophet Joseph Smith made this alteration is unknown.

22. *God’s Greatest Gift* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), pp. 153, 155; emphasis in original. These are Elder Burton’s conclusions after consultation with Professor Hugh W. Nibley.

23. See “The Father and the Son,” in Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 465-73.

24. From Bruce R. McConkie, “The Mystery of Godliness,” *Brigham Young University Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1985), p. 52.

25. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 328; Orson Pratt, “The Kingdom of God,” in *Orson Pratt’s Works* (Salt Lake City: Parker Pratt Robinson, 1965), pp. 46-48.

26. See McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 360-61.

27. We join the true Church through baptism and thereafter receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. By enjoying the influences and gifts of the Spirit we are born again into the family of Jesus Christ and thus become the children of Christ. But it was never intended that we remain children forever—even the children of Christ. Through proving worthy of the ordinances of the holy temple and thereby entering the patriarchal order through celestial marriage, we get on a higher path which may lead us eventually (via worthiness) to become “gods, even the sons of God” (D&C 76:58; cf. 132:19-20). Having so attained, we become co-inheritors, “joint heirs” with Christ to all that the Father has; we are sons and daughters of God, meaning the Father. (See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966-73], 2:261, 471-75; see also *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 284.)

28. See "The Father and the Son," in Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 470-72.

29. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 63; see also *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 69.

30. For additional confirmation that the being on the mount was Jehovah and not Elohim (in support of the principle taught in notes 11 and 12), see James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 4:269-71; McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 443.

31. Divine investiture of authority operates in circumstances other than those where the Savior speaks on behalf of the Father. For example, the Holy Ghost speaks on behalf of Christ (Moses 5:9) and angels speak in behalf of the Lord (Revelation 22:8-13). It may well be that the words spoken to Nephi the night before the Savior was to be born (3 Nephi 1:13-14) were spoken by the Spirit or an angel in behalf of Christ. (See McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah* 1:349, note 1.)

32. *The Promised Messiah*, p. 371.

33. *The Mediation and Atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1882), p. 138.

34. See McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 371-72 for a discussion of this verse.

35. The author has been careful in this paper to make fairly sharp distinctions between Elohim and Jehovah, emphasizing at the same time their infinite unanimity. This has been done based on the clarifying instructions in the 30 June 1916 doctrinal exposition of the First Presidency and the Twelve as well as on subsequent doctrinal pronouncements. It appears, however, that some of the early leaders of this dispensation may not have drawn such fine lines between the Gods. For example, Joseph Smith wrote in August of 1842: "There are many souls whom I have loved stronger than death. To them I have proved faithful—to them I am determined to prove faithful, until God calls me to resign up my breath. O Thou, who seest and knowest the hearts of all men—Thou eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent *Jehovah—God—Thou Eloheim*, that sittest, as saith the Psalmist, 'enthroned in heaven,' look down upon Thy servant Joseph at this time; and let faith on the name of *Thy Son Jesus Christ* to a greater degree than Thy servant ever yet has enjoyed, be conferred upon him, even the faith of Elijah; and let the lamp of eternal life be lit up in his heart, never to be taken away." Further: "As the dews upon Mount Hermon, may the distillations of Thy divine grace, glory, and honor, in the plenitude of Thy mercy, and power, and goodness, be poured down upon the head of Thy servant. O Lord, God, *my heavenly Father*, shall it be in vain, that Thy servant must needs be exiled from the midst of his friends . . . ? Oh, no; Thou wilt hear me . . . and mine enemies shall not prevail." (*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, 1957], 5:127-28; emphasis

added; cf. also the "Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 6 April 1845, in *Messages of the First Presidency* 1:252-53.

Note also the following from President John Taylor regarding the atonement of Jesus Christ: "As He in His own person bore the sins of all, and atoned for them by the sacrifice of Himself, so there came upon Him the weight and agony of ages and generations. . . . Hence His profound grief, His indescribable anguish, His overpowering torture, *all experienced in the submission to the eternal fiat of Jehovah* and the requirements of an inexorable law." (*Mediation and Atonement*, pp. 149-50; emphasis added; cf. pp. 127, 151). Similarly, 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. He understood those purposes, could curb His powers, control His feelings, and could make a manly fight for righteousness and truth, and carry out the decrees of heaven." (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-86], 26:172).

36. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 364.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

39. There are, of course, a number of places in scripture where Christ is called Father in an unspecified sense (e.g. Isaiah 9:6; Mosiah 16:15; Mormon 9:12). "In these cases there is no impropriety in interpreting the prophetic statements as applying to any or all of the senses in which our Lord carries his Father's name" (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p. 371).

40. See *Lectures on Faith* 5:2.

41. "The Father and the Son," in Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 466.

42. See Bruce R. McConkie, "The Doctrinal Restoration," in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1985), pp. 1-22.