

## CHAPTER 11

# WHAT IS MAN?

**M**uch more important to our eternal progression than knowing who and what God is, is an understanding of what Man is. God is who and what He is. He was the same before we came into being and forever will be. The knowledge of the being and form of God, our comprehension of Him, is peripheral to the core and foundational truths that declare who we are, His literal sons and daughters.

In the previous chapters, we have detailed three separate creative eras, their related but disparate spheres and ages, and the courses of God (begun, completed and ongoing) which have led to the space we inhabit today and made us what we are. We have described an eternal past, and within it, an ancient beginning for each of us, intimate with our Father. Of these truths we are left in no doubt. The future state of our being is a direct result of what has happened before and is assured by our Father's singular focus on what He declares is His work and His glory, "*to bring to pass the immortality of man*" (Moses 1:39).

Contention with traditional Christianity begins here, with our understanding of a near infinite pre-existence of man. To that is added our Latter-day concept of an eternal god-like inheritance for man, one that insists we are children of our Heavenly Father, not just in deed, when we live worthily, but by birth; because of this, we can become like God, heir to all that He has. In this conflation of ideas, the whole of which describes a divinely appointed progression for man, Latter-day teachings stand out today as unique, at odds with that described as mainstream Christian doctrine. Within this chapter, we will explore that what canonical Latter-day teaching expounds is consistent not only with Biblical revelation, but it is consistent with the earliest interpretations of the inspired passages by those who were taught the very precepts by the original apostles of the LORD themselves.

Within this work, we have developed an understanding that the primary being of man is eternal in nature, an embodied *personage of Spirit*. In this chapter, we will delve in to what a *personage of Spirit* is. We will revisit, this time in depth, the state of each of our separate existences into the distant past, to the point of our primal creation. But first we will visit what is disclosed about who we are to become.

## *Deus factus est homo, ut homo fieret Deus*

*“God Became Man that Man Might Become God”*

This sometimes inflammatory statement is one of the best-known quotes from Athanasius (ca 298–373 AD), whom we have already met; it comes from his influential *On the Incarnation*, first published in Latin in the fourth century. What is expressed in this phrase is the concept of Theosis or Deification of man (*Figure 11-1*). It is an understanding that mortal men can have a real and integral union with God, that we can become like God to such a degree that we participate with the divine nature.

This precept, however, was not exclusive to Athanasius but was understood and taught by virtually all of the early church fathers, Irenaeus, Clement, and Justin Martyr among them. It continued to be taught as indicated by its explication by Athanasius in the 300's and even later by the likes of Augustine and others; it remains an Orthodox teaching and wholly Catholic to this day, highlighted prominently in the first few pages of the Roman Catholic catechism<sup>1</sup> and espoused emphatically by all of the Eastern churches.

Deification can be considered as similar to the Wesleyan teaching of holiness or perfection with the significant addition of a somewhat *mysterious* union of man with God through Christ. This union empowers both the desire to seek and the method for gaining perfection. Theosis, as it is understood today in an entirely modern theological context, has been identified as “*the gradual process by which a person is renewed and unified so completely with God that he becomes by grace what God is by nature.*”<sup>2</sup> Protestants today may refer to this process as *sanctification*; perhaps a term more familiar to Western Christianity would be *mortification*; the putting to death of sin in a believer's life. We shall see here the modern theological context denies something that was fundamental to Deification as it was originally understood, *that we as mankind are in fact destined for godhood because we are gods by nature.*

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<sup>1</sup> Theosis (divinization) remains an important Catholic teaching today. The following is a set of quotes from various Catholic Fathers included within a quote from today's Catechism of the Catholic Church: “*The Word became flesh to make us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4.) “For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God.” (St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 19, 1: pg. 7/1, 939.) “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.” (St. Athanasius, De inc. 54, 3: pg. 25, 192B.) “The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.” (St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusc. 57, 1-4.)*

<sup>2</sup> Fr. David Hester, in his booklet, *The Jesus Prayer*.  
*In The Beginning*