ONLY ONE GOD TO WORSHIP
By the First Presidency of the Church

Discussions frequently arise over the meaning of isolated texts of scriptures, most of which would find interpretation in other passages of holy writ. Some of them are needless and unimportant, and these should be avoided; but it is proper to study and arrive at correct conclusions as to the meaning of that which is written for our learning and edification. The published standards of the Church, as has been frequently announced, are the Bible, "so far as it is translated correctly," the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. They have been so accepted by the Church in conference assembled. Thus we have something at hand which can be appealed to as authority in doctrine.

The Lord has also appointed one man at a time on the earth to hold the keys of revelation to the entire body of the Church in all its organizations, authorities, ordinances and doctrines. The spirit of revelation is bestowed upon all its members for the benefit and enlightenment of each individual receiving its inspiration, and according to the sphere in which he or she is called to labor. But for the entire Church, he who stands at the head is alone appointed to receive revelations by way of commandment and as the end of controversy. Assisted by his counselors, he presides over the whole Church in all the world; thus the First Presidency hold the right to give authoritative direction in all matters that pertain to the building up and government and regulation of the body.

A question has been discussed in some of the auxiliary societies, and finally has been submitted to us, in reference to a saying to be found in the Pearl of Great Price, as follows:

"And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of my Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for He is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all." (Moses 1:6).

The words particularly debated are; "but there is no God beside me." They appear to be in conflict with many other statements in scripture, both ancient and modern, but are not out of harmony with them when properly understood.

Moses was reared in an atmosphere of idolatry. There were numerous deities among the Egyptians. In commencing the work which the Lord said he had for Moses to do, it was necessary to center his mind and faith upon God the Eternal Father as the only Being to worship. Therefore, the words now under consideration, or rather those that were actually spoken to Moses of which these are a translation, were made emphatic, not only as to the false gods of the times but delusive spirits, of whom Satan was the chief and who tried to pass himself off to Moses as a divine object of worship, as narrated in the same chapter. (Verses 12-25).

This was repeated in substance, and for the same reasons, in the first of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," – that is, beside me, above me, or equal to me, or to be an object of worship, (Exodus 20:2-5). Or, as Paul put it: "For though there be [many] that are called gods whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are gods many and lords many) yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him." (1 Cor. 8:5-6).

It should be remembered that it was Christ before he was in the flesh who gave the law and the commandments to Moses, and who spoke for the Father, as He explained to the Nephites when he appeared to them after his resurrection. (3 Nephi 15:5.) He "was in the beginning with God and was God," according to John 1:1. The Father was represented by Him and He acted and spoke for the Father, in the creation and from that time forward in all the divine dispensations. Angels also, under Him, have been appointed to speak for God, being so authorized and empowered. (See Ex. 23:20, 21). But the sole object of worship, God the Eternal Father, stands supreme and alone, and it is in the name of the
Only Begotten that we thus approach Him, as Christ taught always. “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; He judgeth among the gods.” (Psalms 82:1.) Jesus quoted this and did not dispute it (John 10:34-6). All the perfected beings who are rightly called gods, being, like the Savior, possessed of “the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” are ONE, just as the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are one.

There are questions relating to doctrine and principle that are proper subjects for class discussion, when that is conducted for the purpose of gaining information. There are topics, however, that are of no particular moment, or on which no definite conclusion can be authoritatively reached, and these ought to be avoided, as a waste of time and a cause of endless dispute. Let the light shine and be sought for in faith, but let contention have no place among the Latter-day Saints!

JOSEPH F. SMITH,
ANTHON H. LUND,
CHARLES W. PENROSE,
First Presidency.