
CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

THE GOSPEL'S RESTORATION

INTRODUCTION

Considering that there apparently was an apostasy, as described in the foregoing chapter, there must also, at some point in time, be a restoration of the doctrines of the primitive Church, which Christ established. That is, such a restoration must occur, if the Lord's work is to be carried to a successful conclusion. Those doctrines, which Christ established, with their associated authority, necessarily define the path mankind must follow to receive salvation in Christ. No church, established by man alone, can provide the appropriate doctrines, let alone reinstitute the authority, that is necessary to accomplish the work.

The way unto salvation is described as a strait gate and narrow path wherein the term strait has an archaic definition of strict or exacting [see Matthew 7:13-14 or Luke 13:24]. Thus, the doctrines involved must be the doctrines of Christ and none else. If these doctrines have been corrupted or lost and new or false ones added by uninspired mankind, how can man, in and of himself, some 1300 to 1800 years later, hope to obtain the required light or knowledge necessary to restore them without revelation from God? If they were all clearly described in the scriptures preserved by man and likewise, clearly understood by him, then that source might be the means of revelation God would use. If some doctrines are missing, however, who can reveal them but God, himself? If false ones have been added, who can identify them but God? If some provided in the scriptures are interpreted differently by different individuals, who can clarify them but God? Obviously, well-meaning people made that effort during the reformation but the multiplicity of denominations, then and now professing Christ, point to its less than perfect conclusion. Surely, God would not leave mankind floundering in his own ignorance and pride if he has deemed the salvation of

man, as his purpose in creating the earth. That this latter thought is the case is apparent in a latter day scripture, Moses 1:39, wherein he tells that great prophet; *"For behold, this is my work and my glory — to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."* Christ would not have provided the path (redemption) nor mentioned the means by which it could be accomplished, as given in John 3:15, if it were not the case.

Finally, how can the priesthood authority, held by the ancient apostles, be restored, except by Christ or one of his authorized servants? If there are no authorized servants here on earth, as Roger Williams, a former Baptist pastor, believed; then Christ must intervene and personally call, ordain and grant the necessary authority required to oversee his work on the earth, even the Melchizedec priesthood with its associated apostles that existed in the Church he established during his mortal tenure.

It seems obvious to me that one cannot depend upon man, no matter how sincere, intelligent or convincing he may be, for such a prophesied restoration, unless he is called by God. The only logical answer to such a dilemma is revelation from that Supreme Being who established the Church and its doctrines originally. As in days of old, such revelation would occur through God's ordained prophet whom he will call at the appropriate time.

Now, consider the "Dispensation of the fullness of Times" described by Paul in Ephesians 1:10. Therein he tells us, *"That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."* It may not be obvious as to what all we can conclude from this verse but I will point out a few, which I believe are reasonable. First, in Paul's time it was yet future in appearance. Second, gathering together all things in Christ

indicates to me that certain doctrines will be revealed to the faithful, which weren't necessarily apparent in Paul's discourses. Even Paul may not have been privy to them. If that be the case, one can only wonder just what beautiful doctrines and ordinances might yet come in that restoration. Thirdly, these things that are gathered together will come from both heaven and earth; meaning to me, at least, that much is yet to be revealed to mankind that, at this point, has been withheld because God has so deemed it appropriate.

Now, if one has an interest in and accepts the reality of the dispensation of the fullness of times, as clearly described in the Bible, he or she would surely wonder how it might come about and what the signs would be whereby man can recognize it. Of course, such an individual must believe in God and have hope that there is something more to his existence than mortality can provide. Even those of us who are blessed with freedom and the abundant opportunities provided in our great country, realize that mortality is far from perfect. Couldn't an omniscient and omnipotent God provide such a blessing for his choicest creation? Would Christ tell us to become perfect and even like God if such were unattainable? (Matthew 5:48). Would Paul describe the means by which it can be attained if that were so? (Ephesians 4:13). I hardly think so. If I choose to believe in God, as opposed to the scientific theories of evolution and the big bang, then I must believe that God, whom I accept as omniscient and omnipotent, will, in his own way, create the perfect world with perfect individuals. Thus, I choose to believe we, as mortals, are now involved in that process whether we want to be or not.

Obviously, there are people who could not care less about any existence beyond the veil of death. Similarly, there are many who haven't had the opportunity to hear the real message, as given by Christ, on the earth today as in the centuries past. Are they to be arbitrarily discriminated against by a just and even perfect God? Logic alone screams "No", let alone the numerous other arguments that can be brought forth to dispute such a thought. Are such people provided for? If all things will be brought together, as Paul describes, the answer to those questions will be among them.

It seems to me that the process, mentioned a little earlier, is encompassed as a whole in the nature or path our eternal beings follow. A more

clear and concise understanding of that path might well be a part of that restoration of all things. With temptation swirling around us in mortality it is difficult to follow a poorly defined path, described by a few commandments, which are to help us choose between right and wrong, truth and error or we might term them righteousness and sin. One is God's prescribed path and the other that which the adversary would have us follow. A clearer definition of the path God would have us follow, as well as the prize awaiting us at the end of any and all others would undoubtedly boost our resolve.

We know that Christ ministered among his followers 40 days after his resurrection and prior to his ascension. Obviously, that time spent with his apostles had a purpose or he wouldn't have bothered, it seems to me. We also know that most, if not all, of the twelve denied him during his trial and crucifixion, including his chief apostle, Peter. They had essentially disbanded, it seems, afterwards and returned to their former life styles. In spite of his many declarations regarding his eventual resurrection, they also seemed surprised when it did occur. Whereas they seemed to lack purpose and faith before the 40 days, they suddenly became strong, resolute and full of faith as they preached the gospel, as declared in the book of Acts.

Surely, the reality of the resurrection and Christ's 40 day ministry was the key to that change. Therein he must have taught them many wonderful doctrines and blessed them in many ways to bring about that change. Will not all of those same things be revealed in the dispensation of the fullness of times? Surely they will be, as all things in heaven and on earth are gathered together in one. The mysteries of Godliness or of Christ or the gospel are referred to throughout the New Testament and apparently had been revealed to the more righteous saints of that time. They were considered to be too sacred to be revealed to the less devout members or general public and consequently were not included in the various books and epistles written by the apostles. Surely they will be available to those deemed worthy of their reception in these latter days.

The point of this rather lengthy introduction to this particular chapter is to emphasize the beautiful doctrines that I believe must become available through such an event and which can have the power to change our lives even as it did those of the apostles. Not that we will all

become apostles, for they are special emissaries or witnesses of Christ who testify of him throughout the world but new ones would be called as a necessity of restoring the Church, even as it existed in the meridian of time. (Ephesians 2:20) We should expect to be eligible to receive the same blessings that they are promised through faithfulness and obedience to the laws and ordinances given. Similarly, we should expect to progress and grow towards perfection in Christ even as Paul describes in Ephesians 4:13, for this is the purpose of our mortal probation. Necessarily, there must become available to us a means whereby we can overcome the world with its secular and corrupting influence.

It seems to me that the challenge of the average individual today, such as you and I, is to identify that person whom God has called, if such an event has occurred. If it has, we know to whom he will reveal his will and thus, whose teachings we should heed. God has worked through prophets to accomplish his work in times past and one would expect the same today. Even Jesus Christ was termed a future prophet by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. God has also said, in Amos 3:7, *"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."* Thus we, as average individuals, can then observe the fruits of that chosen individual and eventually ascertain the validity of his claims for God will most certainly bless his work if he is his agent.

All such fruit may not be immediately evident to us because it will require deeper understanding than we might initially have but much will, if we but look and judge honestly without preconceived opinions. We might expect many individuals, involved in the same search, to be earnestly seeking to become more Christ like or to walk in his footsteps, so to speak. Even so we should not expect perfection among them because that is the purpose of Christ's Church and perfection is the end of a process, yet to be realized, by all so engaged. These individuals would come into the church at different times and would necessarily have progressed to different levels in the process. Similarly, the process itself involves all types of people whose devotion to the search is best described by Christ's parable of "The Sower", as given in the 13th chapter of Matthew. Obviously, those who eventually learn to walk in Christ's footsteps are symbolized by that which fell on good ground. Thus we might expect all within such a church to

be in various stages of progression, for that is the process symbolized by the growing seed.

We should also expect the same doctrines to be preached throughout the world regardless of where the congregation might be located, for God requires unity of faith and purpose as described in John 17.

We should expect many good works to be visible, both spiritually and temporally, by the peoples of the institution led by the prophet we are trying to determine the legitimacy of. There will be concern for the poor and the afflicted whether through accident, storm or any other natural or manmade disaster. We should expect members to give of their means generously as well as their time and talent. We should also expect serious members to be deeply involved in the Lord's work without expectation of remuneration, for that is a major part of the growing process. In so doing, we would expect the same to be involved in scripture study and regular prayer as a means of providing spiritual vitality. Many therein would volunteer for special assignments as both an indication of their commitment to Christ and his work as well as a means to further personal spiritual growth.

We would expect such an organization's peoples to share the message of the gospel with the entire world's people and provide the same opportunities for all in the service therein, regardless of rank, color or nationality, for all of us are the children of God.

We would expect spiritual uplifting music to be a part of the worship service because it invites the Holy Spirit to attend and bear witness to those seeking his influence in their lives.

We would expect some kind of regular conferences among the various congregations to develop unity as well as to hear from the church's leaders and the chosen prophet himself. There would be no vying for position or rank among the leaders, for all would support the prophet in his God-given call.

Those more learned than I might well add many other types of fruit an investigator would see in his or her assessment of Christ's Church but these should help one understand what he or she might look for in trying to decide in their own minds if the claim of a man as the designated prophet is legitimate. Many more sacred indications should also become available with time as one understands Christ's doctrines given through that prophet.

In the long run, a prophet's legitimacy might be tested by following the admonition the Lord gave to Moses in Deuteronomy 18:22 wherein he said, *"When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."* Since time is always of essence, we can look at whatever fruit his efforts have wrought thus far and then take our question to the Lord, as already described. Proper verification will only be received through guidance of the Holy Spirit and not through human reasoning. Such guidance comes by virtue of earnest and sincere prayer, searching the scriptures and living in harmony with the light received. That effort invites the Spirit and one's continued application of it will solidify its reality through hope and the associated faith derived, similar to the Prophet Alma's explanation in the 32nd Chapter of his writings in the Book of Mormon. As mentioned earlier, this was my experience.

Some people, already engaged in such a search, are well versed in the Bible and will receive a witness rather quickly, while others must begin the process first.

In either case, faith and humility in real sincerity are the primary requirements, i.e. faith that God will hear and answer one's sincere prayers and humble recognition of his omniscient and omnipotent powers. Just prior to teaching his disciples the Lord's Prayer, in Matthew 6:6, Christ admonished them to pray to the Father in secret and he would reward them openly. I am confident that the Father will reward the worst of sinner's his petition, if he is approached with sincerity and faith. Though it may take the latter type of individual longer in such an effort, all can eventually make informed decisions.

By continued personal effort and attention to the teachings of a prophet, called of God, they will see a marvelous harmony between both sources of truth. God does not provide conflicting truths. The adversary may well become involved by creating doubt or disbelief but faith nurtured by sincerity of purpose will eventually conquer. One must not succumb to lack of understanding coupled with Satan's whisperings of doubt but strive to live the principles the prophet espouses. In so doing, the beauty of the gospel will grow brighter and brighter and our witness of the same stronger and more sure. We then

spend less time on questioning doctrine and more time on living in harmony with it. This accelerates our upward climb in faith to become all the Lord would have us become as mortals.

I am convinced the Lord will reward the sincere seeker of truth as described in Moroni 10:4-5. Therein, is given the key to validating the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and thus the legitimacy of Joseph Smith who claimed to be a prophet called of God. The prophet Moroni tells us, *"And when ye shall receive these things, [meaning the Book of Mormon] I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost"*. What more reasonable approach can be asked in seeking an answer to any gospel question? One is not asked to take the opinion of any man including myself or even so-called apostles or prophets but to simply have faith that God will not mislead them. The only danger in such an approach that I can think of, is to have a pre-conceived opinion wherein you reject such a claim without a sincere investigation. Such an

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opinion comes from an attitude of finding fault rather than looking for truth. God stays or prevents that danger to the devout seeker of truth through sincere

intent and humility coupled with faith. Of this I bear witness, having followed that process myself as I have sought my own answer to that and other questions.

With that rather lengthy introduction, I will now enumerate various events that have taken place in the restoration of the gospel, as I understand it, which culminated with the work of Joseph Smith. I will then leave, as I must, the decision regarding their reality and validity as part of the restoration up to the reader. He or she will have to weigh them in the light of their own study and understanding to ascertain the logic and reasonableness of the process described therewith. I believe the Lord eventually performed the correction of all the heretical teachings described in chapter twenty one through Joseph Smith. He had been foreordained for this very work before his birth, as was Jeremiah.

The Lord, in his infinite wisdom, understood the earth and a people thereon would have to be

prepared to receive this marvelous event, which was about to unfold. Consequently, he began the necessary process of preparation of selected people, locale and technology through various chosen individuals hundreds of years prior to Joseph's birth. The actual event required innumerable steps in the preparation.

THE PREPARATORY WORK

I will sequence the various events involved in the restoration of the gospel in a chronological manner according to my understanding.

THE RENAISSANCE

The time period known as the renaissance occurred between the 14th and 16th centuries according to Webster. He defines it thusly, *"The artistic, literary and scientific revival, which originated in Italy in the 14th century and which influenced the rest of Europe in a great variety of ways in the next two centuries. Broadly, it was typified by the spread of humanism, a return to classical values and the beginning of objective scientific inquiry.* LDS students of history feel this cultural revival was necessary to prepare the technology and people for the coming Reformation. The artistic revival certainly stimulated people's religious thought process through beautiful paintings and sculpturing. The technology revival brought forth the printing press in 1436 via Gutenberg who invented printing with movable type. The first printed Latin Bible, known as the Gutenberg Bible [1452-1455], is attributed to him. Later [1592], the Vulgate Bible, according to Webster, was the Latin version of the Scriptures translated largely by St. Jerome directly from Hebrew and Greek, and in use in the Roman Catholic Church today, as far as I know. The Council of Trent chose it as the authentic text to which reference must be made in matters of theology. It too was apparently printed with the Gutenberg press. Previously, John Wycliffe, an early English religious reformer [1320 to 1384] translated a Latin version into English. Then Tyndale [1494-1536], an English Protestant reformer, made a translation directly from Hebrew and Greek into English, which now comprises some 75% of the King James translation according to my sources. He (Tyndale) was later burned at the stake for heresy by the powers in the Church of England. However, this translation, which was also printed on the Gutenberg press made the Bible available to the common man speaking English and was instrumental in his (man's) preparation and desire for a restoration.

Callister has this to say in his book, *"The Inevitable Apostasy and The Promised Restoration"*, *"Movable type, developed by Gutenberg in the fifteenth century, accelerated the publishing of books, freed the minds of people, and made the Bible available to common man. William Manchester wrote, 'Before the dense overarching, suffocating medieval night could be broken, the darkness had to be pierced by the bright shaft of learning – by literature and people who could understand it.'"* William Manchester was a well-known medieval historian. From his comment as quoted by Callister as well as his own remarks, I believe it is obvious that the minds and literary abilities of the people had to be prepared to search the scriptures before the gospel could be restored. Consider that Joseph Smith was an unschooled frontier boy who might well not have even learned to read, had not the printing press made the availability of the Bible widespread. The Bible reading laity, who were offered various interpretations of the scriptures according to the sect involved, stimulated the very contention of different sects in the United States in the early 1800s. The later publication of 5000 copies of The Book of Mormon in March of 1830 was a massive project for those times and was only made possible in the time frame it occurred by a 'state of the art' Smith press manufactured by Robert Hoe and company in New York City but more will be said about that later. Thus we see the need of the Renaissance in the preparatory phase of the restoration of the gospel. Both the people's preparation and the technology for the development of the printing press had to occur prior to that great event.

THE REFORMATION

The word reformation is defined by Webster as, *a religious movement against abuses in the Roman Catholic Church, ending in the formation of the Protestant Churches.* This definition is followed by further explanation, which is also taken from Webster. I feel this additional information will be helpful to the reader and thus, I quote.

"Although the reformation was a religious movement in origin, its course was much influenced by political and economic factors. Wycliffe and Huss had prepared the way for it and, by the end of the middle Ages many were convinced that the church needed reforming. Circumstances favorable to the Reformation

included: humanism and the Renaissance (which encouraged a new critical spirit), the invention of printing (which aided the spread of ideas), the reaction of princes and jurists against the temporal encroachments of the papacy, the growing wealth of the clergy (especially in Germany) and the religious and moral shortcomings of certain sections of the clergy. The leaders of the Reformation sought to restore Christianity to its early purity by submitting ecclesiastical tradition to the test of scriptural authority”.

Notice, they sought authority, claiming no revelation, and settled on the scriptures as that source. This, of course, was the only thing they could do at the time but the problem lay in the interpretation thereof as well as the accuracy of earlier hand written copies and translations.

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Because such interpretation was left to the reasoning of men, claiming no revelation, numerous sects sprang up over a period of time. Each new sect included one or more principles derived by its founder from the scriptures but not interpreted the same in other sects. Thus, they claimed to be the right one or at least the most correct but none had the keys spoken of by Isaiah in a messianic statement, *“And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulders; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open”*. [Isaiah 22:22], or by Luke, *“Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.”* [Luke 11:52] and finally the Lord, himself, *as he spoke to Peter, “And I give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* [Matthew 16:19].

The keys constitute the earthly authority to perform the sacred ordinances required for salvation. If the Catholic or Universal Church lost those keys, as described in chapter 21, then they weren't on the earth at the time of the reformation. That leaves, by their own admission, each of the reformers own uninspired interpretation of scripture, to decide what to include and what mode of performance should be used. Such had been roundly condemned by the chief apostle himself in 2 Peter 1:20-21,

quoted as follows: *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”*

Keep in mind that the restored Church or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints does not condemn these individuals for their decisions made from the scriptures but actually hails them as just and faithful men and women who did the best they could with the information they had. Many sacrificed their very lives for the freedom to worship as they chose and their very contributions opened the way for the restoration

that was later accomplished by God through Joseph Smith. In fact the reformation was also a necessary but preliminary step, instituted by God who had not yet brought forth the

individual ordained to act as an instrument in his hands in that process.

It was his confusion with the claims of the various sects (he names the Methodists, the Presbyterians and the Baptists in the Joseph Smith History, verse 5 and there may well have been more), that led him to searching the scriptures and eventually the idea of asking God, which was right, he being unsure. The latter effort was prompted by the statement in James 1:5, wherein James tells us, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* Thus, these varieties of denominations in Christendom having differing views were the stimulus, which moved Joseph to seek enlightenment from God before receiving his marvelous vision and revelation. He arrived at that point through study and prayer, fully expecting the Lord would designate the church denomination he should join. I suspect many, if not all, of the reformers establishing differing denominations during the reformation were of the same mind. They saw what they believed to be discrepancies in the teachings of existing churches and established one they felt was harmonious with the scriptures. They differ from Joseph in that they claim no revelation and were not fore-ordained to lead the actual restoration. There was no revelation because of the lack of their foreordination, not because they weren't good and sincere men. Does it make sense for a sincere seeker of truth to discount the

teachings of one who claims such revelation? Can we with surety deny the possibility that Joseph was foreordained for this work, just as Jeremiah was for his? Not in my mind, we can't. Sincerity of purpose demands an honest investigation of such a claim, which requires unbiased study coupled with prayer and faith that God will not mislead us in our quest. We must examine the fruit of Joseph's efforts with sincerity to properly accept it or reject it. Anything else is pure speculation, which is encouraged by other faiths concerned over their own growth as religious institutions.

MAJOR PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS OF THE REFORMATION

To help my posterity, as well as myself, grasp a better understanding of the Reformation and its prelude to the actual restoration, I have consulted Webster. I will share some insights of his regarding various Christian sects established during that period of time, their religious founders and other contributors of that era with their differing views. The contentions among these Protestant theologians demonstrate the differences in scriptural interpretation of their founders and point to the futility of man trying to reform the existing church, which was groping in darkness. Neither could they establish a new one when each had nothing more than his own study and reasoning as a guide. Obviously revelation or guidance from God was needed, a principle soundly denounced by most Protestants at that time, according to the understanding I have gained in my studies.

WYCLIFFE

Drawing from Webster, "*John Wycliffe (1320-1384) was an English religious reformer. He and his followers translated the entire Bible into English. With the protection of his patron, John of Gaunt, he attacked many ecclesiastical abuses and doctrines, proclaimed that salvation depends upon predestination and grace rather than membership of a visible Church, and insisted upon the right of all men to have access to the scriptures in the vernacular. His denial of transubstantiation was condemned (1381) as heretical. His followers were known as Lollards.*" According to Callister, "*There was a John Wycliffe in England (1320-1384), an educated priest who saw serious differences*

between the word of the Lord and the practices of the Church. He criticized the practice of confession and the doctrine of transubstantiation and went so far as to condemn the Pope as anti-Christ. He translated the scriptures into English and made them available to common man. He was tried for heresy in England but influential friends stopped the trial. A year after his death in 1384, he was declared a heretic and his remains dug up, burned, and thrown in the River Avon." Wow, hatred doesn't die easily, does it?

JOHN HUS OR HUSS

Continuing with Webster's remarks, "*Jan Hus (1369-1415), Bohemian religious reformer, commonly called John Huss. Influenced by the teachings of Wycliffe, he denounced ecclesiastical abuses and challenged the authority of Rome. He was excommunicated (1410) and accepted the safe conduct of Emperor Sigmiamund to attend the Council of Constance (1414), but at Constance he was summarily condemned and burned at the stake as a heretic.*

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ZWINGLI

Continuing with Webster, "*Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was a religious reformer who rejected the papacy and attacked the authority of the priesthood, taking the Bible as the only rule of faith, with the object of restoring to the Church its original simplicity. He differed with Luther on the question of the real presence, holding that the communion was the commemoration of Christ's death, and not the repetition of the sacrifice.*"

LUTHERANS

Quoting from Webster; "*Martin Luther (1483-1546) German leader of the Reformation. He was the son of a Thuringian miner. He entered Erfurt University (1501).but by 1505 gave up the idea of becoming a lawyer and entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt. In 1507, now a priest, he began a career as a theological teacher. At Wittenberg University (1508) he met and was influenced by Johann Staupitz (vicar general of the Augustinians in Germany), whom he later succeeded (1512) as professor of biblical theology. He developed (1512-1513) the idea of justification by faith, and attacked (1517) Tetzels sale of indulgences, by posting 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg. These*

provoked a major controversy with Eck, who accused Luther of heresy. Luther's refusal to recant (1518), and his attack on papal authority, resulted in his excommunication (1521). The Diet of Worms ordered his seizure (1521), but he was protected by the elector of Saxony in Wartburg castle, where he began his German translation of the Bible (1521-1522). His popularity was weakened by his opposition to the Peasant's War (1524-1525). After lengthy controversies with Erasmus and the humanists on the one hand, and with Zwingli on the other, Luther sanctioned Melanchthon's Augsburg Confession (1530), which was to provide the basic creed of the Lutheran Church.

I will now add a note, taken from Webster, under the noun Lutheranism; "Lutheranism, a Protestant faith following the doctrines of Luther. It was formed between 1517 and 1580, and had its origin as an organization in the state Church of Saxony set up in 1526. He goes on to describe the history of the church in Germany including its doctrine and orders of Lutheranism defined by the Augsburg Confessions (1530).

CALVINISM

Webster's, remarks follow once again; "The doctrine of John Calvin (Reformed Church). Calvin, John (Jean Cauvin, 1509-1564), French theologian, who spread the Protestant Reformation in France [Huguenot] and Switzerland where he established a strict Presbyterian government in Geneva. Calvin taught that it was the right and duty of the State to aid the Church, that biblical authority was to be set above Church tradition, that the sacraments were of value but not essential, and he taught predestination. His teachings, contained in his *Institute of the Christian Religion* (1536) spread to the Netherlands and Scotland (Knox), and influenced the Puritans in England and New England." Under the topic of Presbyterianism, Webster tells us, "Presbyterian polity was first established in Geneva by Calvin, who held that Church government by elders and ministers, conformed to New Testament practices. This system was adopted by Knox (Church of Scotland) and the Huguenots, and is now found throughout the world. Most Presbyterian Churches adhere to Calvinist doctrine".

METHODISM

Continuing with Webster's description of Methodism, we find the following; "The tenets

and organizations of several Protestant denominations which sprang from the revival within the Church of England led by John and Charles Wesley from 1729. Theologically, Methodism is Armenian in sympathy. Its organization depends on lay preachers, on the weekly meeting, and on the annual conference, which is the supreme authority. It spread rapidly after 1729 in England and in North America and was formerly separated from the Church of England (1791). It has about 13½ million members, about two-thirds being in the U.S.A."

BAPTISTS

"A worldwide Christian Protestant denomination dating from the 17th century. Baptists practice baptism by immersion, and hold that this rite should be performed only when the person is old enough to appreciate its meaning. They are Congregationalists in polity." Webster defines the term Congregationalist as, "a form of church government which makes the local congregation autonomous." As I understand it, however, the Baptists have annual conventions wherein they vote for or against various doctrinal changes to be observed by all members. They do, apparently, have the right to withdraw from that group, such as the Southern Baptists, and follow their own interpretation of the scriptures. The term Anabaptist means rebaptism according to Webster with that particular sect requiring those baptized as infants to be re-baptized upon reaching adulthood. The Anabaptist sect was founded, again according to Webster, in 1521 in Germany with the concept of withholding baptism until it could be accompanied by a confession of faith. The movement was stamped out in 1534-35 but offshoots still exist in various countries. The Mennonites are one such offshoot with the Amish being a conservative Mennonite group.

There were many more brave men who challenged the Catholic Church, I suppose, but this should suffice to show the sacrifices they made for their beliefs. It also demonstrates the variance in doctrine as developed by these brave men in their pursuit of the scriptures. Though their intentions were admirable, they had no revelation to establish true and complete doctrine as given by Christ in the original Church in the meridian of time. Neither had they any of his teachings as given to the apostles in his 40 day ministry with them after the resurrection. Thus, in spite of their mighty efforts, they could not establish the true Church, which had fallen

into apostasy upon the Apostles demise. They had to wait for an act from God who fore-ordained that event for a specific time and through a chosen person so foreordained.

As stated in chapter twenty one by Callister and repeated here for convenience, "*Roger Williams (A.D. 1603-1683), the founder of Rhode Island and a strong proponent of religious freedom, sensed something was missing in his day and age: 'The Apostasy ... hath so far corrupted all [Christian churches], that there can be no recovery out of that apostasy until Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant the churches anew.'* At one point, he declined to continue as pastor of the Baptist Church because there was '*no regularly constituted church on earth, nor any person qualified to administer any church ordinances; nor can there be until new apostles are sent by the Great Head of the Church for whose coming I am seeking.*'" I realize that I have repeated Roger Williams' statement several times but each is included to emphasize a particular point. Here, it emphasizes the fact that he was still waiting for the restoration even though the reformation was winding down.

THE RADICAL PIETISTS

To further demonstrate the confusion of views regarding the pure gospel during the reformation I will insert a few paragraphs from a book regarding German migration to America, which Valerie let me read. It is entitled "Hopeful Journeys" and was written by one, Aaron Spencer Fogleman, who gives no hint of his religious background if he claims any. His purpose seems to be one of defining why the Germans left southwest Germany and when, where and why they settled in America. Their primary exodus was to the east because of the relative ease of the journey involved but roughly 10–15% decided on the new world in spite of the cost and difficulty of the journey. The primary reasons for emigration, according to Fogleman, appear to be economic, i.e. taxation and land availability with some concern for religious freedom. The major denominations involved were Lutheran and the Reformed Church or that established by Calvin. What interested me, in addition to the political and economic discussion, was the number of religious sects or denominations involved. In addition to the two major ones mentioned, there were a host of smaller sects lumped under the title of radical pietists. This gives one an idea of the variation

in religious belief among that segment of American settlers alone and doesn't include those from England and other parts of Europe.

"The radical pietists were small, dissenting religious groups, sometimes called 'sects', that had contributed greatly to the diversification and 'multiplication' of religions in central Europe since the reformation (sometimes earlier) and in Pennsylvania since the late seventeenth century. They were not the 'pietists' who made up the large movement within the Lutheran and German reformed churches during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century. In fact, many Lutheran pietists, such as Gottlieb Mittelberger, the organ player who reached Pennsylvania in 1750, condemned the proliferation of religions in the colony and attributed social ills there to the 'blind seal of the many sects'. The peculiar ways of the radical pietists and their group migrations and settlements made them highly visible to contemporaries and later historians.

The radical pietists' alternative became attractive to some southwest Germans in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. After witnessing decades of religious warfare, persecutions, and the destruction of their society, many simply lost faith in the ability of the traditional churches to provide for their spiritual needs. As had happened in England, in Germany a large number of seekers, wanderers, and seers roamed the devastated southwest, gaining followers. Many older, relatively well established pietists movements also experienced a rebirth or growth during that period.

*Religious persecution and the search for purity or perfection motivated the emigration of these groups to both Eastern Europe and North America. The **Mennonites** from the Palatinate and the middle and lower Rhine regions were the largest group leaving for either destination. Another large group, the **Moravians**, maintained communities throughout Europe, as well as in England and Sweden, but their heaviest concentrations were in Saxony and Wetteravia. The **Swiss Brethren** came primarily from Germanic Switzerland and the Palatinate, while an offshoot from the movement, the **Amish**, came from those two regions and the Alsace. **The Church of the Brethren**, also known as the **Dunkers**, the **German Baptist Brethren**, and other names, came from Schwarzenau, Krefeld, Friesland, and the lower Neckar and Rhine*

regions. *The **Schwenkfelders** came from Saxony and Silesia. Lastly, the **Waldensians** came from Württemberg.*"

I have emphasized in bold type the several different groups of the pietists who came to America, eight in number. These, along with the various mainline denominations of Europe, point to the confusion involved in their efforts to restore the churches to the pristine state of Christ's Church in the meridian of time. It is apparent that devout peoples recognized the reality of an apostasy. The Catholic Church had failed them, at least in their minds. This recognition occurred because of the relatively recent availability of the scriptures to the lay people, allowing them to read, ponder and pray for recognition of the truth. This, they did and many suffered greatly for their beliefs. However, such beliefs were founded on their interpretation of doctrines and practices they found in the Bible, which led to the diversity of sects or different churches.

The leaders involved, founded their individual churches on doctrine perceived as critical therein with obvious sincerity of purpose. None to my knowledge, however, claimed a commission or special revelation from God or Jesus Christ but relied solely on their interpretation of scripture. In their view, that interpretation provided the scriptural authority to preach the gospel and perform the associated ordinances. Yet, the Bible, itself, describes the need for priesthood authority, which, if lost by the Catholic Church through apostasy, must be reinstated by revelation, not by interpretation.

This lack of revelation is the determining factor wherein their efforts differ from that of Joseph Smith. Neither the time nor place nor person had yet been prepared for the final restoration, looked forward to by the prophets of old. They were yet to come but the stage was being set and the people of the earth were being prepared for that blessed event. I hope to briefly describe in my own rather limited ability with words and gospel understanding, further preparatory activities in the following pages.

Obviously, Roger Williams saw the need for direct intervention by Jesus Christ as indicated on the previous page. He, as did various other Christian Reformers, saw the need for revelation

of some sort but that didn't make it any easier for someone like Joseph Smith to act as an instrument in the Lord's hands, similar to Moses and Abraham, patriarchs of old. When the actual restoration of authority and doctrine, others recognized the need of, occurred in 1830 and beyond, the young Church was persecuted unmercifully by some of those very people and denominations who had fled Europe in search of religious freedom. The restoration would have been impossible in Europe where the government enforced the practice of a given denomination or sect and allowed deathly retribution for so-called heresy of those seeking their own concept of truth. The Lord established this very country with its religious freedom specifically for the restoration of his gospel, which had been corrupted in various ways a century or so after Christ's ascension.

AMERICA, A CHOSEN LAND

Just as the people and technology had to be prepared by the Lord for the Restoration, so likewise was it necessary to establish a country in which religious freedom could thrive. Thus, the Lord established the United States of America through chosen individuals in 1776. Several historians have commented as to the unusual concentration of outstanding individuals in such a primitive and unsettled atmosphere. They also point out the sincere belief that all seemed to have in a Supreme Creator.

A few quotes from George Washington and a rather lengthy one from Benjamin Franklin should be sufficient to establish the fact that God had a hand in the establishment of the United States in their opinion. I'll begin by quoting from Callister. Speaking of Washington's army of the

Potomac at Valley Forge, *"They were ill-trained, ill-equipped and ill-fed. They were outnumbered, outgunned, and out-disciplined. They were victims of a severe winter – but there was a sense*

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*of divine purpose that transcended it all, that somehow gave them the stamina and will to carry on, to stick it out one more day, to find sustaining power in the vision of their inspired commander. It was as though Washington spoke Elisha's words: '**Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.**' [2 Kings 6:16]."* In this regard, Washington said this in his farewell words to his

army on November 2, 1783: ***“The disadvantageous circumstances on our part, under which the war was undertaken, can never be forgotten. The singular interposition of providence in our feeble condition were such, as could hardly escape the attention of the most unobserving; while the unparalleled perseverance of the armies of the United States through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of eight long years was little short of a standing miracle.”*** “On another occasion Washington made this significant statement, which is so applicable to our times: ***‘The man must be bad indeed who can look upon the events of the American Revolution without feeling the warmest gratitude towards the great Author of the Universe whose divine interposition was so frequently manifested in our behalf.’***”

Callister continues on: “Other miracles would yet be performed. With the commencement of the Constitutional Convention, George Washington firmly declared, ***‘The event is in the hand of God.’***” A little later Callister tells us: “At one point, the Constitutional Convention was in disarray, but fortunately Benjamin Franklin stepped to the forefront with this inspired counsel; ***‘In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for divine protection – Our prayers, Sir, were heard and they were graciously answered. ... And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proof I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can arise without his aid? ... I therefore beg leave no more to move – that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed with business.’***” , We continue with his dissertation wherein he quotes a portion of Washington’s first inaugural address. ***“In Washington’s first inaugural address he noted: ‘It would be ... improper to omit in this official Act, my fervent supplications to that***

Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the Councils of Nations. ... No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.”

A couple of quotes by Abraham Lincoln, which are included by Callister, also seem worthy of noting to help us understand the faith, not just mere belief, that our founding fathers had in God and his guiding hand in the affairs of this nation. He tells us: ***“Lincoln, a man of God in his own right, acknowledged the divine hand in the shaping of America. Before issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, he declared: ‘It is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence. ... And if I can learn what it is, I will do it.’ As noted by one set of authors, ‘He saw himself more and more as an especially appointed agent of the Almighty.’ On one occasion, Major General Daniel E. Sickles, who had lost a leg at Gettysburg, asked Lincoln why he was so sure of success at Gettysburg. Lincoln paused, and then responded: ‘I felt that the great crisis had come. ... I went to my room and got down on my knees in prayer. Never before had I prayed with so much earnestness. ... I felt I must put all my trust in Almighty God. He gave our people the best country ever given to man. He alone could save it from destruction. I had tried my best to do my duty and found myself unequal to the task. The burden was more than I could bear. ... I asked him to help us and give us victory now. I was sure my prayer was answered. I had no misgivings about the results at Gettysburg.’”***

It makes little difference to me what the far left believes regarding our forefathers. They have done their best to denigrate the character of these great men by striving to rewrite history and bring doubt into the minds of American citizens and the world at large. I prefer the story of earlier historians who had no political axe to grind. I firmly believe that such effort today is motivated by the adversary. In the long run, the far left’s view cannot and will not prevail for God has instituted a purpose for this great country, namely the restoration of the gospel. Having

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quoted some of our forefathers, I believe it's important that the reader understand that the establishment of the United States was also prophesied by Nephi, an early Book of Mormon prophet in 1 Nephi 13: 17-19. It represents one of many Book of Mormon statements that attest to its divinity. Quote: *"I beheld that the mother of gentiles [England and its people] were gathered together upon the waters and upon the land also, to battle against them [the colonists].*

And I beheld the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them in battle.

And I, Nephi, beheld that the gentiles [the colonists] that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations (1 Nephi 13:17-19)

To add additional credibility to this prophetic statement, historians tell us that Columbus felt he was inspired by the Holy Ghost to discover America. Mr. Callister describes it this way: *"For over ten years Columbus and his brother sought financing for their voyage. They were turned down by the rulers of England, Portugal and Spain. After rejecting Columbus's request on three occasions, Queen Isabella finally relented when her court treasurer informed her the voyage would cost no more than two or three royal banquets. But Columbus was not spiritually naïve, not some unwitting pawn in the divine design of things; he knew his mission was much more than an adventurous whim. Columbus knew he was a chosen instrument in God's hands. One biographer, Jacob Wasserman, quoted Columbus's recollections as follows: 'I have studied all books – cosmographies, histories, chronicles, and philosophies, and other arts, for which our Lord unlocked my mind, sent me upon the sea, and gave me fire for the deed. Those who heard of my emprise called it foolish, mocked me and laughed. But who can doubt that the Holy Ghost inspired me?' On another occasion Columbus wrote: 'With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail and he opened my will to desire to accomplish the project. ... Who can doubt that this fire was not merely mine, but also of the Holy Spirit ... urging me to press forward?'"*

As I have said, I think it is important for anyone investigating the validity of the LDS Church to realize the prelude to the restoration occurred over a rather lengthy period of time.

After the sailors had traveled many days on open waters without sighting land, mutiny raised its ugly head. Columbus's men demanded he turn back. He promised them that if land were not sighted within forty eight hours, they would turn back. He recorded in his journal: 'Then I went in my cabin and prayed mightily to the Lord. On October 12, the very next day, we sighted land.'

Joseph Smith could hardly have known of Columbus's remarks, being an unschooled farm boy. Thus, who can trivialize the prophecy of Nephi some 2000 years earlier when Columbus, himself, sought guidance in prayer and felt the hand of the Lord urging him onward? Logic tells me both this land and this country are, indeed, the will of the Lord to further his work through restoration of the gospel. Freedom of religion was required to accomplish the restoration and that was not available in Europe with its despotic rulers. In fact, some of the breakaway Protestant sects became government-mandated religions in the place of Catholicism in various city-states in Europe. This tendency continued among some early settlers in America such as the Puritans. This provided the impetus for Roger Williams to found Providence, Rhode Island in 1636. Such activities along with the persecution suffered by the early members of the LDS Church point to the need for a proper legal environment for the restoration to take place. The Lord's Church would not be a state mandated church because people must come to it of their own free will, agency being an essential and even a key principle therein. Consequently, we can see the Lord prepared the very location of the restoration, the legal climate therein as well as the hearts and minds of selected people.

THE CULMINATING RESTORATION

As I have said, I think it is important for anyone investigating the validity of the LDS Church to realize that the prelude to the restoration occurred over a rather lengthy period of time. Likewise, the actual restoration was a process in and of itself, rather than an event. It required a worthy human being to be placed on earth in the appropriate locale; one whom the Lord knew was up to the prophetic task. That individual had to be humble or teachable, valiant and spiritual, as well as possess great faith to endure

the trials he would face. His early preparation would take place in the pre-existence much as that of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5). There would be additional preparation after he came to earth, which would involve those characteristics already listed. This would take a period of time commensurate with that individual's ability to absorb the Lord's instruction. He must not only live in the land prepared for the restoration but also in the locale the Lord deemed appropriate for receipt of the necessary revelation.

At least some of the people in that locale must be receptive to his message and possess beliefs and characteristics similar to his, so as to endure the persecution the adversary was sure to bring to bear. They would be essential in providing the seed bed and support necessary for the work to go forward. Such support must include the recording of any revelations received, which would constitute supporting even new scripture the Lord might bring to light.

A means then of reproducing such scripture for dissemination among interested parties would be required. Strong and able people would be necessary among early converts to this restored message. They would have to spread the message far and wide among receptive people to build an initial core of stalwart individuals or else the work might quickly die, unable to endure the persecution that would surely occur.

Only the Lord, knowing the end from the beginning as well as the traits of all his children placed on earth, could orchestrate these parameters in a new and primitive land. It is quite probable that I might have overlooked other things that were involved but this preliminary overview will at least help the reader understand the process that was to take place, resulting in the gospel's final restoration.

THE CHOSEN INDIVIDUAL

One might ask, "*How does God choose a prophet?*" The earlier statement regarding Jeremiah 1:5 provides some understanding, which I'll quote in full, as taken from the King James Version of the Bible. "*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.*" Did Jeremiah expect to be called to such a high and holy calling? Verse 6 provides the answer. "*Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.*" Did the Lord accept his answer? Hardly, for he knew Jeremiah and his

potential from the pre-existence where God nurtured him. In verse 7 the Lord tells Jeremiah, "*But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.*"

From the foregoing we learn that Jeremiah was a child but that the Lord would prepare him for his sacred work. We also learn that Jeremiah was foreordained to be a prophet before he was born, signifying not only a pre-existence but also his calling and ordination as a prophet while he was yet there. Not only did the Lord prepare Jeremiah but he also put words in his mouth. Such is corroborated by the Prophet Amos's statement in Amos 3:7 wherein he said, "*Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.*"

That the Lord often calls children yet to be trained or schooled in the gospel is evident in Samuel's call in 1 Samuel 3 and 4. In most, if not all, cases, he calls those who feel unprepared and are truly humbled before him. Consider Moses' call in Exodus 3. Though he was an adult and had apparently been schooled in Egypt's courts, he felt totally incapable of accepting the call from the Lord and made excuse after excuse. The Lord performed miracles before him to convince him that he would be with him. The Lord was angry with him when he claimed he was slow of speech and finally gave him Aaron, his brother, as a mouthpiece. The Bible is full of statements that allude to a pre-existence or speak of it out rightly. Thus, we see the Lord, knowing his children and having prepared them to a degree in the pre-existence calls them in mortality to various responsibilities and, if ordained to be a prophet, tells them what to say. In this latter case, there can be no mistake about his gospel and the doctrine involved with its ordinances and covenants, as well as the need for authority to lead and administer the ordinances.

One might ask; "*Why wouldn't God wait to call a future prophet when he becomes an adult? Wouldn't he be better prepared to grasp the Lord's instruction?*" The answer should be obvious. In an apostate society wherein a new prophet must be called, human instruction in religious matters would be not only un-needed but also a deterrent because of its apostate nature. The Lord knows the individual he intends to call from the pre-existence and

shapes his understanding there as well as early in mortality, before misinformation occurs. If such human instruction were of value, the society would not be apostate.

I know of no scriptural reference, which tells us God would only call prophets prior to Christ's first advent. In fact biblical history would indicate that he continually calls prophets to give voice to his gospel, withdrawing them only when mankind refuses to listen. Even then, he reinstates them when, in his omniscient judgment, people are prepared to listen again. One can, with his best logic, mentally verify the need for a living prophet today by simply asking a few reasonable questions, such as: *"Is mankind so righteous today that there is simply no need for us to hear from God via his historical mouthpiece, even a prophet? Are society's problems different today than in times past, thus requiring additional applicable instruction? Does secular education or knowledge with its scientific advancement produce righteousness among people? Is greediness, desire for domination or other forms of abuse less prevalent in today's society than in times past? Are our children today subjected to more or less temptation via the many forms of electronic media? Are parents better equipped to counter the temptations of the adversary today than in times past through both example and instruction to their children? Is there an effort afoot today to produce family disintegration? Is there an effort today to control the individual's thought and action through a centralized authority?"* I feel sure the reader can think of several more such pertinent questions, all of which point to a continuing need for divine guidance through a mouthpiece selected by the Lord.

Once again, we, as individuals, have to make our own assessment of society today with such questions. If in the affirmative, we ought to then look for such an individual and at least evaluate, to our own satisfaction, the claims of any who might profess such selection by the Lord. If we don't, who can then logically contend that God has not acted in the restoration of his Church with Joseph as his chosen instrument? We, in our ignorance, can only speculate with no real qualifications for making a judgment. Of course, we can take the word of other so-called scriptionians who have made up their minds without real investigation but to what value?

THE BOY JOSEPH

It's interesting to me that Israel, more often than not, refused to follow the living prophets of their day but claimed allegiance to those of old including Moses. The Pentateuch or the first five books of the Bible are full of examples of Israelites who refused to follow Moses. Likewise, Jeremiah was told that Israel would reject him as a prophet [Jeremiah 1:19] before he even began to speak to them. Israel was scattered for refusal to follow the prophets. We have a parallel today in the calling of Joseph Smith and the prophets that have succeeded him. The majority of society refuses to acknowledge their prophetic callings without a sincere investigation and so be it. If they are not prophets, then such people have lost

nothing but if they are legitimate prophets, the same have rejected the beauty of the restored gospel as evidenced by the teachings of the LDS Church.

I can understand why a person would question Joseph's claim and thus the validity of the LDS Church as the Church restored by Jesus Christ. However, the claim is so profound in its promises that it deserves an honest evaluation by those who sincerely want to know the truth. This is particularly true in view of the great apostasy, which was and is so obvious. Think what it would mean, if true. It would remove all doubt as to the church one should join. It would disenfranchise those who scoff at church goers. The divine reality of God and his Son, Jesus Christ, would now be apparent, as would be their interest in mankind. The individuality of Father and Son is clarified as is the reality of a resurrected Being. The question man's creation in the image of God would be put to rest. The reader might add to the list with his or her observations and there is little doubt of its value to mankind even though rejected by most.

The easiest and most sure means of making a reliable evaluation is to simply read the Book of Mormon with a sincere heart with real intent and ask God if the various principles contained therein are not true. He will, as described in Moroni 10:4-5, reveal the truthfulness of it unto such an individual. The truth or falsity of the LDS Church's claims, regarding its prophetic origin, rise or fall on the validity of the Book of Mormon. If it is false, then so are all the Church's claims but if it is true, then all of life's

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efforts would logically be subordinate to one's effort to learn and follow its teachings. You see, if we are spirit children of a heavenly Father and Mother, there is a plan in place for our advancement. We, as mortals, likewise wish to do the same for our progeny with few exceptions. Why would we expect less of our heavenly Parents? We need to know the fundamentals of that plan if it is true, so as to embrace it with the greatest degree of effectiveness. Or, if not, we can reject it but will have learned much on the subject, to our own benefit. How else can we logically reject the first vision without a sincere investigation?

The preceding and rather lengthy introduction to this section is meant to introduce the reader to the importance of Joseph's claims and what they represent. To help the reader understand Joseph's call as a prophet I will draw directly

If it is false, then so are all the Church's claims but if it is true, then all of life's efforts would logically be subordinate to one's effort to learn and follow its teachings.

from his account in the Joseph Smith History. Though slightly different in detail than Jeremiahs, Samuels or Moses' call, the fundamentals are the same. This, I believe, adds credibility to his claim, even though the real test is in the validity of the Book of Mormon, a second testament of Christ. Before including the actual excerpts from Joseph's history, I want to briefly paraphrase the family environment he grew up in, as described by himself.

Joseph was born on December 23, 1805 in Sharon, Vermont. Due to economic reasons, I understand, his father, also named Joseph, moved with his family to Palmyra, New York in Joseph's tenth year and about 4 years later to Manchester in the same county of Ontario. The Smith family was a humble one comprising 11 souls of which Joseph was the third eldest son. Joseph's father provided for the family with farming and various jobs he and his older children were able to gain in the community. In economic terms, they were an average family at that time, or so it seems to me. His parents were devout believers in salvation through Jesus Christ and sought religious understanding. In about the second year after their move to Manchester, religious excitement gripped the community at which point I begin with direct excerpts from the extracts of his history as provided with many copies of the Book of

Mormon. I will also include a few interjections of my own, for clarification I hope but you will have to be the judge as to whether they are of benefit or not. I did this because I expect questions.

Quote, "... *there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of the country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, 'Lo, here!' and others, 'Lo, there!' Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.*"

He then describes the contending nature of the various sects with its confusing and negative results on the society of the time. This religious fervor was emphasized once again in a recent TV documentary. Joseph even describes its impact on his own family as follows; "*I was at this time in my fifteenth year. My father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith, and four of them joined the church, namely, my mother, Lucy; my brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison; and my sister Sophronia.*"

Joseph then describes his own feelings regarding the turmoil going on and mentions his attendance at some of their meetings as well as a partiality to the Methodists. Even so, he admits, it was impossible for someone as young as he [being only 14] and so unacquainted with men and things to arrive at any conclusion as to which sect might be right. One could hardly contest that feeling given the confusion in society today. He also mentions his own excitement in the tumult going on with each sect zealously proclaiming theirs to be the correct one. Finally, in verse 10 he quotes thusly, "*In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: 'What is to be done. Who of all these parties is right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?'*"

One can easily understand his predicament, having probably gone through such a questioning process his or her self. Then, in verse 11 he continues as follows: "*While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: 'If any of*

you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and up-braideth not; and it shall be given him.”

He then describes how this verse affected him in verse 12. *“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.”*

Notice his extreme humility, which caused him to then conclude that he might venture to ask God for wisdom if he was willing to give such to all men liberally without upbraiding the same. Might not a similar attitude apply to those today who question the authenticity of the first vision?

Joseph then decided to approach God in prayer on a beautiful clear day early in the spring of 1820. Continuing with his story, *“After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that That I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But, exerting all my power to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction – not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from an unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being – just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light directly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell on me.”*

From the foregoing, we hear Joseph describing the reality of Satan or the adversary and his attempt to prevent Joseph from engaging in a

prayer, which would provide the wisdom he so desperately needed. Granted, one can say he simply made up such a feeling and it never really happened because the devil is an imaginary being conceived in the mind of man. Of course, such a person must then explain the source of all evil just as he must explain the source of all good. If there is a God who is the source of all good, all righteousness and all truth, then it follows that an opposing force or individual must be the source of evil. As a result, our acceptance of the reality of God and his purposes requires a similar acceptance of the reality of Satan with his agenda. Refusal to accept God as a reality is a choice we all must make or not make and becomes the foundation of our philosophy of life. Is the creation we live in of God or did universe around us come about by chance with mankind evolving from some single cell, such as an amoeba, being the reality of our being? I addressed that question in chapter 20, I believe, and won't belabor it here. Having felt the promptings of both, I know of myself of their reality.

The shaft of light, previously mentioned by Joseph, marked the beginning of the theophany he was about to experience. Continuing with his story; *“It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other – **‘This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!’**”* Such a theophany has a parallel in the identification of Jesus as God's Son in the gospels, one of which I include here; *“... **Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased**”* [John 3:22].

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Like the grasp of the adversary, one can believe or disbelieve the theophany described by Joseph but one must also consider the consequences of such action. If it didn't occur, then everything that Joseph taught, following in its wake, is also false, being outright lies or at the very least, misguided and misleading religious philosophy. As a consequence of such a situation, the authority to act in the name of Christ, mentioned in chapter 21, would also be non-existent. Therefore, there would be no true Church or one in harmony with all of Christ's teachings on the face of the earth today.

Mankind could still study the scriptures and try his or her best to live in accordance with them but he or she would have no assurance of salvation in its fullness or eternal life.

However, if the theophany is true, it follows that the gospel as taught by Jesus Christ in the meridian of time, has been restored to the earth in the embodiment of the church founded by Joseph Smith in April 1830. It also follows that Joseph was called of God as a prophet and as an instrument in God's hands to initiate his work on the earth in these latter days. What a wonderful event such a theophany would be, not just for Joseph but also for the world at large. It would be second only to Christ's original advent with his teachings and atonement and, of course, his second coming still somewhat in the future. It means that God has not suffered man to wonder if the gospel is true and wander in the darkness of the apostasy. Instead, he has provided a second witness of Christ and his Atonement and he has restored all of the teachings, ordinances, covenants and authority present in his first advent as well as everything else he deems necessary in this last dispensation. It means the dispensation of the fullness of times is upon us, in progress and all things are brought together to accomplish his purpose on earth (Ephesians 1:10).

I probably got a little off course in the preceding effort to establish the reality of the first vision but I don't apologize because it is of such major importance to mankind in realizing its veracity. If true, its beauty and reality is beyond compare, rivaling all other biblical revelations. It not only establishes the reality of revelation to the sincere seeker of truth but also the reality of Satan as well as that of God, the Father and God, the Son. It likewise establishes the reality of the glorified personages of the latter two. It provides a witness of the verity of the Bible, in so far as it has been preserved and translated correctly. Its reality should invigorate Christians everywhere to redouble their efforts in Christ's work with the renewed evidence of the reality of his gospel and the real purpose of mortality. It should change mankind's outlook on life.

JOSEPH'S PREPARATION

I think it's important for one to know that the Lord didn't immediately provide Joseph with the golden plates nor did he give directions on how to establish his Church in this theophany. No, Joseph had to be prepared to fulfill his role just as the location and people had to be prepared.

The Lord works through people, they being instruments in his hands and he is intimately familiar with all mankind's talents, weaknesses and spiritual strengths. As noted earlier, he calls and ordains those whom he would have as prophets while they are still in the pre-existence [Jeremiah 1:5]. He knows what is required of a prophet to carry his assignment to a successful conclusion in terms of both knowledge and spiritual strength. Such spiritual strength will be the root of his determination to persist at all costs. Here, I reiterate some earlier comments and also expand on them.

Thus, he prepares the chosen individual accordingly, before and after their birth into mortality and as he said unto Abraham regarding the birth of Isaac, "*Is anything too hard for the Lord*" [Genesis 18:14]? In a manner similar to Joseph, he prepared Samuel, while still a small child [Samuel 3:1-4]. See also Amos 8:11-12 and Psalms 74:9 to help explain the need for God to call a small child. In the case of Samuel, Eli's sons, his logical successors, were too corrupt to be called to such a sacred position. One might ask, "*Is it easier to fashion an unsullied child into a prophet or one who is knowledgeable in the corrupted texts and/or ways of the world?*" Obviously, the argument that Joseph wouldn't be called because he was only a child, while good and capable men abounded around him, doesn't hold water. The Lord knew Joseph in the pre-existence as he did Jeremiah, which was previously stated and would take his time to fashion him into an approved prophet, capable of carrying out his later day work.

The golden plates, which provided the text for the Book of Mormon, weren't mentioned to Joseph for another 3 ½ years or there about. It appears Joseph had to mature a bit as well as experience the reaction of his family and society around him regarding his vision, before the next step in his training could be taken. Whereas he might have expected approval or at least sympathy from the religious community he was now associated with, the opposite was true. Not only did they condemn his story as apparent delusion, they aggressively persecuted him. This he found strange because of his youth and humble status in the community. Even if he was deluded, what threat could he be to the established religions vying for proselytes in the Palmyra community? Without God's direction, at only 14 years of age, his delusions would soon disappear through a desire to be accepted.

Only the activity of the adversary can explain the campaign that was carried out against him in the ensuing months and years. Such gives credence to the fact that the adversary works through people, as does God and we can be influenced by either according to the choices we make through our agency. Uninspired people can easily become a part of Satan's ploys as he carries out his agenda. For the interested reader, I refer them to verses 21-29 of the Joseph Smith History in the Pearl of Great Price found at the end of many Books of Mormon.

No doubt the persecution of the society around him was necessary to toughen him emotionally and spiritually for what he was to experience once the plates and their purpose were revealed. As he describes in verses 24-25, he had seen a vision and dared not deny it in a manner similar to Paul's defense presented before King Agrippa. We too, can refuse to believe such an incredible story, if we choose to. In fact, I did initially and my reluctant acceptance of its possibility in the years following my first contact with Mormons slowed my acceptance of the restored gospel. You see, one cannot really read the Book of Mormon with sincere and real intent, having faith in Christ [Moroni 10:4], until they at least accept the possibility of such an event. Obviously, the scriptures point to the possibility of visions and likewise describe the refusal of much of Israel's populace to accept prophets of their day. Of course, Israel wandered in darkness as a result and was eventually scattered as they apostatized from even the Law of Moses prior to Christ's advent.

I think it's marvelous when people can read the Book of Mormon immediately upon its receipt with an open mind. Many there are who do just that. In a way, I wish I had. All I can say in my defense is, "I listened to various missionaries and members and reluctantly accepted that possibility after a period of time. This led to my reading not only the Book of Mormon but also 'A Marvelous Work and a Wonder' and 'Archeology and the Book of Mormon'. Such reading led me to sincere, though somewhat clumsy, prayer and eventual baptism". Looking back from my vantage point today, I believe it was my faith that God would not mislead an honest seeker of truth that kept me doggedly in pursuit of an answer. Pardon my little side trip from the subject at hand but I think one must be careful in

condemning Joseph's vision, if they really are interested in truth. Such a hasty action speaks more of a desire to maintain their status quo rather than a sincere pursuit of truth. Conversely, sincere pondering of the possibility may well lead to a more firm conviction of its reality than a too hasty acceptance. Of course, the latter may also be an indication of greater spirituality and preparedness. I wouldn't want to be too hasty in categorizing anyone's individual experience any more than I would want him or her to categorize mine. Only the Lord has that right and ability.

Moving on with Joseph's preparation, we find a heavenly messenger visiting him, the angel Moroni, on the 21st of September of 1823. Three-visits occurred that night and a fourth the next day in which he receives various instructions. The details are contained in verses 30-49. Among them was the location of the golden plates, which he was instructed to visit each year until the proper time came for their retrieval. He received additional instruction each year regarding the purposes of God. Such a vision parallels that of Abraham and other patriarchs of the Old Testament.

Four years later, on September 22, 1827, the time came for him to receive the plates. By then he had married Emma Hale, which I suspect was part of his preparation as well. Because of persecution he and Emma moved to the state of Pennsylvania in Susquehanna County with the aid of one, Martin Harris. There they stayed with Emma's parents while he tried to translate a portion of the plates. It was this portion (some 115 pages from the book of Lehi or at least some portion of them, I believe) that Martin took to professor Anthon for verification of the translation as mentioned earlier. One should realize that Martin was a friend but not really converted to the reality of the plates, not yet having seen them. He may well have made this effort to satisfy his own curiosity; little realizing that the act had been foretold by Isaiah. These translations were eventually lost and Joseph was commanded to not retranslate them but to begin with Mormon's abridgement. This visit constitutes the fulfilling of the prophecy in Isaiah 29:11-12, also referred to earlier and is given here as follows. *"And the vision of all is come unto as the words of a book that is sealed, Which men deliver to one that is learned, saying,*

As he describes in verses 24-25, he had seen a vision and dared not deny it in a manner similar to Paul's defense presented before King Agrippa.

Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.” Then in verse 14 we read; *“Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder”:* That wonder was the translation now known as the Book of Mormon, accomplished by the Lord through Joseph’s instrumentality and divine guidance with the Urim and Thummin.

‘Now, compare this to the account written by Martin Harris and included by Joseph in his history as verses 64 and 65. *“I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters that had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic; and he said they were true characters. He then gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them that had been translated was also correct. I took the certificate and put it in my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he had found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him. He then said unto me, ‘Let me see that certificate.’ I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying there was no such thing now as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, ‘I cannot read a sealed book.’ I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation.”*

As additional help in that regard, I also include the other prophecy referred to earlier, namely from the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 37, verses 15 – 19, following his often quoted vision of the valley of the dry bones. Therein, God tells him of additional scripture, which will be given in the latter days and how it will combine with the Bible

I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, ‘I cannot read a sealed book.’

or the stick of Judah. *“The word of the Lord came unto me saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even the with stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in thy hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. He then goes on to tell how he (the Lord God) will bring the children of Israel from among the heathen to their own land and make one nation of Israel with one king, which is obviously Jesus Christ. There is no question in my mind about Martin’s experience being the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. Similarly, it seems clear that the Book of Mormon is the stick of Joseph Ezekiel refers to, providing another testament of Christ and the reality of his Atonement. Of course, the reader must decide once again, the validity of these interpretations for him or herself.*

Joseph was severely reprimanded by the Lord for allowing Martin to have the translation even though he (the Lord) knew before hand that such an activity would take place. The gift of translation was taken from Joseph for a time after which it was restored and translation began in earnest on April 5 of 1829 with Oliver Cowdery as the scribe. It was completed in approximately 80 days according to my

information with just something over 60 days of actual translation via the Urim and Thummin, which demonstrates part of the fulfillment of Isaiah 29:14. No

other equivalent translation has been so quickly accomplished, let alone without significant error or correction.

Joseph’s instruction as a prophet continued throughout his life with the Doctrine and Covenants being the recording of all that pertained to the organization and supervision necessary for the Church. Added to that is an account of Joseph and Hyrum’s martyrdom by

John Taylor, who witnessed it, in section 135, a revelation given to Brigham Young in section 136 and a vision of Joseph F. Smith's in section 138. Section 137 is a portion of a revelation given to Joseph in 1836. The basics for governing of the Church were given by the time of the prophet's martyrdom with the added sections given as later prophets sought clarification on certain problems or situations. Two official declarations, one to Wilford Woodruff and the other to Spencer W. Kimball, are given regarding plural marriage and the conferring of the priesthood on all worthy male members respectively. All of these were given to address particular problems hindering the work of the Lord. The prophets of the Lord's Church can expect to receive additional instruction in the future as the Lord sees fit in addressing new problems arising within society.

The foregoing information regarding Joseph's instruction is not meant to even be complete in its summary, much less in its detail but rather to point out the need for heavenly instruction to reestablish Christ's Church rather than trying to depend upon the reasoning of men. Only the Lord himself can correct the tampering of men that occurred over some 1700 years of apostasy no matter how sincere, dedicated and intelligent the men who are trying to do the same without it. No one questions the intent of such men but the time was not right nor was the man ordained for this sacred work yet born. In view of the lack of scriptural documentation of Christ's 40-day ministry after his resurrection along with the loss of the priesthood as well as corruption of both text and ordinance after the apostles' demise, such a restoration seems essential if the dispensation of the fullness of times is to be accomplished. Some will deny it but the sincere seeker of truth must follow the feelings of his heart as given by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord will not deny such sincere effort.

THE BOOK OF MORMON'S TRANSLATION

The Book of Mormon is 531 pages in length and the translation took place in less than 80 days. The scribe, Oliver Cowdery, was said to have made the statement that he sat on one side of a curtain to write with Joseph on the other side. As the prophet would read the translation, Oliver would write it down and then read it back to him to assure its accuracy. He [Oliver] said at the

beginning of each day Joseph would proceed without asking for him [Oliver] to read his last entry so as to ascertain where he was. He simply began to read as the translation was revealed to him and no discontinuity occurred. Likewise, he never corrected any previously written material as previously stated. Once recorded, the translation has remained the same to this day, except for a few minor grammatical corrections in later editions. However, no revisions have been made to the substance of the original revelations. Such constancy is a hallmark of the Lord and his sacred word.

According to the "Bible Dictionary", bound with the King James Version of modern LDS Bibles, the actual translation effort was begun in 1607 with six companies consisting of 54 members who apparently were university professors, bishops and the chief learned of the Church. Certain rules had been laid down including the most important and were as follows (I quote the dictionary);

"The Bishops' Bible was to be followed, and 'as little altered as the truth of the original will permit'; the translations of the Tindale, Matthew, Coverdale, Whitchurch (i.e. the Great Bible), and Geneva were to be used when they agreed better with the text than the Bishops' Bible; the old ecclesiastical words (church, etc.) were to be retained; no marginal notes were to be affixed unless for some necessary explanation of some Hebrew or Greek words. The new translation was published in 1611"

From this we see 54 highly educated individuals utilizing approximately 4 years to accomplish the translation of 1590 pages of Hebrew and Greek writings, having earlier translations at their disposal, while Joseph translated 531 pages of modified Egyptian hieroglyphics from the golden plates via the Urim and Thummim in less than 80 days. In no way am I criticizing the efforts of the King James scholars but am rather pointing out the miraculous rapidity with which Joseph completed the Book of Mormon translation. This wasn't due to any language skills he may or may not have had but was due to his worthiness, in the eyes of the Lord, to utilize the sacred Urim and Thummim given to prophets of old for such work, thus becoming the marvelous work and a wonder spoken of by Isaiah. Realizing this time

Only the Lord himself can correct the tampering of men that occurred over some 1700 years of apostasy no matter how sincere, dedicated and intelligent the men are trying to do the same without it.

element of Joseph's and his obvious lack of secular education should make the first time reader marvel at the beauty, continuity of thought and correlation with biblical scripture, which he will experience in his effort.

By the way, according to the LDS Bible dictionary these terms (Urim and Thummin) are of Hebrew origin meaning Lights and Perfections. Quoting this same reference regarding its instrumentality we find, "*An instrument prepared of God to assist man in obtaining revelation from the Lord and in translating languages.* See Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Duet. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65; JS-H 1:35." Though their purpose is not explained, to my knowledge, in these biblical references, it is obvious that they were used for holy and sacred purposes. Thus, the translation of the Book of Mormon was the Lord's with Joseph serving as an instrument to accomplish the work, in 19th century language.

Consequently, the 8th article of faith states "we believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God" whereas the Bible is described as being the word of God in so far as it is translated correctly. This statement rests, I believe, on the fact that God protected the golden plates for the very purpose stated therein while the books of the Bible were hand copied time after time in Hebrew, and Greek for hundreds of years before the King James Version was made in 1611. Inadvertent errors as well as intentional changes were apparently made therein.

RESTORATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Mention has been made previously about the eventual loss of priesthood authority because of Peter's martyrdom. With it there was a consequential loss of authority to direct the priesthood on earth or the loss of the keys conferred upon Peter by Christ as described in Matthew 16:19. Without proper direction by the chief apostle or president of the Church, no more apostles could be called nor could other priesthood activities be properly directed. That is, the latter legitimate activity died out after the demise of those men who received the priesthood under proper authority. Thus, the next critical step in the restoration was restoring the priesthood with its accompanying authority. This occurred in May and June of 1829 or during the time period when Joseph and Oliver were translating the golden plates. In fact it resulted through their inquiring about the proper mode of baptism, which was so confused in Christianity.

An account of the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood is given in section 13 of the Doctrine and covenants. This came about it seems, from a discussion Joseph and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, were having regarding the subject of baptism. It seems there was great confusion about the proper mode of baptism in the area at that time. B. H. Roberts, in his "Comprehensive History of the Church", emphasizes this point in Chapter 15 by including a note describing a great debate on the subject in Lexington, Kentucky between Alexander Campbell of the (Campbellite) church and Rev. N. L. Rice of the Presbyterian church. The debate was chaired by Henry Clay and some 600 hundred pages were used to cover the various topics involved.

Similarly, after not being able to come to a common agreement, Joseph and Oliver decided to inquire of the Lord through prayer. While thus engaged, a heavenly messenger appeared unto them and announced himself as John the Baptist. He was now raised from the dead and had been sent to confer the Aaronic priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver. In an accompanying note, Mr. Roberts quotes Matthew 27:52-53 describing the resurrection of many saints who had slept but now arose and appeared unto many. He then asks the question, "*Why not John the Baptist, fore-runner of Christ and martyr with the rest?*" and then comments, "*Who could be more worthy than he of an early resurrection?*" Along those same lines, his selection for the assignment appears logical in that he exercised that same priesthood prior to and during Christ's ministry in the meridian of time, even baptizing the Savior, himself.

The revelation is short and comprises the whole of Section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Thus I include it in its entirety for the reader's convenience. "*Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of the Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.*"

As with the first vision and succeeding ones with Moroni, one can choose to disbelieve it and even ridicule the possibility but the honest seeker of truth must admit it occurred at an appropriate time in answer to prayerful inquiry regarding the confusion surrounding the ordinance of baptism. It seems all the

revelations given to Joseph alone but often with others, occurred after sincere inquiry regarding a given doctrine or problem. They also came at a time when Joseph was ready to understand and apply the same in the work the Lord had given him to do. Thus Joseph was prepared precept upon precept, here a little there a little, line upon line in the manner I paraphrase of the prophet Isaiah's statement in chapter 28, and verse 10.

Joseph was then commanded to baptize Oliver and afterwards Oliver should baptize Joseph, "for so we were commanded," said the Prophet. The Aaronic priesthood was necessary for their baptisms, once again demonstrating the proper order and authority for holy ordinances. It seems appropriate to mention Paul's baptism at this point as recited in Acts 9:11-18. Though Paul's vision was different, Ananias, having proper authority, was dispatched by the Lord to carry out the necessary baptism and bestowal of the Holy Ghost. Both were unusual and both miraculous by mankind's standards but the Acts account points to the reasonableness of Joseph and Oliver's vision in accomplishing the will of the Lord at an appointed time.

John promised the eventual reception of the higher priesthood or the Melchizedek Priesthood discussed in detail in Hebrews 7. Although the date of its reception isn't specifically mentioned, it apparently occurred in late June of 1829 and certainly by April 1830 because it is referred to as an accomplished fact when instruction is given to organize the church. Likewise, reference is made to their being ordained apostles at that time. Thus, the authority to proceed with the organization of the church is now in place, given in a manner similar to that provided to the 12 apostles in the meridian of time. It is that authority required in directing the affairs of the Church in this last dispensation, even the fullness of times.

THE BOOK OF MORMON INITIAL PRINTING

Having read little regarding the initial printing of the Book of Mormon, I will quote what I consider key excerpts from an article by Keith J. Wilson, an associate professor in ancient scripture at BYU. Hopefully he won't mind since my purpose is not financial in nature but one of trying to describe some of the events of the restoration of the gospel for my posterity. This particular article is entitled "**From Gutenberg to**

Grandin" with a subtitle of "*Tracing the Development of the Printing Press*", as provided in "Prelude to the Restoration", a 35th Sydney B. Sperry Symposium. It outlines an unusual series of events leading up to the first printing. I will begin with his introductory paragraph.

"Late in March 1830, a notice in the Palmyra, New York, newspaper appeared announcing the recent publication of the Book of Mormon. It was the culmination of a three-year translating and printing process that would ultimately stamp Palmyra as the birthplace of Mormonism. Producing the book in the small town along the Erie Canal was an event of unusual proportion as well as portent. In many ways this physical event occurred because of a stream of individuals and inventions that stretched over a four hundred year period. The result of this quiet process was an available printing press and competent personnel who in 1830 delivered a book that was anciently described as 'a marvelous work and a wonder' [Isaiah 29:14]. The story of the physical printing developments that culminated that memorable day of March 26, 1830, in Palmyra, New York, is a fascinating one."

After that introductory paragraph, Mr. Wilson describes the development of the printing press in some detail, as it progressed from the Gutenberg press to the Smith press with which the Book of Mormon was printed. To minimize the explanation, I will go directly to his summary of 12 items listed with his concluding paragraph, as follows.

"Using March 26, 1830, as a printing benchmark, the following developments represent significant trends or events that culminated in the printing of the Book of Mormon.

- 1. Printing had an incredibly auspicious start (twelve million books in fifty years) with the Gutenberg press.*
- 2. The Gutenberg wooden press, or the common press, remained virtually the same from 1450 to 1800. It could print about two hundred sheets, or about three hundred square feet of surface printing, per hour.*
- 3. The Industrial Revolution introduced the first iron press in England in 1798.*

It seems all the revelations given to Joseph alone but often with others, occurred after sincere inquiry regarding a given doctrine or problem.

4. By 1800 America had develop an insatiable appetite for reading, and the printing industry responded with a proliferation of presses and materials.
5. Seven iron presses of different designs surfaced in America from 1815 to 1830. They became available only in the mid to late 1820s.
6. These iron presses printed three to four times the amount of printed material as the common wooden press and were well suited for book printing. One drawback, however, was that iron presses were heavy – fifteen hundred pounds.
7. The Erie Canal opened in 1825 and was available for shipping heavier items.
8. The cost of paper fell by 30 percent in just thirty years, and the availability increased due to mechanization of paper factories.
9. E. B. Grandin apprenticed for four years in a printing shop in rural Palmyra, New York. In 1827, at the age of twenty-one, he purchased the same printing shop.
10. Between one and two years later, Grandin bought a new iron press, which was three to four times more efficient than his other wooden press.
11. Grandin hired his former master printer as typesetter and contracted to print the largest book order to that time in Wayne County: the Book of Mormon.
12. The pace of 1.5 sheets per minute in 184 days was a near Herculean printing feat in rural New York.

... Unlike the translation work, unless the book was completely printed in one shop, considerable time would have been lost trying to relocate the printing process.

In sum, it took just seven months to print 5000 copies of a 592-page book in Palmyra. There were two brief stoppages but no vandalism or maliciousness. In contrast, the translation of the Book of Mormon had to be moved three times to carve out just sixty-five working days within a two year period. ... Unlike the translation work, unless the book was completely printed in one shop, considerable time would have been lost trying to relocate the printing process.

In addition to uninterrupted press time, a final perspective to consider involves the historical timing of this 1829-printing job. What difference

would a twenty-year time shift have meant to the Book of Mormon printing? If Joseph had been born earlier and had sought a printer in 1809 in Palmyra, he would have found none.'

After discussing a few other obstacles regarding earlier printing, Mr. Wilson finishes the paragraph with this statement. *“Considering all these obstacles, it is apparent that the general timing of the printing of the Book of Mormon was very significant.”*

The point of this whole section on the printing of the book is to emphasize that the Lord controls events on this earth that are important to his purpose. The scriptures point this out numerous times as with Nebuchadnezzar. He tells us in Joel 2:28 that he will pour out his spirit upon all flesh in the last days. Such scriptures and the previous listed events in the printing of the Book of Mormon cause me to believe such amazing and apparent coincidences are more than just coincidences and, in fact, are guided by the hand of the Lord to accomplish his purposes.

ESTABLISHING THE LDS CHURCH

The Lord, having established the necessary priesthood authority on the earth once again, gave Joseph the initial instruction needed for organizing the church or restoring Christ's Church as it existed in the meridian of time. Most of this instruction is contained in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which was given in April of 1830, coinciding with the date of official restoration according to my understanding. The latter occurred on April 6, 1830, which I don't intend to elaborate on but only to point out once again that the restoration proceeded forward in logical and proper steps. Joseph's instruction was still not finished nor was his work nor his suffering along with the early members as they fled from place to place to avoid the ensuing persecution.

CONTINUING REVELATION

Up until the time of his martyrdom, Joseph continued to be instructed through visions and various emissaries sent by the Lord. In trying to determine just how to describe this continuing revelation, I decided portions of the introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants would provide the most legitimate and complete vehicle, as follows: *“The Doctrine and Covenants is a collection of divine revelations and inspired*

declarations given for the establishment and regulation of the kingdom of God on the earth in the last days. Although most of the sections are directed to the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the messages, warnings and exhortations are for the benefit of all mankind, and contain an invitation to all people everywhere to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to them for their temporal well being and their everlasting salvation.

Most of the revelations in this compilation were received through Joseph Smith, Jun., the first prophet and president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Others were issued through some of his successors in the Presidency (See headings to Sections 135, 136, and 138, and Official Declarations 1 and 2.)

The book of Doctrine and Covenants is one of the standard works of the Church in company with the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price. However, the Doctrine and Covenants is unique because it is not a translation of an ancient document, but is of modern origin and was given of God through his chosen prophets for the restoration of his holy work and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth in these last days. In the revelations one hears the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in this dispensation of the fullness of times; and the work that is initiated herein is preparatory to his second coming, in fulfillment of and in concert with the words of the holy prophets since the world began." ... The next paragraph describes the early boyhood of Joseph and has been previously included. ...

"In the course of time Joseph Smith was enabled by divine assistance to translate and publish the Book of Mormon. In the meantime, he and Oliver Cowdery were ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist in May 1829 (D&C 13), and soon thereafter they were also ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood by the ancient apostles Peter, James and John (D&C 27:12). Other ordinations followed in which priesthood keys were conferred upon them by Moses, Elijah, Elias and many ancient prophets (D&C 110; 128:18, 21). These ordinations were, in fact, a restoration of divine authority to man on the earth. On April 6, 1830, under heavenly direction, the prophet Joseph Smith organized the Church, and thus the true Church of Jesus Christ is once again operative as an institution of

men, with authority to teach the gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation. ...

The sacred revelations were received in answer to prayer, in times of need and came out of real-life situations involving real people. The prophet and his associates sought for divine guidance, and these revelations certify that they received it. In the revelations one sees the restoration and unfolding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times. The westward movement of the Church from New York and Pennsylvania, to Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, and finally to the Great Basin of western America, and the mighty struggles of the saints in attempting to build Zion on the earth in modern times, are also shown forth in these revelations.

Several of the earlier sections involve matters relative to the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon (see Sections 3, 5, 10, 17, 19). Some later sections reflect the work of the prophet Joseph Smith in making an inspired translation of the Bible, during which many of the great doctrinal sections were received (see, for example, Sections 37, 45, 73, 76, 77, 86, 91, and 132, each of which has some direct relationship to the Bible translation).

In the revelations the doctrines of the gospel are set forth with explanations about such fundamental matters as the nature of the Godhead, the origin of man, the reality of Satan, the purpose of mortality, the necessity for obedience, the need for repentance, the workings of the Holy Spirit, the ordinances and performances that pertain to salvation, the destiny of the earth, the future conditions of man after the resurrection and the judgment, the eternity of the marriage relationship, and the eternal nature of the family. Likewise the gradual unfolding of the administrative structure of the Church is shown in the calling of bishops, the First Presidency, the council of the Twelve, and the Seventy, and the establishment of other presiding offices and quorums. Finally, the testimony that is given of Jesus Christ – his divinity, his majesty, his perfection, his love, and his redeeming power – make this book of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth." ...

Having read the Doctrine and Covenants several times, I can testify that they add one more witness to the truthfulness of the first vision and the verity of the Book of Mormon as a second witness of Jesus Christ. Each reading has

added light and knowledge to my understanding and I find it exciting to wonder what more I will learn the next time. Like all scripture, continuing study coupled with prayer and an effort to apply the principles therein adds both knowledge and joy regarding the beautiful plan of salvation. As I have mentioned and will continue to, it is this beautiful plan that gives me such joy and hope.

TRIALS OF THE MORMON PEOPLE

Just as Joseph was being prepared, so were the people who gained a testimony of the restoration. Though it may be difficult to understand the need and purpose of these varied trials, they were necessary according to the wisdom of the Lord. They prepared a people to establish a haven in the west where the gospel could flourish until the time the Church would be sufficiently strong to truly spread throughout the world. This is now in progress with something over 50% of the membership now being in other countries.

This is in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy in verses 13-16 of chapter 16. I include it here for the reader's convenience. *"Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land which you know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favor. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, 'The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands where he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill and out of the holes in the rocks."* In my mind, this obviously speaks of the missionary work going on today wherein people in every country are recognizing the blessings of the restored gospel and are receiving the same. These people are located in virtually every part of the world including such places as Mongolia and Siberia in addition to the more recognized locales.

We, of course, also face trials but of a different nature to test our testimony, commitment and obedience to the principles contained in the plan of salvation. We must make the seeking of gospel truths our primary quest in this life and apply them in our lives despite the many trials and temptations we face. Modern society is

bombarded with temptations of various sorts from pornography to indulging in the many secular facets of entertainment. Though the latter may be morally acceptable, they must not dominate our lives and become secular idols.

EARLY MISSIONARY EFFORTS

Missionary efforts began immediately after the founding of the Church because it was essential for its growth. It began in the immediate area and quickly spread to Canada from which some early Church leaders came. During some of the darkest days of the early Church, when the members were undergoing severe persecution and suffering, Joseph was inspired to send missionaries to England. The faith demonstrated by these early men and their wives who stayed at home, is almost beyond comprehension, at least in my mind. Yet it was necessary and provides additional evidence of Joseph's call as a prophet. From these early English converts sprang many future leaders of the Church and many faithful members who made the trek west to Utah, then under Mexican rule. Their sufferings in the trek west with handcarts are, like the missionaries who fished and hunted them; so immense they stagger the mind. Struggles today are more spiritual in nature but require the same commitment if one is to advance along the path of perfection.

Faithful members today, live in the world, providing for their families and contributing to society. For spiritual growth, they must forsake the temptations bombarding society from a secular world seeking happiness through appetites of the flesh. Other's professing Christ outside the Church, face the same temptations but they have yet to accept the restoration we are so fortunate to have. Members have an obligation to become that light the Savior spoke of. They must continuously strive to become and demonstrate the beautiful qualities of a Christ like life with dedication for that ultimate goal, even eternal life. This can and will only be accomplished by pursuing the gospel in faith and with full intent.

THE MOVE WEST

I suppose the darkest days of the fledgling Church occurred immediately after the martyrdom of the prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum. Many of the Church's leadership were on missions, as I understand it, but returned to Nauvoo as rapidly as possible. There was a good deal of dissension among the

leadership as to who should replace Joseph. Through a rather remarkable manifestation, Brigham Young, then president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles eventually assumed that role. His leadership in taking the saints to the west, outside the United State, to the then Mexican governed Utah territory, is well documented. His vision and foresight in settling a wide area in the intermountain west is among the great stories of this country. His providing of the means for later saints making the trip west, through the establishment of way stations or places of rest and sustenance for the poor and needy making the trip, was visionary to say the least. Truly, he was the man needed to lead the saints west and thus the prophet needed to succeed Joseph. He chose, through vision, the desolate valley of the Salt Lake, which no one else would want, as the place to settle the saints and the Church. Through hard labor and faith in God, they have made the desolate places in which they settled, the valleys of the west, blossom as the rose, as prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 35:1).

Hopefully, this rather limited summary of the preparation of Joseph and the people involved

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will be sufficient to help the reader understand more fully the process that took place in the restoration. It was not an event but is a process, which is still going on.

EVIDENCES OF THE RESTORATION

The evidences of the restoration can be seen primarily by a comparison of doctrine taught in the Church Christ founded by the Savior with that of the various churches today. As previously intimated, if one can be found, which seems to embody those doctrines and practices of the ancient Church, then that church certainly bears investigating by the honest and sincere seeker or truth. It appears to me, one must first become familiar with those activities espoused by the early Church as a point of reference to legitimize such a quest. Of course, this takes study of both scripture and historical references regarding such activities, which in turn, requires

time and effort. I have made an effort in those areas, which was intimated in chapter 21 and have intensified the same in the last 20 years while serving in the temple.

My study has concentrated on LDS scriptures, i.e. the King James Version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price and the Doctrine and Covenants as well as works of several LDS professors of Ancient Scripture. Admittedly, my choice of historical sources was influenced by my status as a practicing member of the LDS Church, as was my choice of scripture also. However, in such scriptural study I find no conflict of doctrine between latter day scripture, i.e. the last three of the four previously mentioned, and the Bible. In fact the latter day scriptures not only support and confirm general biblical doctrine but also clarify many other biblical doctrines only briefly hinted at, such as ministering to, as well as baptism for, the dead, in addition to deification, a pre-existence, three kingdoms of glory in the hereafter, priesthood authority, etc. As has been mentioned earlier, Joseph received many of the revelations given in the doctrine and Covenants while trying to clarify various biblical passages. I freely admit the majority of my study has come since retirement because of time availability. Likewise, my historical sources were largely chosen because of ready availability but such students of religion and ancient scripture are well respected by those of that community, including those of other faiths.

Probably, Doctor Hugh Nibley, a BYU ancient scripture professor, is the most prominent among them, he having studied hundreds if not thousands of ancient writings in numerous languages. According to my understanding, he was proficient in eight or ten ancient and modern languages such as Hebrew, Greek, Semitic, Egyptian, German, etc. These are evident in the references he cites in all his writings. I mention these sources, not to impress my posterity or any other unfortunate reader but to point out my need and, I believe, the need of any sincere seeker of truth, to pursue similar understanding. It doesn't come easily, at least to me but with the passing years my understanding of religion and my testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice as well as of God, our Heavenly Father, has multiplied significantly.

I am convinced that such cannot occur without an effort similar to that of any important discipline of secular life. Likewise, one has to

live the principles he or she comes to understand to fully complete the same, in a manner similar to the application of any rigorous discipline. Those who gain a sincere testimony early have undoubtedly pursued such study already and striven to live according to their understanding. I know, in my own case, geophysical and electronic studies only provided me with the principles for that field of engineering while their reality and validity came alive in their day-to-day application. Why should we expect to make less effort to gain the ultimate reward of life, even salvation? I believe strongly that salvation comes through divine grace but only after all we can do, as described in 2 Nephi 25:23.

As I read such material, I am humbled by my lack of significant knowledge in those areas, both scripturally and historically as compared to those who have pursued it with rigor and humility for a lifetime. Such scholars of ancient religion and scripture reap the fruit of their efforts in later years whereas I only have received a small sample. Even so, it is delicious to me and motivates me to continue to strive for increased light and understanding as long as he, the Lord, provides me with the necessary senses to read, feel, act and eventually internalize small portions of the beautiful concepts of his magnificent plan of salvation. Even more important, however, is the growing sense one feels for the truth, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, as the principles from that study come alive in one's life through such effort and application.

As I mentioned in chapter 21, I am drawing my historical quotations primarily from the text of "The Inevitable Apostasy" by Tad R. Callister because of his excellent summary of evidences pertaining to the apostasy and thus the elements necessary for the restoration. He cites both ancient historical writings of various religious authorities as well as some more modern ones such as Dr. Nibley and C. S. Lewis. All such quotations provide positive intellectual evidence of an apostasy in my mind and he then follows that with a discussion of restored doctrines through Joseph Smith. In my opinion he (Joseph) was, indeed, a latter day prophet called of God, to function as an instrument for the restoration in this last dispensation, even that of the fullness of times. One can certainly disagree

with the restoration as Callister describes it but a sincere seeker of such truth, again in my opinion, would welcome such discussion to further illuminate his or her own understanding of the same. I sincerely and whole-heartedly recommend the reading of his book wherein you will find a much more complete and interesting description of what I am attempting to briefly describe in my own words. Though the reader may question my personal opinion in any of the preceding material, believe me, your money will be well spent and your time well used, as you read and ponder the things therein.

Such investigation differs little from that investigation needed to make responsible secular decisions with a couple of exceptions, namely the consequences are eternal in nature and validation can be received by the Holy Spirit. In my view, these doctrines, lost or corrupted through apostasy, provide elements necessary to fully comprehend the beautiful concepts of

Such investigation differs little from that investigation needed to make responsible secular decisions with a couple of exceptions, namely the consequences are eternal and validation can be received by the Holy Spirit.

the gospel or plan of salvation. As intimated earlier, I don't claim complete comprehension of doctrines given by Christ to his apostles myself but neither do I hesitate to say the beauty conveyed to my being through my search and application has grown brighter and brighter with each element of truth I can claim. I now consider the gospel far more important for mankind than any secular pursuit, including my own, namely a personal interest in geophysical engineering and science in general. With that rather lengthy introductory spiel, I will now attempt to describe a few of the doctrines, which come to mind and also have particular appeal to me because of their promise.

RESTORED OR CORRECTED DOCTRINES

These were all addressed in chapter 21 but a little repetition here will provide additional clarification, hopefully, through a broader discussion. My elaboration on some of these doctrines in the following is, of course, limited by my less than perfect understanding. Even so, I hope my readers will grasp not just the logic of these doctrines but their beauty as well. I would ask them to contemplate the value of each one relative to their future as well as mankind's and to compare the vision it brings to their mind with that which the advocates of evolution and/or the advocates of the big bang theory.

GOD'S NATURE AND THE HOLY TRINITY

The nature of God and His resurrected Son were firmly established by the first vision wherein Joseph not only saw the Father and the Son but also heard both speak as individuals. As described in Doctrine and Covenants 130:22, they possess bodies of flesh and bone and appear as men but with glorified bodies. However, the Holy Spirit is a personage of spirit as explained therein. This is in direct contrast to the concept of the Holy Trinity, devised in the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD and disseminated as the Nicene Creed. As I understand it, most protestant churches accept this concept of the Holy Trinity or something similar in content, having inherited it from the Catholic Church. Even so, many, if not most, protestants I have spoken with feel God is a glorified personage, which man resembles. Such is consistent with biblical descriptions.

I include the pertinent language of the creed, as taken from Mr. Callister's book, for the benefit of the reader. It is

incomprehensible to me but the reader may feel different. "We worship one God in the Trinity and Trinity in unity,

Keep in mind that those who feel this doctrine is blasphemous, either intentionally or by virtue of incomplete, thought automatically limit the power of God.

without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one. ... Uncreated is the Father, uncreated the Son, uncreated the Holy Spirit, infinite ... is the Father, infinite the Son, infinite the Holy Spirit; eternal is the Father, eternal the Son, eternal the Holy Spirit; yet, they are not three eternal beings but one eternal, just as they are not three uncreated beings or three infinite beings but one uncreated and one infinite. ...

Thus, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; yet, they are not three gods but one God. Thus the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord; yet, they are not three lords, but one Lord. ... So too the Catholic religion forbids us to speak of three gods or lords."

Mr. Callister then adds an observation given by Elder James E. Talmage, a former apostle of the LDS church, as follows; *"It would be difficult to conceive of a greater number of inconsistencies and contradictions expressed in words as few."*

It is essential we understand this doctrine properly so as to not only worship them properly

but to also address the Father in prayer while understanding Christ is our mediator with the Father. We then can better understand our own divine origin, as well. Joseph Smith said we can't properly worship God and Jesus Christ without properly understanding their nature. This seems obvious to me because we are God's spiritual offspring as described in Psalms 82:6 and other places. I include that scripture here for the reader's benefit wherein the Psalmist said; *"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High."* Of course, Jesus Christ was the first-born spirit of our Heavenly Father and Mother and is consequently our elder brother, as well as our Savior and Redeemer. Knowing these things, makes our prayers more personal and we can plead for direction, strength and will power to more fully understand gospel doctrine and apply it in our lives. It also makes it more feasible, even with our limited understanding, to realize that we can be perfected in Christ and become a perfect man or woman like unto the fullness of

the stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). Thus, it adds meaning to the gospel or plan of salvation and more fully motivates us to live in

accordance with its precepts, namely the commandments of God. In so doing, we realize that death is simply a door opening to a more beautiful existence.

THE DOCTRINE OF DEIFICATION

This doctrine was discussed to some extent in chapter twenty one. I re-emphasize it here because of its relationship to understanding the nature of God, his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. In the last chapter many quotations from various historical sources were given. The reader may want to review that section beginning on page 1134 as a refresher. My few comments here will serve to cultivate in the mind of the reader the logic and beauty of this wonderful concept, i.e. deification. I consider it as a key to understanding the real purpose of salvation as well as the purpose God had in creating the earth before placing man thereon.

Keep in mind that those who feel this doctrine is blasphemous, either by intention or by virtue of incomplete thought; automatically limit the power of God. Such an act is blasphemous in and of itself, in my mind. Also, such a stance ignores several Biblical scriptures as well as the logic of

"The Gospel of Philip", discovered in the Nag Hammadi library, which simply states an obvious fact, namely; *"A horse sires a horse, a man begets a man, a god brings forth a god"*. Consider the Sermon on the Mount, verse 48 of chapter five, wherein Christ admonishes his disciples, *"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."* If this doesn't command us to become like God, I don't know what does. Would Jesus Christ make such a statement if such were impossible? We might go to Webster, once again and find out specifically what perfect is. Paraphrasing him, it means, among other things, *without flaw as well as complete*. This suggests an infinite potential yet to be reached. Though the mortal mind may find such a concept difficult to accept, the promise therein is of God and who are we to deny it? Even more specific, possibly, is Paul's counsel in Ephesians 4:13 wherein he points out the goal of all members of the Church as follows. *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."* I doubt that any Christian would deny the perfect character of Christ lest he be accused of denying Christ himself. Notice Paul emphasizes the degree of perfection as being the fullness or complete nature of Christ. Yet another scripture found in 1 John 3:2 tells us, *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."* Thus he points out the reality of our being in the process of becoming perfect and thus gods in embryo. A god or goddess in embryo is a man or woman in the process of seeking perfection and whose ultimate destiny depends upon how sincerely he or she seeks to walk in the footsteps of Christ or take upon their selves Christ like characteristics. This sincerity of purpose of each human being determines the measure of grace received and thus the degree of salvation attained, according to my understanding.

A few Book of Mormon scriptures may shed a little more light on the process of perfection. First, we will look at God's great purpose for the earth's and our creation. In Moses 1:39 we are told; *"For behold, this is my work and my glory — to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man"*. Among other things, I believe this verse points out that the perfection process is his work and not that of man's. Second, we might look at Ether 12:27 wherein we are told;

"And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness, I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them." We should also add Moroni 10:32 wherein that great prophet tells us; *"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourself of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God."* Therein we have the answer, i.e. we are perfected or made into gods by the grace of God and not of ourselves. We do however have a part to play as Moroni tells us, which is to deny or give up ungodliness and to love God with all our might mind and strength. That is the process we should follow during mortality. It requires faith, obedience born of humility and sincere effort on our part. In so doing, God provides the rest for he understands we are dedicated to learn of him and to walk in the footsteps of Christ.

O how glorious a doctrine this is, providing purpose beyond the mere prospect of some indescribable reward for obedience. I believe with full confidence, this is what Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 15:40-43.

This is also a good time to repeat from chapter 21, the fact that the early Church taught the doctrine of deification as evidenced in the present acceptance of that doctrine by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

If one accepts God as a reality, then reason alone should indicate the reality of a plan of some sort. As previously mentioned, who could even imagine a God who has created the heavens and the earth and all therein without a purpose? Human beings with their limited intelligence have plans for even their smallest efforts. Is it even reasonable that an all-wise Heavenly Father would have less? If we are spirit children of our Heavenly Father as the scriptures attest, then we are gods in embryo and have the potential to become perfect as our Father in Heaven is, as previously described. This can occur through his divine Grace and not by our own effort but surely such is a part of his plan. What earthly father would not want his son or daughter to grow to their full potential and

become responsible and capable adults? Once again, reason alone attests to that fact. The plan devised by God with its three part existence gives purpose to mortality and provides the motivation to develop one's spirit or inner self, which he or she will take with them when they pass into the third estate. It de-emphasizes the physical self and provides the proper perspective with which we should view mortality. Of course, our Father and God will reveal the factual nature of the plan in its fullness to the honest seeker of truth. We only have to understand what that plan is and in so far as he deems it proper, he will enlighten those who seek such understanding.

CATHEDRAL WINDOWS ATTEST TO THE PLAN

That the Church in the meridian of time taught, the reality of the plan of salvation or redemption or happiness, is made evident by stained glass windows found in three cathedrals in France, namely in Chartres, Bourges and Sens. John W. Welch, a professor of the law school at Brigham Young University and editor in chief of BYU Studies has laid this out beautifully in an article in the February 2007 Ensign from which I will liberally extract appropriate quotes according to my need. As usual, they will be in italics with some maybe in bold italics for emphasis. Also, any authority's statement he has included will be enclosed in single quotation marks. Similarly, I intend to paraphrase, as appropriate, various thoughts in his article to save space and the reader should understand none of my comments are original with me. I am simply trying to share, once again, something I have come across, which made a deep impression on me.

Mr. Welch's article has the title of "Parable of the Good Samaritan" with a subtitle of "Forgotten Symbols". He begins by mentioning the incident in Luke 10:25-35 in which a lawyer asked him, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responds by saying, "What is written in the law? [To which the lawyer quotes Deuteronomy 6:5]. Jesus then says, "This do and thou shalt live". The man then challenges him by asking, "Who is my neighbor? [Where upon Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan]. Mr. Welch continues with the following. "This parable's content is clearly practical and dramatic in its obvious meaning, but a time-honored Christian tradition also saw the parable as an impressive allegory of the Fall and Redemption of mankind. This early Christian understanding of the Good Samaritan

is depicted in a famous eleventh century Cathedral in Chartres, France. One of its beautiful stained glass windows portrays the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden at the top of the window, and, in parallel, the parable of the Good Samaritan at the bottom. This illustrates 'a symbolic interpretation of Christ's parable that was popular in the Middle Ages'. He cites a paper by Malcolm Miller and asks the reader a question, namely, "What does the fall of Adam and Eve have to do with the parable of the Good Samaritan?" He then explains, "The roots of this allegorical interpretation reach deep into early Christianity. In the second century A.D., Irenaeus in France and Clement of Alexandria both saw the Good Samaritan as symbolizing Christ Himself saving the fallen victim wounded with sin. A few years later, Clement's pupil Origen stated that this interpretation came down to him from earlier Christians, who had described the allegory as follows:

'The man who was going down is Adam. Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the Law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience, the beast is the Lord's body, the [inn], which accepts all who wish to enter, is the Church. ... The manager of the [inn] is the head of the church, to whom its care is entrusted. And the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Savior's second coming.'

"This allegorical reading was taught not only by ancient followers of Jesus, but it was virtually universal throughout early Christianity, being advocated by Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen, and in the fourth and fifth centuries by Chrysostom in Constantinople, Ambrose in Milan, and Augustine in North Africa. This interpretation is found most completely in two other medieval stained glass windows, in the French cathedrals in Bourges and Sens.

A Type and a Shadow of the Plan of Salvation

"Readers gain much by pondering the scriptures, especially as these writings testify of Jesus Christ (See John 5:39). The parable of the Good Samaritan testifies of Christ. It teaches of the plan of salvation, the Savior's atoning love, and our journey towards inheriting eternal life. It can be read as a story not only about a man who went down from Jerusalem to

Jericho, but also about all who came down from the presence of God to live on earth. This meaning becomes more visible in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ restored through His latter day prophets.

Let's examine the story, starting in Luke 10:30.

'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves ...'

A certain man. Early Christians compared this man to Adam. This connection may have been more obvious in ancient languages than in modern translations. In Hebrew, the word adam means 'man, mankind,' 'the plural of men,' as well as a proper name. Thus Clement of Alexandria rightly saw the victim in this allegory as representing 'all of us.' Indeed, we all have come down as Adams and Eves, subject to the vicissitudes of mortality. **'For as in Adam all die ...'** (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Went down. the early Christian writer Chrysostom saw in this phrase the descent of Adam from the garden into this world – from glory to the mundane, from immortality to mortality. This story in Luke 10 implies the man went down intentionally, knowing the risks that would be involved in the journey. No one forced him to go down to Jericho. He apparently felt the journey was worth the well-known risks of such travel on the poorly maintained roads in Jesus' day.

From Jerusalem. Jesus depicts the person as going down not from an ordinary place but from Jerusalem. Because of the sanctity of the holy temple city, early Christians readily saw in this element the idea that this person had come down from the presence of God.

To Jericho. Jericho was readily identified with this world. At more than 825 feet (250 m) below sea level, Jericho is the lowest city on earth. Its mild winter climate made it a hedonistic resort area where Herod had built a sumptuous vacation palace. Yet one should note that the traveler in the parable had not yet arrived in Jericho when the robbers attacked. That person was on the steep way down to Jericho, but he had not yet reached the bottom.

Fell. It is easy to see here an allusion to the fallen mortal state and to the plight of individual

sinfulness: 'Yea, all are fallen and lost' (Alma 34:9).

Among thieves. The early Christian writers variously saw the thieves (or robbers) as the devil and his satanic forces, evil spirits, or false teachers. The Greek word for 'robbers' used by Luke implies that these thieves were not casual operators. The traveler was assailed by a band of pernicious highwaymen in a scheming, organized society that acted with deliberate and concerted intent.

Origen noted that 'he went down intending to rescue and care for the dying man'. The Savior came purposefully with oil and bandages 'to bring redemption unto the world'.

'... which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.'

Stripped him of his raiment. Early Christians

sensed that Jesus spoke of something important here. Origen and Augustine saw the loss of the traveler's garment as a symbol for mankind's loss of immortality and incorruptibility. Chrysostom spoke of the loss of 'his robe of immortality' or 'robe of obedience.' Ambrose spoke of the traveler being 'stripped of the covering of spiritual grace which we [all] receive [from God].'

The attackers apparently wanted the traveler's clothing for no mention is made of any wealth or commodities he might be carrying. For some reason, the robbers seem interested in his garment, which he brought down from the holy place and something they envy and want to take away.

Wounded. This term was seen as a similitude of the pains of life, travails of the soul, and afflictions due to diverse sins and vices. Indeed, the enemies of the soul leave wounds (see Jacob 2:8-9). Transgression has real effects (see Alma 41:10).

Half dead. The robbers departed leaving the person precisely 'half-dead'. We may see in this detail an allusion to the first and second deaths. The person had fallen, had become subject to sin, and had suffered the first death, becoming mortal. But the second death, the permanent separation from God, could still be averted (see Alma 12:32-36).

'And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and

looked on him, and passed by on the other side.'

By chance. The arrival of the Jewish priest was 'by chance', not the result of a conscious search. His presence there was not by anyone's plan.

A certain priest ... and likewise a Levite. The early Christian commentators all saw the priest as symbolizing the law of Moses. In their minds the problem was not that the bearers of the Old Testament priesthood did not want to help the fallen man, but that the Law of Moses did not have the power to save him. Indeed, the Law of Moses was only a type and a shadow of the Atonement that was yet to come, not in its full efficacy (see Mosiah 3:15-17).

The Levite was seen as representing the Old Testament prophets, whose words the Lord came to fulfill (Matthew 5:17; 3 Nephi 15:2-5). A lesser class of priests, the Levites did chores in the temple. At least the Levite came close to helping; he 'came' and saw. He may have wanted to help, but perhaps he viewed himself as too lowly to help; he also lacked the power to save the dying person.

'But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine ...'

Samaritan. The early Christian writers unanimously saw the Good Samaritan as a representation of Christ. Chrysostom suggests that a Samaritan is an apt depiction of Christ because 'as a Samaritan is not from Judea so Christ is not of this world'.

Jesus' audience in Jerusalem may well have recognized here a reference by the Savior to Himself. Some Jews in Jerusalem rejected Jesus with this insult, **'Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan?'** (John 8:48). Because Nazareth is across the valley north of Samaria, these two locations could easily be lumped together. And just as the Samaritans were viewed as the least of all humanity, so it was prophesied that the Messiah would be **'despised and rejected of men'** and **'esteemed not'** (see Isaiah 53:3).

As he journeyed. It would appear that the Samaritan (representing Christ) was purposely looking for people in need of help. The text

does not say that he arrived by happenstance. Origen noted that **'he went down intending to rescue and care for the dying man'**. The Savior came purposefully with oil and bandages **'to bring redemption unto the world'** (3 Nephi 9:21).

Compassion. This important word speaks of the pure love of Christ. The Greek word says that the Samaritan's bowels were moved with deep, inner sympathy. This word is used in the New Testament only when the authors wish to describe God's divine emotions of mercy. It appears prominently in the parables of the unmerciful servant, in which the Lord (representing God) 'was moved with compassion' (Matthew 18:27), and the prodigal son, in which the father (again representing God) saw his son returning and **'had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him'** (Luke 5:20). Likewise, the Samaritan represents the divinely compassionate Christ, who suffered so **'that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people'** (Alma 7:12).

Bound up his wounds. Some early Christians said that the bandages represented love, faith, and hope, **'ligatures of salvation which cannot be undone.'**

When I come again. The Christ figure openly promises to come again, a ready allusion to the Second Coming of Christ.

Others saw the bands as Christ's teachings, which bind us to righteousness. Latter-day Saints would add that the rescued person is bound to the Lord through covenants (see Doctrine and Covenants 35:24; 43:9).

Oil. An olive oil lotion would have been very soothing. While most of the early Christian writers saw here a symbol of Christ's words of consolation, Chrysostom saw this as a **'holy anointing'** – which may refer to several priesthood ordinances, the healing of the sick (see James 5:14), the gift of the Holy Ghost (often symbolized by olive oil), or the anointing of a king or a queen.

Wine. The Samaritan also poured wine onto the open wound to cleanse it. Late Christian writers saw this wine as the word of God – something that stings – but the earlier Christian interpretation associated the wine with the blood of Christ, symbolized by the sacrament (see Matthew 26:27-29); 3 Nephi 18:8-11). This wine, the atoning blood, washes away sin and

purifies the soul, allowing God's Spirit to be with us. In addition to rendering physical help, a truly good Samaritan administers the saving principles and ordinances of the gospel as well. The atoning wine may sting at first, but its effects soon bring healing peace.

'... and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.'

Set him on his own beast. Christ, fulfilling prophecy, bears our infirmities (see Isaiah 53:4; Alma 7:11). The Samaritan's beast was thought to symbolize Christ's body. Being placed on his beast is to believe that God became flesh, bore our sins, and suffered for us.

Inn. For the early Christian this element readily symbolized the Church. An 'inn' was **'a public house open to all'**. A public shelter is comparable to the Church of Christ in several ways. A wayside inn is not the heavenly destination but a necessary aid in helping travelers reach their eternal home.

Took care of him. The Samaritan stayed with the injured person and cared for him personally the first night. He did not turn the injured person over too quickly to the innkeeper but stayed with him through the dark hours. As Origen commented, Jesus cares for the wounded **'not only during the day, but also at night. He devotes all his attention and activity to him'**.

'And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.'

On the morrow. Early commentators saw here the idea that Jesus would rise on Resurrection morning. Christ ministered in person to his disciples for a short time. After his Ascension, He left the traveler to be cared for by the Church.

The host. Accordingly, early commentators saw the host, or innkeeper, as Paul or the other apostles and their successors. If the inn refers to the Church in general, however, the innkeeper and his staff can represent all Church leaders and workers who are entrusted by the Lord to nurture and care for any rescued soul who seeks healing.

When I come again. The Christ figure openly promises to come again, a ready allusion to the Second Coming of Christ. The Greek word translated **'to come again'** appears only one

other time in the New Testament, in Luke 19:15, referring to the parable of the Lord who would return to judge what the people had done with the money they had been given. That linkage markedly strengthens this allusion to the Second Coming.

Repay or reward. Finally, the innkeeper is promised that all his costs will be covered. **'I will reward you for whatsoever you expend.'** Perhaps more than any other element in the story, this promise – in effect giving the innkeeper a blank check – has troubled modern commentators who understand this story simply as a real life event. Who in his right mind would make such an open-ended commitment to a strange innkeeper? But when the story is understood allegorically, this promise makes sense, for the Samaritan (Christ) and his innkeeper already know and trust each other before this promise is given."

Well, I included more of the article than I intended to. As I moved through the article I realized my purpose was not only to demonstrate the fact that the early Church taught of a plan of salvation but likewise Christ did while he was on the earth. One may disagree with the interpretation of this allegory but it is apparent that early Church leaders, prior to the completion of the apostasy, had a similar interpretation. Only in later times did the idea of a plan of salvation disappear from the teachings of Christendom. This concept of a plan forms the framework upon which all commandments, ordinances and covenants are secured and receives its efficacy through the atonement. This framework, linking all the various teachings and ordinances together has allowed me to better understand God's purpose for mankind and for myself, in particular. Consequently, it provides me with a purpose for mortality and a clearer vision of both our pre-mortal and post-mortal estates. With this in mind, I now conclude with Mr. Welch's closing remarks to further expand the reader's understanding of that wonderful allegory, which was so understood by early Church fathers.

"An Eternal Imperative

Because of our difficulty in comprehending His infinite nature and divine fullness, God speaks to us in similitudes (see Moses 5:7). Symbols draw our finite minds to sacred truths that are embedded in the mystery of Christ's incomparable gospel, and an allegorical understanding of the parable of the Good

Samaritan adds eternal perspectives to its moral imperatives.

In His parables, Jesus taught the essentials of the Father's plan of salvation. As a type and shadow of this plan, the good Samaritan places our deeds of neighborly kindness here in mortality within the eternal context of where we have come down from, how we have fallen into our present plight, and how the binding ordinances and healing love of the promised Redeemer and the nurture of His Church can rescue us from our present situation, as we serve and live worthy of reward at His Second Coming.

*Seeing the parable in this light invites readers to identify with virtually every character in the story. At one level people can see themselves as the Good Samaritan, acting as physical rescuers and saviors on Mount Zion, aiding in the all important cause of rescuing lost souls. Jesus told the Pharisee, **'Go and do thou likewise'** (Luke 10:37). By doing as the Samaritan, we join with Him in helping to bring to pass the salvation and eternal life of mankind.*

Disciples also want to think of themselves as innkeepers who have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to facilitate the long-term spiritual recovery of injured travelers.

Or again, readers may see themselves as the traveler. As the parable begins, everyone sympathizes and identifies with the lone and weary traveler. We all need to be saved. As the story ends, all travelers can feel safe, having learned that,

*according to the interpretation, He who **'was the neighbor to him who fell among the thieves'** (Luke 10:36) is none other than the merciful Christ. He is the most exemplary Neighbor.*

*This realization answers the second question: **'And who is my neighbor?'** At the same time, it answers the first: **'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?'** Eternal life comes by loving God **'with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind'** (Luke 10:27) and by loving His Son (thy neighbor) as thyself. And that is done by going and doing as the Savior did, in loving our fellow beings, for when we serve them we are only in the service of our God (Mosiah 2:17).*

AUTHORITY AND POWER OF PRIESTHOOD

As mentioned previously, by the time the Church was to be organized, the Aaronic Priesthood had been restored to both Joseph and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist who held its keys. Likewise, Peter, James and John, holding the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, also restored the same to them a little later. They lay dormant in Oliver prior to Joseph's death as only the Lord's designated prophet can actively exercise all the keys. When the quorum of the twelve apostles was formed, they likewise received those keys in dormancy. With Joseph's martyrdom, the president of the quorum of the twelve, Brigham Young, became the Lord's chosen prophet to lead the Church and thus his keys were activated. Each succeeding prophet and president of the Church following Brigham Young has been given the right to exercise those keys, though they lie dormant in the remainder of the apostles. Thus president Monson exercises the keys today and provides the right to exercise certain portions of the same to appropriate leaders at various levels. At least, this is my understanding of the process today, even though I make no claim of complete or absolute correctness.

All worthy male adult members of the Church have the Melchizedek priesthood conferred upon them, giving them the authority to act in the name of God under the ultimate direction of

The power of the priesthood or its effectiveness when administered by individual priesthood holders; lies in each individual's personal righteousness.

the prophet, i.e. he who holds all keys of the kingdom and in whom they are activated. Certain designated priesthood leaders are

given portions of the keys held by the prophet to direct activities within their realm of authority. Thus local authority to direct the Church's affairs is provided through those men called to preside at various levels within the Church organization. Consequently, the Stake President has the keys to direct the stake; the Bishop has the keys to direct the ward and so forth. Such individuals then have power to grant authority within their particular organizations to people called as teachers, presidents of organizations, etc.

The power of the priesthood or its effectiveness when administered by individual priesthood holders; lies in each individual's personal righteousness. Thus we read in Doctrine and Covenants 121:36; *"That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the*

powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.”

I quote from a manual, “Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood”, which better explains this particular principle. “Those who hold the priesthood represent Christ. Therefore, we must do what He would have us to do if we are to have His power. We must obey His commandments and try, whenever we exercise the priesthood, to act how He would have us act.

Elder H. Burke Peterson explained: ‘I understand that there is a difference between priesthood authority and priesthood power. ... All of us who hold the priesthood have the authority to act for the Lord, but the effectiveness of our authority—depends on the pattern of our lives; it depends upon our righteousness.’”

Hopefully, the preceding will help the reader better understand how priesthood authority is properly administered in the Church to carry out the Lord’s work as He would so do if He were here directing the work.

To re-emphasize the need for priesthood authority, I include Paul’s statement given in Hebrews 5:4 and a quotation from the ‘Constitution of the Holy Apostles’, both of which were mentioned before. First, is Paul’s statement; “*And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*” Next I provide the quote of Mr. Callister’s taken from a more inclusive quote in the previous chapter.

*“In making reference to this scripture, ‘The Constitution of the Holy Apostles’ (c. third or fourth century) stated: **For we have affirmed only that no one snatches the sacerdotal dignity to himself, but either receives it from God, as Melchizedec and Job, or from the high priest, as Aaron from Moses.**”* These clearly specify the need for such authority.

BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

This mode of baptism was clearly specified by John the Baptist in the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood and given in Doctrine and Covenants thirteen quoted earlier. I repeat it here for the reader’s convenience.

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of the Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”

As evidence of this mode of baptism in the early Church, one simply needs to turn to the book of Matthew 3:6, which describes John as baptizing in the Jordan River and Romans 6:3-5. One can also review chapter 21.

MAN’S AGENCY

The United States is a bastion of freedom for those living within the framework of its laws. We speak of freedom of conscience and freedom of worship as being unfettered by government as long as such activities do not infringe upon the

The United States is a bastion of freedom for those living within the framework of its laws. We speak of freedom of conscience and freedom of worship as being unfettered by government as long as such activities do not infringe upon the rights of others.

rights of others. The law controls many other areas of activity, to a greater or lesser extent, this being necessary for protection of the citizenry. As far as the restored gospel is concerned, the

views of the early Church in these areas are expressed in Doctrine and Covenants 134. This is a declaration of belief regarding governments and laws in general with a major part given verbatim in chapter 20. Here I only include a summary of its contents to provide the reader with an impression of where Joseph and thus the early Church stood on the issue. The summary outlines the contents of the chapter by providing a short description of various groups of verses with their inclusive numbers. I include it here as an introduction to the topic of agency with which I am concerned.

“1 – 4, Governments should preserve freedom of conscience and worship; 5 – 8, All men should uphold their governments, and owe respect and deference to the law; 9 – 10, Religious societies should not exercise civil powers; 11 – 12, Men are justified in defending themselves and their property.”

One can easily read the details of these verses by gaining access to a copy of the Doctrine and Covenants. I believe such an effort is useful in comparing the concept of agency with freedom of will. They are somewhat similar, but not synonymous. The term agency, as used in the

restored gospel, refers to moral agency and is a gift of God. The power to act according to one's will has other implications, such as the capacity to overcome (willpower), as well as acting in accordance with one's will and is controlled by civil law, at least to a degree. Agency is unfettered by God but its exercise may be limited by the law. Elder Bruce R. McConkie tells us in Mormon Doctrine, "**Agency is the ability and freedom to choose good or evil.**" All mankind can distinguish the difference by virtue of our consciences but the control of our agency or use thereof, is a personal choice. It is probably true that our consciences may be dulled or sharpened through repetition of negative or positive actions. It is probably also true that where mental impairment is concerned, one's ability to discern right from wrong may also be impaired. The Lord Omniscient recognizes such and judgment is made accordingly or so it seems to me.

I believe I will include large sections of Elder McConkie's discussion of agency because of its importance in understanding the plan of salvation. Elder McConkie tells us, "*Four great principles must be in force if there is to be agency: 1. Laws must exist, laws ordained by an Omniscient power, laws, which can be obeyed or disobeyed; 2. Opposites must exist – good and evil, virtue and vice, right and wrong – that is there must be an opposition, one force pulling one way and another pulling the other; 3. A knowledge of good and evil must be had by those who are to enjoy the agency, that is, they must know the differences between the opposites; and 4. An unfettered power of choice must prevail.*"

*Agency is given to man as an essential part of the great plan or redemption [i.e. the plan of salvation or plan of happiness]. As with all things pertaining to this plan, it is based on the atoning sacrifice of Christ. As Lehi [an early Book of Mormon prophet] expressed it: **'Because they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given. Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity***

and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.' [2 Nephi 2:26-30; 10:23; Alma 13:3; Hel. 14:31]

*Agency is so fundamental a part of the great plan of creation and redemption that if it should cease, all other things would vanish away. "All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, **to act for itself**, as all intelligence also; **otherwise there is no existence.**" [Doctrine and Covenants 93:30] Expanding and interpreting this revealed principle, Lehi said: **'It must needs be, that there is opposition in all things. If not so, ... righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must be a compound in one; wherefore if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there could have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.***

And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could be no creation of things neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.' [2 Nephi 2:11-14; Doctrine and Covenants 29:39]

Agency is a philosophy of opposites, and because these opposites exist, men can reap either salvation or damnation by the use they make of their agency.

*..., it is the will of the Lord that all agencies, governments included, should be so ordained 'That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, **that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment.**' [Doctrine and Covenants 101:78]. As in earlier chapters and quotations, italics identify the material as a quotation and bold italics are added for emphasis.*

Churches which teach that men are predestined to gain salvation or damnation, according to the election of God, regardless of the acts of the individual, find no place in their theology for the true doctrine of agency. Their reasoning is to this effect: Why is there any need for agency, so as to be able to perform good works leading to salvation, if your salvation is predetermined by Deity on the basis of predestination regardless of works? Thus the false doctrine of predestination begets the false doctrine that men are not free to work out their own salvation, as such is made possible through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. ...

*Agency, of course, is exercised in accordance with the law. Once a **final** choice has been made, there is no turning back to seek the opposite goal. Men may exercise their agency to repent and turn to the Lord in this life, in which event they will be saved. But if they choose to rebel against the light and work wickedness, they will be damned. And once they are damned, there is no power of choice left whereby they can alter their course and gain salvation."*

I am confident I am correct in stating here that the salvation Elder McConkie speaks of is eternal life, the greatest gift God can give to mankind. The damnation he speaks of includes the lesser kingdoms, called by Paul the terrestrial or telestial kingdoms, which are glorious but wherein progress towards perfection is halted or damned. The opportunity, to accept or reject the light he speaks of, refers to the opportunity to hear the restored gospel or that unadulterated gospel preached by Jesus Christ. Our attitude or desire to seek the truth seems to be the key to acceptance. That is why one must seek the truth in humility and prayer, which merits confirmation through the Holy Spirit.

To depend on other men without such confirmation is to blindly follow them, placing our faith in their beliefs rather than those which the Lord will reveal to all honest pursuers of truth. To accept the light is to begin the long process of scripture study, humble prayer and obedience to those truths revealed unto us. It is this step-by-step, line upon line process that builds our testimony and provides the fruit whereby we can properly judge whether the path we are following is, indeed, the path leading to all truth. It is

likewise the path whereby the beautiful blossoms of the plan of salvation unfold and allow us to partake of its incomparable beauty. Of this I bear witness through that truth, which has been revealed to me over the years in my own quest. Whereas my early understanding left me with many questions and some doubt, living that truth to which the Lord has given me privilege has resulted in certainty of the precepts given me.

SOME BEAUTIFUL RESTORED AND/OR CORRECTED ORDINANCES

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

To my knowledge, only the LDS Church considers this particular doctrine, as an ordinance to be administered by the priesthood, though I admit that I am not conversant nor am I particularly knowledgeable regarding doctrines of other protestant faiths. However, I feel compelled to say **only** those members of the LDS

Our attitude or desire to seek the truth seems to be the key to acceptance. That is why one must seek the truth in humility and prayer, which merits confirmation through the Holy Spirit.

Church who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood can truly bestow this gift because only they have been given the authority needed for this sacred ordinance. Like all ordinances of the gospel, it requires the priesthood authority received through Joseph Smith from servants of Jesus Christ to be acceptable by the Lord. That the higher priesthood is required is made evident by the passage in Acts 8:14-17 wherein Peter and John conferred the gift of the Holy Ghost upon those whom Philip had baptized earlier. Philip, having only the Aaronic Priesthood, lacked the authority to confer that gift upon them. Latter day revelation points out the need for this gift for all who come unto Christ if they are to properly thrive in the gospel. This sacred gift enlightens our understanding in all things pertaining to the gospel as we live worthy of his companionship. Through it we can obtain guidance in our daily lives, being warned of danger and/or being directed to pursuits which will edify us during our mortal tenure. Through it we gain a greater appreciation for the plan of salvation and are motivated to gain eternal life.

SETTING ONE APART FOR A SPECIFIC CALLING

In being set apart for a specific calling, one receives the authority to function in that capacity and thus, carry out the responsibilities therein. It is received from or under the direction of the priesthood holder holding the keys for the

organization directly involved. This was described to a degree earlier in this chapter. I will repeat the paragraph provided there to refresh the reader's memory.

All worthy male adult members of the Church have the Melchizedek priesthood conferred upon them, giving them the authority to act in the name of God under the ultimate direction of the prophet, i.e. he who holds all keys of the kingdom and in whom they are activated. Certain designated priesthood leaders are given portions of the keys held by the prophet to direct activities within their realm of authority. Thus local authority to direct the Church's affairs is provided through those men called to preside at various levels within the Church organization. Consequently, the Stake President has the keys to direct the stake; the Bishop has the keys to direct the ward and so forth. Such individuals then have power to grant authority within their particular organizations to people called as teachers, presidents of organizations, etc.

BLESSING OF BABIES

Blessing of babies is performed in each individual ward under the direction of the local bishop. Even one who might be asked to perform the blessing from another area and ward requires the local bishop's approval. In most cases, the blessing is performed by the child's father, assuming he receives approval of that bishop.

The blessing is similar in nature to christening in other faiths but differs primarily in that baptism of the infant is not involved and the ordinance is performed by the authority of the holy priesthood by virtue of the Holy Ghost. Besides voicing specific words of the ordinance, the priesthood holder pronounces a blessing as received by the Spirit. Such a blessing is a guide for the infant, expressing heartfelt desires of the parents but it is not automatic. That is, full receipt of the blessing materializes by virtue of obedience, as the child matures, and of course, by virtue of the faith of all involved. It basically states the potential that God gives the child for this life

FATHER'S BLESSINGS

A father, holding the Melchizedek priesthood, may bless any member of his family without the bishop's approval. The office itself provides the authority and thus gives the blessing efficacy. It is usually given wherein special circumstances make it desirable by those involved, such as prior to a mission, leaving home for college, etc.

Its power for effectiveness comes through faith of father and child and by virtue of obedience, as do all such blessings and is consequently a guide for the individual involved.

HEALING THE SICK

James speaks of this wonderful ordinance in chapter 5, verse 14. Just as Jesus blessed the sick, faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holders have the power to bless and heal the sick. Brethren who administer to the sick should seek to know and express the will of the Lord in the blessing. Doctrine and Covenants, section 42 and verse 44 describes the proper procedure and the need to follow the will of the Lord, as given by the Holy Ghost. In so doing, the hands of the priesthood holder administering this holy ordinance become proxy for the hands of Christ with the Holy Spirit directing the officiator in the words Christ would have him speak. Some individuals are not meant to be cured, their time on the earth being fulfilled, unfortunately. When one understands the beautiful plan of salvation, however, such a bitter pill is somewhat easier to swallow because of the realization that all will eventually be reunited.

WORK FOR THE DEAD

All Christendom but the restored Church, even the Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints, have no satisfactory answer when asked, "*What about those souls who never had a chance to hear the gospel during their earthly tenure?*" Yet, the doctrine of preaching to the dead and baptizing those who accept the gospel was clearly taught in the primitive Church. Peter described Christ's mission to the dead during the time between his crucifixion and resurrection in 1 Peter 3:18-20 and explains the reason for it Peter 4:6. Likewise, the early Christians practiced baptism for the dead as evidenced by Paul's question in 1 Corinthians 15:29. This sacred work is one of the principle reasons for the existence of temples. There, temple patrons can be proxy for the deceased and represent them in all necessary ordinances of salvation. Those for whom the work is done are under no obligation to accept these ordinances, being able to exercise their agency in the spirit world. Just as an individual has to accept the gospel in this life to receive its blessing, they too must be converted through preaching in the spirit world. What a wonderful way to serve our progenitors as well as others who are waiting for their sacred ordinances to be performed. I bear witness of the validity of this work as well as the

joy and spiritual satisfaction it brings to those who participate in it. Many are the spiritual manifestations in the temple of its acceptance by those who have preceded us through the veil. I can find no better way to spend my time during retirement than to serve the deceased in the House of the Lord.

ETERNAL MARRIAGE & SEALING OF FAMILIES

All other ordinances of the gospel prepare the way and point toward this crowning ordinance of eternal marriage. After sealing a couple as man and wife, their children are sealed to them, in a similar manner, which then constitutes an eternal family. Likewise, parents are sealed to their parents, forming an unbroken patriarchal line or a chain, which will eventually lead back to Adam, as other ordinances are performed for the deceased. As already stated, such ordinances are of no effect until those for whom they are performed accept the gospel and make proper repentance in the spirit world. This work, accomplished in Holy Temples around the world, provides greater understanding of comments made by Peter in 1 Peter 3:19-20 and 4:5-6. Though referred to earlier, I include them here, once again, for the benefit of the reader. In 1 Peter 3:19-20, he speaks of Christ's activities during the three days prior to his resurrection wherein we read; *"By which also he [Christ] went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."* Then moving to 1 Peter 4:6 he, Peter, explains, *"For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."* This latter verse not only explains that the gospel is preached to those in the spirit world who haven't heard it but also validates the concept of our spiritual existence after death.

Think what a wonderful concept this is, i.e. the spirits of all mankind existing together in the spirit world. It gives hope and validity to our innermost desires of seeing our parents and other loved ones again after we depart this life. It adds credence to the idea of mankind having spirits within our mortal tabernacles. It also emphasizes the fact that life is much more than

After sealing a couple as man and wife, their children are sealed to them, in a similar manner, which then constitutes an eternal family.

simply achieving temporal success and collecting the many physical rewards available to us during our mortal existence. Thus, it gives purpose to life, which purpose is described in its fullness by the restored gospel.

PROTESTANT MISCONCEPTIONS

I would like to address a couple of common misconceptions of some Protestants and maybe others as well, regarding the LDS Church's views on the Bible and Christ. It may help clarify their understanding of the Church's beliefs in these areas, though I don't pretend to be their spokesman. They are; first, "The Mormons have their own Bible" and second, the Mormons aren't Christians". I address these because of their commonality, as remarks of various protestant leaders and hence their probable acceptance by many of the uninformed among the lay membership of those churches. We accept those members as being among Christians and don't question their sincerity of their belief in Christ. We believe any individual professing to believe in Christ is sincere in their statement. Only Jesus Christ can judge the sincerity and depth of such a statement, which decision will be made clear at the time we appear before him at the final judgment. Man doesn't have the right or the depth of knowledge necessary to make such a statement. That being the case, we reserve that position for ourselves, leaving all men and women to pursue the path or means of worship they choose in life. Let me first address the concept of the so-called "Mormon Bible".

THE BIBLE

The Bible has been one of the doctrinal texts of the LDS Church since, and even before, its inception. In fact, it was a verse in the Bible, James 1:5 that prompted Joseph to seek help from the Lord regarding which church was true. As stated earlier, he was told that none were true. This was not because the people therein were corrupt or were not in their own way seeking the proper means to worship him and his Father. Such is also not true of those in a similar position today. No, it was and is because there were and are many missing or changed doctrines from the original Church and all lacked priesthood authority. This problem was described in chapter 21, as evidence of the apostasy. Joseph wasn't the first to recognize the problem existed but he was the only one to

be called by the Lord, as an instrument in his hands, to provide the final correction necessary. The Bible was never abandon by Joseph or the Church from the very beginning. In fact it was constantly searched by Joseph and became the root cause of many revelations. The Book of Mormon was simply added to the Bible as another witness of Christ. In terms of sacred scripture, one might call it a third witness, the first being the Old Testament, the second the New Testament and the third the Book of Mormon.

Such is stated in the "Articles of Faith" published in 1842 in answer to John Wentworth, proprietor and editor of the Chicago Democrat. It is the 8th article and follows for the edification of all readers. "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". Additionally, both the Old Testament, and the New Testament, are studied in depth as the official Sunday school text every four years in our church. Similarly, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants coupled with the Pearl of Great Price, are rotated therein as well.

I might also add that those people who claim the Bible is the only word of God and thus of Jesus Christ, available to man today, are apparently rejecting all of the various books brought forth since the compilation of the Bible. Such would include the "Dead Sea Scrolls", the "Nag Hammadi Library" and many others. Though these haven't been officially accepted as doctrine, to my knowledge, by any church including the LDS Church, the theologians therein are deeply involved in the evaluation of the same. Such texts have pointed to possible errors of various books of the Bible, being earlier versions of the same. An example is the book of Isaiah as found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Many lost books are named after known apostles such as Peter, etc. Wouldn't it seem logical that the chief apostle would have written much more than that found in the New Testament? Why should any text claiming to be the word of God be rejected before being fully evaluated by mankind? Why should we limit ourselves to the Bible with its many interpretations by the various theologians when they produce so much confusion among professing Christians? Shouldn't we have faith

that the Lord will guide us in the selection of any and all books that might add to the clarity and purpose he has for us?

To further clarify the Church's position regarding the Bible, I will quote freely from a talk in the May 2007 Ensign by Elder M. Russell Ballard's given in April. He is one of the Twelve Apostles of the latter day Church for those unacquainted with him. The talk entitled "The Miracle of the Holy Bible", is one the reader would find extremely interesting as a whole, if they were to read it. The opening two paragraphs are; "My brothers and sisters, the Holy Bible is a miracle! It is a miracle that the Bible's 4,000 years of sacred and secular history were recorded and preserved by the prophets, apostles, and inspired churchmen.

Joseph wasn't the first to recognize the problem but he was the only one to be called by the Lord, as an instrument in his hands, to correct it.

It is a miracle that we have the Bible's powerful doctrine, principles, poetry, and stories. But most of all, it is a wonderful miracle that we have the account of the life, ministry, and words of Jesus, which was protected through the Dark Ages and through the conflicts of countless generations so that we may have it today".

It would take a rather illogical person to even think such words don't give an impression of deep respect and reverence for this sacred book. This being so, would it make sense for us or anyone else to replace it with another text? No, the Book of Mormon as well as the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price simply add, confirm and testify along with the Bible that God is our Father, Jesus Christ is our Savior and the Holy Ghost is a Comforter and Testator for mankind. We revere and accept all as official doctrine of the gospel. Let me now move on to some additional quotations from Elder Ballard, which add to our acceptance of the Bible as the word of God. We read:

"Abraham Lincoln said of the Bible, 'This Great Book ... is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong' (Speeches and Writings, 1859 1865 [1989] page 628).

It is not by chance or coincidence that we have the Bible today. Righteous individuals were prompted by the Spirit to record both the sacred things they saw and the inspired words they heard and spoke. Other devoted people were

prompted to protect and preserve these records. Men like John Wycliffe, the courageous William Tyndale, and Johannes Gutenberg were prompted against much opposition to translate the Bible into language the people could understand and to publish it in books people could read. I believe even the scholars of King James had spiritual promptings in their translation work. ...

Although these early Christians reformers agreed on many things, they ultimately disagreed on many points of doctrine. This resulted in the organizations of numerous Christian denominations. Roger Williams, an early champion of religious liberty, concluded that there was 'no regularly-constituted Church on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any Church ordinance; nor could there be, until new apostles were sent by the great Head of the Church, for whose coming he was seeking' (See William Cullen Bryant, ed., 'Picturesque America; or, the Land We Live In, 2 vols. [1872-74], 1:502). ...

How grateful we should be for the Holy Bible. In it we learn not only of the life and teachings and doctrines of Christ, we learn of His Church and of His Priesthood and of the organization which He established and named the Church of Jesus Christ in those former days. We believe in that Church, and we believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is that same Church, restored to earth, complete, with the same organization and the same priesthood."

Skipping on a little further we find, "... people say that 'Mormons are not Christians because they have their own Bible, the Book of Mormon'. To anyone harboring this misconception, we say that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and the author of our salvation and that we believe, revere, and love the Holy Bible. We do have additional sacred scripture, including the Book of Mormon, but it supports the Bible, never substituting for it. ...

Members of "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" believe that 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable' (2 Timothy 3:16'. ... It is one of the pillars of our faith, a powerful witness of the Savior and of Christ's ongoing influence in the lives of those who worship and follow him. ...

It is the bedrock of all Christianity. We do not criticize or belittle anyone's beliefs. Our great responsibility as Christians is to share all that

God has revealed with all his sons and daughters. ...

The Book of Mormon does not dilute or diminish nor de-emphasize the Bible. On the contrary, it expands, extends, and exalts it. The Book of Mormon testifies of the Bible and both testify of Christ.

The first testament of Christ is the Bible's Old Testament, which predicted and prophesied of the coming of the Savior, His transcendent life, and His liberating Atonement.

The second Bible testament of Christ is the New Testament, which records His birth, His life, His ministry, His gospel, His Church, His atonement, and His Resurrection, as well as the testimonies of His apostles.

The third testament of Christ is the Book of Mormon, which also foretells of Christ's coming, confirms the Bible's account of His saving Atonement, and reveals the resurrected Lord's visit to the earth's other hemisphere. The subtitle of the Book of Mormon, the clarifying purpose statement printed on every copy, is 'Another Testament of Jesus Christ'.

Each of these three testaments is a part of the great, indivisible whole of the Lord's revealed word to His children. They contain the words of Christ, which we have been admonished to feast upon as a means of qualifying for eternal life (2 Nephi 31:20).

... The name of the church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In our last general conference, here in this building, our Church leaders quoted from the Bible nearly 200 times. ...

I bear solemn witness that we are true and full believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His revealed word through the Holy Bible. We not only believe the Bible — we strive to follow its precepts and to teach its message."

I believe these statements from an apostle of the Lord should be sufficient to disclaim anyone's assertion that we, as Mormons, have our own Bible and either by implication or outright statements say we do not believe the Bible or teach from it. Now let's move on to the concept that Mormons do not believe in Christ as our Lord and Savior as well as, similar innuendos heard from time to time. I believe they are usually uttered in ignorance and not through malice, due to lack of understanding.

WE BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Though I touched on this at the beginning of this particular sub-section, I want to add a clarifying statement from the Church's First Presidency, which was issued January 1, 2000. It is titled "The Living Christ" and follows in its entirety. I assume this was done primarily to assure the LDS members of their testimony and strengthen each of our own. It also refutes the rather frequently stated misconception that Mormons don't believe in Christ. We not only do so believe but assert that his atoning sacrifice is the very central basis of all our doctrine.

THE LIVING CHRIST

The Testimony of the Apostles

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

"As we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, we offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. Non other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live on this earth.

He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the Creator of the earth. 'All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made' (John 1:3). Though sinless, He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38), yet was despised for it. His gospel was a message of peace and goodwill. He entreated all to follow His example. He walked the roads of Palestine, healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead. He taught the truths of eternity, the reality of our premortal existence, the purpose of our life on earth, and the potential for the sons and daughters of God in the life to come.

He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary's cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. His was a great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live on this earth.

We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

He rose from the grave to 'become the firstfruits of them that slept' (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He visited among those He had loved in life. He also ministered among His 'other sheep' (John 10:16) in ancient America. In the modern world, He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long promised 'dispensation of the fullness of times' (Ephesians 1:10).

*Of the Living Christ, the prophet Joseph wrote: 'His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: 'I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father' (D&C 110:3-4)'.
*Of him the Prophet also declared: 'and now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!**

'For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father' —

'That by him and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God' (D&C 76:22-24).

We declare in words of solemnity that His Priesthood and his Church have been restored upon the earth — 'built upon the foundation of ... apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone' (Ephesians 2:20).

We testify that He will someday return to earth. 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together' (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desire of our hearts.

We bear testimony as His duly ordained Apostles — that Jesus is the Living Christ, the Immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His Divine Son." It is signed by The First Presidency; 'Gordon B. Hinkley,

Thomas S. Monson and James E. Faust' as well as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; "Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar". It is dated January 1, 2000.

The majority of the hymns in the LDS hymnbook testify of our belief in Christ. Two that come to mind are "My Redeemer Lives" whose text is by Gordon B. Hinkley and "I Believe In Christ", the text of which is written by Bruce R. McConkie. The first individual is easily recognized as the President and Prophet of the Church until his recent death in 2008. Elder McConkie was an apostle and a recognized scriptionist of the Church until his death in 1985. Another hymn I have always loved is titled "I Know That My Redeemer Lives". It was written by Samuel Medley who passed away in 1799 but was included in the first LDS hymnbook in 1835. This particular hymn demonstrates Joseph Smith's absolute belief in Christ at the foundation of the Church. I include it because of my love for it. The text follows for the reader's benefit.

"I know that my redeemer lives. What comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives, he lives, who once was dead. He lives, my ever living Head. He lives to bless me with his love. He lives to plead for me above. He lives my hungry soul to feed. He lives to bless my every need.

He lives to grant me rich supply. He lives to guide me with his eye. He lives to comfort me when faint. He lives to hear my soul's complaint. He lives to silence all my fears. He lives to wipe away my tears. He lives to calm my troubled heart. He lives all blessings to impart.

He lives, my kind wise heavenly Friend. He lives and loves me to the end. He lives, and while he lives I'll sing. He lives, my Prophet, Priest and King. He lives and grants me daily breath. He lives and I shall conquer death. He lives, my mansion to prepare. He lives to bring me safely there.

He lives! All glory to his name! He lives, my Savior, still the same. Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: "I know that my Redeemer lives!" He lives! All glory to his name! He lives, my Savior still the same. Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives. "I know that my Redeemer lives!"

I believe Elder Ballard's talk, "*The Miracle of the Holy Bible*" and the First Presidency's testimony given regarding Christ; i.e. "*The Living Christ*", in addition to the hymns mentioned, should be sufficient to put to rest any questions regarding the "*Mormon Bible*" and statements or innuendos such as "*Mormons don't believe in Christ*". They simply aren't true and are made either maliciously or in complete ignorance of the facts because of insufficient investigation.

Contained within the testimony of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve is Joseph Smith's testimony as taken from Doctrine and Covenants 76:22-24. That whole section is beautiful, in my opinion, and is partially given in chapter 21 as a view of the post mortal world.

A SUMMARY OF RESTORATION EVENTS FROM A PERSONAL VIEW

The remaining comments of this chapter are repetitive in nature, as I add my personal assessment of events leading to the restoration, my view of its doctrines and principles and my resultant philosophy of life. Coupled together, they will provide the reader with a review of past comments as well as my deep testimony of the actual restoration and why I find such joy in its reality.

The Bible is replete with evidences of an apostasy before the second coming of Christ. Many of the scriptures referring to such an apostasy were provided in Chapter 21 but they were not all inclusive. Such an apostasy resulted in the loss of priesthood authority, an essential ingredient of the Church of the meridian of time or that founded by Christ. The Catholic or so-called universal church recognized this need of authority and have claimed it as theirs. Their claim is founded on the continuance of authority through the bishop of Rome and resulted in the creation of the office of Pope. This claim has no basis as pointed out in chapter 21. This organization, growing out of the apostasy, changed many doctrines and teachings in addition to renouncing others.

The rumblings of the restoration began as early as the Renaissance and probably, well before. During the Reformation, which followed the Renaissance, and even earlier, many God fearing men recognized numerous errors then taught by the Universal Church. They helped establish the various Protestant faiths in following years using the scriptures as their source of authority for changes they viewed as

necessary. This protesting of the Catholic Church, coupled with wide spread printing of the Bible and the establishment of the United States with its constitution, set the stage for the finale or the coming forth of the Book of Mormon with the subsequent restoration of Christ's Church. Joseph Smith was the foreordained individual or prophet called of God, as an instrument, whereby he would usher in this last dispensation. That is, the dispensation of the fullness of times, described by Paul when all things are to be brought together in Christ.

Joseph was given the priesthood authority, lost with the demise of the original apostles around 100 AD but reinstated through heavenly messengers, as Joseph was being prepared by the Lord. In harmony with Paul's statement in Ephesians 1:10, the fullness of the gospel was gradually revealed to Joseph during his service as prophet, seer and revelator. The authority, originally given to Joseph, was passed on from prophet to prophet and now resides in President Monson who assumed that role with President Hinckley's death early this year (2009). The fullness of the gospel, as revealed to Joseph, continues with the revelations given to him and recorded as the "Doctrine and Covenants". Because revelation abounds in the Church, i.e. personal as well as that given to the prophet, it is often referred to as the true and living Church. Christ, being at its head, will make any changes, he deems necessary, to accomplish the Father's purpose for the earth's creation as well as man.

No other book has been brought forward claiming that it, rather than the Book of Mormon, is the stick of Joseph or to claim fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in the 29th chapter of that book. Likewise, no other church that I know of makes the claim of being restored through revelation, nor embodies all of the ordinances and authority claimed by the LDS Church. Such ordinances have been shown to have existed in Christ's Church in the meridian of time. Mankind should be thrilled that the Lord has spoken, once again in these latter days, to remove all doubt regarding the reality of Christ's atonement as well as the reality of the plan of salvation and the magnificent potential of God's children. No one has been able to establish, in over 175 years, that the Book of Mormon is not what it claims to be. The validity of the LDS Church's claim that it was established by Jesus Christ, himself, stands or falls on the reality of the Book of Mormon being what it purports to be. Certainly, people should examine it closely and even investigate

the teachings of the LDS Church to firmly evaluate its legitimacy in their own mind but they should not blow it off as some ridiculous sect without honest investigation. Such cannot be done with only a cursory look at the book or blind acceptance of another's evaluation, whether they are ministers or not. The former make their living by preaching the gospel as they understand it. Though they are typically good men or women, as are the members of their faiths, they have a need to protect their livelihood, making it difficult to be objective. They claim no authority as defined in the Bible. Likewise, they work from partial truth regarding the ordinances and doctrines essential for salvation. Sincerity and goodness cannot replace these essential ingredients.

Leaders and members of the LDS Church are well aware of the goodness of members of other faiths. We, like they, are works in progress and do not claim individual moral superiority. Only Christ can make such a judgment. As the prophet Nephi taught in 2 Nephi 25:23, "*For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace we are saved, after all we can do.* Our advantage lies in priesthood authority, living prophets and a fullness of true doctrine.

Now, let's consider the ramifications of Joseph's first vision in a little more detail. First, it defines the physical reality of God and the glorified personages of both the Father and the Son described later in Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 wherein we are told, "*The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bone, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.*" This glorious theophany removes all doubt regarding the reality of God and thus the creation of the universe with the beings therein. It destroys the various theories of evolution of all life from a single source by chance. It likewise negates the big bang theory and places science on the road to reality with recognition of a Supreme Being.

Second, it removes all doubt about Christ's resurrection and thus the ability of the Father to provide this gift for all mankind through his Son's atoning sacrifice.

Thirdly, it confirms the Biblical assertions that mankind was created in the image of God and are sons and daughters of heavenly Parents

even though in a fallen state. It gives meaning to Christ's statement for mankind to become perfect even as God is perfect as well as Paul's admonition to become perfect even to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Fourth, it gives purpose to life, even that of striving for perfect obedience through faith, humility, repentance, etc. or to learn to walk in the footsteps of our Savior.

Fifth, it demonstrates the reality of revelation and thus the desire of God to guide us along the path to eternal life while in mortality. It eliminates our need to trust only in the word of paid ministry to describe the meaning of the scriptures. We can, with confidence, approach the Lord in prayer for our own confirming answer. It makes the concept of living worthy of the Holy Spirit a desirable and necessary goal in life. Scriptural descriptions and admonitions to live in accordance with commandments, ordinances and covenants now appear as wise counsel for man to follow, rather than restrictions to finding joy and happiness in life. They, in fact, are beacons of light to guide us through the darkness of mortality and assure us of the greatest gift God can give, even eternal life.

I have no doubt that an astute student of the gospel could come up with other blessings the vision demonstrates. However, with these we might ask, *"What more could man hope for than such a blessed event, which gives meaning to life and has the power to set him on a strait and true course for eternal life?"* Even though I understand why an uninformed man or woman might doubt the validity of such an event, I reiterate the fact that the mere existence of its possibility should provoke them to investigate and determine for their-selves if such can be true. A casual rejection of its occurrence is contrary to the honest desire for truth.

One might ask, *"How is an average man to find out the reality of such an event and the validity of Joseph's claim as a prophet called of God?"* Well, ultimately it must come through personal revelation. If a person is already prepared spiritually through study and prayer, he or she may have already realized the reality of the apostasy and be humbly seeking a so-called true Church or one founded upon the same doctrines as those of the Church Christ founded. As they peruse the Book of Mormon, the Spirit may immediately bear witness of its truthfulness, as described in Moroni 10:4-5. Such individuals are, undoubtedly, well versed in the Bible, being

aware already of incomplete and/or erroneous doctrines of other churches. They may have given up their search in this lifetime. Such was the case for Roger Williams some two hundred years before the restoration. Likewise, such was and continues to be the case for many who have joined the LDS Church from the time of its inception in 1830.

Unfortunately, for most of us who are or were relative novices in scripture study, there is no easy or instantaneous answer, to my knowledge. Though the Spirit may well bear witness, we may doubt that source of truth initially being completely dependent upon our own rational thought and/or consider it as emotional in nature. Certainly, humility and faith that God will not mislead one sincerely seeking the truth are required. How else can one satisfy the requirements of Moroni 10:4, i.e. reading the book with a sincere heart, with real intent and having faith in God? These are the very characteristics that invite the Spirit into our lives and provide personal credibility to his witness. The reality of the Book of Mormon being the word of God, i.e. being what it purports to be, is the keystone to the arch of truth in Joseph's claim. Take it away or prove it false and his claim of the restoration of the gospel through him, as a prophet, collapses. That effort has been going on for almost 180 years now but without success. If it rings true in one's mind, nothing could be more beautiful for mankind and one's faith in Jesus Christ multiplies through this second witness, which wipes away any doubts of the veracity of the Bible and thus, of Christ's atonement and associated blessings.

Faith and humility are gifts of God but are not attained without effort. The first step, in my mind, as already described, in establishing Joseph Smith's legitimacy as a prophet, is to gain a witness that the Book of Mormon is true by following Moroni's advice. That is, to pray for enlightenment as one reads and ponders the message of this book. A companion step might be to examine results or the latter day fruit that has come about from Joseph's work. Has it been good or bad? The scriptures are replete with quotations signifying; **"by their fruits ye shall know them"**. Consider Luke 6: 43-45. One might also consider Moses' counsel to the Israelites, repeated here for convenience as follows; *"And if thou say in thy heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?' When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor*

come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

Some such fruit may be immediately evident and others may require the passage of time to reveal their reality. In today's world, the sincere investigator is blessed with the history of the Church's existence over 175 years. The fruit of its existence is readily available for examination for all to carry out. Likewise, many of Joseph's prophetic statements, received by revelation, can be examined in the light of the history of the Church. A few examples of such fruit, which a person may wish to consider, are included in the following, which I leave for the reader's perusal:

1) The veracity of the Book of Mormon.

This needs no further discussion except to repeat that it can't be ascertained by a cursory examination in most cases. I reiterate, one must follow the counsel given in Moroni 10:3-5, which requires a sincere study of its contents coupled with pondering and prayer. It is the sincerity of the investigation that summons the Holy Spirit.

Anything of value requires study and effort to acquire. All one has to do to understand this principle is to consider his or her life. I doubt that anything of real value has been received without concentrated effort, some requiring more prolonged effort than others. I'm not speaking of monetary value but of personal characteristics, be they physical expertise, secular knowledge, spirituality or strength of character in their application. Though each of us appears to be born with certain abilities, their increase and application require personal effort in life. While it's true one may receive a temporal gift, with little or no effort on their part, to the real being or the inner self, such an article is of little value unless used appropriately later. So, we might ask; *"If that be so, why would we expect eternal life, the greatest of God's gifts to mankind, to be easily attained?"* Even though we understand that this gift is received by grace, it stands to reason that something worthy must be done to demonstrate ones sincerity if one expects to be the recipient. Otherwise, this life has no meaning, allowing one to commit the vilest of sins and, without repentance, still receive God's greatest gift, even eternal life.

2) Correlation of biblical truths with teachings in the Book of Mormon.

An honest search will illustrate the teachings of the two are compatible; with the Book of

Mormon adding clarity to many biblical teachings. It does not contradict biblical teachings but confirms them.

3) Consideration of the Articles of Faith.

All thirteen articles of faith are supported by biblical teachings and form a simple, yet complete summary of the faith that Joseph taught to the early LDS members. Consider just how early it was developed by Joseph, how complete it is in its description and how easy it is to digest as compared to similar summaries of other faiths. Is it likely that Joseph could have arrived at this level of understanding without revelation from that divine source of the same?

4) Consideration of Joseph's Prophecy regarding the Civil War.

Joseph prophesied of the beginning of the Civil War in a revelation of 1832, even designating the state in which it would begin, in Doctrine and Covenants 87. I will quote only the first three verses for the reader's benefit and for simplicity's sake.

"Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls;

And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations beginning at this place.

For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call upon other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations."

It seems to me that there is enough detail included within those verses to discount any thought of a lucky guess. For the interested reader many other revelations of his abound throughout the Doctrine and Covenants.

5) The numerous false teachings, lost teachings, changed or lost ordinances and covenants of the apostasy.

The Lord corrected all of these problems, as laid out in chapter 23, with the restoration. Many of them have been referred to in chapter 22, as well, but with more detail and according to my own understanding. We could do so here once again but it seems unnecessary in view of their earlier discussion.

6) The Witnesses

In the front of the Book of Mormon are the testimonies of three witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris who were shown the golden plates by the angel Moroni.

Similarly, there is the testimony of eight witnesses, namely Christian Whitmer, Jacob Whitmer, Peter Whitmer Jr., John Whitmer, Hiram Page, Joseph Smith Sen., Hyrum Smith and Samuel H. Smith who saw the golden plates but did not witness them by or with the angel.

There are several references to witnesses and their role in establishing validity in the Bible of which I will only quote one. In John 8:17, we are told by Christ; *"It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true."* By virtue of this biblical basis, it seems there can be no question of the reality of the angel or golden plates and thus the veracity of the Book of Mormon. To challenge the statements signed by these witnesses seems ludicrous, they being sincere and honest men with nothing to gain. Might not this of itself make investigation of the book worthwhile? One might begin with a study of the testaments given in the front of the Book of Mormon before reading Moroni 10:4. They are sobering and thought provoking.

7) Biblical Prophecies, Which Appear to be Fulfilled with the Book of Mormon

Daniel's prophecy of the latter days describing the spread of the gospel throughout the earth is coming to pass through the restored Church. See Daniel 2: 34, 45.

Isaiah's prophecy regarding the latter days in Isaiah 29 appears to be fulfilled with the gospel restoration and growth of the LDS Church. Did Joseph stage this encounter of Martin Harris with Professor Anthon, which so closely parallels the words of Isaiah in verses 11-12? Do verses 8-10 describe rather vividly the actions of many early reformers such as Roger Williams? It most assuredly does in my estimation, even though you might question that.

The prophecy of two sticks coming together in Ezekiel 37 seems fulfilled in the joining together of their independent testimonies regarding Christ; as given in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon. It is obvious the sticks are ancient writings, which the Lord tells the reader he will bring together as one.

Christ's statement in John 10:16 wherein he said, *"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."* can certainly point to his visit to the American continent. Many others can be found with a little effort by the reader if he or she cares to peruse the Bible..

8) Book of Mormon Prophecies are Fulfilled by the Establishment of the United States.

Such things as the discovery of America, the establishment of the United States and freedom under the Constitution fall in this category. Are they true or fabricated? The foregoing discussions regarding the same seem to provide the necessary validity.

9) The Tremendous Good Work Provided by the Restored Church as it Spreads its Message Throughout the Earth

By this category, I mean the humanitarian aid given throughout the earth relative to disasters, famines and pestilence. I believe the LDS Church, in recent years, has been foremost in speed, efficiency and laity participation among private contributors to such need. That isn't to say that other good people of other faiths haven't contributed also. They obviously have but I bring this to the reader's attention as an example of the good fruit of this institution.

The gospel's plan of salvation, often referred to as the plan of redemption and the plan of happiness, is, in my view, almost beyond human comprehension. Even so, all three titles are apt in their description of God's great purpose for mankind, even eternal life, through his only begotten Son in the flesh, Jesus Christ. The first vision brings all of these various blessings to the forefront.

A PERSONAL VIEW OF THE RESTORED GOSPEL'S DOCTRINES AND PRINCIPLES

My understanding of the Church's doctrines and principles might be found wanting if reviewed by an LDS general authority or someone else with a greater gospel knowledge of the scriptures than me. Even so, I make this rather questionable effort because it provides an opportunity for me to mentally review the doctrines of the gospel, help me commit myself more fully to them and finally, to provide my

In John 8:17, we are told by Christ; *"It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true."*

posterity with a glimpse of their progenitor's understanding at this point in time. Any incompleteness will obviously be due to my limited understanding.

I hope any reader familiar with LDS gospel doctrine will grant me a reasonable degree of leniency for what they might possibly see, as questionable or incomplete doctrine. I make no claim to doctrinal expertise. Likewise, I hope those of other faiths, who might read it, will be so kind as to see it through before making any rash judgments. They have every right to disagree with the doctrines I espouse and in fact, even a responsibility to examine and ponder them closely in the light of their own understanding. In so doing, they will find some doctrine, ideas or principles they agree with and others that may actually provide increased hope for them as mortals and contain a degree of logic, even to them. Some such doctrine may have a familiar ring to their deepest feelings regarding life, even though not previously considered, giving credence to a pre-mortal exposure. The pondering and effort required to fairly evaluate my view will most certainly provide personal clarification of one's own beliefs and may even add purpose to their lives, as it has to mine. As mentioned, all applicable doctrine in this chapter has been discussed in greater detail in a past chapter, namely twenty one. Some doctrines, of which I am fully aware of, follow in my rather questionable grammar.

1 – There is a God in heaven. Thus, I reject the secular concept of the existence of humanity and other living organisms occurring by mere chance, not meeting the evidence at hand.

2 – All mankind are spiritual sons and daughters of heavenly Parents. This is specifically pointed out in the "PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD" on the family, as provided by the LDS First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles.

3 – Our spiritual bodies as well as our physical bodies or tabernacles of flesh were created in the image of God, both male and female (see Geneses 1:27), giving credence to the concept of a heavenly mother because both man and woman were created in his image. Our spirit bodies are similar in appearance to our physical bodies but differ primarily by being composed of finer materials not visible to our mortal eyes. Neither do they portray the ravages of age, which persons of my generation are now experiencing; at least this is my understanding of this particular doctrine.

4 – Each of heavenly Father's children was given agency or the right to choose for themselves upon their spiritual birth. This is a principle necessary for spiritual and temporal advancement and gives us the capacity to act rather than to be solely acted upon.

5 – God, the Father's, only begotten Son in the flesh is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

6 – Jesus Christ is our spiritual brother, the firstborn spirit of heavenly Father's sons and daughters. Thus, Christ is the eldest spiritual brother of all mankind. By virtue of his perfect conduct in the pre-existence, he was chosen to become mankind's Savior.

7 – Similarly, Adam was chosen to initiate the fall, a necessary event for mankind's progression. Adam and Eve, as the mortal progenitors of all mankind, passed their fallen state on to all who are born into mortality. The fall was essential to the receipt of eternal life.

8 – The atonement provided redemption for all mankind as pertaining to Adam's fall, thus all mortals will eventually be resurrected. When brought before Christ in the final judgment, each of us will answer for our own conduct during mortality thereby determining our ultimate or final reward in the eons to come.

9 – Everything in the plan of salvation receives efficacy by virtue of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

10 – By virtue of doctrines 2 through 9, all mankind has the potential to become exalted beings or gods and goddesses, partaking of the same kind or type of existence our God has and returning to his presence.

10 – God, our Father, has devised a plan whereby his spirit sons and daughters can progress to a level that enables them to lead the same kind of existence as He, our Mother in Heaven and Jesus Christ lead, i.e. attain a celestial glory and eternal life.

11 – This plan, i.e. a plan for our salvation, embraces three types and periods of existence termed estates. The first, called our pre-mortal or first estate, was accomplished in the presence of our heavenly Parents wherein we advanced as far as possible while being confined to or living in their presence.

12 – Satan, the adversary, was a choice spirit who rebelled against God in the pre-mortal life and a third of our spirit brothers and sisters chose to follow him (Revelations 12). Such

rebellion came in spite of living in God's presence and obvious omniscient truth. It seems to me that it was more a clash of wills than one of concept. As a result, they were cast out of God's presence to the earth to provide choice to men and further God's purpose.

12 – Satan is a real being, our spiritual brother in the pre-existence. His angels, both male and female, were also our brothers and sisters but are denied mortal bodies. He was known as Lucifer and was among the most advanced of God's sons and daughters before being cast down to earth for rebellion.

13 – Satan strives to defeat or invalidate God's plan of salvation or redemption through his angels by making mankind unworthy to re-enter God's presence. This is accomplished through half truths and man's weaknesses in the flesh.

13 – Satan plays an essential role in our trek towards eternal life, being the tempter, so as to provide mankind with choices of good or evil, commitment or indifference, through mortal appetites. This test is more severe than that of the pre-mortal life, in that we are no longer in the presence of our heavenly Parents. We have been given knowledge of right and wrong and now have the opportunity to act accordingly through our own agency. We can seek God through his Holy Spirit or submit to the adversary through fleshly appetites. This will define our inner-most desires and strengths. Through grace, we can develop Christ like virtues such as faith, purity, humility and charity. In spite of human weaknesses, such is freely given to all who sincerely pursue truth, according to their individual capacities. Truth is embodied in its fullness in Christ who is our Savior, Redeemer and Advocate with God.

Satan plays an essential role in our trek towards eternal life ... so as to provide mankind with choices of good or evil ... through mortal appetites.

14- We can only receive salvation of any degree, i.e. a celestial, a terrestrial or a celestial reward, through God's grace, of which the atonement is an essential part. Upon resurrection, each of us will receive a glorified body commensurate with the individual judgment received at the judgment bar of Christ.

15 – A celestial reward of eternal life is the ultimate or highest degree of salvation available to mankind and is received by grace after proving one's self a worthy recipient through his or her mortal conduct.

16 – By virtue of the spirit within our bodies, mankind is a dual being. Such knowledge is essential to proper nourishment of both body and spirit during mortality. Its recognition helps us develop balance in our daily lives.

MY MILESTONES IN MORTALITY

I decided to add what I consider major milestones in my life, which will provide the reader with some idea of just how mortality has shaped my character and influenced my actions. Not that my character is sterling nor my actions of any particular interest but it (the review) may help cast some light on past chapters and help explain how and why I see things as I do. It might even help someone by comparing it with their own perceived character growth in life.

As I review my personal life, I am left to wonder why I have been so blessed. I now look back on my life's experiences from the perspective of 8 decades of struggle and see mistakes galore. I am acutely aware of many personal weaknesses with

the mistakes, indiscretions and sin they have bred. I also see many gains that have been made along the way but not always deserved, which I count as blessings from my Father in Heaven. I have become aware that the only thing I can give to God is a submission of my will because everything else I value is, in fact, a blessing received from him. My health, my strength, my intellect, my ability to move and to act, all have been gifts from a benevolent Father to whom I am deeply in debt. My only wish for life's remaining years is to please him by striving to understand and live in accordance with his will that I might return to his presence.

The foregoing may seem a bit self righteous, to the reader but it comes to me by virtue of an honest evaluation of what life is all about. You see, I have no financial goals or challenges and currently, at least, don't expect any. My health is reasonably good after 8 decades of abuse and consequently, character improvement appears to be the area needing the most attention. This is a challenge because my understanding is limited and my capacity to overcome some of my remaining weaknesses is somewhat in doubt. Not that I expect to achieve perfection in this life because God doesn't expect that, nor will he provide it therein by grace, according to my limited understanding. Yet, I must try because, considering my age, the

only mortal improvement I can make while in this life is the submission of my will to the Creator of the universe, even God the Father. I believe the degree of such submission is the measure by which we will be judged when we finally come before Christ in the final judgment. It will be that submission of our spirit to his that will have determined the glory of our resurrection by grace, whether telestial, terrestrial or celestial. Such submission, it seems to me, is gained through prayer, scripture study and service to our fellow beings, which ultimately define our desire and effort to gain eternal life.

These are the ingredients, I believe, which will provide both understanding and strength to assimilate and digest the gospel precepts or truths God has made available to us. These are the steps we all must take, in my opinion, to follow Christ, to learn to walk in his footsteps and ultimately become perfected in him, through his divine grace. He is our great Exemplar, even the template to which we must be molded through obedience to gain the greatest gift God has to give, even eternal life. The principle of obedience is the means by which we can eventually become congruent with that sacred Being. Through his Divine grace we are cleansed, reformed, strengthened and added upon, to eventually take on his perfect image through faith, humility and obedience.

Obviously, the first and greatest milestone God has blessed me and the rest of mankind with is the reality of being his spirit son with potential to progress and become even as he is. To those who might count such a statement as blasphemous, I remind them that such a reality is accomplished by grace and is thus a gift and not a personal accomplishment. Such a gift is not beyond the omnipotent powers our Father has. Denying such a possibility is, in itself, blasphemous, whether intentional or not, by questioning his omnipotent power. My challenge, as well as all mankind's challenge, is to live worthy of that supreme gift, so that one day we may return to the presence of our heavenly Parents, even God, our Father and our beloved heavenly Mother to enjoy their fond embrace. We likewise will then have the opportunity and desire to express our utmost gratitude to Jesus Christ, our Savior, our advocate with the Father and our Redeemer for his infinite love expressed through his merciful atonement.

He is our great Exemplar, even the template to which we must be molded through obedience to gain the greatest gift God has to give, even eternal life.

The second milestone of my existence is that of being born to loving parents in a society of freedom, destined for economic prosperity. The very opportunity to make my own way through my own efforts is indeed a blessing of no small magnitude. Even more so, is the blessing of being born to parents who put family first and in their own way struggled to find the truth as well as the purpose for life. Their examples of a love of liberty with no thought of a handout coupled with integrity and an obvious work ethic were my tutors, though I hardly realized it during my youth. Their desires to seek the good, the precepts that build character, were an ensign to my maturing intellect. Though I often wavered and most certainly questioned their advice during my young adulthood, I now look back and see clearly their example was rooted in truth. These were gospel principles in action. These were the characteristics I learned to admire as experience shaped my values. These, I believe, were the deeply rooted principles, even though not fully embraced, that sparked the interest in my mind to investigate the gospel as restored through Joseph Smith. Without such values, it is questionable whether I would have begun and continued to struggle with the character building process required of all sincere seekers of truth. I question whether, without them, I would have taken the challenge of Moroni in chapter 10, verses 4 – 5 of the Book of Mormon repeated

here for the reader's convenience. Therein we read the challenge given to all who see and accept it, as follows. **“And when ye shall receive these things,**

I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” That both the challenge and reward are true, I can now bear my personal and solemn witness, which has been born of over 47 years of experience.

A third milestone in my life was received by being the 5th of 8 siblings whose examples, though not always perfect, motivated me to achieve, so as to keep up, or at least try to keep up, with each of them. I have nothing but the greatest respect for each and every one of them. In a secular sense, I may well be the least

successful, though in terms of peace, joy and confidence in the future, I suspect I may well be near or even in the lead. I make that rather boastful statement because I have accepted the restored gospel with all of its blessings. They have yet to accept this truth and the reality of its path, which leads to those fore-mentioned blessings. However, in spite of our differing theological beliefs, their integrity and work ethics have done much to help groom my own efforts in these areas. I believe they too, in their own ways, have sought to follow truth in their lives. I count my birth among them as a most prized blessing and source of motivation.

Even though I am confident that I am the most fortunate among my siblings for having found the one and only true path leading to eternal life, I suspect in due time they too will see the beauty and joy God has provided mankind through his marvelous restoration in these latter days. I don't blame them for being dubious about the reality of the first vision as well as the restoration in all its beauty and completeness. I certainly struggled with that concept and was slow to come around. I can say, however, that one will never get on the path without making an honest investigation of the claims put forth by Joseph Smith, the prophet, fore-ordained for restoration of the gospel, in a manner similar to Jeremiah. His ordination for this sacred work and his untiring mortal effort to carry out this responsibility has provided an opportunity and blessing, which is now available to all mankind.

A fourth milestone in my life actually occurred with my first marriage to Esther Spencer. Though I hadn't previously considered it as such, pondering this event has helped me realize it, having launched me into the rigors of adulthood, marked the real beginning of my understanding of responsibility. During this time I applied my education to the temporal challenges of life and began to think outside myself. I began to understand that for me to be happy, Esther had to be happy. I had now taken on a new responsibility for her as well as any children we might have. She also brought a whole new consciousness to my own existence. Whereas I was rather logical about life and made many decisions with that consideration and little else, she was more emotional and made me think in terms of her well being as well as that of our children, particularly our

daughters. They and their mother have contributed much to my sense of respect for womanhood, daughters of heavenly Parents to whom respect is owed.

Shamefully, I suppose, I considered myself as Esther's intellectual superior, though I didn't use that as a means to browbeat her or hurt her feelings in any way. As time wore on, I began to realize our intellectual differences were more a matter of interest and education, as well as reason and emotion. Also, it didn't take me long to realize that her feelings were a part of me. Thus, I was made aware of a new dimension in my own life, namely that of emotions, which needed to be considered. Consequently, I

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believe, I became somewhat more tolerant and patient in dealing with various situations I didn't fully understand. I learned to listen to and

respect her and her feelings throughout our marriage, bringing a greater measure of peace to our family life. I began to understand that emotions are not only essential to real happiness but also the source.

Even so, in my case at least, my business life and thus the major part of my day, was centered in reasoning or logic. Certain responses to measurements in a well bore led logically to certain conclusions regarding the formations surrounding it; this having been derived through scientific reasoning. Similarly, employees produced results commensurate with their pay check or we looked for a replacement. Also, study and sweat produced both measurable results and their attendant rewards. People might be hurt by logical and even reasonable decisions but that was their problem; one they needed to solve. Unfortunately, such a line of thought didn't necessarily work with Esther and if my logic hurt her rather tender emotions, I had to back off and plug in a little feeling as well. Through that effort I have come to understand both my strengths and my weaknesses more clearly and have, hopefully, taken proper action.

Now, with the gospel to enlighten that understanding more completely, I realize the psyche is more than simply reasoning ability in various disciplines. While it's true that reasoning ability brings one a degree of satisfaction, the consciousness of the soul requires emotions to warn and help direct that ability. Both are thusly essential to a full life. Logic may guide our

course to success but emotion frosts the cake by enhancing the taste through love, kindness, safe decisions and other types of feeling. As a result, a blending of both the man's and woman's psyche in a harmonious marriage brings the greatest satisfaction to both. Emotion or intense feeling, it seems to me, is the root of happiness. Even so, unbridled emotion can set a dangerous course and take us to an undesirable ending. Logic sets the course through reason but love and fear control the steering and speed. The combination, if properly applied, can lead a family to success and happiness in mortality.

I believe God gave us emotions for a purpose. He gave man and woman differing amounts, in most cases, for a reason, it seems to me. A woman, I believe, has a greater capacity to love and show sympathy for other human being's situation in life. In this sense she is closer to God and brings the essential quality of nurturing into the family. Her decisions aren't necessarily based on what is most practical or reasonable to temporal progress. She tries to avoid the apparent obstacles in family life primarily by steering and speed. A man is more prone to base his decisions on reason, setting a direct course for what he believes is family progress and happiness, with little thought for the feelings of others. This may stem from the work environment and man's role as the provider for a family, who knows? Obviously, there are exceptions to each but my point is that a good marriage blends the assets of both to bring about a family's purpose. I suspect, though I don't claim to know, that our heavenly Parents have established a perfect blending of divine attributes, whatever that may be. Boy, I'm not sure how I got myself into this element of philosophy, having such little knowledge of the subject. It may well stir up questions regarding my own logic and sanity.

A man, I believe, is generally equipped better to meet the demands of providing for the family through his logic and temperament and, in times past, his physical strength. That is, he is at home in the rigors of the working world. That isn't to say a woman isn't logical or can't compete in the workplace, particularly today's computer driven society. Nor is it to say a man can't show sympathy and love for family members and other members of society as well. Society is full of examples of both such activities

with their resultant benefits. It simply means that members of both sexes are generally best suited for the roles God has ordained them to, i.e. man as a family provider and woman as a homemaker and nurturer of children. Understanding their individual roles, while supporting each other, promotes peace and harmony in their dual objective and effort in gaining eternal life. Preparing their children to cope with mortality becomes a part of that primary goal of becoming an eternal family. Individual mortal goals of spouses become subordinate to spiritual goals and find their place as a means to an end, even that of eternal life as a family unit, rather than an overriding individual goal of either spouse.

In my view, many of the problems that have risen in today's society stem from disregard of the importance of mother in the home and the abuse of so-called patriarchal authority by men. Children also suffer and acquire

Studies showing well founded families as being the building blocks of a successful society are legion in number.

various emotional problems in their young lives because of a lack of nurturing by a caring mother who would rather be in the workplace. Men often suffer from inflated egos stemming from their positions of importance in the workplace. Such egos can result in unkind and unfeeling remarks meant to demonstrate his superiority in their marriage. It is usually blind to real challenges of motherhood as well as fatherhood, including both the skills and patience it requires. Likewise, it loses sight of any dual objective the couple may have had for their family and pounds the wedge of dissatisfaction between them. Obviously, such conduct can eventually lead to infidelity and breakup of a union that might have been eternal. In so doing it breeds unhappiness for all involved, especially the children and destroys their image of the purpose of marriage.

Studies showing well founded families as being the building blocks of a successful society are legion in number. Both men and women need to understand more clearly the importance of motherhood and give it the respect it deserves. Because it receives little acclaim in the world doesn't make it any less important, nor does the resounding acclaim attached to worldly success make the same more important. Such acclaim is simply the opinion of man with little understanding of things of the spirit or the real purpose of life. Any aging adult has probably learned, through experience, that material

wealth or positions of prominence in society are of little value when trying to attach meaning to life or find real happiness. I don't believe my realization of this, after eight decades on this earth, is exceptional. What is somewhat different is the fact that I have found purpose, peace and joy in the restored gospel while many others are still searching. What they need to do, in my opinion, is take Moroni's challenge, as given in Moroni 10:4.

The fifth milestone I have become aware of while looking back on life is my demotion and apparent failure in the capacity of Technical Manager for the Schlumberger Offshore Organization. As I mentioned earlier, my technical strength was not enough to sustain me or, should I say, compensate for my management weakness. I simply didn't meet the needs expected in that level of management. Why was this event significant? One may ask. Certainly it was a bitter pill for me to swallow because I had had much success in my career due to technical expertise. I had not experienced real failure in any position previously. Though I was far from a burning success in the capacity of a sales

engineer, neither was I a failure. My technical skills seemed to sustain me in spite of my rather introverted nature. My career had been on an upward trend throughout with a few plateaus here and there. Consequently, my setback started me on a psychological downward spiral, which culminated in Esther's death some 10 years later. With my demotion, I learned to disregard the concept of a successful career, as being the real source of happiness. It simply no longer existed. I continued to function satisfactorily, apparently, in various training capacities but never found any real satisfaction in any of them. I was ready to retire when the opportunity arose with the downturn in the oil business in 1986. I knew I would have to find purpose elsewhere. Initiation of this new concern, i.e. to find purpose if any such thing existed in life, began to take place in my subconscious.

The next milestone or sixth one was Esther's death in 1990, at which point I seemed to reach a psychological bottom, bordering on depression. I didn't complain about the situation because life had taught me it would do no good. No, I simply began to look for other solutions in other places in order to find some peace and

purpose. In so doing, I began to study the scriptures more intently, which seemed to stimulate a desire to serve a mission for the Church. I had a testimony of the restored gospel but admittedly, I had allowed it to languish during my working years. However, I was, once more, disappointed in finding out widowers were unacceptable for some unknown reason, which I didn't understand. Widows were readily accepted but not widowers. Even so, not to be completely defeated, I decided to make my own mission by spending some time in Georgia, getting to know Valerie's family better and working in the Atlanta temple. This I knew I could accomplish because I was already serving in the Denver temple. I would work in Atlanta two years and then return to Denver where Esther was buried. So, after celebrating my 63rd birthday in May of 1991, I headed south for what turned out to be unforeseen experiences.

Esther had been gone 13 months when I arrived in Georgia. I missed her terribly even though I

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knew her physical condition had been extremely difficult for her to bear. She hadn't complained but simply expressed her desire to fulfill her role as a homemaker, in which she excelled. We had been together almost 40 years in a union, though not perfect, that was none-the-less a source of joy and comfort for each of us. I had learned that love between a man and a woman was more than sexual in nature and stimulated the higher emotions of a Christ like life. Though I still had much to learn and many failings to overcome, I needed a companion. Very simply put, I was lonely and I knew without a doubt that a good marriage was preferable to being single. I loved each and every one of my children but none could fill the void Esther's death had made in my life. Yes, I wanted a companion. Of this I became quite confident as time wore on. Such an emotional state led, little to my realization, to the success of my son-in-law's next maneuver, which followed soon after.

Jared may have sensed my need for a companion, though I don't really know, and then again, he may have simply had an ulterior motive in his decision to play cupid. After six months or so of living with them, he began to look for a means to keep me in Georgia, beyond the two years I intended. You see, with both he and Valerie working, I simply fell into the role of chief cook and bottle washer. Not that they

expected me to do so but I wanted to keep busy. I was still waiting for my call to serve in the Atlanta temple and ended up cooking meals and even shopping for groceries. As it turned out, his somewhat dubiously intended efforts boomeranged, at least as far as they pertained to keeping me in the role of kitchen maid.

Jared had rightly thought that it would take something other than his urging to keep me in Georgia beyond my allotted two years. Behind the scenes, he was trying to find me a companion that would do the job for him. Where he had miscalculated was in the fact that my marriage, if it occurred, would necessarily cause me to move out where I could have a life of my own. No more chief cook and bottle washer. A little before the time I was called as a temple worker, Jared's efforts began to bear fruit. He managed to create situations where I met various nice and even attractive women. I even dated a couple, which increased my desire for a companion but nothing seemed to work out. After all, I was 63 years old, going on 64, and was hardly a prize catch. Not to be dissuaded, however, he kept plugging away and eventually concocted the idea of getting me to become involved in a singles group that was a part of the Roswell stake. Well, that led to my meeting Lethia who has blessed my life with joy and satisfaction these past 16 plus years. I'll enlarge on that as my next and seventh milestone, though our meeting occurred just after I began working in the temple, which I consider a milestone as well.

My meeting Lethia has proven to be a blessing far beyond my expectations at that time and has resulted in many years of contentment, joy and peace for both of us, I believe, though I don't want to put words in her mouth. She, indeed, is a seventh milestone for me, making my declining years joyous, fulfilling and full of optimism. I find it hard to imagine what life would be like without her. She is quiet and unassuming, patient and even tolerant of my rather weird antics at times. Though I don't always agree with her or her with me, we have never argued, nor will we, because she would undoubtedly let me have my way. Quite fortunately, we agree on most things and have yet to come across anything of major proportion, which resulted in a disagreement. Our home is one of peace and joy, stemming from a

harmonious relationship based on gospel principles. Not that either of us claim perfection of character but we do employ gospel principles in our various activities, which definitely contribute to such a relationship. Our children have given us no problems of any significance but, in general, add satisfaction to our otherwise rather mundane life. I attribute our peaceful life together as being a large factor in my lack of stress, as well as the good health I have experienced. Though I will undoubtedly expire before her, I look forward to many more years with a companion that I both admire and love. She is in every way, the light of my life. Her happiness is my chief concern.

Temple covenants increase ones commitment to live in accordance with those principles while increased understanding of the same adds to one's grasp of the scriptures.

As I mentioned earlier, my call as a temple worker, whether we consider Denver or Atlanta, has been a significant milestone for me, which I will call my eighth. It

accentuated my interest in temple ordinances, as they pertain to the gospel, and hence my pursuit of gospel knowledge through the scriptures. I was acutely aware of how poorly informed I was in scriptural understanding in spite of some 30 years in the Church. I simply was caught up in other things and gave limited heed to scripture study. I have found initial study can be somewhat painful, in the sense that grasping real meaning from them is difficult, when one starts from ground zero. The Old Testament is particularly perplexing when one has such little understanding. However, persistence pays off, particularly when accompanied by renewed effort to live the principles one discovers in those sacred pages. Temple covenants increase ones commitment to live in accordance with those principles while increased understanding of the same adds to one's grasp of the scriptures. Thus, they complement one another in a synergistic manner, one being multiplied by the other. Little can be said of the temple and particularly the ordinances thereof because of their sacred nature. Let it be sufficient to say the Holy Spirit resides there in rich abundance and blesses all who attend in any capacity. Such effort enlightens and strengthens all such attendees and boosts their trajectory heavenward in gospel understanding, peace and happiness.

This brings me to a ninth and last milestone, which rests, I believe, on the preceding eight, for it quite probably would not have become

available to me without them. As has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, in the fall of 1996 I was given the authority to utilize the sacred sealing power in the Atlanta temple, which is vested in our dear prophet. It was conferred upon me by Elder Hales, one of the twelve apostles and a special witness for the Lord. To say I was overjoyed, somewhat awed and exceedingly nervous by this privilege would be an understatement though I didn't fully comprehend or appreciate how significant this privilege was until some years later. Exercising that authority has been a blessing beyond compare for me personally. As time has worn on, my appreciation for its magnificent and incomparable blessing for mankind has grown beyond my anticipation. Not only have I had numerous spiritual blessings within the temple while exercising it but my understanding of the scriptures and desire to pursue them has grown significantly. Even more important for me, personally, has been my desire to live in accordance with all the Lord has revealed to me in his various modes of communication. My love for the gospel has grown by leaps and bounds and now exceeds anything I ever dreamed of. The beauty of the plan of salvation has unfolded to my view in ways I never dreamed possible. Having been so blessed my hunger to know more increases every day, as does my desire to share the same with others. This desire to share is the real source of prompting that motivated me to include these last 4 chapters in my autobiography. I now realize; that a fullness of joy, promised to the faithful, lies in perfection in Christ through assimilation of his perfect characteristics. I also understand I am but a babe in the woods in terms of such comprehension and assimilation of his most precious characteristics. Yet he, himself, commands us to be perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Similarly, as previously mentioned, Paul admonishes all the members of the Church to come to "a unity of the faith, unto the knowledge of Christ, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13). Thus, I know such is possible through his divine grace and not of our own doing. May we all so live that we may merit such a reward.

The preceding three chapters as well as this chapter include essential elements of the way I now look at life after some 8 decades of mortal experience. In the following, I have tried to bring them together as one to provide the reader with

a view of my thought process, which I now add as my philosophy of our existence. As in previous remarks, the reader need not agree.

MY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

I don't know whether the term philosophy is accurate in describing the following remarks because the guide I have developed for my life is composed of both secular reasoning and theological beliefs, as described in the restored gospel. Unfortunately, it isn't a guide I have followed all my life but rather one which I have arrived at through the various activities of my life. Even though many, if not all, of the principles included herein have been expounded upon previously, I hope to unite them here in one composite philosophy or guide for the path I now follow in my waning years. If any or all of it can be of any help to my posterity or even others who come across it, then the effort will be of extended value. If not, it is a means of molding my own view of life, as I see it today, into the defined path of my past. The result might help those reading this rather dubious effort to better understand me.

LIFE'S FOUNDATION

In chapter 20, I made remarks regarding the ultimate source of all we regard as truth, which is either based on man-made study and reasoning, i.e. man's philosophy, or on the one and only true God. The scriptures are full of references calling upon men to trust in the arm of the Lord and not in the arm of the flesh. If we accept God as the source of all truth then truth discovered by man emanates from God for man's discovery and use. If we believe there is no God, we may still discover valid truth because God is at the helm and allows such discovery to bring about his purposes. However, if purported truth is contrary to that which emanates from God, then it has flaws or errors somewhere within man's study and conclusions. Thus valid or real truth must always be in harmony with gospel principles. Those who say "there is no God" and yet discover real truth will ultimately run into error for failure to harmonize their efforts with gospel principles. Those who accept God as the source of all truth and harmonize their efforts with his principles will also discover truths, which God makes available to mankind but will seldom run afoul of the ultimate source. Thus, I conclude that the reality of God in valid long term study of all kinds must include his existence for legitimate progress. Anything else

has launched the researcher of truth on a path destined for ultimate failure, which he or she will eventually realize.

LIFE'S PURPOSE

As previously stated God's creations without a purpose is beyond my comprehension. Man's creations always have a purpose, even if trivial in nature. It seems ridiculous to me to accept God as the creator of all things and yet deny that he has a purpose in so doing. Anything as grand as the universe, mankind and all the various organisms of the world, demand a purpose. Only those who say "there is no God" and therefore all creations came about by chance, have a basis for claiming there is no purpose. Consequently, I believe mankind was placed on earth for a purpose and our individual efforts should point towards determining what that purpose is and living in harmony with it.

The atheist would have us believe everything in existence came about by chance from the universe itself to all life contained within it. They expound their various theories with "what if" stories of how such may have come about. The "Big Bang" theory is apparently evolving into the "Multi-verse" theory because it was found wanting. Darwin's "Theory of Evolution" is full of "what if" stories from its various adherents that strive to explain the improbable beginning of this process. Both of these unproven theories deny the existence of a Supreme Being, let alone the reality of the one and only "True God" of Christianity. Their theories fail because they leave the reality of God out of their foundation of study. They set themselves up as the apex of human-evolution and thus we, who are further down the chain of that process, intellectually speaking, should listen to their uninspired wisdom. In short, they set themselves up as gods of the human race by virtue of their supposed greater evolvment. In actuality, they walk in darkness because they refuse to accept the light that emanates from God.

There is no purpose to life, from the atheist's viewpoint, and thus nothing but darkness beyond mortality to look forward to. They provide no hope for the future or beauty in the history of our past. In their view, our ancestors were less than the amoeba and crawled out of the slime of ancient seas. If that seems depressing, consider the future wherein death opens the door to a bleak existence of decomposition and nothingness. If such were true, only mortal success, as defined by the

society of the time, would provide purpose for our lives. Our passions and thus probable actions would only be limited by the laws of society. Consequently, we would have no freedom beyond that dictated by the powerful of society, regardless of the means by which that power was obtained. Virtue of a spiritual nature would have no validity, though its imitation might be used for personal gain of some type. Real love would be non-existent because all exercise would be for personal gain. In short, morality would only be a product of the human mind and it too would ultimately be defined by the powers that be. The truths described in the "Declaration of Independence" would be a farce, being simply a product of the minds of leaders from the thirteen original colonies. The very principles that have made this country great would simply have been derived through evolutionary thinking rather than having been inspired of God. I reject such thinking, as being inspired by the adversary, who the evolutionist would say is imaginary but follow the counsel of his purpose in ignorance. In my mind, Satan is continuing the war that began before the world was. (Revelations 12:7).

Contrast the preceding paragraph's concepts to those of the gospel. We are taught that man is an eternal being, having experienced a pre-mortal existence and is now gaining the benefits of a mortal probation. Herein he is looking forward to a future existence whose degree of glory will be based on his desires and actions in mortality. These concepts can be found in the scriptures in such places as Jeremiah 1:5; Psalms 82:6; Acts 17:28-29; 2 Corinthians 15:40-43, as well as in the Book of Mormon and other latter day scriptures. They clearly teach that we are the sons and daughters of God in the spirit realm or in an existence prior to mortality and that all mankind will be resurrected to differing glories determined by our loving Father and Jesus Christ. Christ atoned for the original sin as well as for the mortal sins of those who accept him as their Savior and strive to follow his teachings.

Our heavenly reward is determined by grace after all we have done through our works in mortality. Thus, the purpose of mortality is to provide a probationary time for mankind to demonstrate his or her desire for a given reward, i.e. telestial, terrestrial or celestial, through works and the opportunity provided to learn and apply gospel principles in our lives. Ample opportunity is provided for those who lived or

now live without such opportunity as mortals by an all wise and loving heavenly Father. Such scriptures as given in 1 Peter 3:19-20; 4:6; and that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:29 attest to that process now going on in the spirit realm as well as in mortality.

Such scriptures, as those above, also attest to the fact that man is a dual personage, being both a physical being and a spiritual being. The importance of understanding this concept is critical, in my estimation, in the proper conduct of our lives. Without it, we are prone to over emphasize the physical aspects of mortality while starving the spiritual. The condition of the latter as we exit mortality is, of course, the primary means by which we are judged in determining our heavenly future. The words of William Wordsworth describe our eternal journey, as we prepare for that reward in a beautiful and meaningful way, in his poem "*Ode on Imitations of Immortality*", repeated here yet again for the reader's benefit and convenience.

*"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come,
From God, who is our home."*

There is no question that most people prefer the latter description of mankind's existence on this earth to that of science with its adversarial conclusions of a big bang creation of the universe and the theory of evolution. Neither of these have, in my mind, advanced beyond the theory stage with empirical data. As already described, they point to a dismal past and an even more bleak future, while setting up gods of science for us to worship. These conclusions, of some scientists, are based on the premise that "there is no god" and have become an intellectual means of the adversary to derail mortals who accept God as a reality. Unfortunately, our ignorance of scientific truths, allow those highly trained in that discipline to mislead us with their rhetoric.

Where such conclusions are accepted by man with no later change of thought, he (the adversary) has won the war, which began in heaven, regarding those particular individuals' souls. They deny the existence of the spiritual being and its ability to communicate with our God through prayer and the Holy Spirit. Even

where God is accepted as a reality, failure to accept and or live in accordance with true principles indicates doubt or a lack of faith and prevents the individual from gaining full benefit of his or her stated belief. Again, as previously stated, such individuals have never experienced any such spiritual communication because they either deny its existence or fail to use it because of doubt. Such is similar to the untrained individual denying the existence of an atom or a sub-atomic particle because he or she has never used the device necessary to see or detect them or even the trained person failing to use them because he doubts the validity of the results. Either situation prevents faith's development.

The believer with faith, however; accepts valid scientific conclusions because of the fruit such knowledge bears, i.e the empirical results in our physical world. Likewise, the fruit apparent in the lives of those who believe in and practice the use of God given commandments and covenants also bears witness of God's existence. Many people, with limited as well as extensive education in science and other fields, testify of the reality of such fruit in their own lives as well as in that of others. Even unbelievers partake of some of this fruit because it makes society better while they falsely attribute its source to man's reasoning rather than God. The choice to believe or not believe, it appears, is an individual one, not conditioned by either intelligence or education. The latter, as well as many other things in society, are frequently used by the adversary to lead mankind astray. God's creations through man become some of the weapons, the adversary uses against us.

In so being led, we become a tool in the hands of the adversary in his personal war with God, while belief leading to faith and thus, trust in God prepares one to become an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Each of us makes a personal choice. In actuality, it is not being an instrument of either/or but our faith and effort that leads us to God or the lack thereof that allows Satan to bind us in his chains of disbelief. It is our choice of the path to follow rather than our personal righteousness that will ultimately lead us to God. Being saved by grace is a process and not an event. Each step in the perfecting process is an element of grace bestowed by a loving Father. Our failure to accept a given element through unbelief or disobedience stultifies our progress. The adversary uses common weaknesses of man, such as pride, to detour his efforts from refining the spiritual by gratifying the physical.

Individuals are all afflicted to one degree or another in different ways and to different degrees. For instance pride in personal success of some sort in society is commonly admired by mankind in general. We, in our weakness and ignorance, deny God as the source of our talents and tend to attribute personal success in society to our own effort and talent. Yet, the talents were given to us, as is our health, intellect and life. In general, mankind doesn't consider the source of their talents or express gratefulness to God for them.

In my opinion, the process of developing one's spiritual being begins with hope that God is a reality and has a purpose in the creation of man. With that hope, there must be acceptance of his omniscience and omnipotence while, in comparison, our own level of knowledge, power and understanding are nothing. This establishes a degree of humility, which coupled with even a modicum of faith, starts us on our journey of spiritual growth through obedience to those commandments and principles that have been revealed to us personally and to mankind in general. They, of course, have been revealed through prophets, called of God, who mark the way with the scriptures they write under Spiritual direction. All genuine scripture comes from God and is for the spiritual edification of man. Study is most effective when we apply them to our personal lives, for there-from is spiritual growth derived, as we conform and change our lives.

Faith in God will grow with personal observance of one's sincere feelings when obedience to a given principle or commandment is practiced. I love a scripture given in Alma 32:26-27 wherein he said; *"Now, as I said concerning faith — that it was not a perfect knowledge — even so it is with my words, Ye cannot know of their surety at first, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge. But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words."*

Though I didn't know it at the time, that particular scripture applied to my introduction to the restored gospel. I was slow to accept its beautiful message because I relied on my own ability in reasoning and failed to give room in my feelings for the Holy Spirit to bear witness of the reality of its restoration and truthfulness. I acted

in opposition to the proverbial advice, given by Solomon I suppose, in Proverbs 3:5 wherein he tells us; *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding"*. For the first 30 years of my life I relied on my own reasoning power and gave little place to sincere prayer and faith that God would reveal the truth of it or anything else to me. My study and reasoning kept me interested but it was prayer and a feeling of trust in God that finally convinced me. Even then, my journey had just begun and it was some years before I could really bear witness that I knew it was true. Only then, in concert with that witness, did I make a real effort to learn and apply its doctrine in my life. That delay greatly slowed my spiritual growth during my early years in the Church.

That witness has intensified my study and being coupled with both sincere prayer and service opportunities, has led to a dramatic increase in the level of my gospel knowledge with an attendant strengthening of that growing witness. The Lord has been both merciful and patient with my rather slow progress. I give thanks to him for his outstretched arm that the scriptures speak of and his tolerance for my weakness and errors along the way. It is the growth of my witness that has brought me a sure knowledge of the dual nature of mortal man, as well as the eternal nature of our beings as sons and daughters of God. This sure knowledge has finally dictated a complete reordering of my philosophy of life. Whereas I started adulthood convinced that happiness in life came through temporal success with its attendant rewards, I now see spiritual growth or development of the inner man as the real means of obtaining peace and happiness in this life.

I want to insert a parable here, which I have manufactured from a spiritual thought I once heard in a church meeting I attended. It also fits, I believe, with Christ's admonition given in Matthew 5: 15-16 in the Sermon on the Mount. I call it "The Parable of the Candle". You can call it whatever you want.

When one makes candles at home as they did in the olden days, they begin with a pot of hot wax and a string suitable for a wick. The string is dipped into the hot wax with the initial dipping requiring a certain degree of patience. As it straightens out while the bottom end sinks, wax permeates the string and forms a coating around its entire length. When it is then pulled out for a few moments, the wax hardens and makes the

string stiff and easier to immerse the second time. Continued dipping builds up the wax coat surrounding the string and increases the diameter of the candle until it reaches the size desired for the candle.

We might liken that process to the growing faith of one who is converted to the gospel. Accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, in humility and with admission of our sins and weaknesses, may well be the most difficult part of the conversion process. Pride can be difficult to overcome just as the initial dipping of the candle wick is. The latter requires patience by the candle maker as well as love for the beauty of that for which he knows the bare wick will become. Similarly, those who share the gospel with others must exude patience and love, as does our Father in heaven and our beloved Savior, while sharing their testimonies. Conversion of an individual is a process and not an event. No, one does not verbally accept Christ, undergo baptism with confirmation and become a finished product any more than does the first dip of the wick in the hot wax produce a finished candle. It is only the beginning of a life long process wherein we must endure to the end, which is defined as "following the example of our Savior".

It is the continued dipping of the individual in the principles or wax of the gospel that builds his or her faith to where they can stand alone. This dipping process can be likened to scripture study, prayer, obedience to commandments, etc. Just as the candle grows in diameter, the converted individual grows in knowledge and confidence of the process he or she is undergoing. They learn to love the principles of the process with their strengthening attributes as well as gain a greater realization of the final beauty the process will lead to. The rigors of the process now become the joy of the process as they lead one to sincere and earnest prayer, to personal application of the scriptures and to a sincere joy in serving others. No longer is the gospel a device designed to save one from hell as much as it is one for growing in light, knowledge, truth and certainty that through the grace of God we can become perfected in Christ. The individual now hungers for eternal truths and loses all desire for secular pleasure that degrades the spirit but finds joy in pursuing secular activities that build it as well as support such growth in others. He or she now sees death as simply a door to another dimension of our eternal existence, which offers opportunity

for further growth and advancement but also understands the necessity of mortality as a means of proving oneself for the greatest gift that God can bestow upon the faithful, even eternal life or life in his presence.

I certainly don't mean to disparage success in life. To a degree, secular success is important, as are the secular activities necessary for its development. It provides opportunity to properly provide for our families and ourselves. It also provides a means for spiritual growth through proper use of its attendant rewards. The way we use secular rewards is part of the test of mortality and provides some of the means by which we will be judged. Using them in accordance with God's will; develops the inner man, the spirit being that passes from mortality to immortality. This is the eternal part of our being and reasonable logic would demand that emphasis be placed on its growth for our eternal happiness. Secular success of any kind is fleeting even if we achieve fame and have monuments erected in our honor. Whether deserved or not, such monuments represent the adulations of mankind, whereas spiritual accomplishment brings the approval of God.

One might ask; "What is our potential and what is the means by which we can judge our personal progress or success"? Christ defined our potential in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:48 wherein he tells us; "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". I don't believe Christ would give a commandment that can't be met. Therefore, I have to believe that becoming perfect is possible even though it seems impossible and is obviously beyond my power. Paul gave a general description of the process in his epistle to the Ephesians in chapter 4, verses 11-13, whose last verse reads; "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". Just what does it mean to become perfect? According to Christ, it means to become like God and according to Paul it means to become essentially a carbon copy of Christ. He is our Great Exemplar and is also the way and the light. He has set the example and shown us the way to follow in his footsteps. If we strive to follow him, he will provide the light or knowledge by which we can be guided to that perfection, which will ultimately occur after our resurrection if we are worthy of God's greatest gift, even eternal life.

To add a little additional light to the term perfect, we might look to Webster. Among other meanings he tells us it is to be without flaw as well as complete or whole. That being the case, Christ's admonition for us to become perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect means to me that my potential is to become like God even though we will always be subordinate to him as well as Christ and probably many others. This is in harmony with the doctrine of Deification, which was taught in the church of the meridian of time and is still part of Eastern Orthodox thought as well as LDS doctrine.

In trying to understand mankind's responsibility in this, the process of perfection, I will turn to a scripture in the Book of Mormon in Moroni 10:32 wherein he tells us; *"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God"*. Notice that our part of the process is to deny ourselves of all ungodliness and to love God with all our might, mind and strength. If we do this, which is no small order, then his grace is sufficient to perfect us in Christ and help us fully walk in his footsteps. I don't know how much of this will be accomplished in this life but I do know that a sincere effort to follow Christ while in mortality, will provide us the opportunity to be perfected. I believe that our effort requires more than a statement that I believe in Christ and as a result the required effort on our part does away with so-called death bed conversions bringing salvation for the soul.

The eternal nature of mankind coupled with the opportunity for eternal progression and the uniting of families for all eternity, including those who have never heard the gospel, provides a philosophy for our existence that is beautiful beyond my fondest dreams. The concept that the purpose of mortality is to prove ourselves to our heavenly Father and gain a body to be resurrected at some point in the future to some glorified state provides motivation for this life. It creates a desire to not only learn the will of our Father but also employ his commandments in our lives. The various ordinances, covenants and commandments one follows and receives, become a light to mortal man to guide his footsteps in this life and not an impediment to minimize his pleasures in mortality. They

become positives in the life of man and not the negatives that so many believe.

The last scripture quoted from the book of Mormon counseled us to deny ourselves of all ungodliness and to love God with all our might, mind and strength. This is indeed a challenge to mankind. The adversary is at work in the world trying to mislead and tempt man in a variety of ways. Given the weaknesses all mankind enters this world with, we need all the help we can get to resist the adversary's menu. It is tempting and varied, offering something for all according to the weaknesses they are afflicted with. Our only real help is God through Jesus Christ our Savior. Satan and his angels, a full third of the sons and daughters of God (Revelations 12:3), are on the earth seducing mankind in numerous ways. Our only hope is through God and Jesus Christ who will not only show us the way but help us find the strength to follow it. We must not only realize that God is both omniscient and omnipotent but that we are his sons and daughters whom he loves and wants to return to live in his presence or gain eternal life. If we accept these attributes of our heavenly Father, we will realize that we are nothing in comparison and will approach him in all humility. This characteristic of humility is essential to our spiritual progress or learning during mortality.

Mankind doesn't accept instruction unless he or she accepts the fact that they know less than the teacher. With this recognition, we can approach Heavenly Father in prayer even as we would our own earthly father, looking for help and instruction. If we do so, he will answer our prayer through the Holy Spirit by mental impression, warmth in our breast or some other way he deems appropriate. As we take that instruction and apply it in our lives we will be guided to safety from the wiles of the adversary. The success and joy we feel will increase our faith and our love for our heavenly Father as well as Jesus Christ. We will then be able to "deny ourselves of all ungodliness and love God with all our might, mind and strength" as counseled by Moroni. We can then be found to be worthy of that grace required to move towards perfection, realizing that it is a process rather than an event. The scriptures also tell us that we must endure to the end as given in the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi 31:16. Thus, we must continue this process throughout life from the time of our conversion to our eventual demise if we, indeed, truly desire the promised associated blessing of perfection.

The secular blessings of life come from God through man by inspiration whether scientific, economic, political or religious in nature. Even those who deny his existence can be inspired to develop scientific laws, various processes, articles, etc. to further his purposes. Man may not understand why or how but God is in control. The adversary utilizes all such advances from God's inspiration to further his work of frustrating the purposes of God. Thus we find marvelous inventions used for extremely wicked purposes. Any one of us can be in the employ of God or the adversary at any given time. We cannot afford to say in our hearts that we are totally righteous nor can we say another is totally wicked. God blesses mankind through the talents and works of all his children according to his divine will at any given time. He also uses the wicked to chastise, rebuke or scourge even his chosen people, the House of Israel. Consider Nebuchadnezzar as an example. All members of mankind are works in progress who may move forward, stand still or move backward in our spiritual development at any given time. Our movement is related to whom we listen to, God through the Holy Spirit or the adversary through his angels that saturate the earth.

Mankind, being removed from God's presence, no longer has his constant guidance as we did in the pre-mortal state. We can only feel his presence by drawing near to him through the Holy Spirit in prayer, in listening to the prophets, both living and dead and being involved in righteous works. We passed the test of our pre-mortal life by not rebelling against God as did the adversary and his angels. See Isaiah chapter 14 and Revelations chapter 12 for a scriptural record of these events and their resultant influence on those who enter mortality. Here we are battered by Satan and his angels with no hope of survival unless we turn to God and Jesus Christ. This requires the proper use of our agency by choosing good works over evil, which ability we were endowed with as we entered mortality. This is the ultimate test, requiring humility, faith in our loving heavenly Father and his Son, as well as obedience to the covenants and commandments he provides through his plan of salvation. This opposition in all things, presented by the adversary and our Father in heaven, forces us, as human beings, to make a choice and thus express our desire for good or evil. This choice we make then provides God and Jesus Christ with the means to judge us and bestow upon us the appropriate

blessing as resurrected beings. This is, in my opinion, the ultimate hurdle in becoming perfect.

The adversary is a master of deception. His goal is to entrap us by appealing to the weaknesses of our mortal beings or to bind us in his chains as described in the scriptures. See Psalms 68:6 and Jude 1:6. The darkness of the latter scripture refers, I believe, to the lack of truth experienced by those who oppose the truth of God. Those who live in harmony with his will eventually receive a fullness of truth or become gods in their own right. We see the adversary's means of deception in all facets of life. Some are obvious while others are not. This is true because we tend to judge a situation or act in terms of good or evil by comparing it to our own standards of good and evil. Too often these standards are set by the society in which we live. If people obey the laws of society we tend to judge them as good but we have to remember that such laws are made and enforced by people who are less than perfect and demand only that which is acceptable to society. Thus, they are incapable of guiding us to perfection in Christ as described earlier. If we are serious in following Christ and reaching that status he commanded us to achieve in the Sermon on the Mount, even becoming perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, we must follow a higher law or that of the gospel. It will stretch us and try us to the utmost but it will also reward us with the greatest gift God can bestow upon man, even eternal life.

In closing my comments about my philosophy of life, I want to cite four areas, which though important to secular life, still provide opportunity for the adversary to inject his deceptive views on humanity. I want the reader to realize these comments are my own and not something the LDS Church has taken a stand on, at least to my knowledge. The leadership stays clear of the political arena and never resorts to condemning other religions or denominations. They also comment very little on scientific thought, only saying that scientific conclusions must be in harmony with the gospel to be valid. They often warn us about various economic influences that are detrimental to living the gospel as do many leaders or pastors of other churches as well.

ECONOMIC INFLUENCES

Economies are designed to promote wealth and produce an enjoyable lifestyle that leads to what man would generally call happiness. A fly in the ointment, however, is that such happiness is usually described in a secular sense and has

nothing to do with the inner or spiritual side of man. This imbalance that society promotes regarding mortal happiness focuses people on the physical side of life only, with the spiritual side being something hazy and indefinable. We tend to work to provide a comfortable living and have the resources we need for entertainment that we enjoy with little thought as to the spiritual aspects of our life. Thus, in a sense, we live for today with little thought for the future. We also give little thought to how the inner man or spirit influences our physical being in establishing hope, peace, contentment and self image. Our emphasis is generally to promote those personal characteristics that bring temporal success but do little to build the spiritual side of life. This is, in my opinion, a ploy designed and promoted by the adversary to keep us in spiritual darkness.

SCIENTIFIC INFLUENCES

Science has contributed greatly to the prosperity and well being of people in this life. True science is inspired of God, in my opinion. The LDS Church has no quarrel with true science other than some conclusions that fly in the face of truth as revealed by our Father in heaven. It is scientific advancement that makes possible effective communication in the world wide church. Without it, it would seem that taking the gospel to "all the world", as Christ commanded and, moreover, keeping it pure in doctrine and teaching would be impossible. With the adversary doing his thing, it is still a demanding job, I feel sure, even though I'm not privy to such problems. Two perplexing problems, in my view, are the advancement of both the "big bang theory" and the "theory of evolution" as proposed by Darwin to a status of fact without the empirical data to verify them. They are so discussed and even taught in much of society.

POLITICAL INFLUENCES

One might feel politics has no bearing on religion, at least in the United States. Yet we see politics undermining the fabric of the society as put forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. As our government moves towards socialism, it moves away from personal responsibility and the proper use of agency as given by our Father in heaven. Whereas this country was founded on freedom and the concept of limited government, we now see ourselves as becoming wards of the government wherein it takes care of our every need. We are fast losing our right to act for ourselves as in "political correctness" or to vocally express our

opposition to immoral acts that our forefathers deemed reprehensible. Socialism is founded on the basis of "there is no God" and as we approach it in totality, the government will begin to dictate how we can or can't worship. I worry about government handouts of any kind to my posterity because of the weakening influence they have on moral character.

I believe that what we are seeing today in the present administration's quest for Big Government is the very act of "*Give people plenty and security and they will fall into spiritual torpor*", as mentioned in Mr. Steyn's article included in chapter 20. This government would remove all responsibility for personal growth and well being from the individual and eventually turn society into a group of adolescents who have no responsibility for their own welfare. This removes an essential virtue from such individual's lives, even personal responsibility. That coupled with the fact that the ultimate goal of the extreme left is socialism, which denies God, leads me to believe the individuals therein are ploys of the adversary, knowingly or unknowingly in his continuing war with God and the ultimate perfection of man.

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

I believe all Christian churches promote goodness in the hearts of their members to some degree. However, I believe God provides only one church under his direction, which has the fullness of the gospel as well as the authority to administer the same. Believing one has the authority by virtue of the scriptures to act for God is akin to saying I have the authority to act for a given company by virtue of having read their founding documents. I believe we have to study the scriptures, pray for enlightenment and act in harmony with moral principles so as to be guided by the Holy Spirit in selecting a church. We not only have that right but also that responsibility, similar to political freedom, so as to guide our lives through mortality and help accomplish God's purpose for each of us.

In closing this rather questionable work, I thank my Father in heaven for both a small degree of inspiration and for the preservation of my limited intellectual and physical well being sufficiently long for its completion. I also express my gratefulness to all readers who have endured its questionable message so as to reach this point. May God bless them, as well as all mankind, in finding that path, which leads back to his presence, even eternal life.