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APPRECIATION FOR BLESSINGS

I desire to express to the Lord in your presence, my brethren and sisters, the gratitude I feel this morning for the blessings of the everlasting Gospel. I am thankful that my grandparents heard and received the Gospel in their native land, England—that they forsook the traditions and the religion of their fathers and joined with the Saints in Nauvoo and later came to these valleys of the mountains, and that I had the privilege of being born of goodly parents under the Celestial law of marriage and have had the environment of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of faithful men and women, and that my heart has been inclined to love and obey the truth.

I desire to show to the Lord my appreciation of his blessings in the ordinances, the gifts and all the blessings of the Gospel by living an orthodox life, being orthodox in thought and in my living and in my teaching. A true Christian—that is what I would like to be.

CERTAINTY CAME WITH VISION OF FATHER AND SON

Expressive of the principles of the Gospel, I desire to say that as I view it, the most important event in many centuries affecting mankind occurred in Manchester, New York, in the Spring of 1820 when the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, revealed themselves anew to the world, through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith, whom the Lord raised up for this and other important purposes pertaining to the welfare of mankind.

Mankind may now know of a certainty that the God of this world is a personage having a body of flesh and bones as tangible as the body of mortal man; and that he is an immortal being, glorified and exalted, in whose image and likeness man is created and made; and that the Son is in the express image of the Father. This revelation and the restoration of the Gospel which followed are what the people of this world needed more than anything and everything else.

THE GOSPEL NOT ALWAYS ACCEPTED

For more than a century we have, as a Church, been preaching the Gospel to the world; but as a rule people have not received it. They are not, however, unlike the people of other Gospel dispensations in this respect. The Prophet Isaiah preached the Gospel to the people of his day, yet we find him saying, "Who hath believed our report?" (Isaiah 53:1)

The Apostle Paul was a great preacher of the Gospel in his day, and yet we find him saying to the Romans, "But they have not all obeyed the Gospel, for Esaias sayeth: Lord, who have believed our report?" (Rom. 10:16)

Even the Savior's forceful teachings, accompanied by mighty miracles, did not convert all the people. It is our responsibility as a people to continue the preaching of the Gospel in all the world regardless of who may or may not accept it. To them that hear and understand the Gospel, it becomes as a savor of life or death, according as they accept or reject it.

We came to earth for the express purpose of working out our salvation according to the plan of the Gospel, which was instituted in the councils of heaven before the world was; and which has been restored to earth in these last days. One of the conditions of salvation is a belief in God the Eternal Father and in his Son Jesus Christ as they are, also a belief in the efficacy of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

BELIEF IN GOD AS A PERSONAL BEING

The first article of our faith reads, "We believe in God the Eternal Father, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost, unlike the Father and the Son, is a personage of Spirit, without flesh and bones. The faith of all intelligent beings is centered in God; and it is necessary that they have a correct understanding of his personality and attributes and the relationship they sustain to him. The scriptures of the Bible support the doctrine of a personal God; but religionists generally do not accept the teachings of the Scriptures on that point of doctrine.

There are, however, some independent thinkers who do. Henry Ward Beecher was one of them. In lecturing to a class of students who were preparing for the ministry he said:

I am compelled to say that I must form an ideal of God, through his Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is indispensable to me. My nature needs to fashion the thought of God, though I know him to be a spirit, into something that will nearly or remotely represent that which I know. I hold before my eyes a glorious form, therefore; but after all the glory, whatever may be the nimbus and the effluence around about it, it is to me a glorified form of a glorified man. And I therefore fashion to myself, out of the Spirit, that which has to me, as it were, a divine presence and a divine being, namely a divine man.—Lecture on Preaching, p. 129.

NEED FOR NEW REVELATION

As an evidence of the need for a new revelation of God, such as was given through Joseph Smith, I quote from a sermon by the Bishop of Liverpool, England, as reported in the *Lancashire Post*, of March 21, 1912, as follows:

One of the great needs of the Christian Church is power. We are living in an age of great material power. We have covered the land with new and restored churches; we have spent great sums of money on Colleges and ecclesiastical buildings; we have improved and enriched their services. We have planted new missions in foreign lands, and their settlements in all the great towns. Religion today is wearing silver slippers, and moving in high places, and yet I venture to think there is a strange want of power

about the Church of God, not only in our Church, but about every other branch. The Church at present seems almost overmatched by the power of darkness. Sometimes it seems as if the darkness is gaining on the light. What is the cause of the strange paralysis that has befallen the Church?

He "believed that the Church needed today a new discovery of God; the Church was weak today because God was so distant, so unreal, so dimly seen." The Bishop evidently had not learned of the new discovery of God through Joseph Smith; but to him the need for such a discovery was very apparent.

Naturally, one will desire to know what are the teachings of that great Angelican Church concerning God, that he should be to them so distant, so unreal, so dimly seen. It is explained in the first article of their religion as follows:

There is one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things visible and invisible, and in the unity of this Godhead there are three personages of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Note: three persons of one substance, having no body.

We have considered the need the world had for the re-discovery of God by Joseph Smith. At that time, the Gospel was about to be restored in fulfilment of the Scriptures. Joseph Smith was raised up to be the instrument in the hands of the Lord in its accomplishment; and it was necessary that he have a correct understanding as to the personality of God, that he might be orthodox in his teachings pertaining to the Godhead, and that his faith and knowledge might sustain him in meeting the false ideas and teachings so prevalent at that time, and that he might be able to endure the trials and persecutions he would have to meet, for the Gospel's sake.

FULNESS OF GOSPEL REVEALED

This wonderful revelation of the Father and the Son was followed by the visitation of other heavenly beings—delivering to Joseph messages pertaining to the Gospel and the Church, and the keys of former dispensations, necessary in the accomplishment of his divinely appointed mission, with priesthood and authority from God to administer all the ordinances pertaining to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many revelations were given to Joseph for his guidance in the restoration of the Gospel and the establishment of the Church and kingdom of God on the earth and for the guidance of the members of the Church.

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE GOSPEL

The fourth Article of our Faith reads as follows:

We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

There are other principles and ordinances of the Gospel the acceptance of which is necessary to man's salvation. In the preaching of the Gospel we undertake to make plain all the conditions on which salvation is predicated, and to prove our position from the Scriptures. We have given some time to the consideration of the subject of faith as the first article of our religion. The subject of repentance follows faith in logical sequence, and is one of the most comforting of all the principles of the Gospel. By repentance our sins, though they may have been as scarlet, may be washed white as wool, through the blood of the Lamb of God.

Such are the teachings of the Scripture.

The third Article of our Faith reads as follows:

We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

All the principles, laws and ordinances of the Gospel are made effective for man's salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Repentance means a forsaking of all evil and the doing of good.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.—Matt. 11:28-30.

This is a beautiful call to repentance. The burden of sin is hard to bear.

Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.—Doc. and Cov. 58:42.

For, behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I, which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink.

Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken.—Doc. and Cov. 19:16-20.

Baptism naturally follows repentance, for baptism by immersion by one having authority is for the fulfilment of the law, for entrance into the Church and kingdom of God, and for the remission of sins, which have been repented of.

On the occasion of the Pentecost at Jerusalem, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, those of many nationalities were convinced that Jesus Christ, who had been crucified, was what he claimed to be, the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Faith had found place in their souls, and they said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of

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

In this declaration of Peter's, we have taught us in logical sequence, the principles of Faith, Repentance, Baptism and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is conferred by the laying on of hands of those having authority, and upon those who have met the prescribed conditions, and are worthy. The Holy Ghost will not dwell in unholy tabernacles. But when a man has repented of his sins and has had them washed away in baptism, he is without sin and worthy to receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. It is the mission of the Holy Ghost to bear record of the Father and the Son, and of the truth of all things. By the Holy Ghost we may know the Father and the Son, whom to know is life eternal.

The Apostle Paul mentions these principles and ordinances in his epistles to the Hebrews, as follows:

Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.—Heb. 6:1, 2.

The *Bible Commentary* by Matthew Henry has this to say with respect to the above quotation:

These are the greatest foundation principles, which ministers should clearly and convincingly unfold and clearly apply. In these the people should be well instructed and established, and from these they must never depart; without these, the other parts of religion have no foundation to support them.

GOING ON TO PERFECTION

The Apostle Paul says, "Let us go on to perfection."

We read from Peter:

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.—II Peter 1:5-7.

The thirteenth Article of our Faith reads:

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

I bear you my testimony that I do know that the work in which we as Latter-day Saints are engaged is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the plan and power of God unto salvation, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.