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JESUS CHRIST AS FATHER IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

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THE BOOK OF MORMON TESTIFIES OF THE divinity, majesty, and power of Jesus Christ like no other writing. In the Book of Mormon we are presented with the most complete picture of the roles, functions, offices, and titles of Jesus of any ancient record on earth—perhaps even of any scripture, ancient or modern. These roles and titles are as sweeping as they are awe-inspiring. Some of the major ones discussed by Book of Mormon prophets include Creator, Redeemer, Savior, Intercessor, Advocate, Judge, Only Begotten Son, Good Shepherd, and Lord of Hosts. However, no aspect of the Savior's divinity is more significant nor taught with greater power and consistency in the Book of Mormon than that of Father. It is a concept that is taught both explicitly and implicitly in several different passages. The undergirding and overarching doctrine of the fatherhood of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon is an important and singular validation of the book's correctness and professed purpose of standing as another testament of Jesus Christ. It is

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a testimony of the book's ability to clarify doctrinal precepts. It is a witness of the book's expanded understanding of the person and work of Christ—who He really is and what He actually does. The Book of Mormon's consistent presentation of the doctrine of the fatherhood of Jesus Christ is inextricably linked to the Savior's self-witness that He is "the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth" (3 Nephi 11:14).

Thus, the discussions in the Book of Mormon about Christ's role as Father are really a summary of all of His other roles, offices, functions, and titles. They help us appreciate more fully and immediately the incomparable greatness of the Being we know from the Bible as Jesus of Nazareth. We now turn to the specific ways the Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is also the Father.

AS THE CREATOR

The Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus Christ is justly called the Father by reason of His role as the Creator of all things, the Father of heaven and earth. King Benjamin makes this point very clear in his great Christ-centered sermon wherein he prophesied of the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to this earth. The prophet-monarch said:

"For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, 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, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. . . .

"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; and his mother shall be called Mary" (Mosiah 3:5, 8).

Several doctrinal concepts emerge as we parse these verses. Jesus Christ was God before He came to earth as a mortal. In His premortal state He was the Lord Omnipotent, the eternally existing

One who reigned with all power but chose to come down from His exalted position to take up a “tabernacle of clay” in order to experience life with the sick and afflicted in this fallen world.

Here King Benjamin is restating, in his own words, the uniquely Latter-day Saint doctrine of the condescension of God, which derives directly from the Book of Mormon. This doctrine, revealed to King Benjamin by an angel (see Mosiah 3:2), was revealed many hundreds of years earlier, also by an angel, to Nephi, son of Lehi: “And the angel said unto me [Nephi] again: Look and behold the condescension of God! . . . And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people, in power and great glory. . . . And I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits; and the angel spake and showed all these things unto me. And they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 11:26, 28, 31).

These mighty miracles, foretold by both Nephi and King Benjamin and performed in actuality by Jesus of Nazareth, were but an extension of the Savior’s godly powers used in premortality to create all things—the heavens and the earth. Other scriptural texts and prophetic utterances teach us that we may regard this vast creative activity as literal, not metaphorical. To the prophet Moses, for example, it was given to know that Jesus, under the direction of God the Father (whom we often refer to as Elohim), created innumerable worlds like our own:

“And behold, the glory of the Lord was upon Moses, so that Moses stood in the presence of God, and talked with him face to face. And the Lord God said unto Moses: For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me.

“And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth.

“And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:31–33).

Because Jesus Christ in very deed formed *millions* of planets and solar systems like the one on which we now reside, it is no exaggeration to say, as King Benjamin did, that Jesus Christ was the

creator of all things from the beginning. Remember, the prophet Enoch learned that even the staggering figure of “millions of earths” is so small, relatively speaking, to the number that actually exist that it cannot begin to serve as a starting point for finite mortal minds to count the total number of Christ’s creations (see Moses 7:30). Thus, Jesus is rightfully regarded as the Father of heaven and earth, which is a truth that continued to be taught by prophets throughout the Book of Mormon.

- Abinadi, for example, called the earthly Messiah “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth” (Mosiah 15:4).

- Amulek declared Christ to be “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, all things which in them are” (Alma 11:39).

- Samuel the Lamanite said he had climbed upon the city walls to preach so that the people “might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning” (Helaman 14:12).

- And Moroni testified of Christ’s cosmological fatherhood when he spoke the very words of Jesus Christ, who declared that in the day that people “shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are” (Ether 4:7).

Some passages in the Book of Mormon also speak of Jesus Christ as the creator of humankind (see Mosiah 26:23; Alma 5:15; Ether 3:16). While this is true in the sense that He created the habitations and environments that make it possible for human beings to exist, it is also accurate to say that there is one area of creation in which the premortal Jesus Christ did not act directly as the primal maker or organizer—the procreation of spirit children. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has provided a helpful framework for our thinking regarding Jesus’ role as Father of creation. He said:

“In the ultimate and final sense of the word, the Father is the Creator of all things. That he used the Son and others to perform many of the creative acts, delegating to them his creative powers,

does not make these others creators in their own right, independent of him. He is the source of all creative power, and he simply chooses others to act for him in many of his creative enterprises. But there are two creative events that are his and his alone. First, he is the Father of all spirits, Christ's included; none were fathered or created by anyone else. Second, he is the Creator of the physical body of man. Though Jehovah and Michael and many of the noble and great ones played their assigned roles in the various creative events, yet when it came time to place man on earth, the Lord God himself performed the creative acts. 'I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them' (Moses 2:27)."¹

AS JEHOVAH—ISRAEL'S PARENT, GOD, AND LAWGIVER

Another way in which Jesus Christ is regarded as the Father in the Book of Mormon concerns His premortal role as ancient Israel's paternal guardian and lawgiver, the great Jehovah. To the people of ancient times, Jehovah revealed His paternal or fatherly relationship to Israel when He declared to Moses, "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord [Hebrew YHWH or Jehovah], Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Exodus 4:22). To the prophet Jeremiah He was even more explicit: "At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. . . . For *I am a father* to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn" (Jeremiah 31:1, 9; emphasis added).

This, of course, is the very same Jehovah who brought the children of Israel out of bondage and gave to them His laws and covenants through the prophet Moses: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2–3). What follows after this declaration in the book of Exodus is the Covenant Code, or the commandments and covenants that constitute the system known as the law of Moses given by Jehovah at Mount Sinai to the nation of Israel. Furthermore, this same Jehovah

is the very God who appeared to the Nephites many centuries later in America as the resurrected Savior. This fact is confirmed by the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself as recorded in 3 Nephi:

“And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses; for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

“And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

“Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses.

“Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end. . . .

“Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life” (3 Nephi 15: 2–5, 9).

Thus, by virtue of the fact that Jesus is Jehovah-come-to-earth, as the Book of Mormon makes clear, and that Jehovah declared Himself to be ancient Israel’s cultural and spiritual parent, her guardian and source of law as well as light, we see again that Jesus is rightly regarded as Father in the Book of Mormon.

AS JEHOVAH—SENDER OF JESUS

The Book of Mormon also contains the truly unique doctrine and perspective that Jesus, acting in His role as Jehovah, was actually the Father spoken of in ancient times who sent Jesus to earth to fulfill His mortal probation. Or, in other words, the Book of Mormon teaches that the premortal Jesus declared the inevitability of His own mortal probation. Lest someone accuse this statement of sounding like meaningless double-talk, we may appeal to an important Book of Mormon text to illustrate the point. On the day before the Savior’s physical birth into mortality, Nephi prayed mightily unto God and received a momentous response to his plea:

“But there were some who began to say that the time was past for the words to be fulfilled, which were spoken by Samuel, the Lamanite.

“And they began to rejoice over their brethren, saying: Behold the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain. . . .

“Now it came to pass that when Nephi, the son of Nephi, saw this wickedness of his people, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.

“And it came to pass that he went out and bowed himself down upon the earth, and cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people, yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in the tradition of their fathers.

“And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord all that day; and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying:

“Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.

“Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil 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. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given” (3 Nephi 1:5–6, 10–14).

These verses teach profound principles. At a time of lethal persecution against the Saints of God, Nephi petitioned the Lord for redress because the wicked thought they had proof that the prophecies of Christ’s first coming in the flesh were false traditions. As it turns out, Nephi offered this mighty prayer on the day before the actual mortal birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The Lord answered Nephi’s plea and promised that the ultimate sign of the impending nativity would be given that very night and that Jesus would come into the world the following day. Here we learn that the Lord always fulfills His word, though it is according to His timetable and not ours.

But this is not all. At least three other points are worthy of notice as we contemplate the doctrine of the fatherhood of Christ. First, it is significant that the premortal Jesus answered Nephi's prayer, for the premortal Jesus is none other than the great Jehovah, the very giver of the prophecies about the first and second comings of the Messiah pronounced since the foundation of the world. Jehovah says to Nephi, in effect, that He will give the ultimate sign of His own mortal birth and that He will enter the world as the earthly Jesus.

Second, it makes perfect sense that Jehovah would answer Nephi's petition because Jehovah has been the God of this earth from the beginning. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained this when he stated: "All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In all of the scriptures, where God is mentioned and where he has appeared, it was Jehovah who talked with Abraham, with Noah, Enoch, Moses and all the prophets. He is the God of Israel, the Holy One of Israel; the one who led that nation out of Egyptian bondage, and who gave and fulfilled the Law of Moses (1 Nephi 19:10; 3 Nephi 11:10, 14; 15:2-9). The Father [Elohim] has never dealt with man directly and personally since the fall, and he has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son."

President Smith further noted that "the Father [Elohim] has honored Christ by placing his name upon him, so that he can minister in and through that name *as though he were the Father*; and thus, so far as power and authority are concerned, *his words and acts become and are those of the Father*."²

Thus, when the Lord Jehovah spoke or appeared to humans in ancient times, He did so as the Father. When He gave revelation to His prophets about the mortal mission of Jesus Christ—even though He was speaking of Himself—He did so as the Father, using the perspective of God the Father (Elohim) and speaking of Jesus as though Jesus were another party. This principle is called divine investiture of authority, meaning that "the Father-Elohim has placed his name upon the Son [Jesus Christ], has given him his own power and authority, and has authorized him to speak in the first

person as though he were the original or primal Father.”³ This principle is clearly demonstrated in certain sections of the Doctrine and Covenants wherein the Lord is found to be speaking as both Jesus Christ and God the Father–Elohim in the same revelation (see as the best examples D&C 29:1, 42; 49:5, 28).

Third, enlightened by a basic understanding of the historical and doctrinal backdrop of Nephi’s petition on the eve of the Savior’s birth into mortality, we may more fully comprehend the exact wording of the Lord’s response to Nephi when He said, “I come unto my own, to fulfil 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” (3 Nephi 1:14). In other words, the Lord’s words to Nephi indicate the following:

1. He was speaking from the perspective of both of His roles or titles as Jehovah *and* Jesus.

2. He was declaring that His mortal lineage would be through the house of Israel—“I come unto my own”—the very group or family for whom He acted as Father in His role as Jehovah, just as He earlier declared in Exodus 4:22: “Israel is my son, even my first-born.”

3. As the earthly Jesus, He would fulfill all the prophecies and principles about the Messiah and about the plan of salvation that He, in His role as Jehovah, revealed to His prophets from the foundation of the world.

4. In coming to earth as Jesus the Messiah, He would be fulfilling the will of Himself when He acted in the role of the Father–Jehovah as He said, “To do the will . . . of the Father because of *me*.” He, Jehovah, would come into the world as the Messiah because that is what He wanted to do when acting as Jehovah. But in reality, by carrying out what He had proposed for Himself, when acting as Jehovah, He was also carrying out the aims and desires of His own Father–Elohim (see Moses 4:1–4).

5. Once on earth as Jesus the Messiah, He would also fulfill His own will or desire to act as the dutiful and obedient Son of God

(Elohim) as He further said, “To do the will . . . of the Son because of my flesh.”

We can now see that the Lord’s response to Nephi was not double-talk, but representative of the Savior’s varied and separate roles and responsibilities. He was speaking as Jehovah the Father. And He was speaking as the Son of God, Jesus Christ, under the direction of His own literal Father, Elohim. This makes logical sense, for if God the Father–Elohim placed upon His Son the right and responsibility to act and speak as He (Elohim) acts and speaks through the principle of divine investiture of authority, then our Lord must, of necessity, be the Father. Jehovah must speak as the One who sent Jesus Christ to earth. And yet, once on earth Jehovah the Father must act as the Son precisely because His mortal tabernacle was born of the union between a divine Father and a mortal mother, and He was literally the Son of Elohim.

This pattern displayed so clearly in the Book of Mormon helps us to understand other passages of scripture in the standard works. Note, for example, the language of Psalm 110:1 quoted by the Savior in an episode reported in Matthew 22:41–45.

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, “Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.

“He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

“The Lord [Jehovah] said unto my Lord [Jesus], Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?”

“If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?”

With the understanding of Jesus’ premortal roles and titles in mind, the Savior’s purpose in using Psalm 110 becomes so much clearer to us. He was telling the Pharisees that He was both Messiah and Lord Jehovah.

Also, note the language of Isaiah’s greatest messianic prophecy in Isaiah 53 and later quoted by the prophet Abinadi: “The Lord [Jehovah] hath laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all” for “it pleased the Lord [Jehovah] to bruise him [Jesus]; he [Jehovah] hath put him [Jesus] to grief” (Isaiah 53:6, 10; see also Mosiah 14:6, 10).

It should not be hard for us to understand that it is not only acceptable but necessary that our Lord speak as both the Father and the Son. He is both Jehovah and Jesus Christ, and He sometimes communicates from the perspective of both roles. This is the essence of His declaration to the brother of Jared: “And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and *he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father*, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world (Ether 4:12; emphasis added).

Thus, Jesus is the Father by virtue of the fact that, as Jehovah, He was saying that, in a sense, He was sending Himself into the world to be our Messiah and Redeemer. The Book of Mormon makes it clear that He was conscious of the fact that He was speaking as the Father.

THE FATHER ACCORDING TO ABINADI

The prophet Abinadi delivered one of the most profound and best known sermons on the mission and ministry of the Messiah, including the doctrine of the fatherhood of Christ. Addressing the priests of Noah, Abinadi presents in his opening statements many of the seminal features of Christ’s true identity as the Father *and* the Son—ideas with which we are already familiar.

“And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

“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 of earth.

“And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to

the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people” (Mosiah 15:1–5).

With penetrating clarity Abinadi first testified that the forthcoming Redeemer was none other than God Himself, He whom the people knew and worshiped as Jehovah (15:1). This is another restatement of the doctrine of the condescension of God articulated previously by Nephi and King Benjamin.

Next, Abinadi teaches the principle of the subjection of Jehovah to the buffetings of the flesh precisely as a result of His taking up a physical body in this fallen world. Through the birth process He would become the Son of God in the flesh, and in so doing would subject Himself to the will of the Father (15:2). The will of the Son was swallowed up in the will of the Father, as Abinadi declared a few verses later (15:7).

At this point Abinadi reveals to his audience a most significant aspect of Christ’s identity and role. Because Jehovah’s earthly body would be conceived by the power of God (Elohim) and thus Jehovah would become God’s literal Son in the flesh, He would become the Father and the Son. He would possess within Himself the powers, attributes, and literal physical makeup possessed by Elohim. Genetically He would assume the identity of His Father and thus become just like the Father physically but be born as a son. He would receive the same powers inherent in His Father and would be capable of doing the same things His Father could do, yet He would also be considered the Son.

This is the very reason behind Jewish antagonism to Jesus’ statements after He had healed the disabled man by the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. The Jews knew that putting forth a claim of divine sonship in the flesh also implied being equal with God, physically as well as spiritually. Here they got it right, for divine sonship also meant that Jesus was the same as God the Father, at least in terms of power, endowments, and makeup. And, as the following verses indicate, Jesus was intent on leaving no room for doubt:

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not

only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

“Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

“For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. . . .

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

“And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:18–20, 26–27).

Thus, Jesus is rightly regarded as both the Father and the Son because of His genetic makeup and endowments of divine power. Abinadi taught the truth just as others have since then. In a modern revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Savior Himself explained that He is “the Father because he [Elohim] 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” (D&C 93:4). This is very helpful commentary to study alongside Abinadi’s discourse.

Abinadi rounded out the first part of his discourse on the nature of Christ by testifying that Christ the Father and Christ the Son are in reality one God who manifests or fulfills different aspects of His eternal mission at different times. Abinadi also testified that the eternal being who came to earth as the Messiah was indeed the creator or Father of the heavens and the earth.

THE FATHER THROUGH SPIRITUAL REBIRTH

The Book of Mormon is really our single most important witness of Christ’s role as spiritual Father. This aspect of His fatherhood results from the opportunity He offers to all humankind to become His sons and daughters through spiritual rebirth. This rebirth comes through the Savior’s atonement, that singular gift of

redemption which makes it possible for us to enter His family. King Benjamin explained the process in these words: “And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

Similarly, the Lord Himself declared that “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 [and daughters]” (D&C 39:4). All those who accept the gospel by covenant, participating in the ordinances of rebirth, enter the family of Jesus Christ. They receive both the name of their new family as well as the family inheritance, its blessings, and its obligations. “And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ” (Mosiah 5:9).

The prophet Alma taught that it is required of all men and women to enter the family of Christ and become His sons and daughters through rebirth into the kingdom of God:

“For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

“And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

“And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:24–26).

The process of rebirth, or the second birth, parallels our first birth into this world. Jehovah, the premortal Jesus, taught this to our first parents in a profound way. Note not only the connection He makes between the first and second births, but also the way in which He speaks of Jesus in the third person—a being separate and apart from His current role as the Father:

“Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere,

must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.

“Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying:

“That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory” (Moses 6:57–59).

CONCLUSION

There is no question that Elohim is our Father, the Father of the spirits of all human beings including Jehovah or Jesus Christ (see Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9). He is the creator of our spirit bodies, the first member of the Godhead, and the ultimate object of our worship and adoration. But it is also true that Jesus Christ is the Father, as well, in several different ways.

Jesus Christ is the Father by reason of His being the creator of heaven and earth—millions of earths like this one. He is Jehovah, Israel’s cultural and spiritual Father and lawgiver. As Jehovah, He sent Himself to earth to become the mortal Messiah—Jesus Christ. He is the Father of our salvation and redemption, our spiritual rebirth, our exaltation and eternal progression. Elohim has literally given His Son Jesus Christ His own attributes and powers. “This is a matter of [the] Eternal Parent investing him with power from on high so that he [Jesus] becomes the Father because he exercises the power of that Eternal Being.”⁴ Such insight gives new and deeper meaning to the Savior’s many statements in the Book of Mormon

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that He and His Father are one. They are indeed. One has been invested with the powers and characteristics of the other.

The Book of Mormon was given to us to help us comprehend the magnitude of Christ's greatness, and this record is the most correct and profound tutor and witness of the doctrine of the fatherhood of Jesus Christ in all the world.

NOTES

1. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 63.
2. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 1:27, 29–30; emphasis added.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 63.
4. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, 371.

Mormons believe that Jesus Christ has always been a separate person from God the Father. In some ways Christ Himself is our father—He is the creator of the heavens and the earth; He is a father to all those who are born-again; He is one with God the Father in all the attributes of perfection, power, and authority. By obeying His commandments during mortality, we become His children in another sense. We are His, and He is God's. Jesus Christ as the Mortal Messiah. The biblical record has given us a portion of Christ's doings and teachings during His mortal ministry. The Book of Mormon gives an account of His post-resurrection visit to descendants of Israel in the Americas. That account also claims that Christ planned next to go to the Ten Lost Tribes. Biblical response to the Mormon doctrine that Jesus, Lucifer, angels, demons, and all human beings are spirit children of God. Spencer W. Kimball, for example, stated that when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, "a momentous contest took place between two brothers, Jehovah and Lucifer, sons of Elohim". Satan, also a son of God, had rebelled and had been cast out of heaven and not permitted an earthly body as had his brother Jehovah (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball [1982], 34). The book of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus Christ is God's "Son" in a unique sense that sets him apart from and above all the angels. Abinadi taught that Jesus Christ was both "the Father and the Son." This has caused many to wonder whether the Book of Mormon teaches a trinitarian concept of God. By viewing Abinadi's teachings through the lenses of Mesoamerican "deity complexes," however, a different understanding emerges. These "deity complexes" in Maya religion envisioned single deities in various. By viewing the Book of Mormon in this light, readers can more fully appreciate the variety of formulas used in the text to explain the relationship between the Father and the Son. This of course includes Abinadi's discourse, which focused on Christ's role as the God of Israel and father of creation condescending to earth to atone for His people (cf. 1 Nephi 11). The Book of Mormon is a book of scripture that details God's teachings to people who lived in the ancient Americas. It serves as a companion to the Bible, reinforcing the witness of Jesus Christ, and adding new insights into His sacred mission. The Bible tells the story of Jesus's life and ministry in the Holy Land, from His birth to His resurrection. But in the Book of Mormon, we read of His visit to the Americas after He died and rose again. He taught the people there, blessed them, called people to serve in His name, and then ascended to heaven. Together, the Bible and the Book of Mormon te