

**WHITNEY
ORSON
FERGUSON**

GOSPEL THEMES

Orson Whitney
Gospel Themes

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Gospel Themes / A Treatise on Salient Features of 'Mormonism':*

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Orson F. Whitney Gospel Themes / A Treatise on Salient Features of 'Mormonism'

PREFACE AND DEDICATION

This little book was written and compiled at the request of the General Priesthood Committee, under the sanction of the First Presidency of the Church, for the use and benefit of the Priesthood Classes, throughout the Stakes and Wards of Zion.

The treatise, "Gospel Themes," represents the best effort I could make under the circumstances in which that effort was put forth. Many interruptions occurred, consequent upon the performance of other duties, and I had no opportunity to submit the manuscript to a committee of revision, prior to publication; the usual course with works of this character. I was barely able to get it ready for the printer within the time allotted for its preparation. But I tried to be accurate, and am not aware that I made any mistakes.

While lacking the help of a revisory committee, I received, and hereby gratefully acknowledge, valuable suggestions from

Elders David O. McKay and Edward H. Anderson, members of the Priesthood Committee, and from others whom I consulted. Moreover, Brother Anderson was with me in proof-reading the work, and in engineering it through the press.

My aim has been, not to give exhaustive treatment to any subject, but to throw in sight certain themes, and dwell briefly upon points of doctrine, prophecy, history, and illustration, that I thought would be helpful to the brethren of the Priesthood—those who are studying the Gospel at home, and those who are preaching it abroad. To both classes this volume is affectionately dedicated.

THE AUTHOR.

Salt Lake City, Christmas, 1913.

The Story of God

CHAPTER I

A Divine Plan for Human Progress

The Gospel Defined.—The English word "Gospel" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "Godspell," or God-story—the story of God. It derives its significance from that great central idea of the Christian faith—the coming of God as the Son of God to redeem and save mankind. The joyful intelligence of the advent of the world's Redeemer, proclaimed by the angels to the shepherds on the Judean hills (Luke 2:10), furnishes another name for the gospel—"good tidings," or, as it is otherwise rendered, "glad tidings of great joy."

God the Savior.—"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" (Mosiah 15:1,2). prediction by Abinadi the prophet, centuries before the birth of the Savior, had been preceded by a This similar prophecy from King Benjamin, another Nephite seer (Mosiah 3:5). The fulfilment of these foretellings is recorded in the opening verses

of the gospel according to St. John, where reference is made to "the Word" that was in the beginning "with God"—the Word that "was God," and was "made flesh" and dwelt among men. In him, as Paul affirms, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

Foundation and Superstructure.—When we speak of the gospel, therefore, we should bear in mind that the term means something more than faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and other rituals and requirements in the Church of Christ. We must not isolate "the laws and ordinances of the gospel" from the basic principles upon which they rest—the mighty foundation stones of sacrifice and redemption, without which all this sacred legislation would be aimless and of no effect. Nor can the basic principles which make operative those laws and ordinances be dissociated from the idea of eternal progression, the great and paramount purpose for which the gospel code was framed, the gospel in its fulness instituted.

Fulness of the Gospel.—The phrase, "fulness of the gospel," should be understood in a relative sense, as pertaining to the revealed will of God. There can be no absolute fulness, with man, until all things are made known to him. The fulness of the gospel as delivered to the Nephites and other ancient peoples, and told of in the inspired records that have come down to us, differed from, in that it was not so complete as is the fulness of the gospel which the Latter-day Saints enjoy. Truth is always the

same; it never contradicts itself; but more of its principles have been revealed in modern times than at any previous period. Never before, upon this earth, has there been such a gospel fulness as that delivered to the Prophet Joseph Smith. And the end is not yet; for, as he himself said in one of his latest recorded utterances: "Those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this the dispensation of the fulness of times" (D&C 128:18).

It may help the reader to understand how there can be more than one "fulness of the gospel" by bearing in mind what has been made known concerning the final judgment, or the various awards of glory to be meted out to redeemed souls after the resurrection. Their glory shall be that by which their bodies are quickened, and whether quickened by a portion of the celestial, the terrestrial, or the telestial glory, they shall "receive of the same, even a fulness" (D&C 88:28-31). But one fulness can differ from another, even as differ the glories, and even as capacities differ—the power to receive and contain. The absolute fulness of the gospel can only come to a people prepared to receive and make a wise use of it. Until the Latter-day Saints are in that condition, they must be content with a comparative fulness, or all that they can contain of the divine wisdom. Paul the apostle was contemplating this subject when he wrote: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1

Cor. 13:9,10).

Gospel Features.—The gospel, in its fullest sense, signifies everything connected with the redemptive career of that glorious and divine Being known among men as Jesus of Nazareth, but who was and is no other than Jehovah, the God of Israel (D&C 110:1-4), who "came unto his own" and was rejected by them, was crucified at their instigation, and died to redeem the world. The accounts given by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are properly termed "gospels," because they are narratives of the personal ministry of our Lord; but they are only parts of the complete God-story. The Savior's life, death, resurrection and ascension, with the conditions prescribed by him upon which fallen man might profit further from his sacrifice for human redemption,—these are all gospel features, but not the gospel in its entirety. The full "story" of the Redeemer and Savior—the God who died that man might live—involves events both past and future, events premortal and post-mortal, scenes in which he was chosen to play his mighty part in the great tragedy of human experience, and scenes yet to come in which he will make another and a more glorious appearing upon the stage of time, enacting the illustrious role of King of kings and reigning over the earth a thousand years.

Salvation and Exaltation.—Paul defines the Gospel of Christ as "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). He might have gone further, had he so desired, or had it been timely, and shown that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto

exaltation—a plan devised by Omnipotent Wisdom whereby man, the child of God, may advance from stage to stage of soul development, until eventually he becomes like unto his Heavenly Parent, inheriting eternal thrones and dominions, and receiving "a fulness of joy."

This is exaltation. It is more than salvation, being an extension of that idea or condition—salvation "added upon;" just as salvation is an extension of, or an addition to, redemption. A soul may be redeemed—that is, raised from the dead, and yet condemned at the final judgment for evil deeds done in the body. Likewise may a soul be redeemed and saved, and yet come short of the glory that constitutes exaltation. To redeem, save, and glorify, is the threefold purpose of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Origin and Antiquity of the Gospel.—The gospel originated in the heavens, before this earth was organized, and was revealed to man, out of eternity, at the very beginning of time. It was the means by which Adam, our great ancestor, after his expulsion from Eden, regained the divine presence from which he had been banished. It is the means by which his posterity, such as are obedient to the gospel's requirements, have been or will yet be able to follow him into the heavenly kingdom. The same ladder that Adam climbed, until beyond the reach of the fatal consequences of his transgression, the whole human race, inheriting from him the effects of the fall, must likewise climb, or they will never see the face of God in eternal glory.

The Paramount Purpose.—Let us keep in mind, however,

that the gospel, even in a limited sense, is more than a means of escape from impending ills. It is the way of progress, the path to perfection, and as such was devised by the wisdom of the Gods, before this world rolled into existence. The origin of the gospel, and the grand purpose for which it was instituted, are briefly yet clearly outlined by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the following language:

Eternal Progression.—"The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest 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 may have one glory upon another."— ("Times and Seasons," August 15, 1844; "Improvement Era," January, 1909.)

Power and Benevolence of Deity.—Here are pointed out both the power and the benevolence of Deity. Our Father in heaven is no monopolist. While omnipotent and all-possessing, he is likewise altruistic and philanthropic. Instead of keeping to himself the glory that he found himself possessed of, he used his superior intelligence "to institute laws" whereby the lesser spirits surrounding him might advance toward the lofty plane that he occupies. He proposed to lift them to his own spiritual stature and share with them the empire of the universe.

Plato's View.—Our prophet's simple yet sublime setting forth of the divine power and benevolence, as exemplified in the establishment of a plan for man's eternal progress, is far more pointed and specific than the presentment made by Plato, the Greek philosopher, of a doctrine somewhat similar. Plato, as quoted by Emerson, says: "Let us declare the cause which led the Supreme Ordainer to produce and compose the universe. He was good; and he who is good has no kind of envy. Exempt from envy, he wished that all things should be as much as possible like himself. Whosoever, taught by wise men, shall admit this as the prime cause of the origin and foundation of the world, will be in the truth."—"Representative Men," Lecture II.)

Man's Destiny.—There is a fitness, a propriety, in man's becoming like his Maker—God's child, fashioned in his image and endowed with divine attributes, developing to the fulness of the parental stature, as taught by Joseph; but how the same can be predicated of "all things"—beasts, fish, fowl, trees, plants, etc., as Plato implies, is not so clear. That the lower animals, as well as man, in fact all forms of life, animate and inanimate, are to be perpetuated and glorified, is a plain inference from the teachings of the prophet (D&C 77:2-4) but undoubtedly all will retain their identity, in their respective orders and spheres. No creature of God's, except man, is destined to become like God, in the fullest and highest sense. "As much as possible" is a saving clause, however, and Plato, therefore, is not committed to any contradictory proposition.

CHAPTER II

Eternal Nature of Gospel Principles

Gospel Code and Fundamentals.—The gospel, as a code or System of laws and ordinances, is a creation, a work of God; but like all other creations it was organized out of materials already existing. "Intelligence or the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be (D&C 93:29). Truth, "eternal, unchanged, evermore"—such is the gospel in its fundamental principles. These were never created. God did not make them; he "instituted" them, recognizing their worth, their utility, their adaptability to the purposes which he had in view. He saw that these principles were ennobling and exalting in their nature and tendency, and he therefore created a plan embodying them as the most effectual means for man's promotion.

Faith.—Take, for instance, faith—the first principle. Can you conceive of its creation as a principle? I cannot: but I can grasp the idea of its existence as a law, as an essential force, its adoption by divine wisdom, and its adaptation to the purposes of Deity. I can conceive of its bestowal upon man as an endowment from God, its assimilation, cultivation, growth and increase, as illustrated in the Book of Mormon, where it is compared to a seed germinating in the soul (Alma 32:28). But I cannot think

of it, in its essential, fundamental nature, as having been called into existence. Faith is a gift from God, both as a law and a manifestation of spiritual power: but it is not a creation—not as a basic principle. The gospel code containing this law, however, may readily be conceived as the work of a divine Creator and Law-giver.

Repentance.—What is true of faith in this respect, is true also of repentance. God did not create repentance as a principle; it already existed as an essential to progress; but he made it obligatory upon sinful man, if he would be saved and put upon the road to perfection, to practice this principle—to turn away from evil and "sin no more."

Baptism.—As for baptism, the idea of washing in order to be come clean is plain enough for a child's comprehension. It is this idea that underlies the baptismal ordinance. God did not create the fact that washing maketh clean—that is fundamental; but he instituted baptism for the remission of sins and made it a part of the gospel plan, because no unclean thing can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Holy Ghost.—Divine Wisdom did not create the Holy Ghost: he is eternal, without beginning or end—he is God. Nor did it decree light necessary to illumination; that is a self-evident, self-existent truth. But Divine Wisdom instituted the laying on of hands for the gift (giving) of the Holy Ghost, and included it in the great progressive plan, because, without the illumination that comes from the Spirit of the Lord, man cannot be "led into all

truth."

Thus we might go on, taking up other features of the gospel, and in each one pointing out some underlying principle upon which this law or that ordinance has been based. The same philosophy will apply to them all. These fundamental principles are not creations—they are eternal truths, applied or adapted to ends foreseen and predestined by the all-wise Ordainer and Giver.

The gospel was instituted for the advancement of God's children, who had probably progressed as far as they could in the spirit at that time, before they were given bodies; and it was made effective for their further progress by the Atonement of Christ, offsetting the fall of Adam, and nullifying the deadly effects of the original transgression.

The Fall.—Right here let me suggest that Adam's transgression, while technically a sin, because of the broken law, should be stressed as the means whereby those spirits obtained their bodies, rather than as an act of moral turpitude. In law, crimes are of two general classes—*malum per se* and *malum prohibitum*. *Malum per se* means "an evil in itself"—an act essentially wrong; while *malum prohibitum* signifies "that which is wrong because forbidden by law." Adam's transgression was *malum prohibitum*, and the consequent descent from an immortal to a mortal condition was "THE FALL."

A Prearranged Plan.—It is evident from the revelations of God, particularly in modern times, that everything connected

with man's mortal pilgrimage was understood and arranged before that pilgrimage began. Not alone was the gospel instituted: an executor was appointed to put it into effect. In other words, the machinery was constructed, and the power then turned on. The fall being foreseen, the redemption was ordained. Eternal progress and everlasting glory were the objects in view, and over the glad prospect, in spite of the pain and sorrow that must necessarily intervene, "the Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7).

CHAPTER III

The Fall and Redemption

Essentials to Progress.—The story of God embraces the fall as well as the redemption of man. Both these mighty vicissitudes are steps in the march of human progress. The fall was just as necessary as the redemption, in order to make operative and effective the laws and ordinances of the gospel. In other words, the fall prepared the way for the redemption. How could redemption have been, had there been nothing to redeem? Of what use were a gospel of salvation where nothing needed to be saved?

Innocent Ignorance.—Had the spirits of men, "all innocent in the beginning," remained where they were and just as they were, they would have had no need to exercise faith unto salvation. They would have had no need to repent or to be baptized, having no evil practices to turn away from, and no uncleanness to be washed away. But they would have remained ignorant as well as innocent, and without any further progression. The following passage from the Book of Mormon illustrates this point:

"And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen; but he would have remained in the Garden of

Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore, they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery, doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Ne. 2:22-25).

This passage, of course, refers directly to Adam's condition in the Garden of Eden, and not to the spirit life preceding that period of innocent ignorance. But the fact remains that man, in the spirit life, needed experience in mortality, in order to become wiser, as much as he needed a body for purposes of progression and eternal increase.

Adam Not Deceived.—When Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, it was the woman who was beguiled by Satan and induced to go contrary to the divine command. The man was not deceived. Adam was but telling the truth when he answered the Lord, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). Those who satirize Father Adam for this reply, imputing to him an unworthy motive, a desire to evade responsibility and "hide behind the woman in the case," take but a superficial view of the subject. Adam was not trying to evade the issue: he was simply stating the fact. The Lord wanted the truth, and no fable would suffice, however

polite, in the opinion of shallow wits or would-be chivalrous wisacres, it might have been to invent one, in order to shield the fair transgressor.

A Deliberate Transgression.—Adam, after Eve had transgressed, did likewise in order to carry out a divine command previously given—the command to multiply and replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28). Eve, by her act, had separated herself from her husband, and made it impossible, unless he followed her and also became mortal, to carry out God's original behest. This was Adam's motive. He was facing a dilemma. He must make choice between two divine commands, and doubtless felt that he could not consistently do otherwise than as he did. He disobeyed in order to obey, retrieving, so far as he possibly could, the situation resulting from Eve's disobedience. He did it wittingly, deliberately, undeceived as to the consequences, realizing that in no other way could he carry out God's first command and become the progenitor of the human race. Adam and Eve, with their eyes open, rejoiced over what had befallen them, recognizing it as part of a preordained plan to people the earth with their posterity, and afford to a world of waiting spirits the opportunity, long anticipated, of taking earthly tabernacles and starting out upon their great pilgrimage to perfection.

Adam and Eve Rejoice.—"And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life

I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

"And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient."—"Pearl of Great Price," Book of Moses, 5:10,11.)

"Adam fell that man might be, and man is that he might have joy." But there would be no joy, no progress, no eternal life for fallen man—only pain, sorrow, and everlasting banishment from God's presence, had Christ not died to nullify the ill effects of Adam's act, and lift man up from his fallen condition.

Human Standards and Divine Dispensations.—Why, it may be asked, did God place Adam and Eve in so seemingly contradictory a position? Why were they forbidden to do what they had manifestly come to do, and which had to be done in order to carry out the divine purpose? For that is the problem in a nutshell, as it appears to human eyes. I can only answer in the words of Nephi: "All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things." Man cannot sit in judgment upon his Maker, nor measure by human standards divine dispensations. The God who gives life, and takes it, without committing murder, can command today and countermand tomorrow, and yet remain consistent and unchangeable. In a world where faith is necessary to progress, and where premature knowledge would prevent progress by swallowing up faith, by destroying the opportunity for its exercise, man must not expect to know all things. That

calamities and sacrifices bring forth blessings, is apparent to observation and experience; but the deep why and wherefore of it all remains a mystery. Adam's fall and Christ's atonement were fearful calamities, from the human point of view; but wonderful benefits and advantages accrued therefrom. Just why such sacrifices have to be made, however, in order that such blessings may come, is too profound a problem for the finite mind to solve.

Spiritual and Temporal Death.—The fall brought man into the world—into this state of mortality; but it also brought death, with all its sad concomitants. Not such a death as the righteous now contemplate, and such as both righteous and unrighteous must undergo, as a change preparatory to resurrection. There was no resurrection when Adam fell—not upon this planet—nothing but death, resting like a pall over the prospective human race. Adam and Eve, after the fall, were spiritually dead, and were doomed to the temporal death as well—the dissolution of the body—and they had entailed this fate upon their posterity. Hell had triumphed over man's, or rather woman's, weakness. Life was dead, death reigned, and demons held high carnival.

The World in Pawn.—Adam's transgression had put the world in pawn. The name of the pawnbroker was death, and his claim was twofold. Death held all things in his grasp, and there was no help for it this side of heaven. No part of what had been pledged could be used as the means of redemption. Adam could not redeem himself, great and mighty as he was—in the spirit;

for he was no other than Michael the archangel, leader of the hosts of heaven. But this puissant Michael was now a weak, frail, mortal man, under the penalty of a broken law, and powerless to repair the injury that had been wrought. He and the race that was to spring from him were utterly lost, unless the Almighty One would intervene, and do for them what they could not do for themselves. If man could have redeemed himself, it would have been required of him; but because self-redemption was impossible, a Redeemer had to be provided.

The Redemption.—Redemption must come, if at all, through some Being high enough and powerful enough to make an infinite atonement, one fully covering the far-reaching effects of the original transgression. The scales of eternal justice, unbalanced by Adam's act, had to be repoised, and right's equilibrium restored. Who could do this? Who could retrieve the situation, bring good out of evil, mould failure into success, and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat? Where was the Moses for such an exodus? Where the deliverance from this worse than Egyptian bondage—a bondage of which Egypt's slavery was but typical?

The life of a God was the price of the world's freedom, and that price was paid by the God of Israel, who descended from his glorious throne, made himself mortal, an exile of eternity, walked in the dust of his own footstool, and by submitting to death, broke the bands of death, and made it possible for man to live again, and go on to the goal of endless glory. He was

the Lamb "without spot or blemish," typified by the lamb of the Passover, and preordained for sacrifice, to "take away the sins of the world." He gave himself as an offering, as a ransom for human redemption, and by the shedding of his own blood, paid the debt of the universe, took the world out of pawn, and became the Author of Salvation for all mankind.

CHAPTER IV

The Gods in Council

Fore-ordination.—The parts played by Adam and Eve in this sublime tragedy were doubtless cast at the same time that the pre-eminent role was assigned to the Redeemer and Savior. Likewise, is it just as reasonable to infer that other great ones were forechosen for service in the cause of humanity. It is more than an inference; it is a revealed fact. What other meaning can be attached to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah (1:5): "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations"? If this be true of Jeremiah, why not true of other prophets, both ancient and modern? Joseph Smith is on record as saying that men who have such callings to minister to the inhabitants of the world, were "ordained to that very purpose in the grand council of heaven before this world was" ("Compendium," p. 285).

Two Plans Proposed.—In that same Grand Council—the "congregation of the mighty" (Ps. 1:5)—there were two candidates, if we may so designate them, for the redeemership. One was like unto the Father, desiring for the pure love of God's children to uplift them, and at the same time glorify the Great

Head, by the sacrifice that he proposed to make. The other was proud, self-willed, and bent upon personal aggrandizement, regardless of consequences. The former stood for freedom—man's agency—and the rewarding of all souls according to their works. The latter proposed coercion, so that not one soul should be lost; thinking, perhaps, that his demanded compensation for proposed service might be made in that way all the more abundant.

Lucifer Rebels.—The first was chosen; the second rebelled, and was cast out, with a third of those then populating the spirit world. That third, following Lucifer, who became Satan, were doomed with him to wander up and down the earth, as fallen spirits, tempting and trying the children of men—those who, as a reward for keeping their first estate, where they "walked by sight," were given a second estate—the privilege of taking tabernacles, and "walking by faith" through the shadowed experiences of mortality.

Upon this subject the Prophet Joseph says: "The contention in heaven was: Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the devil said he could save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council, who gave their vote in favor of Jesus Christ. So the devil rose up in rebellion against God, and was cast down with all who put up their heads for him" ("Compendium," page 285).

Advantage of Having a Body.—Our prophet likewise affirms: "At the first organization in heaven we were all present,

and saw the Savior chosen and appointed, and the plan of salvation made, and we sanctioned it. We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine's body to having none. All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not" (Ibid, page 288).

Testimony of Moses.—The following passages from our sacred writings will here find place:

"And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.

"But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.

"Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power: by the power of mine Only Begotten I caused that he should be cast down;

"And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice." (Moses 4:1-4.)

Testimony of Abraham.—Still more comprehensive are the appended paragraphs of a similar glorious revelation:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

"And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

"And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon: and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate: and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever.

"And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered

like unto the Son of man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first.

"And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate: and, at that day, many followed after him." (Book of Abr. 3:22-28.)

Truth Speaks for Itself.—What a sublime presentation! What a wealth of doctrine! What a wonderful scope of prophecy! The whole divine scheme for human progress revealed at a glance! Surely the Book of Abraham, whose authenticity has recently been assailed by Christian scholars, and defended by "Mormon" writers and speakers, can stand upon its own merits in refutation of any argument brought against it as a divine record. Who but God could reveal such principles as this marvelous book contains? Who but one inspired of heaven could teach them in so pure a spirit and in such majestic terms? Truth—eternal truth—speaks for itself: it is not dependent upon books or translators. These are but some of the means used in making it known to the world. It is not limited to time and place. Whether in the catacombs of Egypt, or in the mounds of America, whether spoken anciently or modernly,

"Truth is truth, where'er 'tis found,
On Christian or on heathen ground."

"Mormon" Philosophy.—Note the sound philosophy of this revelation—the divine proposition to "make an earth," not out

of nothing—an absurdity put forth by Christian theologians in their teachings relative to the creation—but out of "materials" already in existence, eternal spirit and eternal matter, as never-ending as space and duration. Then ask yourself, reader, if the "Mormon" doctrine, set forth in the Book of Abraham, is not the only logical, scientific, common-sense presentation possible or conceivable in the premises.

Note also that it was the design to "make an earth;" the inference being that this was not the only earth that had been created, nor would it be the last.

"And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth" (Abr. 4:1).

CHAPTER V

Creation of the Earth

Two Creations.—There were two creations—the first spiritual, the second temporal. This truth is taught inferentially in the first and second chapters of Genesis, King James's Translation; but more plainly and pointedly in the Book of Moses, a reproduction of the Book of Genesis, revised and amplified by the spirit of revelation in Joseph the Seer. Here is the modern rendering of the passages bearing directly upon this point:

As Related in the Book of Moses.—"And now, behold, I say unto you, that these are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that I, the Lord God, made the heaven and the earth.

"And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. For I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth. And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air;

"But I, the Lord God, spake, and there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

"And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also; nevertheless, all things were before created; but spiritually were they created and made according to my word." (Moses 3:4-7.)

Adam's Incarnation.—In the Book of Abraham the incarnation of Adam is thus described:

"And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man's spirit) and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Abr. 5:7).

Plurality of Worlds.—Regarding this earth and other creations, the Lord said to Moses:

"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.

"And the first man of all men have I called Adam, which is many.

"But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them."

* * * * *

"And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

"And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works; neither to my words.

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."—Moses 1:33-39.

Purposes of Earth Life.—God's purpose, primarily, in placing man upon the earth, is to give him a body, a mortal tabernacle, which is rendered immortal through death and the resurrection. The spirit and the body constitute the soul. It is the soul that is redeemed from the grave (D&C 88:15,16). It is the soul that goes on to perfection. Man is here also for experience, that he may advance from stage to stage of growth and development, approximating nearer and nearer to the divine ideal voiced by the Savior: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—Matthew 5:48.

Man on Probation.—There is still another purpose in man's mortal existence, and it is referred to in the Book of Abraham, where the Creator, after announcing to "those who were with him" the proposed making of an earth "whereon these may dwell," says: "And we will prove them herewith, to see if they

will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command." Thus we are shown that man while here is on probation, that he may demonstrate his worthiness to inherit the great things held in reserve for the righteous.

CHAPTER VI

Elect of Elohim

In solemn council sat the Gods;
From Kolob's height supreme,
Celestial light blazed forth afar
O'er countless kokaubeam;
And faintest tinge, the fiery fringe
Of that resplendent day,
'Lumined the dark abysmal realm
Where earth in chaos lay.

Silence. That awful hour was one
When thought doth most avail;
Of worlds unborn the destiny
Hung trembling in the scale.
Silence self-spelled, and there arose,
Those kings and priests among,
A power sublime, than whom appeared
None nobler 'mid the throng.

A stature mingling strength with grace,
Of meek though God-like mien;
The glory of whose countenance

Outshone the noonday sheen.
Whiter his hair than ocean spray,
Or frost of Alpine hill.
He spake;—attention grew more grave,
The stillness e'en more still.

"Father!"—the voice like music fell,
Clear as the murmuring flow
Of mountain streamlet trickling down
From heights of virgin snow.
"Father," it said, "since one must die,
Thy children to redeem,
From spheres all formless now and void,
Where pulsing life shall teem:

"And mighty Michael foremost fall,
That mortal man may be;
And chosen Savior yet must send,
Lo, here am I—send me!
I ask, I seek no recompense,
Save that which then were mine;
Mine be the willing sacrifice,
The endless glory Thine!

"Give me to lead to this lorn world,
When wandered from the fold,
Twelve legions of the noble ones
That now thy face behold;
Tried souls, 'mid untried spirits found,

That captained these may be,
And crowned the dispensations all
With powers of Deity.

"Who blameless bide the spirit state
Shall clothe in mortal clay,
The stepping-stone to glories all,
If man will God obey,
Believing where he cannot see,
Till he again shall know,
And answer give, reward receive,
For all deeds done below.

"The love that hath redeemed all worlds
All worlds must still redeem;
But mercy cannot justice rob—
Or where were Elohim?
Freedom—man's faith, man's work, God's grace—
Must span the great gulf o'er;
Life, death, the guerdon or the doom,
Rejoice we or deplore."

Still rang that voice, when sudden rose
Aloft a towering form,
Proudly erect as lowering peak
'Lumed by the gathering storm;
A presence bright and beautiful,
With eye of flashing fire,
A lip whose haughty curl bespoke

A sense of inward ire:

"Send me!"—coiled 'neath his courtly smile
A scarce concealed disdain—
"And none shall hence, from heaven to earth,
That shall not rise again;
My saving plan exception scorns.
Man's will?—Nay, mine alone.
As recompense, I claim the right
To sit on yonder throne!

"Ceased Lucifer. The breathless hush
Resumed and denser grew.
All eyes were turned; the general gaze
One common Magnet drew.
A moment there was solemn pause—
Listened Eternity,
While rolled from lips Omnipotent
The Father's firm decree:

"Jehovah, thou my Messenger!
Son Ahman, thee I send;
And one shall go thy face before,
While twelve thy steps attend;
And many more on that far shore,
The pathway shall prepare,
That I, the First, the last may come,
And earth my glory share.

"After and ere thy going down,
An army shall descend—
The host of God, and house of him
Whom I have named my friend.
Through him, upon Idumea,
Shall come, all life to leaven,
The guileless ones, the sovereign Sons,
Throned on the heights of heaven.

"Go forth, thou Chosen of the Gods,
Whose strength shall in thee dwell!
Go down betime and rescue earth,
Dethroning death and hell,
On thee alone man's fate depends,
The fate of beings all.
Thou shalt not fail, though thou art free—
Free, but too great to fall.

"By arm divine, both mine and thine,
The lost thou shalt restore,
And man, redeemed, with God shall be,
As God forevermore.
Return, and to the parent fold
This wandering planet bring,
And Earth shall hail thee Conqueror,
And Heaven proclaim thee King."

'Twas done. From congregation vast
Tumultuous murmurs rose;

Waves of conflicting sound, as when
Two meeting seas oppose;
'Twas finished. But the Heavens wept;
And still their annals tell
How one was Choice of Elohim,
O'er one who fighting fell.

("Elias," Canto III, Part One.)

The Way of Salvation

CHAPTER I

The Law of Obedience

Man Helpless.—When Adam and Eve had transgressed the divine command by partaking of the forbidden fruit, it was as if the human race had fallen into a pit, from which they were powerless, by any act of their own, to emerge. They could not climb out, for they did not know how to climb; and even had they known, there was no means by which to climb. Human endeavor, unassisted, could accomplish nothing in the way of deliverance. Man in his mortal condition needed spiritual enlightenment, having forgotten all that he had previously known. In other words, he needed a ladder, that he might climb out of the pit, and that ladder was furnished in the revelation, of the Gospel of Christ. Without it there is no salvation, no exaltation. The Tower of Babel symbolizes the situation: All man's efforts to reach heaven, without divine assistance, must end in confusion and failure.

Redemption by Grace.—The gospel ladder rests upon the rock of Christ's atonement—an act of grace, a free gift from God

to all mankind—the wicked as well as the righteous. All profit by it, for, as the result of that atonement, all are brought forth from the grave. And this is eminently just: Adam's posterity were consigned to death for no deed of their own doing. It is fitting, therefore, that their redemption should come unconditionally.

Salvation by Obedience.—But redemption is not salvation, nor salvation exaltation, as already explained. Men must "work out their salvation" (Phillipians 2:12), and gain exaltation by continuous upward striving. Salvation and exaltation, while depending primarily upon the grace of God, are also the fruits of man's acceptance of the gospel, and his steadfast adherence thereto, until it shall have done for him its perfect work. There are degrees of glory—"many mansions" in the great house of God, and the highest are reserved for those who render to the Master of the house the fulness of their obedience.

"Salvation means a man's being placed beyond the power of all his enemies. * * * Until a man can triumph over death, he is not saved. * * * To get salvation we must not only do some things, but everything which God has commanded" ("Joseph Smith's Teachings," pp. 146-150).

Heaven's First Law.—"Order is heaven's first law," says human wisdom. "Not so," says divine inspiration, "obedience is heaven's first law, and order follows as the result." ^[A] Without obedience, spiritual growth, eternal progress, is impossible. Says Joseph the prophet: "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundation of this world, upon which all

blessings are predicated; and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:20,21).

Illustrations of Obedience.—That obedience is required from those who become and remain members of the Church of Christ, should not surprise any intelligent student of political science, nor even a casual observer of the everyday life of men and nations. All governments demand from their people obedience to the laws enacted for the general welfare. Without such obedience, there would be no peace, no protection. This is readily conceded by most men as to human governments; but some people think it strange that divine government should be administered upon like principles, and for similar, though higher, ends.

A friend of mine once said to me: "Why do I need to belong to a church, to subscribe to a creed, or to undergo any ordinance, in order to be saved? I have always been truthful, honest, virtuous, benevolent—why will this not suffice to make my peace with God and pave my way to heaven?"

Aliens and Naturalization.—I answered on this wise: "Let me use a comparison to illustrate the point. Suppose you were an alien, born in Great Britain, in Scandinavia, or in some other foreign land, and you came to America desiring to become a citizen of the United States. When told that you must take out citizenship papers, forswear allegiance to every foreign power, and honor and uphold the Constitution and laws of this Republic,

suppose you were to reply: 'Why, what is the need of all that? I am a good man, I have always done right, and am clean, moral, and upright in conduct and conversation—why is that not sufficient to entitle me to vote, to hold office, pre-empt land, and enjoy all the rights and privileges of an American freeman?' Do you think such a plea would avail? No, you do not. You see its inconsistency as quickly as would the government unto whom it might be made. You would not expect to become a citizen of the United States upon your own terms. Why, then, should you hope for admittance into God's kingdom upon any other conditions than those which the King himself has laid down?"

Man's Proper Attitude.—Truthfulness, honesty, virtue, and benevolence are precious possessions, inestimable treasures. They enrich the soul under all conditions, outside or inside the kingdom of God; but they are not valuable enough to purchase a passport into that kingdom. We must not count upon our personal qualities, however admirable and commendable, to gain us admission into the divine presence. Man's proper attitude, as a seeker for salvation, is one of humility, not of self-righteousness. When the Pharisee and the Publican prayed in the Temple at Jerusalem, the former thanking the Lord that he was better than other men, and the latter meekly murmuring: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," the Savior, pointing to the Publican, said: That man is justified, rather than the other, "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:13,14).

Obedience Better Than Sacrifice.—"Obedience is better than sacrifice." So said obedient Samuel to disobedient Saul. Adam's obedience in offering sacrifice without knowing why, simply because the Lord had commanded him (Moses 5:6) Abraham's obedience in offering Isaac—for the same reason—was far more precious in the sight of heaven than the sacrifice itself. In Abraham's case the will was taken for the deed, and the Father of the Faithful was blessed as abundantly as if the sacrifice had been consummated.

Dead Letter and Living Oracle.—Suppose, however, that Abraham had not obeyed the Lord's second command, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad." In that event he would have been in transgression, and could not have been blessed any more than if he had disobeyed in the first instance. In the face of that second command, he could not have pleaded consistently that he was under obligation to obey the first. "My word is my law," saith the Lord, and his latest word, even though it seem to contradict an earlier behest from the same source, must always be given precedence. The choice in such a case is between the dead letter and the living oracle.

All Blessings Come by Obedience.—It is the rod of power which smites the rock of divine providence, causing it to flow with the waters of human weal.

The Justice of God.—When the Savior uttered his exhortation: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," and added, "For he maketh his sun to rise

on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45), he did not mean that the Lord makes no distinction between the two classes; but meant that he is just to both—just even to the unjust, upon whom he sends his rain and sunshine, causing their orchards to bloom and their vineyards to bear equally with those of the righteous. Nevertheless, all who receive such blessings must merit them. If the unjust (unjust here) had not kept their first estate, thereby showing some degree of obedience to divine law, they would not have been given a second estate, where the sunlight and the rains could reach them. In this second estate, however, further obedience is requisite, in order that greater benefits may follow.

Blessings Bestowed by Law.—God's blessings are temporal as well as spiritual, and their bestowal is regulated by law. A bad man may be a good farmer or a good artisan, and reap reward for obedience to the law of industry in the exercise of his vocation. But there are greater blessings than those which come from the workshop and the harvest field; and they can be had only by obedience to the higher laws governing their distribution. One cannot become a member of the Church of Christ by being an expert tiller of the soil. It requires more than the skill of a mechanic to get into the kingdom of heaven. There is but one way into that kingdom—a way pointed out by the finger of God—and any person who tries to get in by picking the lock or by climbing over the wall, will be treated as a trespasser, as a would-be thief and robber.

What Must Man Do for Himself?—What particular acts of obedience are required of man, in order that God, who redeemed him, may likewise save and exalt him? What must he do for himself, that he may profit fully by the great things done in his behalf? How shall this alien become naturalized? The ladder having been let down into the pit, how shall the fallen avail himself of the divine assistance offered?

The answer is plain: He must climb, if he would get out. While there was no ladder, he could not, and all his intelligence and skill were unavailing. But now, if he will use his God-given powers and the means provided, he may climb from earth to heaven, round by round. If he refuses to climb, who but himself is responsible for his remaining in the pit?

The Most Important Personage.—This gospel code—this way into the kingdom—what is it? What does it consist of? What are the divine laws of naturalization? What requirements are made of those who would be identified with the Church of Christ—who would be saved in this world and in the world to come? The man who can answer, to the spiritually unenlightened, such questions as these, is easily the most important personage of his generation. Such a man was the Apostle Peter, and such another was the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The Pentecostal Proclamation.—When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached "Christ and him crucified," and the conscience-stricken multitude cried out: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" a question was propounded which the most

learned philosophers of that age could not answer. Caesar, sitting upon the throne of the world, would have been mystified had the question been put to him: What shall men do to be saved? Not so Peter, the Galilean fisherman. He knew what men must do, and he straightway told them what to do:

"Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

[Footnote A: An idea advanced by President George Q. Cannon.]

CHAPTER II

Faith

The First Requirement.—Faith, however, not repentance, is the first requirement. The probable reason why Peter omitted to mention faith at that time, was because he perceived that the multitude already had faith, already believed what he had told them of the crucified Redeemer. Had it been otherwise, they would not have been "pricked in their heart." and would not have anxiously inquired, "What shall we do?" Belief was the first requirement made by the Savior, through his chosen twelve, when he sent them "into all the world" to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:16). He declared salvation dependent on faith and works: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." For faith is shown by works (James 2:18), and each is dead without the other.

The Foundation of All Righteousness.—Faith, according to the Doctrine and Covenants, is "the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness." There are few things more lucid in our literature than the Lectures on Faith which form the fore part of that sacred volume—one of the four doctrinal standards of the Church; the other three being the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price.

Beginning with the text, "Now faith is the substance [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), the lecturer goes on to say:

The Moving Cause of All Action.—"If men were duly to consider themselves, and turn their thoughts and reflections to the operations of their own minds, they would readily discover that it is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them; that without it both mind and body would be in a state of inactivity, and all their exertions would cease, both physical and mental."

"Were this class to go back and reflect upon the history of their lives, from the period of their first recollection, and ask themselves what principle excited them to action, or what gave them energy and activity in all their lawful avocations, callings, and pursuits, what would be the answer? Would it not be that it was the assurance which they had of the existence of things which they had not seen as yet? Was it not the hope which you had in consequence of your belief in the existence of unseen things, which stimulated you to action and exertion in order to obtain them? Are you not dependent on your faith, or belief, for the acquisition of all knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence? Would you exert yourselves to obtain wisdom and intelligence, unless you did believe that you could obtain them? Would you have ever sown, if you had not believed that you would reap? Would you ever planted, if you had not believed that you would gather? Would you have ever asked, unless you had believed that

you would receive? Would you have ever sought, unless you had believed that you would have found? Or, would have been opened unto you? In a word, is there anything that you would have done, either physical or mental, if you had not previously believed? Are not all your exertions of every kind, dependent on your faith? Or, may we not ask, what have you, or what do you possess which you have not obtained by reason of your faith? Your food, your raiment, your lodgings, are they not all by reason of your faith? Reflect, and ask yourselves if these things are not so. Turn your thoughts on your own minds, and see if faith is not the moving cause of all action in yourselves; and, if the moving cause in you, is it not in all other intelligent beings?" * * * *

A Principle of Power.—"As we receive by faith all temporal blessings that we do receive, so we in like manner receive by faith all spiritual blessings that we do receive. But faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth. Thus says the author of the epistle to the Heb. 11:3: 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.'

"Had it not been for the principle of faith the worlds would never have been framed, neither would man have been formed of the dust. It is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute—for it is an attribute—from the Deity, and he would cease to exist.

"Who cannot see, that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, must be so in man as well as in the Deity? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers, and the lesson which they have been endeavoring to teach to man. * * * *

"It was by faith that the worlds were framed. God spake, chaos heard, and worlds came into order by reason of the faith there was in him. So with man also; he spake by faith in the name of God and the sun stood still, the moon obeyed, mountains removed, prisons fell, lions' mouths were closed, the human heart lost its enmity, fire its violence, armies their power, the sword its terror, and death its dominion; and all this by reason of the faith which was in him.

"Had it not been for the faith which was in men, they might have spoken to the sun, the moon, the mountains, prisons, the human heart, fire, armies, the sword, or to death, in vain!

"Faith, then, is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things; by it they exist, by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence!"

A Negative Opinion.—A Christian minister (a Unitarian) once tried to convince me that faith was anything but an admirable quality. He called it contemptible, declaring that it consisted simply of a willingness to believe anything, however

improbable or absurd: it was mere credulity, nothing more. When I spoke of faith as a spiritual force, he said I was attaching to the term a significance that it had never borne, and for which there was no warrant. I reminded him of the Savior's words in Matt. 17:19,20: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Whereupon he answered flippantly: "Oh, it takes picks and shovels to move mountains."

The Positive View.—I presume he would have conceded, had I pursued the subject further, that there are other ways of removing mountains. I fancy he would have admitted the power of the earthquake in the premises; though he might not have agreed with me that all intelligent action, human or divine, is the result of faith, and that whether mountains are moved with pick-axes or with earthquakes, by man or by his Maker, it is faith that precedes the action and renders it possible. This professed minister of Christ, who denied what Christ had taught, overlooked the fact that the smallest as well as the greatest acts of our lives spring from the exercise of faith.

Faith Fundamental.—God made faith the first principle of the gospel, because that is its proper place. It is the bottom round in the ladder of salvation, the first step in the stairway to perfection. "All things are possible to them that believe."

"As a Grain of Mustard Seed."—When the Savior spoke of the faith that "removes mountains," he was not measuring,

either satirically or hyperbolically, the quantity of the faith by the size of the mustard seed. He probably meant that if man would obey the divine law given for his government, as faithfully as the mustard seed obeys the divine law given for its government, he would have infinitely more power than he now possesses. How difficult it seems for man, "the noblest work of God," to live in obedience to the highest principles revealed from heaven for his guidance. Yet the earth, we are told, "abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law" (D&C 88:25).

Faith and Credulity.—Faith, in its incipient stages, may resemble at times mere credulity. The untutored savage who was told by one of the early settlers of New England that if he planted grass seed it would produce gunpowder, believed it, not yet having learned that the white man would lie. He therefore parted with his valuable furs, in exchange for some of the seed, showing that he had faith in the settler's word. But it did not bring the desired result. Faith, to be effectual, must be based upon truth, and though higher than reason, must have a reasonable foundation. The spirit of truth must inspire it. This was not the case with the poor, misguided Indian; he trusted in a falsehood and was deceived. But some good came of it. He ascertained the falsity of the settler's statement. His faith induced him to plant the seed, and though it did not produce gunpowder—that being contrary to its nature—it produced a growth of grass—and a wiser Indian.

CHAPTER III

Faith, Continued

Faith Founded on Evidence.—The second of the Lectures on Faith is a discussion of the object upon which faith should rest; that object being God, the evidences of whose existence, as the foundation of all rational belief, are abundantly shown. Lecture Third contains these paragraphs, pertinent to the point now raised:

Essentials for a Perfect Faith.—"Three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

"First, the idea that he actually exists.

"Second, a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes.

"Third, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he [man] is pursuing is according to his [God's] will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Possibilities of Faith.—Had the Indian's faith been properly

founded—had it been a perfect faith, intelligent, rational, heaven-inspired, he could have produced gunpowder or any other commodity from the all-containing elements around him; and that, too, without planting a seed or employing an ordinary process of manufacture. The turning of water into wine, the miraculous feeding of the multitude, the walking upon the waves, the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, and other wonderful works wrought by the Savior, the apostles, and the ancient prophets—what were they but manifestations of an all-powerful faith, to possess which is to have the power to remove mountains—without picks and shovels, my skeptical Unitarian to the contrary notwithstanding. Such a faith is not mere credulity; it is a divine energy, operating upon natural laws and by natural processes—natural, though unknown to "the natural man," and termed by him supernatural.

The Universal Mainspring.—Faith is the beating heart of the universe—the incentive, the impulse, to all action, the mainspring of all achievement. Nothing was ever accomplished, small or great, commonplace or miraculous, that was not backed up by confidence in some power, human or superhuman, that impelled and pushed forward the enterprise.

An Impelling Force.—It was not doubt that drove Columbus across the sea; it was faith—the impelling force of the Spirit of the Lord (1 Ne. 13:12). It was not doubt that nerved the arm and fired the soul of Washington, inducing him and his ragged regiments to fight on through heat, frost, and hunger

of seven long years, to win their country's freedom. It was not doubt that inspired Hamilton, Jefferson, Franklin, and the other patriot fathers, to lay broad and deep the foundations of this mighty republic. It is not doubt that has caused nations to rise and flourish, and raised up great men in all ages and in all climes, to teach, toil, and sacrifice for the benefit of mankind. It is faith that does such things. Doubt undoes, or hinders, what faith achieves. The men and women who have moved this world were men and women who believed, who were earnest and sincere, even if in part mistaken.

Mahomet and Islam.—Carlyle portrays vividly the wondrous transition from weakness to strength that came over the descendants of Ishmael, when they became a believing nation, abandoning idolatry, and accepting Allah as their god, with Mahomet as his prophet:

"To the Arab nation it was as a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first became alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world; a hero-prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe; see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable, the small has become world-great; within one century afterwards Arabia is at Granada on this hand, at Delhi on that—glancing in valor and splendor and the light of genius, Arabia shines through long ages over a great section of the world. Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. These Arabs, the man Mahomet, and that one

century—is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark, on a world of what seemed black, unnoticeable sand; but lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Granada! I said, the great man was always as lightning out of heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame."—"Heroes and Hero Worship," Lecture II.)

Achievements of Christendom.—Who can doubt that this same philosophy applies to Christendom and its marvelous achievements, all down the centuries? Is it not faith in the divine Nazarene that has caused Christian nations to thrive, that has enabled Christianity, in spite of its errors, to flourish, to survive the wreck of empires and weather the storms of time? Was not Christ indeed as "lightning out of heaven," sent down to kindle and illumine the world, and has not the world been warmer and brighter for his coming? Is it not the faith of any nation, its trust in and reliance upon some power deemed by it divine, that constitutes its main strength?

Faith Must Be Genuine.—But faith must be genuine. Pretense and formalism will not avail. Hypocrisy is the worst form of unbelief. Honest idolatry is infinitely preferable to dishonest worship. Better burn incense to Diana, believing it to be right, than bow down to Christ in hollow-hearted insincerity. Mighty Rome did not fall, until she had ceased to worship sincerely the gods enshrined within her Pantheon. Glorious Greece did not succumb, until she had proved false to her ancient faith, until her believers had become doubters, until skeptical

philosophy had supplanted religious enthusiasm, and the worship of freedom, grace, and beauty had degenerated to unbridled license and groveling sensuality. No nation ever crumbled to ruin until false to itself, false to the true principles of success, the basic one of which is to believe.

The Articles of Faith.—What should Latter-day Saints believe? I can think of no better answer to this question than is contained in the Articles of Faith, formulated by the Prophet Joseph Smith soon after the Church of Christ was organized in this dispensation:

"1. We believe in God the Eternal Father, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

"2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

"3. We believe that through the atonement of Christ all men may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

"4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the gospel are:—First, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, repentance; third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

"5. We believe that a man must be called of God by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority, to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

"6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the primitive church, viz.: apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers,

evangelists, etc.

"7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.

"8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

"9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

"10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth: and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisaical glory.

"11. We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

"12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates, in obeying, honoring and sustaining the law.

"13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul, We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."

CHAPTER IV

Repentance

The First Fruit of Faith.—The first fruit of faith is repentance. Repentance follows faith as naturally as kindness follows love, as obedience springs from reverence, as a desire to be congenial with, succeeds admiration for, one whose example is deemed worthy of emulation. God commands all men everywhere to repent. A desire to please him and become acceptable in his sight, leads the soul of faith of repentance.

A Gift from God.—No repentance is possible, however, without the Spirit of the Lord, which "giveth light to every man that cometh into the world" (D&C 84:45-47). This is what makes repentance, no less than faith, a gift from God. When his Spirit ceases to strive with men, they no longer desire to repent, and are delivered over to the buffetings of Satan. They deliver themselves over to those buffetings. They make their choice between the spirit of good and the spirit of evil, both of which are in the world, influencing the spirit of man, and they receive their wages from the master whom they list to obey.

The Spirit of God and the Holy Ghost.—A distinction should be drawn between the Spirit "that enlighteneth every man," and the Holy Ghost, whose gifts are given to members of

the Church of Christ. The former is an influence, proceeding from the Divine Presence; the latter a personage, one of the Godhead, concerning whom the Prophet Joseph says: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones, as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us" (D&C 130:22).

The Prophet says further upon this subject: "There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God would have left him."—"Joseph Smith's Teachings," p.69.)

Real Repentance.—Repentance is not that superficial sorrow felt by a criminal when caught in the act of wrong-doing—a sorrow not for sin, but for sin's detection, for being taken in transgression. Chagrin is not repentance. Mortification and shame, alone, bring no change of heart toward right living or right feeling. Repentance involves remorse; but even remorse is not all there is to repentance. In its highest meaning and fullest measure, repentance is equivalent to reformation—a resolve to "sin no more," backed by conduct consistent with such a determination. "Repentance is a thing that cannot be trifled with every day. Daily transgression and daily repentance is not that which is

pleasing in the sight of God" ("Joseph Smith's Teachings," p. 136). "By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins. Behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D&C 58:43). This is a real, genuine repentance. All who truly repent can be forgiven. These, and these alone, are ready for the cleansing process—baptism for the remission of sins. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness, and consequently no remission of sins.

Damnation No Part of the Gospel.—Damnation is no part of the gospel. Damnation or condemnation is simply the sad alternative, the inevitable consequence of rejecting the means of escape. When men hear the gospel and refuse to obey it, they come under condemnation. This cannot be helped. God would save them, but they will not be saved. They are free agents, and they damn themselves. Says Joseph the prophet: "When God offers knowledge or a gift to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned." Not because God wishes to damn him, but because damnation is inevitable when one rejects the offer of salvation.

Sin, a Wilful Transgression of Law.—A man sins when he goes contrary to light and knowledge—that is, contrary to the light and knowledge that has come to him. One may blunder in ignorance, and suffer painful consequences; but one does not sin unless one knows better than to do the thing in which the sin consists.

Carlyle on Repentance.—"Of all acts," says Carlyle, "is not, for a man, repentance the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin;—that is

death; the heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility and fact; is dead: it is 'pure' as dead dry sand is pure."—"Heroes and Hero-Worship," Lecture II.

Condemnation Measured by Culpability.—They who refuse to repent will be damned; they damn themselves by that refusal. But damnation is not necessarily permanent, and like salvation or exaltation, it exists in degrees. The degree of condemnation is according to the measure of culpability in those condemned. Even the damned, who repent, can be saved.

Some Souls Incapable of Repentance.—Some sinners cannot repent. Their sins are of such a heinous character as to preclude it. The spirit of repentance cannot lay hold upon them. Their conduct has so grieved it, that it is completely withdrawn. Consequently they cannot repent, and that is what makes their case hopeless. If they could repent, they could be forgiven; but not being able to repent, the pardoning power cannot reach them. There would be no unpardonable sin if all sinners were capable of repentance. Those who cannot repent, who have committed the sin unpardonable, are called sons of perdition.

A Hint from Shakespeare.—Apropos of the inability to repent, Shakespeare gives a philosophic hint in his tragedy of "Hamlet." Claudius, brother to the king of Denmark, has murdered the king in order to obtain his crown and queen. But remorse gnaws at the murderer's conscience—not a godly remorse, leading to repentance, but the terror that guilty souls feel at the prospect of judgment and retribution. Claudius kneels

to pray, but can only pray with his lips, his heart being far from God. It is therefore no prayer at all. "The soul's sincere desire" is lacking.

"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;
Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

So says the murderous monarch, as he rises from his knees. Prior to his ineffectual attempt to supplicate the Throne of Grace, he thus soliloquizes:

"My fault is past. But O what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder?'
That cannot be, since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardoned and retain the offense?
* * * * *

"Try what repentance can: what can it not?
Yet what can it when one can not repent?"

("Hamlet," Act. III, Scene III.)

The unpardonable sin involves utter recreancy to divine light and power previously possessed. It is the sin against the Holy Ghost; but one must first receive the Holy Ghost before he is capable of sinning against it. Such a sin can be committed only by men who have been equipped with every qualification for celestial glory.

The Sons of Perdition.—"Thus saith the Lord, concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers there of, and suffered themselves, through the power of the devil, to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—

"They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born,

"For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity;

"Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come,

"Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father—having crucified him unto themselves, and put him to an open shame.

"They are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels,

"And the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power;

"Wherefore, he saves all except them." (D.&C. 76:31-37,44.)

The Saved and Glorified.—But the saved are rewarded according to their works. The glorified differ like the sun, moon, and stars, typifying, respectively, celestial, terrestrial, and telestial conditions. They who cannot abide any of these conditions, "are not meet for a kingdom of glory," and the utterly disobedient, who will to abide in sin, are fated to "remain filthy still" (D&C 88:22-35).

The Celestial Glory.—The inheritors of celestial exaltation,

the highest degree of glory, are they who render to the Great Giver the fulness of their obedience, manifesting a willingness to lay all upon the altar at his bidding. In short, "to do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abr. 3:25).

"They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given,

"That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power.

"And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

"They are they who are the Church of the first born.

"They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things

"They are they who are Priests and Kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory,

"And are Priests of the Most High, after the order to Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son;

"Wherefore, as it is written, they are Gods, even the sons of God—

"Wherefore all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's and Christ is God's. * * *

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