

## THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD

Many Christians now living devoutly believe that God has revealed himself to man anew, literally and personally, in this very age in which we live.

This newly revealed knowledge of God has had a more shattering and tumultuous effect on modern religious beliefs than any event since the resurrection of our Lord some 2,000 years ago.

What is this new knowledge that has come into the world? How does it compare with the teachings of the ancient prophets? Does it change, add to, or overturn their testimonies? What effect does it have on the creeds and dogmas that are almost universally believed by members of nearly every Christian church?

Indeed, what kind of a being is God? And how many Christians actually know what kind of a being they worship?

Is he a personage in whose image man is created? Or is he an uncreated spirit essence that fills the immensity of space, everywhere and yet nowhere in particular present?

Can he be seen, known, and described? Or is he unseen and unseeable, unknown and unknowable, an incomprehensible mystic force that pervades all space?

Is he a person, an entity, a knowable personality, an individual with all power, who appeared to the ancient prophets and talked with them face to face? Or is he the laws and powers, the forces and influences that comprise the laws of nature?

Can God be in only one place at one time? Is he a person, a personality, a glorious exalted individual having a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's? Or is he the laws that govern in the universe, the powers and controls that are in all things, yet cannot be catalogued, segregated, or defined?

Is God a spirit or a personage? A power and force, or a personality? Is he without body, parts, or passions? Or is he an exalted body in which every part is perfected, every passion controlled?

Is he impersonal, unreal, and unapproachable? Or is he the very embodiment of all good graces so that he is jealous for his name, angry with the wicked, merciful to the penitent, and just to all men?

And what of the Trinity or Godhead? Is it composed of three separate personages who are one in purpose and plan? Or is this eternal Trinity but three manifestations of the same spirit essence whose members are but differing unfoldments of the same thing?

How is the Trinity or Godhead three, yet one? And what character, perfections, and attributes does each member possess?

## CONFLICTING VIEWS ABOUT GOD

Many conflicting notions about God have existed in various ages, and many now prevail in the world. Some men have made gods of wood and stone; others have worshipped cows or crocodiles; others have seen in the heavenly bodies or the forces of nature objects deserving of mortal obeisance.

In the Christian era creeds have been prepared, both by councils and by individuals, attempting to settle the almost universal uncertainty as to the nature and kind of being that God is.

One creed specifies that God is almighty, *uncreated*, and *incomprehensible*. It applies these descriptions equally to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and yet recites that “there are not three eternal, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.” The conclusion reached is that “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.” (Athanasian Creed.)

Another church proclaims God to be “the supreme, *incorporeal*, *uncreated* being.” (Bruno, *Catholic Belief*, p. 1.) But perhaps the most commonly known orthodox view is found in this declaration: “There is but one living and true God, everlasting, *without body, parts, or passions*: of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.” (Protestant Episcopal Church in U.S.A., Article 1.)

On the other hand many believe that God is a personal being in whose image man is created, and that the members of the Godhead are distinct personages, united as one in purpose and plan.

## THE UNKNOWN GOD

Manifestly all the views now prevailing as to the nature and kind of being that God is, and as to the relationship and missions of the members of the Godhead, cannot be true. Truth ever is harmonious with itself, and concepts that are diametrically opposed to each other cannot all be expressive of ultimate truth.

Since a belief in God is the foundation of any religion, and a belief in a true God is essential to a true religion, it follows that it is tremendously important for those who seek salvation to come to the knowledge of God.

In contrast with the views presented in the creeds of modern Christendom is the statement of our Lord in his great intercessory prayer: “*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.*” (John 17:3.)

Joseph Smith taught: “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.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345.)

When Paul stood in the midst of Mars hill to reason with the philosophizing though religiously inclined Athenians he said: “As I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” To these men, he whom it is life eternal to know was unknown. Much the same condition prevails today among those who accept the creeds proclaiming God to be incomprehensible, uncreated, and without body, parts, or passions.

Yet Paul, in the majesty and knowledge of his apostleship, said to the men of Athens: “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” (Acts 17:22-23.) And so today the Lord’s witnesses go forth proclaiming a new revelation of God and the Godhead so that men again may know these holy beings and become heirs of eternal life.

Revelation is the sole source of knowledge about the true and living God. Man must drink from this foundation or go forever athirst. He cannot by searching in the field of reason alone find out God. He can make idols, write creeds, and develop philosophical concepts, but all these things will be his own creations. They will not affect the truth about God. God stands revealed, or he remains forever unknown.

So now, as Isaiah expressed it, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isaiah 8:20.)

## PERSONALITY OF GOD

As all Christians know, the Godhead or Trinity is composed of three members: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Initially, however, in presenting the revealed knowledge of the personality of God, no attempt will be made where certain scriptures are concerned to distinguish between the Father and the Son. Since they have the same personal characteristics, the same perfected attributes, the same personality (though they are separate personages), every such scripture cited does or could apply equally to each of them. Truth seekers can make the necessary distinctions later showing the missions performed by each and their relationship to each other as members of the Godhead or Trinity.

Now since it is life eternal to know God, and since he desires that man gain this very salvation, he has revealed himself to man from time to time. This revelation began in the beginning with Father Adam. While he was yet in the Garden of Eden, he walked and talked with God, saw his face, received instruction from him, and knew what kind of a being he was. (Genesis 2:15-25; 3:1-24.)

Then when the Lord revealed the account of the creation, he was very express in teaching that he himself was a being in whose image and likeness man was created. That he was the pattern after which man was made physically and naturally upon the earth is very evident from the plain reading of the record. The language cannot be twisted to mean that man is merely in his spiritual likeness and image.

The account of man's creation as given in Genesis reads: "And God said, Let us make man in our *image*, after our likeness: . . . *So God created man in his own image*, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:26-27.) This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, *in the likeness of God made he him*; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And *Adam* lived an hundred and thirty years, and *begat a son in his own likeness*, after his image; and called his name Seth. (Genesis 5:1-3.)

Thus Adam was created in the image and likeness of God *in the same way* that Seth was created in the image and likeness of Adam. Paul gave the same literal meaning to these words by explaining that as man "is the *image* and glory of God," so "the woman is the glory of the man." (1 Corinthians 11:7.)

So man is in form like God, and God is in form like man. Both have size and dimensions. Both have a body. God is not an ethereal nothingness that is in all things, nor is he merely the powers and laws by which all things are governed.

This is the teaching of the ancient scriptures; later we shall see what latter-day revelation has to add.

## MANY PROPHETS SAW GOD

By faith many men have seen God and have left their testimonies as to the nature and kind of being he is. On one occasion, "As Moses," one of the greatest of these, "entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and *the Lord talked with Moses . . . And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.*" On another occasion Moses was permitted to see the "back parts" of the Lord. (Exodus 33:9, 11, 23; emphasis added.)

Moses was not alone as a witness of the Lord in his day. It was a period when by faith many great spiritual manifestations were given.

Then went up *Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:*

And *they saw the God of Israel:* and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his *hand:* also *they saw God,* and did eat and drink. (Exodus 24:9-11; emphasis added.)

Isaiah has given us similar testimony.

*I saw also the Lord* [he says], *sitting upon a throne,* high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for *mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.* (Isaiah 6:1, 5; emphasis added.)

That Enoch (Genesis 5:24), Noah (Genesis 6:5-9), Abraham (Genesis 17:1; 18:1), Isaac (Genesis 26:2, 24), Jacob (Genesis 28:13; 32:30; 35:9; 46:2-3; 48:3), and many of the prophets had similar manifestations is almost too well known to require documentation. And that similar knowledge continued among God's elect in New Testament times is also commonly known by gospel students.

On the occasion of the martyrdom of Stephen, for instance, we find a plain illustration of the personalities of the members of the Godhead. For testifying of Christ to those whom he called "the betrayers and murderers" of the "Just One," Stephen was stoned to death.

"But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and *Jesus standing on the right hand of God,* And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the *Son of man standing on the right hand of God.*" (Acts 7:55-56; emphasis added.)

At that moment, Stephen, on earth, was receiving testimony from the Holy Ghost, one member of the Godhead, while the Father and the Son, the other two members, stood in heaven.

In rejoicing over the testimony of the prophets, who through righteousness and by faith perfected themselves sufficiently to see *the face of God,* it is also worthy of note that the scriptures specifically promise that those who attain the celestial heaven shall yet see God, for "*the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.*" (Revelation 22:3-4; emphasis added.)

So we have the recorded testimonies of the prophets of old that they knew God, saw his face, stood in his presence, and heard his voice. Later we shall inquire whether this same unchangeable being--this being who is the same yesterday, today, and forever; this being with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17)—has ceased to speak, no longer reveals himself to men, has degenerated into an ethereal nothingness, and become an UNKNOWN GOD.

## CHRIST IN IMAGE OF FATHER

One of the great aims of Christ in his mortal ministry was to reveal to the world the truth about God and his personality. In that day, as in this, most people had lost the knowledge of God and were steeped in vain and foolish notions. As Paul expressed it, that was a day when "*the world by wisdom knew not God,*" and so "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching" (1 Corinthians 1:21) to send forth the saving truth about himself.

Our Lord proclaimed himself as the Son of God, which very proclamation was an affirmation that his Father was like him, even as any son is begotten in the image and likeness of his father. The divine record, however, foreseeing the rupture confusion that would engulf the world relative to the personality of God, did not let the matter rest there. Rather, the record goes at great length to specify, pointedly and positively, that Christ was in fact created in the *actual and express image of the person of the Father*.

Christ was a manifestation of God to the world. He was born, grew to maturity, ministered among his fellows, was crucified, died and rose again the third day in a glorious resurrection. Immediately thereafter he began a series of appearances to the apostles and disciples, showing them his body, letting them feel the tangible nature of it, and eating food in their presence—all to impress upon them the physical reality of his resurrected body.

On the Emmaus road, for instance, the resurrected and immortal Lord, while withholding his identity from his disciples, walked and talked with them as though he were yet a mortal man. Then at even time he revealed himself to them, "vanished out of their sight," and they "returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them," and told them of their experiences with the Risen Lord.

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my *hands* and my *feet*, that it is I myself: *handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his *hands* and his *feet*.

“And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.” (Luke 24:13-53.)

Now, having in mind that Christ after his resurrection was a tangible, physical, personal being with a body of flesh and bones, a body that could be felt and handled, a body that could walk, talk, and eat, let us inquire: What of his Father?

In answer, the scriptures speak plainly. Paul told the Corinthians that Christ was in “the *image* of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:4.) To the Colossians he said Christ was “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), and to the Philippians he taught that he was both “in the *form* of God” and also “was made in the *likeness* of men.” (Philippians 2:6-7.)

To the Hebrews he gave the most pointed affirmation of all:

God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Who being the brightness of his glory, and *the express image of his person*, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* (Hebrews 1:1-3.)

Is it any wonder, then, in the light of these plain teachings which reveal that the Father and the Son are glorified personages whose perfected and exalted bodies of flesh and bones are in the express image of each other, that Jesus should reply to Philip’s query, “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” by saying:

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (John 14:8-9.)

What more perfect manifestation of the personality of the Father did Philip need than to see him who is the express image of the person of the Father, him who though in the image and likeness of the Father is a separate personage from him, as he said: “I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.” (John 14:28.)

That Christ, both during his mortal ministry and also after he had risen in a glorious resurrection, was in the express physical image of his Father, none who believe the *Bible* can doubt. But here, again, we shall hereafter show what has been revealed in our day on this transcendently important subject.

## THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Paul's method of proof to show the Athenians that the Godhead was not "like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device," was to quote with approval their own Greek poets who had taught that men are the offspring of God. That the poets had spoken truly Paul affirmed by making the positive declaration in his own right that "*We are the offspring of God.*" (Acts 17:28-29.)

This same apostle in exhorting the Hebrew Saints to endure the trials and chastenings of this mortal probation said: "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto *the Father of spirits*, and live?" (Hebrews 12:9.)

And this same eternal truth--that we are the offspring of God--was made the basis of Christ's direction to his disciples that they should pray by addressing the Father as "*Our Father which art in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:9.) That is, God was not only the Father of Christ after the manner of the flesh, but he is also the Father of the spirits of all men; all are his spirit offspring, born as his children before the mortal birth into this world.

This was reaffirmed by the Lord when, after his resurrection, Mary rushing to embrace him, he restrained her by saying:

"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to *my Father*: but go to *my brethren*, and say unto them, *I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God*" (John 20:17; emphasis added.)

Many passages of scripture shed light on this truth that men are the offspring of God, his spirit children, and that they lived with him in pre-existence before their mortal birth.

It was during this pre-existent era that "there was war in heaven," that Lucifer and one-third of the hosts of heaven were cast out for rebellion, (Revelation 12:7-9) and have been known ever after as "the angels which kept not their *first estate.*" (Jude 1:6.)

It was of this period—"When the morning stars sang together, and *all the sons of God shouted for joy*"—that the Lord asked Job: "Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, it thou hast understanding." (Job 38:1-7.)

And it was because of God's foreknowledge, gained in this first estate, that enabled him to say to Jeremiah: "*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*" (Jeremiah 1:5.)

Now, if we are the *sons of God the Father*, the offspring of that same being to whom Christ ascended after his resurrection, if we are actually his spirit children, then we as his children are created in his image and likeness and he is a personal being.



Again, the student may learn hereafter that these plain *Bible* truths have been confirmed by revelation in our day.

## GOD IS A SPIRIT

We shall note hereafter the source of the false concept in the world that in some indefinable way God is three beings and yet one. We should consider here, however, as we deal with his personality, those passages which are cited in support of the creeds, creeds in which he is described as a spirit without body, parts, or passions, as filling immensity and as being everywhere present.

These views in the creeds were not formulated from and did not grow out of the scriptures. After these false beliefs were crystallized in the creeds, however, then certain scriptures were seized upon in a vain attempt to support the creeds and establish their verity.

The absurdity of selecting portions and fragments of the scriptures, tearing them from their contexts, and interpreting them without reference to the whole body of the revealed word, is generally recognized. Yet because this is the only way in which seeming support for false doctrines can be found in the scriptures, it becomes necessary to evaluate the claims made, and to study the passages in their proper perspective so that they may be seen to be in harmony with all of what the Lord has said on the subject.

Perhaps the most widely known such passage is gleaned from the conversation of our Lord with the Samaritan woman at the well. The selected words say: "God is a spirit," an expression that is neither confusing nor difficult to understand when rightly viewed.

Let us see the context. Our Lord was discussing with the woman of Samaria the place where the faithful should worship, it appearing that the Samaritans worshipped in the mountain where they were then conversing, whereas the Jews designated Jerusalem as the central place of their worship.

Then our Lord said: "*Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" Then the woman spoke of the promised Messiah, the Christ, who was to come, and the Lord replied: "I that speak unto thee am he." (John 4:22-26; emphasis added.)

First, we should note that the Jews, those who were converted and had the knowledge of salvation, *knew* whom they worshipped and *knew* what they worshipped. They were not professing to bestow their adoration upon an unknown, unknowable, incomprehensible spirit essence that is everywhere present. They *knew* who the Father was whom they worshipped.

Well, then, is God a Spirit? Certainly he is; and on the same basis and within the same meaning of words, *Man is a Spirit*. But neither man nor God are Spirit essences that are indefinitely everywhere present. Both are *Spirit Personages*. Their respective *spirits have form and size and dimensions*, and are *within* their own bodies and within those bodies only.

Man is a spirit, but man is also a tangible body. God is a Spirit, and God, also, is a tangible body.

A soul—either mortal or immortal—consists of body and spirit. The body is tangible and corporeal, is made of a substance that can be felt and handled as the apostles felt and handled the body of the resurrected Christ. The spirit, also, is an actual entity or being; however, the spirit body is made of a more pure and refined substance, so that it cannot be handled and felt by mortal men.

Thus when the apostles saw the resurrected Christ stand before them “They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.” (Luke 24:37.) Christ comforted their fears and gave them the test whereby they could distinguish a spirit from a personage of tabernacle, one who had flesh and bones. They were to handle him, to feel the nail prints in his hands, and put their hands against the spear wound in his side.

The spirit of man is within his body. When he dies the spirit leaves the body, and the body goes to the grave. After his crucifixion Christ’s body lay in the tomb, but his Spirit went and preached to other spirits, the spirits of those men who “sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.” (1 Peter 3:20.)

The third day his Spirit entered the body again, the glorious resurrection took place, and he rose from the tomb, the first fruits of them that slept. Now he was immortal, not mortal, and now his body and Spirit were inseparably connected, never again to be torn asunder by death.

And we have already seen that the resurrected Lord with his tangible body of flesh and bones was in the express image of the person of the Father who also had a tangible body of flesh and bones, one in which spirit and body are inseparably connected.

So man is body and spirit; Christ is body and Spirit; and God is body and Spirit. What impropriety is there, then, when a proper understanding of its meaning is had, of saying, “God is a Spirit”? This is true in the same sense in which man and Christ also are spirits, and in no other.

And as all revelation—past, present, and that which shall yet in the providences of the Almighty be vouchsafed to his children in mortality—is in perfect accord with itself, so we shall find that Latter-day revelation confirms this *Bible* teaching that God is both body and spirit.

## THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD

Men sometimes speak of the omnipresence of God as though God himself filled the immensity of space and was everywhere present. This is an utterly false and pagan notion. But there is a sense in which God is omnipresent, and this term may be used to describe him when properly understood and defined.

God is a personal being who is and can be in but one place at a time. He is the possessor of all things, however. All power, all wisdom, and all truth are his, and he has given laws to all things. By his laws the earth was created and is controlled, all life exists and grows, and the planets move in their orbits.

Because he has given laws to all things and because his power of creation and control are in all things, it may be properly said that he is omnipresent. He is a person; but the power, the agency, the influence, the spirit which proceeds from his person to govern

and control all that he has created is everywhere present and does fill the immensity of space. But this is not God; it is the agency through which he works, the power that he has in all things.

Speaking in poetic language David, accordingly, was led to exclaim:

Whither shall I go *from thy spirit?* or whither shall I flee *from thy presence?*

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. (Psalms 139:7-10.)

In his famous Mars hill speech Paul spoke in similar manner of the nearness of God. Men “should seek the Lord,” he said, for he is “not far from every one of us: For in him [that is, *in his presence*] we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your poets have said, *For we are also his offspring.*” (Acts 17:27-28.)

Again, both anciently and modernly, this doctrine of the omnipresence of God has been revealed in plainness.

## UNITY OF THE GODHEAD

Since it is so clear that the members of the Godhead are separate personages, what is the meaning of those scriptures which speak of them as being one and as dwelling in each other?

The answer is easy to find. It is readily apparent from the mere recitation of the passages involved, provided enough of the context is quoted to show the real meaning of our Lord and of the apostles who recorded the statements. Indeed, these statements throw a marvelous flood of light on the nature of the Godhead, and also upon the relationship that the saints of God should have to each other here in mortality.

In his great intercessory prayer Christ gave utterance to some of the loftiest concepts to be found in holy writ. (Incidentally, all of the occasions on which he prayed to his Father are direct evidence that he and the Father were not one in person and personality. How foolish to think he would pray to himself!) To the Father he said:

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world . . .

I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that *I came out from thee*, and they have believed that *thou didst send me*.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and *I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are*.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in, thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; *that they may be one, even as we are one:*

*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that *the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.* (John 17:4-6, 8, 11, 18, 20-23, 26; emphasis added.)

In the Good Shepherd sermon, previously given, the Lord had included similar statements: “*I and my Father are one . . . I am the Son of God.* If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But, if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that *the Father is in me, and I in him.*” (John 10:30, 36-38; emphasis added.)

In his conversation with Philip our Lord expressed similar truths. “Believest thou not,” he asked, “that *I am in the Father, and the Father in me?* the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but *the Father that dwelleth in me.* he doeth the works. Believe me that *I am in the Father, and the Father in me:* or else believe me for the very works’ sake.” (John 14:10-11; emphasis added.)

John, the beloved apostle, whose privilege it was to record for us the foregoing statements as to the unity that exists between the Father and the Son, understood them perfectly, and in his own epistles gave further expression to some points connected with them. He wrote to the saints of his day:

*But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

He that saith he *abideth in him* ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. (1 John 2:5-6; emphasis added.)

*And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. (1 John 3:24; emphasis added.)

*. . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. (1 John 4:12-14; emphasis added.)

This scriptural explanation of the unity of the Godhead may properly be summarized in these words of Paul, written to members of the Church in his day:

. . . Stand fast in *one spirit*, with *one mind* striving together for the faith of the gospel.

. . . Be *likeminded*, having the *same love*, being of *one accord*, of *one mind*

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind *let each esteem other better than themselves*.

*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:*

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 1:27; 2:2-7; emphasis added.)

It was Paul, also, who, because of the revelation that was in them, was able to say to the Corinthian Saints: “*We have the mind of Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 2:16; emphasis added.)

What, then, is the true doctrine of the unity of the Godhead? The reading of these scriptures has given us a clear and easily understood view of this basic doctrine. There is no incomprehensible mystery as to the manner in which the Father and the Son are one God, and in which they dwell in each other. It is the creeds of men and not the revelations of the Lord that have left a muddled and confused view in this field.

The Father and the Son are two personages, and yet they are one in purpose, in plan, in obedience to law, in all of the attributes of perfection. They possess the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power, and fulness. They are one in the same sense in which the apostles were expected to be one, in which all the saints are expected to be one, one in attributes, not one in personage or personality.

It is in this same sense, also, that the Father and the Son dwell in each other; and in that same sense Christ is to dwell in us, meaning that we are to have the mind of Christ.

In precisely the same sense, and using words to convey the same thought, we might say that the faithful members of the Church dwell in each other in that they all have *one spirit* and *one mind*, possessing the *same love*, and being of *one accord*, with each other, so that every man esteems his brother as himself. And if “we have the mind of Christ,” we too, are one with the Father and the Son, as these scriptures so plainly teach.

These truths, also, find their confirmation in what God by his own voice has spoken in modern times.

## CHARACTER, ATTRIBUTES AND PERFECTIONS OF GOD

To gain faith unto salvation men must, first, believe in God, that is, they must believe in the true and living God who actually is, who is revealed in the scriptures, who is that

personal being in whose image man is created. Faith unto salvation is based on truth, does

Second, faith unto salvation is gained only following a true and correct idea of the character, perfections, and attributes of God. Again, this faith will not result from false views, or from false concepts of the characteristics and attributes of the Almighty. Truth, eternal truth, is the foundation of progression and salvation.

The third essential to the acquirement of faith is that men gain the actual knowledge that the course of life which they are pursuing is according to the divine will. Faith comes through righteousness, not through rebellion.

We have already taken a brief scriptural view of the personality of God and the nature of the Godhead. It is now our purpose to mention, at least, the true nature of his character, perfections, and attributes. Thereafter it will rest with those who seek him with full purpose of heart to conform their lives to the standards of personal righteousness which the gospel requires, if they would gain an everlasting inheritance in his eternal kingdom.

Without reciting here the multitudinous scriptures from which these conclusions are reached, perhaps it will suffice to recite the six basic truths which the revelations record as to the character of God. Although these fundamental truths are in direct conflict with much that is taught in the creeds of the world (as, for instance, the false pronouncement in the creeds that God is devoid of passions), yet they will find ready acceptance in the hearts of honest truth seekers. They are:

1. That God existed before the world was created, and is the same God now that he was then.
2. That he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, and that he was so from everlasting, and will be so to everlasting.
3. That he changes not, neither is there variableness with him, and that his course is one eternal round.
4. That he is a God of truth, and cannot lie.
5. That he is no respecter of persons.
6. That he is the very embodiment of love.

From the revelations we learn, also, that the attributes of God are: Knowledge, faith or power, justice, judgment, mercy, and truth. His perfections are the perfections which attach to all of the characteristics and attributes of his nature, which means that he has all knowledge and all power, dispenses the perfection of justice, has infinite judgment, the fulness of mercy, and so on.

By coming to a correct understanding of these principles, men are able to put that confidence in him on which faith unto salvation is founded.

A creed that says he is without passions and incomprehensible is as bad as one that denies to him a body and parts, for it shuts the door to an inquiry relative to his true character and attributes.

If he is without passions, the scriptures are false which say he is angry with the wicked, yet slow to anger where the penitent and repentant are concerned.

If he is without passions, then the Ten Commandments are in error, for they recite: "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:5), and the great Sinatic proclamation has no meaning when it says:

. . . The Lord, the Lord God, *merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,*

Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6-7; emphasis added.)

Surely one way in which the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children is in that the children inherit from their fathers false and vain notions about the nature and kind of being that God is!

As with all things about God which have been revealed, the knowledge of his character, attributes, and perfections is again known by direct revelation.

## LOSS OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Salvation—the highest goal towards which humans can strive—can be gained only in and through a knowledge of the true and living God and of the laws he has ordained. Satan stands firmly in opposition to all righteousness and seeks to prevent men from gaining salvation. Accordingly, he seeks to pervert and destroy the truth about God and the Godhead.

By what seem to be perfectly natural means men have been led into false beliefs about Deity. For instance, various pagan philosophies were extant in the Roman empire, one of which was Gnosticism. The Gnostics believe that from all eternity there had existed a being who embodied within himself all virtues. They conceived of this essence as being the purest light and as being diffused through boundless space. Differing notions about God, the eternity of matter, and the creation of all things existed in this and various other pagan philosophies.



When the era of Roman persecution ended and Christianity of that day became popular, a great flood of pagan peoples surged into the Church. They brought their beliefs and philosophies with them. Conversion, primarily, consisted in adopting the names of Christian doctrines and applying them to slightly modified but well ingrained pagan notions of long standing.

As a result there was uncertainty and confusion in all doctrinal fields, but nowhere so great as in the field of the Godhead. So violent did the resultant controversies become that by 325 A.D. the emperor Constantine assembled delegates to adopt a creed and reach a determination as to the conflicting views about God and the Godhead.

Out of the quarrels and compromises, out of the confusion and tumult, out of the intermingling of discordant views in that conclave, there was formalized the first great untrue creed of the Christian era. This creed, the Nicene, together with others that soon followed, laid the foundation for the false concept that God is a spiritual essence filling boundless space, an immaterial being without body, parts, or passions, incorporeal, uncreated, and incomprehensible.

Men had turned from the God of the scriptures and made themselves gods, piecing them together out of an intermingled maze of pagan uncertainties as surely as though they had hewn them out of wood or stone. Men had made their own gods, defined them in their creeds, and now proceeded to worship them forgetting that they were the works of their own hands. Men had turned the truth of God into a falsehood. As succeeding generations came, without the Spirit of the Lord to guide them, men soon ceased to question the truth of the false creeds and the worship of the unknown god became universal.

That this direful and awful apostasy should prevail was foreseen and foretold by many of the ancient prophets. And what is still more marvelous, the end of the night of darkness, the restoration of the knowledge of God was also foreseen and foretold.

Anciently the Lord condemned Israel for walking after, serving and worshipping other gods and forsaking him. "Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and *there shall ye serve other gods* day and night; where I will not shew you favour." For rebellion and because they turned from the Lord Israel was scattered.

But in the last days the promised gathering and restoration of Israel was assured. With many marvels attending, the Lord promised to gather Israel "from all the lands whether he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

In the promised day of gathering, latter-day Israel was to come to a knowledge again of the nature and kind of Being who is the Lord their God. Then, in Jeremiah's prophetic language, they will say: "*Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are not gods?*" (Jeremiah 16:13, 15, 19-20; emphasis added.)

What are the false concepts of the creeds, but an inheritance of “lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit”? There is no salvation in worshipping false gods. And whence came the creeds except by the hands of men?

*Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.*

*Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.*

For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the *fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* (Jeremiah 2:11-13; emphasis added.)

Yet the prophecies end on a high note of hope. “Therefore, behold, *I will this once,*” saith the Lord, “*cause them to know.*” Once more, only once, for the last time the knowledge of God is to be revealed and men are to know him! “*I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The Lord.*” (Jeremiah 16:21; emphasis added.)

His hand and might again are known, and his holy name is being heralded to all the world, this once, for the last time, that men in this day, with the ancients, may have a hope of salvation and eternal life.

## KNOWLEDGE OF GOD RESTORED

Paul aptly described conditions in the meridian dispensation by saying, “*The world by wisdom knew not God.*” Then Christ came to manifest his Father to men again, with the result that, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Corinthians 1:21; emphasis added.)

The modern world has seen an exact repetition of this condition. The world by wisdom, as such was recorded in the creeds, knew not the true and living God. Then the hour arrived for the opening of the dispensation of the fulness of times, the heavens were opened, and that God who is an unchangeable being again revealed himself to his children on earth. And now, again, for the last time, it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

The Spring of 1820 saw a wave of violent religious revivalism sweeping through the frontier areas of America. Nowhere was the tide higher than in the western part of the state of New York. There the Lord had placed the young man whom he had chosen to stand at the head of the dispensation of the fulness of times, the man through whom he deigned to commence the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets of old.

This favored youth, Joseph Smith, Jr., by name, troubled with the cries of “Lo, here is Christ,” and “Lo, there,” one day read the following in the epistle of James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5.)

“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine,” he wrote later. “It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again.” (Joseph Smith 2:12.)

Finally, led of the Spirit, he retired to a secluded place and sought the Lord in matchless faith. This was the hour for the opening of the heavens. This was the time in which God had decreed that revelation should start again. Young Joseph was the one prepared and foreordained to lay the foundation of the Lord’s great latter-day work, and so a glorious vision was vouchsafed to man.

. . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me [he said].

. . . *When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked *the Personages* who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right—and which I should join.

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that *all their creeds were an abomination in his sight*; that those professors were all corrupt; that: they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me: they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. (Joseph Smith 2:16-19; emphasis added.)

From that moment the power of the creeds began to wane—creeds that were an abomination in the Lord’s sight because they did not teach the truth about him whom it is eternal life to know. From that moment the truth about God began to spread in the earth, and from that moment the Lord began to reveal—line upon line, precept upon precept—more about himself and his laws, laws by obedience to which his children here are empowered to return to his presence and inherit eternal life.

Soon revelations came which verified in every respect all that the ancient prophets had seen and known and taught. It was revealed that “God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; *In the image of his own body, male and female, created he them.*” (Moses 6:8-10; emphasis added.) Again it was made known that Christ was in the express image

of the person of the Father; that all men are the spirit offspring of the Father; that the members of the Godhead are one in purpose, plan, and perfection.

Indeed, some 23 years after the First Vision, writing by way of revelation, the Prophet Joseph Smith recorded: “*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; emphasis added.) He whom it is life eternal to know is no longer the Unknown God!

Eventually there shall be a glorious millennial day when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9), a day when men “shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.” (Jeremiah 31:34.)

Pending that day of glory and light, the knowledge of God must go forth by the mouths of his latter-day servants, speaking and writing as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost and calling upon the inspired writers of ancient and modern scriptures to sustain their teachings.

In the light of all that the prophets have said about God, honest truth seekers will find no offense in this new revelation of the Almighty; rather, they will rejoice that *light has come into the world*. Honest hearted people everywhere have believed the false concepts of the creeds because from their father, they “have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.”

The light of truth now exposes the darkness of the creeds. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19.)

Every man who will come to the light, as that light is manifest in the teachings and spirit of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, can gain a sure knowledge for himself of those beings whom it is life eternal to know. The choice as to the god we worship is made at the peril of our own salvation.