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Coop Research

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR
HEAVENLY FATHER

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OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

In primary our children sing, "I am a child of God." Several times daily in private and family prayers we pray to that Eternal Being who we address as "our Heavenly Father." In our sacrament services we often sing:

"In the heavens are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare.
Truth is reason, truth eternal,
tells me I've a mother there."¹

Over the pulpit, in the ~~s~~unday ~~s~~chool class, and in ~~o~~ther church teaching situations, the doctrine that we are the spiritual children of our Heavenly Father is heard often enough that it is one of the doctrines I personally have taken somewhat for granted.

While studying the creation of the earth at the beginning of this semester, I became interested in searching out information both scriptural and from the writings of the prophets which pertain to this doctrine.

There were several questions connected with this doctrine which were not clear in my own mind. Namely: 1) What is the relationship between the "spirit" of man and "intelligence"? Are they separate entities? If not, how are they combined together? I understood that "Intelligence" was not created--but was co-eternal with the Gods. And yet it is an integral (or so I understood) part of the spirit. Did God "organize" one into another?

2) Is our Heavenly Father LITERALLY the father of our spirits, or are the many references to "Father of our Spirits", used in a figurative connotation?

It is not the intent of this paper to make an exhaustive study of this subject. Much has been written by those far more knowledgeable than myself. The purpose is to jell (if correct) my present understanding of the subject of our relationship with our Heavenly Father, and expand my knowledge by searching the scriptures and the writings of the Prophets of this dispensation on the subject.

In re-reading the account of the creation in Abraham,² the following facts seem to emerge: 1) Anything the Lord God takes it in his heart to do, he will do it.

1. Oh My Father, LDS Hymn #139, LDS Hymn Book
2. Book of Abra., Pearl of Great Price, Chap. 3:17-28

2. There are differences in the intelligences.
3. Intelligences have no beginning or end.
4. The Lord God is most intelligent of all.
5. Intelligences were organized before the world was.
6. Among "all these" were many of the great and noble,
(Implying that they had already proved themselves.)
7. Abraham was one of these great and noble ones.
8. He called Abraham "My son--My Son".
9. "I rule in the heavens over all the intelligences.
Thine (Abraham's) eyes have seen from the beginning. I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen."
(Down where?) *(They were apparently not in the same place with God.)*
10. That in choosing the "one" to be sent, one of those "great" rebelled and kept not his first estate. Many of the intelligences followed him.

It was not clear to me in these scriptures what are the differences, if any, between "intelligences" and "spirits". Sometimes they seemed synonomous, or one and the same. Also that these intelligences were "organized." My impression of this organizing was that it was much the same as we would organize a ward. In other words, establish the leadership and make the plans.

Bruce R. McConkie³ says:

"Abraham used the name Intelligences to apply to the spirit children of the Eternal Father. The intelligence or spirit element became intelligences after the spirits were born as individual entities. Use of this name designates both the primal element from which the spirit offspring were created and also their inherited capacity to grow in grace, knowledge, power, and intelligence itself, until such intelligences, gaining the fulness of all things, become like their Father, the Supreme Intelligence."
(Teachings, . p.354)

President Spencer W. Kimball has beautifully explained this section of the Pearl of Great Price in his sermon given in April Conference, 1977. He says (among other things):

"God has taken these intelligences and given to them

3. Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg 386, "Intelligence"

spirit to spirit bodies and given them instructions and training. Then he proceeded to create a world for them and sent them as spirits to obtain a mortal body, for which he made preparation. And when they were upon the earth, he gave them instructions on how to go about developing and conducting their lives to make them perfect so they could return to their Father in heaven after their transitions. Then came periods of time when souls were to be placed upon the earth and born to parents who were permitted to furnish the bodies. But no parent has ever yet on this earth been the parent of a spirit, because we are so far yet from perfection. Remember what I said a while ago, that "As man is, God once was; and as God is, man may become." They came with the definite understanding that they could return to become like God and go forward in their development and progress."⁴ *(my underlining)*

In this talk, President Kimball, too, used Intelligences synonymously with "spirit."

One of the clearest references to the relationship of "intelligence" with "spirit" comes from the Prophet Joseph Smith himself:

"I am dwelling on the immortality of the spirit of man. Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal and yet that it had a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. That is good logic. That which has a beginning must have an end. There never was a time when there were not spirits; for they are co-equal (co-eternal) with our Father in Heaven..... "

"Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it. All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement."⁵

In relation to the above Elder B.H. Roberts makes this comment in a footnote:

"It appears to be very clear that the Prophet had in mind the INTELLIGENCE when he said "The soul--the mind of man--the immortal spirit" was not created or made, and he did not have reference to the spirit as a begotten child of God. It is the doctrine of the Prophet, and is of the Church, that the spirits of men are begotten sons and daughters of God. See the official statement of the first Presidency and the Council of

4. President Spencer W. Kimball, "Our Great Potential," given in 147th Ann. Gen. Conf. of church, and reported in May Ensign, pg.49,50,51, 1977.

5. Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, by Joseph F. Smith, pp. 354-5.

the twelve as published in the Improvement Era, August 1916, under the caption, THE FATHER AND THE SON.* The passage in the Doct. and Cov. on which this doctrine is base is found in Sec. 93:29-30, and is as follows: "Man was in the beginning with God. Intelligence or the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be." 5

The reference which I like the best of all, however, and which in addition is definite about what we know and what we don't know about intelligences, and furthermore tells us what our attitudes should be in reference to this almost 'mystery' comes from Joseph Fielding Smith in 1963, writing in the Improvement Era, while still President of the Council of the Twelve.

"First let us consider the question of intelligences. There are many things that the Lord, for a wise purpose, has not revealed to mortal man, evidently because in mortality man is unable to comprehend them. (He then quotes the above scripture from D. & C. 93.)

Some of our writers have endeavored to explain what an intelligence is, but to do so is futile, for we have never been given any insight into this matter beyond what the Lord has fragmentarily revealed. We know, however, that there is something called intelligence which has always existed. It is the real eternal part of man, which was not created nor made. This intelligence combined with the spirit constitutes a spiritual identity or individual.

There are so many things in the gospel which are essential for us to know and observe, that we need not bother about the mysteries which have never been revealed. There are many things that we will know when we receive the resurrection → and attain to the glories of the kingdom of our Eternal Father, which we cannot understand in this mortal state even if they were revealed to us. The Lord expects us to spend our time preparing for eternity, and he has given us his laws and will reveal to us line on line as we study, all things that are essential for our preparation for salvation in the celestial kingdom. It is the duty of the children of men to seek out and obey the fundamental truths and ordinances of the gospel which are made known. 6

So much, then, for the subject of the difference between "spirit" and "intelligence". We seem to have very little indeed on the subject. What it seems to boil down to is as Joseph Fielding Smith so clearly states: 1) There is something called

6. Your Question, by Joseph Fielding Smith, Improvement Era J an 1963, pg. 14.

* The full text of this is attached to this paper. It has been reproduced in "Messages of the First Presidency", Vol. 5, pp. 26-35, compiled by James R. Clark.

intelligence. 2) It is the real eternal part of man, which was not created nor made. 3) This intelligence, combined with the spirit, constitutes a spiritual identity or individual.

The second question concerned our relationship to our Heavenly father. Is God the Eternal father indeed our "Father" of our spirits, literally, or is the often repeated reference to "Father" of figurative connotation?

Under the title of "Father in Heaven" Bruce McConkie writes:

"The designation FATHER is to be taken literally; It signifies that the Supreme Being is the literal parent or Father of the spirits of all men. (Heb. 12:9) All men, Christ included, were born as his children in pre-existence. This is the reason men are commanded to approach Deity in prayer by saying, "Our Father which art in Heaven." 7

He quotes as references the following scriptures:

Heb. 12:9: Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which have corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

D&C 93:21-23: And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn.

22. And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are of the church of the Firstborn.

23: Ye also were in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth.

After Christ's crucifixion he appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden and told her:

St. John 20:17: Jesus saith unto her,, Touch me not; for I have 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. "

If Christ had thought the Father his own and exclusive Father, he would not have said "Your Father," and "Your God." In his instructions on prayer in the sermon on the mount, he instructed us to begin all our prayers with "OUR Father in Heaven" Not just HIS Father, but all of "OUR Father" as well. This and the above quote from John, also attests that Christ recognized his brotherhood to all the rest of us.

7. Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, pg 278

I have not found a direct quote from President Joseph Smith on the subject. However, Brigham Young was quite vocal on the subject. During a discourse delivered in the Tabernacle, Feb 8, 1857, on the subject of the importance of knowing God, he said:

"I want to tell you, each and every one of you, that you are well acquainted with God our Heavenly Father, or the great Eloheim. You are all well acquainted with Him, for there is not a soul of you but what has lived in His house and dwelt with Him year after year; and yet you are seeking to become acquainted with Him, when the fact is, you have merely forgotten what you did know.....

The scriptures which we believe have taught us from the beginning to call Him "Our Father," and we have been taught to pray to Him as "Our Father," in the name of our eldest brother whom we call Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world; and that Savior, while here on earth, was so explicit on this point that he taught his disciples to call no man on earth "Father," for we have "One," which is in Heaven. He is the Savior, because it is his right to redeem the remainder of the family pertaining to the flesh on this earth, if any of you do not believe this, tell us how and what we should believe. If I am not telling you the truth, please to tell me the truth on this subject, and let me know more than I do know. If it is hard for you to believe, if you wish to be Latter-day-saints, admit the fact as I state it, and do not contend against it. Try to believe it, because you will never become acquainted with our Father, never enjoy the blessings of His Spirit, never be prepared to enter into his presence, until you most assuredly believe it; therefore you had better try to believe this great mystery about God....

....Things were first created spiritually; the Father actually begat (my underlining) the spirits and they were brought forth and lived with Him...⁸

Orson Pratt, speaking in the 14th ward assembly Rooms, Sunday, Dec 15, 1872 on the subject of the pre-existence of our spirits, said:

"If we were born in heaven before this world was made, the question might arise as to the nature of that birth. Was it by command that the spiritual substance, scattered through space, was miraculously brought together, and organized into a spiritual

⁸. Journal of discourses, Vol. 4 pg. 217-218. Speaker: Brigham Young, Feb 8, 1857.

form, and called a spirit? Is that the way we were born? Is that the way that Jesus, the first born of every creature, was brought into existence? Ch, No, we were all born there after the same manner that we are here, that is to say, every person that had an existence before he came here had a literal father and a literal mother, hence the Apostle Paul, in speaking to the heathen at Ephesus says: "We are his offspring." I look upon every man and woman that have ever come here on this globe, or that ever will come, as having a father and mother in the heavens by whom their spirits were brought into existence. But how long they resided in the heavens before they came here is not revealed."⁹

One of the best features of James Talmage's "Jesus the Christ" is his further comments on the various subjects in what he calls "Appendixes." In one of these which he titles "Man's Relationship with God," he says:

"Mormonism claims an actual and literal relationship of parent and child between the creator and man-- not in the figurative sense in which the engine may be called the child of its builder; not the relationship of a thing mechanically made to the maker thereof; but the connection between father and offspring. In short, it is bold enough to declare that man's spirit being the offspring of Diety, and man's body though of earthy components yet being in the very image and likeness of God, man even in his present degraded--aye, fallen condition--still possesses, if only in a latent state, inherited traits, tendencies and powers that tell of his more than royal descent; and that these may be developed so as to make him, even while mortal, in a measure Godlike.

But "Mormonism" is bolder yet. It asserts that in accordance with the inviolable law of organic nature--that like shall beget like, and that multiplication of numbers and perpetuation of species shall be in compliance with the condition 'each after his own kind' the child may achieve the former status of the parent, and that, in his mortal condition man is a God in embryo."¹⁰

9. Orson Pratt, Pre-existence of our Spirits, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 15, pg. 246

10. James Talmage, Man's Relationship to God, Jesus the Christ, The Articles of Faith, Appendix 24, 4. pg. 528

John Taylor: "God is our Father: we are his children. he has brought us into his covenant, and it is our privilege to go on from wisdom to wisdom, from intelligence to intelligence, from understanding of one principle to that of another, to go forward and progress in the development of truth until we can comprehend God, for we are his children; we are his sons and daughters; and he is our Father."¹¹

Lorenzo Snow: "We believe that we are the offspring of our Father in heaven, and that we possess in our spiritual organizations the same capabilities, powers and faculties that our Father possesses, although in an infantile state, requiring to pass through a certain course or ordeal by which they will be developed and improved according to the heed we give to the principles we have received..."

"We are born in the image of God our Father; He begot us like unto Himself. There is the nature of deity in the composition of our spiritual organization; in our spiritual birth our Father transmitted to us the capabilities, powers and faculties which he Himself possessed, as much so as the child on its mother's bosom possesses, although in an undeveloped state, the faculties, powers, and susceptibilities of its parent."¹²

Also: "As man now is, God once was--even the babe of Bethlehem advancing to childhood--thence to boyhood, manhood, then to the Godhead. This, then, is the "mark" of the prize of man's high calling in Christ Jesus.

We are the offspring of God, begotten by Him in the spirit world, where we partook of His nature as children here partake of the likeness of their parents. Our trials and sufferings give us experience and establish within us principles of godliness."¹³

Joseph Fielding Smith in his book Man; His Origin and destiny, says:

"The Father of Jesus is our Father also, Jesus himself taught this truth, when he instructed his

11. J. Discourses, 21:93, April 13, 1879

12. Lorenzo Snow, JD 14:300,302, Jan. 14,1872

13. Lorenzo Snow, JD 26:368, Jan 10, 1886

his disciples how to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, etc. Jesus, however, is the firstborn among all the sons of God--the first begotten in the spirit, and the Only Begotten in the flesh. He is our elder brother, and we, like him, are in the image of God. All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity."¹⁴

On December 18, 1909, the then-first Presidency, issued a formal statement entitled: The Origin of Man:. Some of the excerpts from this are as follows:

"Inquiries arise from time to time respecting the attitude of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints upon questions which, though not vital from a doctrinal standpoint, are closely connected with the fundamental principles of salvation. The latest inquiry of this kind that has reached us is in relation to the origin of man. It is believed that a statement of the position held by the Church upon this important subject will be timely and productive of good."

The document goes into considerable detail both scriptural and doctrinal of the background of our belief in the origin of man. Quotation #14 is contained, in essence within this document. The closing paragraph of the statement reads thus:

"Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as an infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into Gods. "¹⁵

Joseph F. Smith
John R. Winder
Anthon H. Lund

Harold B. Lee:

"How many races are there? Most scientists have divided humanity into five groups:

¹⁴. Joseph Fielding Smith: Man: His Origin and Destiny, P 351.

¹⁵. Messages of the First Presidency, compiled by James R.

Clark, Vol. 4, pp 204-206, Dec 18, 1909

The white, the black, the yellow, and the red races. Others have grouped the brown, yellow and red races as "sub-groups" of a single race. The scriptures have taught us that God, our Heavenly Father is the "Father of all men" and that when we pass from this life our spirits "whether they be good or evil, are taken home to God who made them."¹⁶

Each of the prophets who have lived in this last dispensation, have had unique problems connected with their own days. There seem to be more discourses connected with the subject of the "Fatherhood" of God in the earlier days of the church. Every conference there are references to "Our Father" as the literal "Father" of our spirits, but fewer treatises on the subject. It is almost as if the doctrine is so embedded in the Mormon Philosophy as to be taken for granted. This paper is by no means an exhaustive paper of the references on said subject. Joseph Fielding Smith within this generation has written a 542 page treatise on the subject of "Man, His Origin and Destiny," but my searchings have helped me to clear up any questions I may have had concerning this doctrine, and so has fulfilled the purpose of this paper.

At no time, in my reading, did I find any Prophet that deviated from ^{the ideas that} ~~this single idea:~~ 1) God, the Father, is rightly so-called because he is the literal Father of our spirits. 2) The spirit of man contains within it an intelligence which was never created nor formed--it is co-existent with God, himself.

It is important for us all, as his children, to learn all we can about the nature of our Father, and his purposes in bringing us here on this earth to work out our salvation. I would like to conclude this paper with the beautiful words which Christ spoke to his disciples prior to his atonement.

John 17: 1: " These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

2. As thou has given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

3. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent .

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

¹⁶: Harold B. Lee, Decisions for Successful Living, pp. 237-8

5.

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

6. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee."

THE FATHER AND THE SON

A Doctrinal Exposition by The First Presidency and The Twelve

The scriptures plainly and repeatedly affirm that God is the Creator of the earth and the heavens and all things that in them are. In the sense so expressed the Creator is an Organizer. God created the earth as an organized sphere; but He certainly did not create, in the sense of bringing into primal existence, the ultimate elements of the materials of which the earth consists, for "the elements are eternal" (Doc. & Cov. 93:33).

So also life is eternal, and not created; but life, or the vital force, may be infused into organized matter, though the details of the process have not been revealed unto man. For illustrative instances see Genesis 2:7; Moses 3:7; and Abraham 5:7. Each of these scriptures states that God breathed into the body of man the breath of life. See further Moses 3:19, for the statement that God breathed the breath of life into the bodies of the beasts and birds. God showed unto Abraham "the intelligences that were organized before the world was"; and by "intelligences" we are to understand personal "spirits" (Abraham 3:22, 23); nevertheless, we are expressly told that "Intelligence" that is, "the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (Doc. & Cov. 93:29).

The term "Father" as applied to Deity occurs in sacred writ with plainly different meanings. Each of the four significations specified in the following treatment should be carefully segregated.

1. "Father" as Literal Parent

Scriptures embodying the ordinary signification — literally that of Parent — are too numerous and specific to require citation. The purport of these scriptures is to the effect that God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title "Elohim," is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race. Elohim is the Father in every sense in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Furthermore 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). In view of this fact we are taught by Jesus Christ to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

Jesus Christ applies to Himself both titles, "Son" and "Father." Indeed, He specifically said to the brother of Jared: "Be-

hold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son" (Ether 3:14). Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and bodily offspring; that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also of the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh, and which body died on the cross and was afterward taken up by the process of resurrection, and is now the immortalized tabernacle of the eternal spirit of our Lord and Savior. No extended explanation of the title "Son of God" as applied to Jesus Christ appears necessary.

2. "Father" as Creator

A second scriptural meaning of "Father" is that of Creator, e. g. in passages referring to any one of the Godhead as "The Father of the heavens and of the earth and all things that in them are" (Ether 4:7; see also Alma 11:38, 39 and Mosiah 15:4).

God is not the Father of the earth as one of the worlds in space, nor of the heavenly bodies in whole or in part, nor of the inanimate objects and the plants and the animals upon the earth, in the literal sense in which He is the Father of the spirits of mankind. Therefore, scriptures that refer to God in any way as the Father of the heavens and the earth are to be understood as signifying that God is the Maker, the Organizer, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

With this meaning, as the context shows in every case, Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ the Son of Elohim, is called "the Father," and even "the very eternal Father of heaven and of earth" (see passages before cited, and also Mosiah 16:15). With analogous meaning Jesus Christ is called "The Everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6; compare 2 Nephi 19:6). The descriptive titles "Everlasting" and "Eternal" in the foregoing texts are synonymous.

That Jesus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation is set forth in the book "Jesus the Christ" Chapter 4. Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is consistently called the Father of heaven and earth in the sense explained above; and since His creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth.

3. Jesus Christ the "Father" of Those Who Abide in His Gospel

A third sense in which Jesus Christ is regarded as the "Father" has reference to the relationship between Him and those who accept His Gospel and thereby become heirs of eternal life. Following are a few of the scriptures illustrating this meaning.

Messages of the First Pres. Vol. 5 - pp. 26-34 -
 compiled by James R. Clark, Bookcraft, 1977

In the fervent prayer offered just prior to His entrance into Gethsemane, Jesus Christ supplicated His Father in behalf of those whom the Father had given unto Him, specifically the apostles, and, more generally, all who would accept and abide in the Gospel through the ministry of the apostles. Read in our Lord's own words the solemn affirmation that those for whom He particularly prayed were His own, and that His Father had given them unto Him: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For 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. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 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. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:6-12).

And further: "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. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:20-24).

To His faithful servants in the present dispensation the Lord has said: "Fear not, little children; for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me" (Doc. & Cov. 50:41).

Salvation is attainable only through compliance with the laws and ordinances of the Gospel; and all who are thus saved become sons and daughters unto God in a distinctive sense. In a revelation given through Joseph the Prophet to Emma Smith

the Lord Jesus addressed the woman as "My daughter," and said: "for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom" (Doc. & Cov. 25:1). In many instances the Lord has addressed men as His sons (e. g. Doc. & Cov. 9:1; 34:3; 121:7).

That by obedience to the Gospel men may become sons of God, both as sons of Jesus Christ, and, through Him, as sons of His Father, is set forth in many revelations given in the current dispensation. Thus we read in an utterance of the Lord Jesus Christ to Hyrum Smith in 1829: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world. I am the same who came unto my own and my own received me not; But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. Amen." (Doc. & Cov. 11:28-30). To Orson Pratt the Lord spoke through Joseph the Seer, in 1830: "My son Orson, hearken and hear and behold what I, the Lord God, shall say unto you, even Jesus Christ your Redeemer; The light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not; Who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God: wherefore you are my son" (Doc. & Cov. 34:1-3). In 1830 the Lord thus addressed Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon: "Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and for ever. I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one" (Doc. & Cov. 35:1-2). Consider also the following given in 1831: "Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I AM, even Jesus Christ, The light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not: The same which came in the meridian of time unto my own, and my own received me not; But to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons, and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons" (Doc. & Cov. 39:1-4). In a revelation given through Joseph Smith in March, 1831 we read: "For verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world—a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. I came unto my own, and my own received me not; but unto as many as received me, gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God, and

even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life" (Doc. & Cov. 45:7-8).

A forceful exposition of this relationship between Jesus Christ as the Father and those who comply with the requirements of the Gospel as His children was given by Abinadi, centuries before our Lord's birth in the flesh: "And now I say unto you. Who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed? Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord; I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins; I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God: For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed? Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression; I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed" (Mosiah 15:10-13).

In tragic contrast with the blessed state of those who become children of God through obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that of the unregenerate, who are specifically called the children of the devil. Note the words of Christ, while in the flesh, to certain wicked Jews who boasted of their Abrahamic lineage: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. . . . Ye do the deeds of your father. . . . If God were your Father, ye would love me. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:39, 41, 42, 44). Thus Satan is designated as the father of the wicked, though we cannot assume any personal relationship of parent and children as existing between him and them. A combined illustration showing that the righteous are the children of God and the wicked the children of the devil appears in the parable of the Tares: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matt. 13:38).

Men may become children of Jesus Christ by being born anew—born of God, as the inspired word states: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God

are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (I John 3:8-10).

Those who have been born unto God through obedience to the Gospel may by valiant devotion to righteousness obtain exaltation and even reach the status of Godhood. Of such we read: "Wherefore, as it is written, they are Gods, even the sons of God" (Doc. & Cov. 76:58; compare 132:20, and contrast paragraph 17 in same section; see also paragraph 37). Yet, though they be Gods they are still subject to Jesus Christ as their Father in this exalted relationship; and so we read in the paragraph following the above quotation: "and they are Christ's and Christ is God's" (76:59).

By the new birth—that of water and the Spirit—mankind may become children of Jesus Christ, being through the means by Him provided "begotten sons and daughters unto God" (Doc. & Cov. 76:2). This solemn truth is further emphasized in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ given through Joseph Smith in 1833: "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the firstborn; And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the firstborn" (Doc. & Cov. 93:21, 22). For such figurative use of the term "begotten" in application to those who are born unto God see Paul's explanation: "for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (I Cor. 4:15). An analogous instance of sonship attained by righteous service is found in the revelation relating to the order and functions of Priesthood, given in 1832: "For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two Priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies: They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God" (Doc. & Cov. 84:33, 34).

If it be proper to speak of those who accept and abide in the Gospel as Christ's sons and daughters—and upon this matter the scriptures are explicit and cannot be gainsaid nor denied—it is consistently proper to speak of Jesus Christ as the Father of the righteous, they having become His children and He having been made their Father through the second birth—the baptismal regeneration.

4. *Jesus Christ the "Father" By Divine Investiture of Authority*

A fourth reason for applying the title "Father" to Jesus Christ is found in the fact that in all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim

His Father in power and authority. This is true of Christ in His preexistent, antemortal, or unembodied state, in the which He was known as Jehovah; also during His embodiment in the flesh; and during His labors as a disembodied spirit in the realm of the dead; and since that period in His resurrected state. To the Jews He said: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30; see also 17:11, 22); yet He declared "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28); and further, "I am come in my Father's name" (John 5:43; see also 10:25). The same truth was declared by Christ Himself to the Nephites (see 3 Nephi 20:35 and 28:10), and has been reaffirmed by revelation in the present dispensation (Doc. & Cov. 50:43). Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father's name; and so far as power, authority and Godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father.

We read, by way of analogy, that God placed His name upon or in the Angel who was assigned to special ministry unto the people of Israel during the exodus. Of that Angel the Lord said: "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him" (Exodus 23:21).

The ancient apostle, John, was visited by an angel who ministered and spoke in the name of Jesus Christ. As we read: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Revelation 1:1). John was about to worship the angelic being who spoke in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but was forbidden: "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Rev. 22:8, 9). And then the angel continued to speak as though he were the Lord Himself: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (verses 12, 13). The resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, who had been exalted to the right hand of God His Father, had placed His name upon the angel sent to John, and the angel spoke in the first person, saying "I come quickly," "I am Alpha and Omega," though he meant that Jesus Christ would come, and that Jesus Christ was Alpha and Omega.

None of these considerations, however, can change in the least degree the solemn fact of the literal relationship of Father

and Son between Elohim and Jesus Christ. Among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors. Following are affirmative scriptures bearing upon this great truth. Paul, writing to the Colossians, says of Jesus Christ: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell" (Colossians 1:15-19). From this scripture we learn that Jesus Christ was "the firstborn of every creature" and it is evident that the seniority here expressed must be with respect to antemortal existence, for Christ was not the senior of all mortals in the flesh. He is further designated as "the firstborn from the dead" this having reference to Him as the first to be resurrected from the dead, or as elsewhere written "the first fruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20, see also verse 23); and "the first begotten of the dead" (Revelation 1:5; compare Acts 26:23). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms the status of Jesus Christ as the firstborn of the spirit children of His Father, and extols the preeminence of the Christ when tabernacled in flesh: "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6; read the preceding verses). That the spirits who were juniors to Christ were predestined to be born in the image of their Elder Brother is thus attested by Paul: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:28, 29). John the Revelator was commanded to write to the head of the Laodicean church, as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14). In the course of a revelation given through Joseph Smith in May, 1833, the Lord Jesus Christ said as before cited: "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the firstborn" (Doc. & Cov. 93:21). A later verse makes plain the fact that human beings generally were similarly existent in spirit state prior to their embodiment in the flesh: "Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth" (verse 23).

There is no impropriety, therefore, in speaking of Jesus Christ as the Elder Brother of the rest of human kind. That He is by spiritual birth Brother to the rest of us is indicated in Hebrews: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any and all others, by reason (1) of His seniority as the oldest or firstborn; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father; (3) of His selection and foreordination as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of the race; and (4) of His transcendent sinlessness.

Jesus Christ is not the Father of the spirits who have taken or yet shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of them. He is The Son, as they are sons or daughters of Elohim. So far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring. Only such exalted souls have reached maturity in the appointed course of eternal life; and the spirits born to them in the eternal worlds will pass in due sequence through the several stages or estates by which the glorified parents have attained exaltation.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND THE
COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE
APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH
OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-
DAY SAINTS.

1916 — August 5 — Original letter. Church Historian's Library,
Salt Lake City, Utah.

Four missions of the Church were particularly in need of lady missionaries who were also stenographers.

*Office of The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints*

Salt Lake City, Utah

August 5, 1916.

President Serge F. Ballif and Counselors,
Cache Stake.