

Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother

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"WHAT KIND OF A BEING IS GOD?" inquired Joseph Smith. "I will tell you & hear it O Earth! God who sits in yonder heavens is a *man like yourselves* . . . It is the first principle to know that we may converse with him and that he was once a man like us, and the Father was on an earth like us."¹ He also said, "If men do not comprehend the character of God they do not comprehend themselves."² Today Mormon women say, "If I do not comprehend the character of God the Mother, I cannot comprehend myself." They ask, "What kind of a being is she?" From Mormon theology there is one thing we can conclude: she is a woman like us; she has a woman's body. Without it she could not be our mother.

Feminist theologians have demonstrated the need for the feminine principle in our concept of deity. They have argued that picturing God as male leads to valuing masculine attributes, values, and experience over feminine ones and contributes to the oppression of women. The symbol of the Goddess is necessary, they say, to affirm the goodness of the feminine, to enable women to claim their female power, and to acknowledge the goodness of the female body. Ironically, the vast majority of them do not believe that the Goddess possesses a real female body.

It would seem that Mormons who have believed for over a hundred years in the real existence of the Goddess, the Mother in Heaven, should be far ahead of other Christians in developing a theology of God the Mother. However, our belief in her as a real person puts us at a disadvantage. If the Goddess is merely a symbol of deity, as the male God is also a symbol, then certainly God can be pictured as either male or female with equal validity. Joseph Smith, after asking what kind of a being God is, asked

1. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 344.

2. *Ibid.*, 340.

his congregation, "Have any of you seen or herd him or communed with him?"³ For Mormon theology this is a very important question. God must reveal himself or we have no knowledge of him. Must we then wait for a revelation of the Mother before we have any knowledge of her? The answer is both "Yes" and "No." We must be aware of the possibility of idolatry, of creating her in our own image, of making her into what we conceive the perfect woman should be, of using our images of her to control or manipulate others. On the other hand, we should also recognize the importance of our own seeking after God. Comprehending ourselves is as vital to comprehending God as comprehending God is essential to comprehending ourselves. Our own experiences, our loneliness, our communion with others, our sorrows, our joys, our sins, our striving for righteousness, our demand for justice, our finding forgiveness, our reaching out to God for knowledge and comfort are all experiences with the divine. And we should not assume that there has been no revelation of the Mother or that waiting for her to reveal herself need be entirely passive.

In this essay I attempt to reinterpret the Mormon concept of the Godhead. This interpretation is based on three convictions. I believe that God the Mother is equal to God the Father in divinity, power, and perfection. I believe that God, both Father and Mother, is deeply involved in our mortality and immortality. I also believe that God the Father has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Although he is male, for me he is an adequate model. He modeled many roles for us—father, mother, teacher, friend, son, lover, servant, lord—and also many attributes. If he were the only God, he would be enough. But there is another god and she has a woman's body like mine. I want to know her, not simply as a model, but as a person. That she is God as well as woman is as important for men as it is for women as it affirms the equality of male and female and of masculine and feminine attributes and values. At the same time I must add that I am in no way whatsoever attempting an *official* reinterpretation of LDS doctrine; that prerogative rests solely with the leaders of the church. I am interested simply in offering a possibly new understanding and appreciation of the Mother based on my own reading and personal reflection.

The doctrine of the Godhead presently taught by the Latter-day Saint church is that the Godhead consists of three distinct individuals or personages. These personages are God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Each of these individuals has a particular mission in relation to humanity; God the Father is the father of all the spirits of mortal beings. He is the ultimate source of all power and knowledge, and the other two

3. *Ibid.*, 344.

members of the Godhead are subordinate to him. Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father; he is the first born of the spirit children of God and the only begotten of the Father in the flesh. This enabled him to become the Redeemer and Savior of humankind. Because of his death and resurrection everyone will be resurrected, and through his atonement all who repent and believe in him will be forgiven of their sins and receive eternal life. Jesus represents the Father and acts as his agent. The Holy Ghost, unlike the Father and the Son who possess bodies of flesh and bone, is a personage of spirit. He is one of the spirit children of God the Father and has the mission of revealing truth and testifying of the Father and the Son. He is also called the Comforter because he gives peace, hope, and comfort.

Although Mormons believe that we have a Heavenly Mother, she is not included in the Godhead. Does this mean that she is not also God? Does this mean that she has no mission to perform in relation to our mortal probation, that her role is restricted to giving birth to our spirits and nurturing us in our premortal lives? I find such conclusions unacceptable. God the Mother must be equal to God the Father; she must play an equally active role in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man and woman.

I believe that a serious acceptance of the existence of God the Mother requires us Mormons to re-examine and reinterpret our doctrine of the Godhead. I also believe that such a re-examination must be firmly grounded in the scriptures. I acknowledge that there is no direct information given about God the Mother in the scriptures. However, both the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants teach that some revelations have been withheld. The Book of Mormon tells us of revelations given to a few which the prophets were not permitted to write or which they were commanded to seal up until a later time, and the Doctrine and Covenants speaks of knowledge "that has not been revealed since the world was until now; a time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest" (121:26, 28). One God that has not been manifest is the Mother. Surely this is a promise that she will be revealed. Also the fact that she is not directly revealed in the scriptures does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the scriptures have nothing to say about her. Indeed, new revelations always demand a reinterpretation of scripture and permit us to see things and understand things in ways we previously could not.

To re-examine our doctrine of the Godhead I examined all the references to deity in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. I then attempted to work out relationships between different names of deity without using traditional Mormon assumptions about the nature of the Godhead but simply relying on the evidence of the text. I recognize that every reader has her own prejudices and hidden assumptions as well as

the ones she shares with the various groups she belongs to, and that it is not possible to approach a text completely objectively; however, perhaps something may be gained by trying. I do not hope to present a complete or final interpretation of the Godhead as given in the scriptures I reviewed. Such a result is neither possible nor desirable. However, I do hope to present an interpretation which fits the text better than the one we presently subscribe to.

I did not begin my study without a hypothesis. My study of the scriptures over many years had presented me with several passages I found difficult to harmonize with the view of the Godhead I had learned from LDS seminary and church manuals and publications. The first passages that struck me were the teachings of Abinadi. He repeatedly taught that God himself would redeem his people and make an atonement for their sins (Mosiah 13:28, 32, 33; 15:18, 19; 16:4). He explained that God was both the Father and the Son (15:2-7) and concluded his testimony by saying, "Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father" (16:15). The most obvious interpretation of Abinadi's words is that God the Father and Jesus Christ are two names for the same being. There are other scriptures in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants which plainly teach the same concept. My initial hypothesis, then, was that God the Father and Jesus Christ are one individual. Do the scriptures bear this interpretation? Are there any which present difficulties for it?

The most common names for deity in the scriptures are God, the Lord, the Lord God, and Jesus Christ. Others include the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Father, the Eternal Father, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Only Begotten of the Father, the Creator, and the Almighty. I have excluded all terms referring to the Holy Spirit as these will be discussed later.

JESUS CHRIST, LORD AND GOD

The names God and the Lord are used synonymously throughout the scriptures, often being used together as the Lord God. "God" is the generic term for deity, the Supreme Being, the translation for the word El or Elohim in the Bible. The personal name for God in the Bible is YHWH which is translated as "the Lord" or "Jehovah." The Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants seem to follow this usage. "God" is more often used when general information about deity is being given, for example, "O how great the holiness of our God" (2 Ne. 9:20), and "the Lord" is used when specific acts and words of God are given, for example, "I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates" (1 Ne. 9:3).

It is possible to show that the names God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, the

Holy One of Israel, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Messiah, and the Creator all refer to the same Supreme Being in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. Every major prophet in the Book of Mormon taught this.

Writing of his vision, Nephi said, "And the angel said unto me again: Look and behold the condescension of God! And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world" (1 Ne. 11:26, 27). Literally condescend means to come down with. According to the angel the condescension of God is the Redeemer. So Nephi learned exactly what Abinadi later taught, that God himself would come down among his people to redeem them. Nephi also wrote, "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 Ne. 11:7). Jacob declared, "He also hath shown unto me that the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, should manifest himself unto them in the flesh" (2 Ne. 6:9); and:

O how great the holiness of our God! . . .

And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men . . . And he suffereth this that the resurrection may pass upon all men . . .

And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

. . . for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel has spoken it (2 Ne. 9:20-24).

King Benjamin, in his great sermon to his people, said:

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 shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, . . .

And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body . . .

And he shall be called Jesus Christ . . . the Creator of all things from the beginning (Mosiah 3:5, 6, 8).

He concluded his teachings with these words: "I would . . . that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, . . . that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things in heaven and earth, who is God above all" (5:15).

I have already mentioned that Abinadi taught that God himself would redeem his people. "And were it not for the atonement which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people, . . . they must unavoid-

ably perish" (Mosiah 13:28). Speaking of those who have part in the first resurrection, he declared, "They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them; thus they have eternal life through Christ . . . being redeemed by the Lord" (15:23, 24).

Alma wrote, "And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world" (Alma 42:15).

The word of the Lord came to Mormon saying, "Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God" (Moro. 8:8).

When he visited the Nephites, Jesus Christ introduced himself: "I am Jesus Christ . . . I am the God of Israel and the God of the whole earth" (3 Ne. 11:10, 14). Prophesying of the remnants of the house of Israel, he said, "And they shall be brought to a knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them" (20:13). His disciples "did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God" (19:18).

Moroni wrote of the vision of the brother of Jared in which he saw Jesus. "And he saw the finger of Jesus . . . he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; Wherefore having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil" (Ether 3:19-20).

The Doctrine and Covenants is in harmony with the Book of Mormon in using the names God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, Jehovah, the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Savior all to refer to the same God. Section 1 is given by the Lord. In verse 20 he says, "But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world." Section 6 begins, "Behold, I am God," and in verse 21 the same speaker declares, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ." In D&C 18:47 we read, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, and your Redeemer." Other passages read: "Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer" (27:1); "Verily thus saith the Lord, your God, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ" (66:13); "For the Lord is God and beside him there is no Savior" (76:1);

. . . as God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth, even so in the beginning of the seventh thousand years will the Lord God sanctify the earth, and complete the salvation of man, and judge all things, and redeem all things . . . and the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of his work . . . the preparing of the way before the time of his coming (77:12);

"We saw the Lord . . . and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah" (110:2).

MEANINGS OF "THE FATHER"

My study of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants shows that it is consistent with the text to interpret the names God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the Creator, and Jehovah as all referring to the same being. My initial hypothesis was that all the names of God refer to the same being. The only names that posed any difficulty were those referring to the Father or the Son. Since it is easy to establish that the names referring to the Son also refer to Jesus Christ, it could be concluded that all the names of God except "the Father" refer to Jesus Christ. However, this leads to the conclusion that "God" and "the Son of God" are the same person. Indeed, for this reason most Mormons usually think of God as God the Father. But I have shown that "God" consistently refers to the same being who is Jesus Christ. A close examination of all the occurrences of the name "the Father" in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants suggests that it cannot be consistently maintained that the Father and the Son are simply two separate individuals. "The Father" seems to have several different meanings.

In many verses the Son is called the Father, implying that the Father and the Son are the same person: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (2 Ne. 19:6); "And 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); "He said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things" (7:27); "Teach them that repentance cometh through Christ the Lord, who is the very Eternal Father" (16:15); "Now Zeezrom saith unto him: 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" (Alma 11:38-39). The resurrected Jesus said to the Nephites, "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in Heaven, is perfect" (3 Ne. 12:48). If Jesus were speaking of two individuals it would be more natural for him to use "and" rather than "or." The commas enclosing "or your Father who is in heaven" make this phrase an appositive explaining "I" rather than a compound subject. Also the verb is singular rather than plural. Finally, "And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, the Father and the Son" (Morm. 9:12); and "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son" (Ether 3:14).

Sometimes the Father and the Son seem to be spoken of as two separate beings, but closer examination of the text shows them to be the same person. In section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord (Jesus Christ) says, "But if ye enter not into my law ye cannot receive the promise of my Father which he made unto Abraham." Here Jesus seems to refer to his

Father as someone separate from himself. However, there are many references that show that Jehovah was the one who covenanted with Abraham. The next two verses confirm this. "God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham . . . Was Abraham therefore under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord commanded it" (vv. 33-35). This also shows that the Lord sometimes speaks of himself in the third person.

Sometimes "Father" seems to be an alternate name for God or the Lord. This poses a problem for my interpretation only when Jesus is the one speaking. However, again he may simply be referring to himself in the third person, saying that as the Father, the premortal Christ, he did and said certain things. This may have been the case when he visited the Nephites as the resurrected Lord. He talked to them about the covenants which the Father made with the house of Israel, with Jacob, and with Abraham, but it was the Lord God Jehovah, the same being who would become Jesus Christ, who covenanted with Abraham, Jacob, and the people of Israel (3 Ne. 20:27, 1 Ne. 15:18). Jesus gave the Nephites the same teachings which he gave the Jews in the Sermon on the Mount. In these he often referred to "your Father in heaven." Since Jesus' purpose in this sermon was to teach people how to live and about their relationship with their Father in Heaven rather than to reveal who he was, we cannot conclude that the Father he referred to was necessarily a different person than himself.

However, there are some passages in which the most natural interpretation is that the Father and the Son are two separate beings. These passages refer to the relationship between the Father and the Son. In the Book of Mormon most of these occur in the accounts of the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the Nephites. Jesus tells them that he suffered the will of the Father, that he glorified the Father, that his doctrine was given him by the Father, and that his Father commands all to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. He also talks about commandments which the Father gave him, says the Father sent him, talks of going to or ascending to his Father, and prays to the Father. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord or Jesus Christ speaks of the kingdom of his Father and those whom his Father has given him, says that he has done the will of the Father, claims to be our advocate with the Father, pleads for us before the Father, and says that no one will come unto the Father but by him.

How are we to understand such passages in light of our discovery that the Lord, God, and the Redeemer are one being? Should we reinterpret Lord-God-Redeemer passages in light of Father-Son passages or should we reinterpret Father-Son passages in light of Lord-God-Redeemer passages?

To attempt to answer these questions I will discuss the few scriptures which attempt to explain the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Only in two places in the Book of Mormon and one place in the Doctrine and Covenants is the question directly addressed. These passages all assert that they are discussing one being and explain why he is called the Father and the Son. First, let us look at Mosiah 15:2-5.

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 Son—

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

And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God . . .

Verse two says that because God will dwell in mortal flesh he will be called the Son of God. Verse 5 interprets verses 2-4 by equating the Son to the flesh and the spirit to the Father. The Son subjects himself to the Father by subjecting the flesh to the spirit or his mortal self to his eternal self. Abinadi says nothing about the LDS church's current belief that Jesus is called the Son because he is the literal Son of God the Father in the flesh nor does he assert that Jesus receives his power to redeem and resurrect because his mortal father is God. According to Abinadi Jesus' power to redeem and resurrect comes from himself, his spirit being the Spirit of the Eternal Father himself.

The second passage in the Book of Mormon explaining the relationship between the Father and the Son occurs in 3 Nephi 1:14. Here the Lord, the premortal Jesus, tells Nephi, the son of Nephi, that he will be born the next day. "Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfill 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." There is an interesting echo of Abinadi here. Abinadi said that the will of the Son would be subjected to that of the Father, but the Lord says that he comes into the world to do the will of both the Father and the Son. "Of the Father because of me," the Lord says, which means that he is the Father, "and of the Son because of my flesh." Here the Lord asserts that he is already a god of spirit and flesh and that the spirit and flesh are in harmony. Understanding the Lord's words as a comment on Abinadi's words, we conclude that "the Father" can mean "God the Eternal Father, a being of spirit and immortal glorified flesh" or it can refer only to the spiritual part of God's eternal being, and that "the Son" can mean either "God the Eternal Father, a being of spirit and immortal glorified flesh," putting the emphasis on the flesh to distinguish the person of God from the Spirit of God, or it can refer to God as a mortal being

dwelling among people to redeem them from their sins, or it can simply refer to the body of God.

Doctrine and Covenants 93 agrees with Abinadi in equating the Father with the spirit and the Son with the flesh. Verses 3-5 read:

And that I am in the Father and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—

The Father because he 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.

I was in the world and received of my Father, and the works of him were plainly manifest.

Note the parallel construction of verse 3 with the words of Abinadi and the words of the Lord. All explain why the Lord is both the Father and the Son. In section 93 the Lord says that he is the Father "because he gave me of his fulness." In verses 16 and 36 we learn that "he received a fulness of the glory of the Father" and the "glory of God is intelligence or, in other words, light and truth." Verses 9 and 11 call the Redeemer "the Spirit of Truth" which came and dwelt in the flesh. Thus in section 93 "the Father" seems to mean "the Spirit of God." Verse 17 substantiates this conclusion. "And the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him." According to Joseph Smith the Father cannot dwell in a person's heart because he has a body of flesh and bones (D&C 130:3, 22). Although the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, it also cannot dwell in a person's heart.⁴ Our bodies can only be inhabited by our own spirits. Therefore, if the Father dwelt in the Son, "the Father" must mean the spirit body of God and the Son and the Father must constitute one eternal being.

However, "the Father" seems also to sometimes have a meaning beyond the personal spirit of God. Verse 23 of section 93 reads, "Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth." Here the Father is called Spirit and the Spirit of truth; the Redeemer, as was pointed out, is also the Spirit of truth. "The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God" (v. 35). The terms God and the Father in such passages seem to mean a spiritual substance or power that pervades all things. The Lord says, "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (v. 2). In section 88 this concept is amplified.

... he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth.

4. *Ibid.*, 173.

Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ...

Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things (vv. 6-7, 12-13).

“The Father” or “God” or “the Spirit of God” or “the Spirit of the Lord” may mean this totality of spirit or a portion of it.

“Spirit,” “intelligence,” “light,” and “glory” seem to be synonymous terms. A spirit or a personage of spirit is an individual being organized from spirit and given independence (D&C 93:30). Spirit is a unifying principle, but if it could not be divided up into separate spheres, there would be no existence.

Understanding that “the Father” can mean either “God the Eternal Father, a personage of spirit tabernacled by immortal glorified flesh,” or “the personal spirit of God,” or “the totality of spirit which emanates from God” illuminates some of the more difficult Father-Son passages. “I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one,” could be interpreted to mean, “I am in the totality of spirit which emanates from the Father and the individual spirit personage of the Father dwells in my body, thus I am the Eternal Father.”

The scriptures in which Jesus speaks of those who believe in him becoming one through him seem to require a different interpretation. For example, “that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one” (D&C 35:2). This speaks of many distinct individuals, each with his or her own spirit and body, becoming one. What does this oneness mean? Jesus explains it by comparing it to the oneness he has with the Father. But I have shown that the Father and Jesus, when the Father is an individual, are the same individual. To attempt an interpretation of this passage and offer another meaning for the term “the Father” I will examine a revelation given to Joseph Smith and several other scriptural verses.

Joseph Smith received this revelation probably in 1833. It was not written down but was related by Orson Pratt in 1855. It is given in the form of questions and answers.

“What is the name of God in the pure language?”

The answer says, “Ahman.”

“What is the name of the Son of God?”

Answer, “Son Ahman—the greatest of all the parts of God excepting Ahman.”

"What is the name of men?"
"Sons Ahman," is the answer . . .

This revelation goes on to say that Sons Ahman are the greatest of all the parts of God except Son Ahman and Ahman.⁵

In this revelation "Ahman" seems to be equivalent to God or the Father as the totality of spirit since Son Ahman and Sons Ahman are parts of Ahman. Son Ahman, Jesus Christ, is an individual, a personage who is embodied since "Son" refers to the flesh. As the greatest of all the parts of Ahman, he is creator of all things, ruler of all things, the God we worship. This revelation calls men and women "Sons Ahman." However, it may refer to exalted beings rather than mortal ones. To support this idea I offer the following reasons.

In Doctrine and Covenants 76 Joseph Smith describes the celestial glory and those who will receive it.

They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

And he makes them equal in power and might and dominion.

And the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one (vv. 56, 58, 95, 96).

Those who inherit celestial glory are called gods or sons of god. Christ has made them equal and has given them all things; they are one in him. As gods or sons of god, being embodied celestial beings, they are the greatest of all the parts of God excepting Son Ahman and Ahman.

And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things—where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever (vv. 92-93).

Celestial beings receive of the fullness of the Father through Jesus Christ. As many individuals partaking of one glory they may also be called the Father. With this additional meaning of "the Father" I can now offer a possible interpretation of D&C 35:2. "They may become the sons of God" means "inherit celestial glory"; "even one in me" means "become equal in power, might, and dominion, receiving all things from Jesus Christ"; "as I am one in the Father" means "as I am one among the celestial beings"; "as the Father is one in me" means "as the celestial beings have been made one

5. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, Eng.: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-86), 2:342.

by me"; and "that we may be one" means "that we may all dwell together in celestial glory."

THE MOTHER IN THE GODHEAD

Having reinterpreted "the Father," we now look for the Mother. She is present in the scriptures, but she is hidden; even as we do not see light in a room but see the room and all things in it by the light which is present, so is she in the scriptures.

Nephi explains why Jesus was baptized: to obey the Father in keeping his commandments and to set an example for us. "And he said unto the children of men, Follow thou me" (2 Ne. 31:10). In Doctrine and Covenants 132:6 the Lord reveals a "new and everlasting covenant . . . [which] was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law." The new and everlasting covenant is the covenant of eternal marriage. As we have seen, those who inherit celestial glory receive a fullness of God's glory and are called gods. According to the revelation on eternal marriage, those who do not marry by the new and everlasting covenant and are not sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise "cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods," but those who do marry by the new and everlasting covenant and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise "shall . . . be gods, because they have all power." If the Lord requires us to keep the law of celestial marriage to become gods, then Jesus himself must certainly keep it. The laws he institutes are to make us like him. In the celestial glory all are equal; therefore the daughters of God are equal to the sons of God and God the Mother is equal to God the Father in power, might, and dominion.

If the gods are divine couples, then we can assume that God himself is also a divine couple, that God the Father, as a being of spirit and body, is eternally joined to God the Mother, also a being of spirit and body. "The Father" then must also mean "the Mother" as "sons of God" certainly includes "daughters of God."

This suggests another way of interpreting the Godhead. The Father is the divine couple, Father and Mother, each possessing a spirit and a glorified body. They must together be the source of light or spirit which permeates all things. If the name "the Father" refers to the union of the two personages who together are God, then perhaps the other two names in the Godhead refer to them separately. As we have seen, "the Son" refers to the flesh, so the Lord or Jehovah, as the embodied God, is the Son. But the name "the Son," as Abinadi points out, more specifically points to his mission as the Redeemer, to his taking on himself a mortal body to redeem

us from sin. Perhaps, then, the Holy Ghost is the name of the Mother which refers to her work among us in mortality.

One objection that has been made to the suggestion that the Holy Ghost is the Mother is that the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit but the Mother must have an immortal, glorified body as the Father does. Indeed, this same objection is likely to be raised against the idea that Jesus is God the Father. If Jesus is God the Father, it will be argued, then he must have had an immortal, physical body before he took on himself a mortal body. But many Mormons will object that the scriptures teach that the resurrected body and spirit are inseparably connected, so Jesus must have been a personage of spirit before he became a mortal man and thus he could not have been God the Father. However, given the teachings of Joseph Smith about the importance of the body—that all beings with bodies have power over those who do not, that it was necessary for us to obtain bodies to become like God—it is impossible that Jesus, the Lord God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Holy One of Israel could have been what he was and have done all he did without a body. Although a resurrected person is not subject to death in the sense that his body and spirit will separate without his will or control, it may be that he has the power to separate his body and spirit if he so desires.

Is there any scriptural support for the view that the premortal Jesus had a body of flesh and bone? I have already discussed the passage in 3 Nephi where the premortal Jesus speaks of his flesh. In the New Testament Jesus says to the Jews, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself”; and “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again” (John 5:26, 10:17-18). This could refer not only to his power to lay down a mortal body and take it again as an immortal body, but also to his power to lay down an immortal body and take on a mortal body. The best evidence that the premortal Jesus had a physical body is in Ether 3. When the brother of Jared sees Jesus Christ he sees his immortal physical body.

And the veil was taken off from the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was like unto flesh and blood . . .

And he saith unto the Lord: I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood.

And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood . . . (3:6, 8-9)

This is usually interpreted to mean that the brother of Jared saw the spirit body of Jesus because he said, “I will take upon me flesh and blood.” But, as Joseph Smith taught, an immortal body is a body of flesh and bone

without blood, so it was necessary for the Lord to correct the brother of Jared. However, it is significant that the brother of Jared thought it was a body of flesh and blood. Many people have seen spirits and they never mistake them for bodies of flesh and blood. Jesus told the brother of Jared, "Behold, this body, which ye now behold is the body of my spirit" (Ether 3:16). A spirit body is composed of spirit. Mormons use the term spirit body to emphasize the fact that we believe spirit is a substance, but "body of my spirit" implies the body is not of the same substance as the spirit, that is, it implies a physical body belonging to the spirit. Jesus continued, "And man have I created after the body of my spirit." The creation of man and woman includes the physical creation. Moroni comments, "Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites" (v. 17). Usually this is interpreted to mean that this man saw the spirit of Jesus Christ. However, as Joseph Smith taught, it is necessary to be quickened by the spirit to see God in the flesh (D&C 67:11). Therefore this could simply mean that the brother of Jared was in the spirit when he saw Jesus. "Even after the manner" must mean in the same way, which included seeing and touching. "And in the likeness of the same body" is usually interpreted to mean that the physical body which the Nephites saw was in the likeness of the spirit body which the brother of Jared saw. However, this passage is also consistent with the interpretation I offer. The body which the brother of Jared saw was not identical to the body which the Nephites saw, although they were both in the likeness of Jesus' spirit. Moroni emphasizes that "he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites." Jesus ministered to the Nephites as their God, a being of flesh, bone, and spirit.

If it was possible for the Lord to lay down his immortal body to take on mortal flesh, then surely it is also possible for the Mother to lay down her immortal body to become the Holy Ghost.

The scriptures refer to the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Christ, the Comforter, and the Spirit of truth. Two possible meanings that we have ascertained for these names are the personal spirit of Jesus Christ and the substance or power that emanates from God and pervades all things in differing degrees. The scriptures do not make it clear whether the Holy Ghost is an individual being or a power. However, there are several passages which declare that the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God. How are we to interpret this? The official doctrine of the LDS church at this time is, as has been pointed out, that they are three distinct individuals. I have tried to show from the scriptures that the Son is one individual, who is also called the Lord, God, and our Redeemer, and that the name "the Father," when it refers to one individual, refers to the same person who is Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost could also be interpreted as the power of God, since Jesus refers to himself as the Spirit of truth and the names "my Spirit," "Spirit of the Lord," "Spirit of God," etc., are actually used more frequently than and often synonymously with the Holy Ghost. Thus the names "Father," "Son," and "Holy Ghost" could all refer to one individual God, but I would argue that this interpretation would also require us to recognize God as Mother, Daughter, and Holy Ghost.

There are, however, reasons to believe that there is an individual being, a god distinct from Jesus Christ, called the Holy Ghost who has a special mission to perform among humans. Nephi taught his people that the words of Christ are given by the power of the Holy Ghost. "I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels . . . Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore they speak the words of Christ" (2 Ne. 32:2-3). The connection between angels and the Holy Ghost is interesting. Angels are messengers of God who are seen as well as heard; whoever is ministered to by an angel knows he has seen and heard a being distinct and different from himself. The Holy Ghost, however, speaks to the mind and heart (D&C 8:2). It is sometimes difficult to distinguish her voice from our own inner voice. The reason she is not clearly pointed out as an individual in the scriptures is because she does not often manifest herself as an individual distinct from ourselves. It is also possible that there are many spirits working with the Holy Ghost to perform her work.

Jesus, during the Last Supper, spoke of two distinct comforters; one he called the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Truth, the other he also called the Spirit of truth. Joseph Smith taught that the Second Comforter was Jesus Christ himself.⁶ He also taught that the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit who is also God who also has a distinct mission to perform for us even as the Son atoned for our sins.⁷

Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages, according to Abraham's record, are called God the first, the Creator; God the Second, the Redeemer; and God the Third, the witness or Testator.⁸

But numerous scriptures testify that the being who would become Jesus Christ created the earth. And in Moses 6:8-9 we read, "In the day that God

6. Ehat and Cook, 4-5.

7. *Ibid.*, 64.

8. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1968), 190.

created man, in the likeness of God made he him; in the image of his own body, male and female, created he them." If God created male and female in the image of his own body then God the Creator must be the Divine Couple, a Man with a male body and a Woman with a female body. If God the Creator is the Divine Couple and God the Redeemer is the male part of the Divine Couple, then it is reasonable to conclude that God the Witness or Testator is the female part of God the Creator.

God himself came down among the children of men to redeem his people. He sacrificed his immortal body and took on himself a mortal body to become one of us and suffer the pains and sorrows of mortality. He sacrificed his mortal body so that he might conquer death and bring about the resurrection of all humanity and he suffered the pains of all our sins so that we might be redeemed.

God herself came down among the children of women to succor her children. She sacrificed her immortal body to be with us; she remains a spirit so that she can always be with us to enlighten, to comfort, to strengthen, to feel what we feel, to suffer with us in all our sins, in our loneliness and pain, and to encircle us in the arms of her love. She bears witness of Christ and leads us to him, teaching us of their will so that we might partake of eternal life in their kingdom.

PROPHECIES OF THE REVELATION OF THE MOTHER

We find the Mother in the scriptures, then, wherever they speak of the Holy Ghost, but of course they do not identify the Holy Ghost as our Mother. When will she be revealed? Do the scriptures prophesy of her revelation?

Joseph Smith taught that in the last days many things would be revealed. The purpose of this is to bring about a whole and complete and perfect union. In order to do this, lost and hidden things from past ages will be revealed as well as things which never have been revealed (D&C 128:18). The Lord told Joseph Smith, "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" (121:26). The clause "that has not been revealed since the world was until now" is usually considered to modify "knowledge." However, it could also modify "the Holy Ghost," yielding "The Holy Ghost has not been revealed since the world was until now," that is, in the last days. However, whether this interpretation is admitted the Lord says that there is "a time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many, they shall be manifest" (v. 28). So the Holy Ghost, either as one with God or one of many gods, will be revealed in the last days. Therefore we should look for prophecies of her revelation among the prophecies of the last days. We

should not expect to find any plain prophecies. Prophecies of the future are usually metaphoric, allusive, and suggestive rather than plain and since the Mother herself is hidden in the scriptures, we can expect that prophecies concerning her appearance will be even more hidden.

I will discuss two clusters of metaphors which I believe refer to the Mother: the arm or the hand of the Lord and the bride of the Lord. In speaking of the last days Isaiah prophesied, "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations" (Isa. 52:10). In the Book of Mormon Nephi, Abinadi, and Jesus all refer to this prophecy and it is referred to four times in the Doctrine and Covenants. What is the meaning of "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord?" What is to be revealed in the last days? To discover this I undertook a rhetorical analysis of all occurrences of the phrase "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord" in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants.

There are a number of passages which indicate that "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord" denotes the means by which the Lord carries out his purposes or accomplishes his work. For example, "It is the hand of the Lord which has done it" (Morm. 8:8); "being directed continually by the hand of the Lord" (Ether 2:6); "he extended his arm in the preservation of our fathers" (Mosiah 1:14); and "my arm is stretched out in the last days to save my people Israel" (D&C 136:2). Of course, we regard such passages as metaphoric; we do not think that the hand or arm of the Lord is literally accomplishing the work. By what means, then, does the Lord carry out his purposes? To determine this I looked for parallel constructions that might explain or interpret "arm of the Lord" and found several such passages.

"I call upon the weak things of the world . . . to thrash the nations by the power of my Spirit; and their arm shall be my arm" (D&C 35:13-14). Since they are to accomplish their work by the power of the Lord's Spirit, the arm of the Lord is the Spirit of the Lord.

"For I the Lord have put forth my hand to exert the powers of heaven" (D&C 84:119). This tells us that what is done by the hand of the Lord is done by the powers of heaven.

"Thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and call upon his name" (Alma 19:36). This verse equates the Lord's pouring out his Spirit to extending his arm.

"He was taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord" (Alma 45:19). Again the hand of the Lord is equated to the Spirit.

Having identified "Spirit of the Lord" or "power of my Spirit," or "Spirit" to mean "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord," I checked to see if this was a plausible interpretation for all occurrences of "arm of the Lord" or "hand of the Lord" and found it to be so except in the few cases where a literal interpretation seemed to be required.

The Spirit of the Lord is not necessarily the personage of the Holy Ghost, so something more would seem to be required to show that the prophecy that the Lord will make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations is a prophecy of the revelation of the Holy Ghost or Mother in the last days. I have one more interpretation to offer to show that the prophecy that the Lord will make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations is a prophecy of the revelation of the Mother. Isaiah's prophecy reads, "For the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (52:9-10). In his visit to the Nephites, Jesus rendered the prophecy as:

For the Father hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father; and the Father and I are one (3 Ne. 20:34-35).

Joseph Smith taught that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Second Comforter and that when anyone obtains this last comforter he will have Jesus himself appear to him from time to time and that he will manifest the Father to him and they will together visit him.⁹ If the Lord or the Father comforts his people, he appears to them and he also reveals the Father to them. Since the Father is also the Divine couple, the manifestation of the Father could mean the revelation of the Divine Couple, and "The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations" could mean that Jesus reveals himself as the Father and his divine wife as the Mother. Doctrine and Covenants 97:19 supports this interpretation. "Zion is the city of our God, . . . for God is there, and the hand of the Lord is there." This implies that "the hand of the Lord" is indeed a person whose presence in Zion is as important as God's.

Interpreting "the Father" as "the Divine Couple" also suggests an interpretation for scriptures which assert that Jesus is on the right hand of the Father or God. These scriptures may picture the Father and Mother standing or sitting side by side and Jesus is on the right and she is on the left. Thus either the Son or the Daughter, the Father or the Mother could be called the arm or hand of the Lord.

The second cluster of metaphors which I believe point to the revelation of the Mother are those of the marriage of the Lamb. Jesus called himself the bridegroom (Matt. 5:19) and gave two parables, the Marriage of the King's Son and the Ten Virgins, in which he compared the Second Coming to a wedding and himself to the bridegroom. In the Doctrine and Covenants

9. Ehat and Cook, 5.

he refers to himself as the bridegroom five times in connection with the Second Coming. Will there be a real wedding at the Second Coming or is the wedding merely figurative?

The most detailed account of the marriage of the Lamb is in Revelation. Before Christ descends to the earth John hears a voice saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (19:7). The bride is usually interpreted to mean the church of God or the people of Israel. John calls the bride the new Jerusalem (21:2, 9-10). But a figurative meaning does not preclude a literal one. John also says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Since the Fall brought about the separation of many things—God from humanity, male from female, body from spirit, individual from community, faith from reason—the Millennium will bring all things into a new unity. But the Fall also brought about the separation of God from God, Father from Mother. Isaiah declared:

Yea, for thus saith the Lord: have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? For thus saith the Lord; Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement? To whom have I put thee away, or to which of my creditors have I sold you? Yea, to whom have I sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away (2 Ne. 7:1).

Our Mother exiled herself voluntarily to be with us. The Mother is identified with the Child: she also took our sins on herself.

In Revelation 12:1 John describes the Divine Mother. "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." A great dragon made war on her and she fled into the wilderness where the dragon continued to make war on her and her children. Joseph Smith in his translation of the Bible said that the woman was the church of God. The images of the sun, moon, and wilderness are also found in a description of the church given three times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;

And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens (109:73-74).

One metaphorical meaning of "wilderness" is given by the Lord. "Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—in the wilderness, because you cannot see him—my voice, because my voice is Spirit" (D&C 88:66). The wilderness where the Mother is exiled

is the realm of the Spirit which we cannot see. The description “fair as the moon” and “clear as the sun” and “terrible as an army with banners” reminds us of the glorious woman in heaven “clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet,” her power denoted by the crown of stars on her head. Again Mother is identified with Child. She cannot come out of the wilderness adorned as a bride to meet her bridegroom until her child is sanctified. “But first let my army become very great, and let it be sanctified before me, that it may become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon, and that her banners may be terrible to all nations.” The description “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” is taken from the Song of Solomon where it describes the bride of the king. If the Song of Songs is interpreted as an allegory of the hierogamos or marriage of the divine male and female, this further supports the view that the marriage of the Lamb is literal as well as figurative and that the Mother will be revealed “adorned as a bride for that day when God shall unveil the heavens” and be reunited with his divine spouse.

As the time for the revelation of the Mother draws closer we should expect that some people will receive visions or voices or feelings which manifest her presence and her mission. I would like to share one such experience with you. My husband David and I were driving home to Provo after having been in Denver for David’s twenty-fifth high school reunion. I will give David’s account of what happened.

The time in Denver was good, along the lines of recovery as I felt, but better than I anticipated. No close friends were there but after a time I felt kinship with many I met again. I felt a great desire to celebrate the lives of these friends and comfort those who had discovered that their lives were not exactly what they had anticipated they would be. It was a time of reaching out with love and understanding. The epiphanal experience came on the way home. It was about noon. Janice was driving—she had been since Denver—and I was reading to her from Margaret’s and Paul’s book [*Strangers in Paradox*]. I got to a part of the book that overwhelmed me suddenly: “Rather each is cast in the Image of the Mater Dolorosa, the mourning mother who imposes upon herself a voluntary exile in order to wander with, and comfort her children, mourning and grieving in the veil of tears.” At this point I felt tears welling up inside of me and I choked on, “She is like Rachel weeping for her children. She is De . . .”

I couldn’t control my voice; I couldn’t go on. I wept for a while and then said, “I am very touched by this.” Janice said, “It’s more than that. It’s revelation.” I said, “She is here with us. She is in the back seat with us and . . .”

What was I feeling? I was saying inside myself, “This is what I want—to comfort in this veil of tears, to nurture, not to advance myself. This is what I have always wanted.” Yearning towards her, I cried out in my heart, “I want to share your loneliness and sorrows. How can I? Oh, that

I could comfort with you!"

I realized that she was not in the back seat. She was around me and before me. With tear fogged eyes I saw her fill the horizon in front of me. I couldn't go on reading. Tears were on my cheeks. I am not usually so overcome with feelings. I rarely cry. I stopped wondering if Janice would wonder why I was having such trouble going forward. I began wondering if I could remain on earth. I was being expanded and it was joyful—and it hurt!

This was not just empathy for the Mother. This was epiphany. She is here! I felt such love and identification for her and her work and rapture at her presence.

What would I tell Janice? What could I tell her? Finally I regained control and found out.

"I've given my heart to the Mother. She was here and I wasn't sure that I would go on living."

WORSHIPPING THE MOTHER

One question which has received a great deal of attention is whether we should worship the Mother and, if so, how? The question is important to those who sincerely believe that our Heavenly Mother is God, while those who believe that only the Father is really God tend to view the answer as self-evident (of course, we worship only God the Father) and the question as presumptuous. This is not surprising since fundamentally to worship God means to acknowledge that the being we worship is God. When Jesus first appeared to the Nephites they thought he was an angel. But after he told them that he was Jesus Christ, they fell to the earth. Jesus then invited them to feel the prints of the nails in his hands and feet. After they had done so, they all fell down at his feet and worshipped him. They worshipped him because they knew he was their God and the God of the whole earth, the light and life of the world who had atoned for their sins. Whether we should worship the Mother, then, depends on whether we know her and know who she is. We have not been commanded to worship her as we have God the Father. Worship demands a distance; he is the transcendent God, while she is the immanent God. She bears witness of him and leads us to him. Without her with us we could not see him as the Almighty God. However, once she has been revealed to us and we see and understand that she is also God, then we also, in the most fundamental way, worship her. There is no question whether we should worship her; no one can allow us or forbid us to worship her. We simply do.

We also worship God through rituals or ordinances. These connect us in some way to God and are the means through which we, by performing some action, receive blessings from him. All religions believe their rituals come from God. They are either transmitted from generation to generation

or rediscovered or revealed by God himself. Some women look for ancient forms of Goddess worship to express their devotion to the Goddess. However, we as Latter-day Saints only need to re-examine the ordinances given us through Joseph Smith to see that she is present in all of them. We cannot worship him without her presence. Because they are one there is no ordinance through which we worship only him or only her. We are baptized to show our faith in him, but faith is a gift of the Spirit which testifies of Christ. We repent of our sins believing that he has atoned for them and we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost to sanctify us and reveal his will to us so that we may retain a remission of our sins. In partaking of the sacrament we remember him and he pours out his Spirit more abundantly on us. The temple ordinances, as Margaret and Paul Toscano have shown,¹⁰ symbolize both the sacrifice of Christ and her veiled presence.

Jesus taught that doing the will of God is more important than formal worship; indeed, it is the truest worship because it requires our deepest commitment and expresses our truest desires, our essential being. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (3 Ne. 14:21). If we want to worship the Mother, we must do the work of the Mother, and if we do the work of the Mother, we worship her. Her work is the same as his work. They are one God. Nephi taught that the words of Christ will tell us all things that we should do and that the words of Christ are given by the power of the Holy Ghost (2 Ne. 32:5).

For Mormons the question of whether we should worship the Mother has focused mainly on whether we should pray to her. Those who think we should not pray to her point out that Jesus commanded us to pray to the Father in his name and conclude that the only acceptable form of prayer is to address God as Heavenly Father and end the prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. I have tried to show that Jesus is the Father whom we worship. In Doctrine and Covenants 93, which clearly teaches that the Son is the Father, the Lord says, "I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name." This means that Jesus Christ is the name of the Father which we should use when we pray to him and worship him. He has other names but we should call him Jesus Christ because that is the name through which we are saved. "Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved" (D&C 18:23). If the words are changed around a little this reads, "Behold, Jesus Christ is the name of the Father which is given." Mormons usually interpret this verse to mean that Jesus Christ is the name

10. Margaret and Paul Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 265-91.

given by the Father, which is also a true interpretation, but it obscures the more fundamental one.

Doctrine and Covenants 109 is the prayer offered by Joseph Smith at the dedication of the Kirtland temple, which he said was given to him by revelation. In this prayer he addresses God as "Lord, God of Israel," "Lord," "Holy Father in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of thy bosom," "Holy Father," "Jehovah," "Mighty God of Jacob," and "O Lord God Almighty." All these names are names of Jesus Christ and this prayer is clearly addressed to him. It is concluded with a simple "Amen." Nephi, in his account of his life, usually tells us that he prayed to the Lord, and we have seen that he identified the Lord as the one who would come to the earth to redeem his people. He also exhorts us to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ (2 Ne. 32:9) and tells us to worship Christ (25:29). He does not distinguish between praying to the Lord, praying to the Father in the name of Christ, and worshipping Christ.

If we are to pray to Jesus, the question arises, "To whom did Jesus pray?" As a mortal man he prayed to the Father and as God among the Nephites he also prayed to the Father. But I have shown that the Father, the Man of Holiness, is Jesus Christ. Surely Jesus did not pray to himself. Perhaps the Father whom Jesus prayed to was the same being who on several occasions introduced Jesus as "My Beloved Son." Who was this? The voice is described in 3 Nephi 11:3.

... and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear it to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them that did hear it to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

This description has several points in common with descriptions given of the voice of the Holy Ghost. It was a small voice but it pierced those who heard it to the center and it caused their hearts to burn. I believe that this being who bears witness of Jesus Christ is his Beloved, the Woman of Holiness, who is now the Holy Ghost. She calls him, "My Beloved, who is the Son."

Should we pray to the Mother? Although we are not commanded to pray to her, we are commanded to pray with her. "He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God" (D&C 46:30). And when we pray, we invoke her presence (19:38). And our prayers are answered through her. Understanding this, we certainly may address her directly in our prayers. However, prayer, unlike ritual, does not require a form given by God in order to be efficacious. In its most fundamental sense prayer is a reaching out for God. The deepest longings of our hearts, our strivings for

goodness, our hearts broken by our sins and failures, the pains of our humanity, our hope for love, and finally our deepest desires to know God are all prayers to him and her.

Jesus taught us to pray to the Father, not to set up barriers between us and God, but to remove them. God is your Father, he taught us. You need not be afraid to approach him because he loves you. You are fathers yourselves, he reminded us; you know that you respond to your children's pleas. "How much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11) She is our Mother, a Mother who knows our needs before we can express them, a Mother who is here before we call out to her.

Which of you mothers, if your child cries out in the night, will not hear her cries and go to her and put your arms around her and comfort her? If you, then, being weak, know how to comfort your children, how much more does our Mother in Heaven comfort us when we stand in need of comfort?

Or which of you mothers, if your child is confused or has a problem, will not give him counsel? If you, then, lacking knowledge of the future, know how to counsel your children, how much more does our Heavenly Mother guide us when we ask to know what we should do?

Or which of you mothers, if your child asks you a question, will send him away? If you, then, being ignorant of many things, know how to enlighten your children, how much more does our Mother in Heaven give truth to those who seek it?

Or which of you mothers does not know that your children need you to be with them? If you, then, being selfish, will sacrifice to be with your children, how much more is our Mother, not in heaven, but here with us?