

## 2 GOD

Belief in God is basic to the religious concept and life of all men. What one believes about God determines to a large extent his entire philosophy of life. All men believe something about God. Even the atheist has such a belief, for he believes that God does not exist.

An adequate concept of God, His being, and purpose is of utmost importance to the Church of Jesus Christ. Such a concept will either challenge its members to victorious achievement or limit them to misplaced satisfaction in mediocracy. One of the significant contributions of Jesus Christ to men is found in this beautiful revelation of God. In a similar manner, His Church restored in these latter days is under responsibility to so reveal the heavenly Father.

### GOD IS

Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, said, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). A sense of the reality of God's existence is fundamental, for it is from this point that our God-concept begins.

Many great scientists, using scientific fact and logical reasoning, have tried to prove God and have come to the conclusion that He is. A number of good statements can be found in the pamphlet *What Latter Day Saints Believe about God*, by Elbert A. Smith. However, in the final analysis, science can no more prove the existence of God than it can prove a mother's love. The fact of God's being comes directly as a result of personal religious experience.

It is from such religious experience that we find at the heart of the Restoration and our guiding Scriptures this affirmation: GOD IS!

### GOD IS INFINITE

"We believe in God, the eternal Father." In this, the opening declaration of the Epitome of Faith, we find the implication of His infinite nature. God is infinite; He is limitless and immeasurable; He is without bounds. The Psalmist said, "Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2). The Doctrine and Covenants declares, "By these things we know there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal" (D&C 17:4a). It is difficult for us to grasp the idea of an infinite God. Elbert A. Smith says, "We cannot think of time as having no beginning. Nor can we comprehend it as stretching back without a beginning and forward without end."

We must constantly seek within ourselves for that which is eternal and placed there by Him—such as intelligence, agency, and love. The finite mind, unaided, will never completely understand or know all there is about God. The challenge of this very thought should spur man on in unreserved effort to reach a higher plane of association with Him. In our own day comes the assurance, "The day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him" (D&C 85:12e).

### GOD IS CREATOR

"I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God. By mine Only Begotten I created these things. Yea, in the beginning I created the heaven and the earth upon which thou standest" (Genesis 1:2-3). These are among the earliest words of Holy Writ. By the Son, God created all that is (see John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16). Through the concept of God as Creator, we see Him as the source of all that we have, know, enjoy, and anticipate. The fact of God's creatorship is upheld by the very detail of creation itself. It is inconceivable that the boundless universe or complex nature of life is the result of blind chance.

Recognition of God as Creator causes man to admit that God is owner of all and man is His manager or steward. This then begins to establish not only the relationship of man to God, but of man to life itself and to all that is given into our keeping.

## **GOD IS PURPOSEFUL**

Back of all creation, all life is the purpose of God. It is not just an accident that there is oxygen in the air to sustain the life of man, nor that nitrogen is there to supply the needs of plant life. All things necessary for man's life have been carefully provided in God's creation. Could it be by chance that man's broken body can heal itself, bones knit together, infection be repelled? How long could man live if there were not forces of regeneration in his body constantly replacing the muscle cells spent to supply his energy?

"This is my work and my glory: to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (D&C 22:23b). These words help us understand something of the purpose of God, and this understanding puts purpose in man's life.

## **GOD IS PERSONAL**

Recognition of God as the purposeful Creator attaches to Him the fact of personality. Many men look upon God simply as a Spirit. As such, He is everywhere and nowhere. We believe in a personal God. From the earliest declarations of the Restoration Movement comes the witness of this personal God through the experience of Joseph Smith, Jr., in the grove near Palmyra, New York (see *Church History*, Volume 1, pages 9ff).

God hears and answers our prayers. He sees our every act and understands every problem we take to Him. He weeps at our iniquity (see Genesis 7:35-41) and pays the price of our salvation (see John 3:16). Through the Holy Spirit, He speaks to lead us to all truth (see John 14:26; 16:12-15) and witnesses our adoption as His sons (see Romans 8:14; Galatians 4:4-7).

Elbert A. Smith says, "At the very foundation of our faith is the belief in a personal God who from time to time has revealed Himself to man, whose purpose is to save men and exalt them to the estate of sonship and brotherhood." President Joseph Smith III said, "The Father is a personage of spirit, glory, and power, in whom all perfection and fullness of attributes dwell."

## **GOD IS THE FATHER**

God is more than personal; He is the heavenly Father! In the Scriptures, God is referred to as the "Father" more frequently than any other way. Jesus, in teaching men to pray, instructed them to address God as "Our Father who art in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

To know God as "Our Father" is to place significance on our own lives—to be assured that this being of infinite power and wisdom, Creator of all the universe, source of life itself, condescends to establish a personal relationship with individual men and reveal His concern for man. If God is concerned with individuals, then individuals must be important. "Remember, the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 16:3c)

## **GOD IS LOVE**

The love of God is assured us by the nature of His fatherhood. However, it is not sufficient just to say that God loves. John tells us, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). And just as God is the source of all power, wisdom, and knowledge, so also is He the source of all love. John also said, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us" (1 John 4:12).

To the extent that we permit love to enter our lives, we also permit God to enter. His all-embracing love penetrates all creatures wherever He is. This love of God reaches out to all mankind, offering them the privilege of becoming His sons and daughters if they are willing to yield themselves to Him and live in that relationship (see John 1:12).

Only the knowledge that God is love can explain such compassion and concern as we find recorded in the testimony of Enoch, where we find God weeping because of the wickedness of men (see Genesis 7:35). Enoch's knowledge of God caused him to say, "Thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever; . . . and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end" (Genesis 7:37-38). Knowing that God is love, we can then be assured of His justice, mercy, and kindness. Men who follow His leadings have no need to fear the future; for though they cannot see the distant scene, they move forward—confident that they do not walk alone (see Psalm 23).

## **GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE**

“He changeth not; if so, he would cease to be God” (Mormon 4:82; also 68-70). “I am the Lord; I change not” (Malachi 3:6). “He is the same God yesterday, today, and forever” (D&C 17:2g). The Scriptures have consistently taught the unchangeable nature of God, and the Restoration Movement has maintained that He is unchangeable in every respect. He is perfect in knowledge and wisdom. Jacob said, “Oh, how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it” (2 Nephi 6:44).

Believing that God is unchangeable has caused us to accept as truth many doctrines that are rejected by other religious bodies. For example, since God spoke to men in ages past, we believe that He does now and will continue to speak whenever men are willing to listen. Amos said, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing until he revealeth the secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come to men to speak to them, saying that this spirit would “take of mine and shall show it unto you” (John 16:15).

God, who healed the sick in ages past as they came to Him in faith, still heals men under the same conditions. Because of our belief in His unchangeability, we interpret His teachings and observe His ordinances more literally than many other bodies of religious men. We ought to be challenged to test that which we believe and are taught in the name of God by comparing it with that which He has revealed in ages past—lest we be deceived by the opinions of men and fall into the path of apostasy.

## **GOD IS SUPREME**

We affirm this most important fact: God is supreme! He rules the universe. Being the maker of law, He is obedient to law; but He is not subordinate to law! There is no thing, no being, greater than God. In Him we move and live and have our being, for He is the source of life itself. Isaiah, speaking in the name of God, said, “I am the Lord, and there is none else; . . . a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me” (Isaiah 45:5, 21). “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). From Him alone does man receive divine help. To Him alone does man owe unending allegiance. What a wonderful God to know, worship, and seek to understand! Though our finite minds do not conceive Him for all He is, yet gratefully we ought to sing:

My God, how wonderful thou art,  
Thy Majesty, how bright!  
How glorious Thy mercy seat,  
In depths of burning light!  
Yet I may love Thee, too, O Lord!  
Almighty as Thou art,  
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me  
The love of my poor heart.

## **Questions for Discussion**

1. What are three eternal attributes of God that are also found in the personality of man?
2. In what way do the Scriptures most often speak of God?
3. Give at least three scriptures from the Three Standard Books which tell that God is unchangeable.
4. Why must Latter Day Saints have an adequate concept of God?
5. How does science help us in our search for knowledge of God?