

head—one that is achieved among distinct individuals by unity of purpose, through faith, and by divine will and action. Joseph Smith taught that the Godhead was united by an “everlasting covenant [that] was made between [these] three personages before the organization of this earth” relevant to their administration to its inhabitants (*TPJS*, p. 190). The prime purpose of the Godhead and of all those united with them is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39; Hinckley, p. 49–51).

Each member of the Godhead fulfills particular functions in relation to each of the others and to mankind. God the Father presides over the Godhead. He is the Father of all human spirits and of the physical body of Jesus Christ. The human body was formed in his image.

Jesus Christ, the Firstborn son of God the Father in the spirit and the Only Begotten son in the flesh, is the creative agent of the Godhead and the redeeming mediator between the Father and mankind. By him God created all things, and through him God revealed the laws of salvation. In him shall all be made alive, and through his atonement all mankind may be reconciled with the Father.

The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit who bears witness to truth. The Father and the Holy Ghost bear witness of the Son, and the Son and the Holy Ghost bear witness of the Father (3 Ne. 11:32; cf. John 8:18). Through the Holy Ghost, revelations of the Father and of the Son are given.

The LDS doctrine of the Godhead differs from the various concepts of the Trinity. Several postbiblical trinitarian doctrines emerged in Christianity. This “dogmatic development took place gradually, against the background of the emanationist philosophy of Stoicism and Neoplatonism (including the mystical theology of the latter), and within the context of strict Jewish monotheism” (*ER* 15:54). Trinitarian doctrines sought to elevate God’s oneness or unity, ultimately in some cases describing Jesus as *homoousious* (of the same substance) with the Father in order to preclude any claim that Jesus was not fully divine. LDS understanding, formulated by latter-day revelation through Joseph Smith, rejects the idea that Jesus or any other personage loses individuality by attaining Godhood or by standing in divine and eternal relationships with other exalted beings.

[See also Christology; Deification.]

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## GODHOOD

Logically and naturally, the ultimate desire of a loving Supreme Being is to help his children enjoy all that he enjoys. For Latter-day Saints, the term “godhood” denotes the attainment of such a state—one of having all divine attributes and doing as God does and being as God is. Such a state is to be enjoyed by all exalted, embodied, intelligent beings (*see* DEIFICATION; ETERNAL PROGRESSION; EXALTATION; GOD; PERFECTION). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all resurrected and perfected mortals become gods (cf. Gen. 3:22; Matt. 5:48). They will dwell again with GOD THE FATHER, and live and act like him in endless worlds of happiness, power, love, glory, and knowledge; above all, they will have the power of procreating endless lives. Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus Christ attained godhood (*see* CHRISTOLOGY) and that he marked the path and led the way for others likewise to become exalted divine beings by following him (cf. John 14:3).

The LDS conception of godhood is central to their understanding of why God creates and acts. Latter-day Saints believe in a God who “cleaves unto” other eternal INTELLIGENCES (D&C 88:40) and wants to make them happy. Joseph Smith observed, “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God” (*TPJS*, p. 255). Happiness is the goal of existence, and God created this world in order to promote happiness (2 Ne. 2:25). Because he loves the world, he gave his “only begotten Son” (John 3:16). God gives commandments to help mankind achieve happiness. Joseph Smith wrote: “In obedience there is joy and peace unspotted, unalloyed; and as God has designed our happiness—and the happiness of all His creatures,

he never has—He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his law and ordinances” (*TPJS*, pp. 256–57). The Book of Mormon refers to God’s plan of salvation as “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8). In this sense, God creates in order to increase the total happiness in the universe.

As the Supreme Being in the universe, God has the greatest capacity for happiness. Thus, to maximize joy in others, God desires them to be as much like him as possible. “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39; cf. Ps. 16:11). This latter-day scripture is understood to mean that God’s goal is to help men and women share in the kind of eternal life he lives. Joseph Smith wrote: “God . . . was more intelligent, [and he] saw proper to institute laws whereby [his children] could have a privilege to advance like himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself, so that they might have one glory upon another, and all that knowledge, power, glory, and intelligence, which is requisite in order to save them in the world of spirits” (*TPJS*, p. 354).

All of God’s spirit children have within them a divine nature with the potential to become like him. To become more like God, individuals must gain increased light and truth and follow all the commandments that God has given. They must know God (John 17:3; D&C 88:49) and see him (1 Jn. 3:2). Those who achieve this level of perfection will become joint-heirs with Christ: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:14–17). “All that [the] Father hath” shall be given to them (D&C 84:37–38). In biblical terms, those who are worthy to share in all the power and glory that God himself has are called “gods”: “Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High” (Ps. 82:6; John 10:34–38). Latter-day scriptures refer to several persons, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who once lived on

earth and who are now resurrected beings and have become gods (D&C 132:37).

Most people are accustomed to using the term “God” to identify only one being, the Father. But the scriptures sometimes use the term to designate others as well. In this sense, while the faithful worship only one God in spirit and in truth, there exist other beings who have attained the necessary intelligence and righteousness to qualify for the title “god.” Jesus Christ is a god and is a separate personage, distinct from God the Father (*see* GODHEAD).

People qualify themselves for this rank and degree of exaltation by bringing themselves fully in line with all that God has commanded them to do: “Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, . . . namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power” (*TPJS*, pp. 346–47).

Joseph Smith also wrote, “Every man who reigns in celestial glory is a God to his dominions” (*TPJS*, p. 374). This does not mean that any person ever would or could supplant God as the Supreme Being in the universe; but it does mean that through God’s plan and with his help, all men and women have the capacity to participate in God’s eternal work. People participate in this work by righteous living, by giving birth to children in mortality and helping them live righteous lives, and by bringing others to Christ. Moreover, Latter-day Saints believe that those who become gods will have the opportunity to participate even more fully in God’s work of bringing eternal life to other beings. God is referred to as “Father in Heaven” because he is the father of all human spirits (Heb. 12:9; cf. Acts 17:29), imbuing them with divine potentials. Those who become like him will likewise contribute to this eternal process by adding further spirit offspring to the eternal family.

Latter-day Saints believe that God achieved his exalted rank by progressing much as man must progress and that God is a perfected and exalted man: “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent

today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another” (*TPJS*, p. 345).

Much of the LDS concept of godhood is expressed in a frequently cited aphorism written in 1840 by Lorenzo SNOW, fifth President of the Church. At the time, Snow was twenty-six years old, having been baptized four years earlier. He recorded in his journal that he attended a meeting in which Elder H. G. Sherwood explained the parable of the Savior regarding the husbandman who hired servants and sent them forth at different hours of the day to labor for him in his vineyard. Snow continued, as recorded in his sister’s biography of him: “The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man. I formed the following couplet which expresses the revelation, as it was shown me. . . . As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be” (Eliza R. Snow, p. 46).

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## GOLD PLATES

On September 21, 1823, the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph SMITH and instructed him about a record engraved on thin goldlike sheets. The record, written by MORONI<sub>2</sub>, his father MORMON, and other ancient inhabitants of the Americas, was buried in a stone box in a hill not far from the Smith residence. Moroni eventually delivered these plates to Joseph, who translated and published

them as the Book of Mormon and returned them to Moroni. While the plates were in Joseph’s keeping, others saw them, including eleven witnesses whose testimonies appear in all editions of the book. Various descriptions provided by eyewitnesses suggest that the plates may have been made of a gold alloy, measured about 6 inches by 8 inches (15.2 cm by 20.3 cm), were 6 inches (15.2 cm) thick, and weighed about 50 pounds (22.7 kg).

[See also Book of Mormon Plates and Records; Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith; Book of Mormon Witnesses; Plates, Metal.]

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## GOSPEL OF ABRAHAM

On April 3, 1836, the keys of the “dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” were committed to the Prophet Joseph SMITH and Oliver COWDERY in the Kirtland Temple as part of the RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS in the DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES (D&C 110:12). It was promised that through latter-day recipients of the gospel and their seed, all generations who accept it shall be blessed (HC 2:434–36). This renewed the promise that was given anciently to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; Abr. 2:6, 9–11; cf. Gal. 3:7–9, 29).

Latter-day Saints teach that Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and many others headed DISPENSATIONS OF THE GOSPEL. Divine blessings and commandments were bestowed appropriate to the circumstances of the faithful people of God in each dispensation.

The gospel dispensation of Abraham includes the PATRIARCHAL ORDER OF THE PRIESTHOOD and the eternal marriage covenant (D&C 131:1–4; 132:28–30; see also MARRIAGE: ETERNAL MARRIAGE), by which the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT is perpetuated from generation to generation among the faithful. Abraham was given a promise of innumerable posterity both in the world and out of the world. This promise is renewed for all who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive the priesthood covenant of celestial marriage, “and by this law is the continuation of the works of [the] Father” among mankind both in time and eternity (D&C 132:31–33). The restoration of all things included the restoration of the KEYS to Joseph Smith to make it possible in modern times for all who do