

grew up in a home where there was love and virtue, patience and prayer; that he was attending school when he left for his mission and hopes to return to sit at the feet of good counselors and able teachers and partake of wisdom and knowledge mixed with faith; that with a great inheritance from forebears who pioneered the wilderness for conscience' sake, he loves the land of which he is a part; and that he carries in his heart a certain quiet conviction of the living reality of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and of the assurance that life is eternal and purposeful.

Would that every young man and woman in the land might be blessed to develop and live under such a charter for youth—that each might have a home in which to grow, an education worth striving for, a land to be proud of, a faith to live by.

We, their parents, their teachers, their leaders, can help them. God help us so to do that we may bless their lives and in so doing bless our own, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken

to us. Following a brief organ interlude the Tabernacle Choir will sing "O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings," from Handel's Messiah, with Richard P. Condie conducting and Alexander Schreiner at the organ. Following the singing the Choir and congregation will join in singing "Come O Thou King of Kings."

After a brief organ interlude, the Choir sang "O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings," from Handel's Messiah, Richard P. Condie conducting and Alexander Schreiner at the organ.

The Choir and congregation joined in singing "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

President Hugh B. Brown:

For the benefit of the television and radio audience we again announce that we are gathered in the historic tabernacle on the Temple Square in Salt Lake City in the third session of the Semi-Annual Conference of the Church.

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us.

ELDER STERLING W. SILL

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brothers and sisters, I appreciate very much this privilege of having a part with you in this great general conference of the Church.

One of the biggest businesses in the world is this business of holding conventions. This week and every week men and women all around the world will be getting together to discuss their problems, exchange ideas, and try to develop more effective techniques for accomplishment. If it is desirable for doctors and lawyers and teachers and farmers to get together to pool their ideas and experiences and then use them to uplift and motivate each other, how much more important such

a program should be for us, who labor in this greatest of all enterprises which Jesus referred to as "my Father's business." (Luke 2:49.) This is the business of building character, godliness, and eternal exaltation into human lives. God has said that it is his work and his "... glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.) But that is also our work, and it is also our glory, as God has invited each one of us to have a membership in his firm and to take as great a part as we desire in promoting our own eternal welfare. And what a stimulating idea it is that we may find our greatest employment in

that work in which God himself spends his entire time.

One of the chief characteristics of our age is our high standard of accomplishment. We live in the greatest period of enlightenment and progress ever known in the world. No one desiring excitement or wonders or miracles could complain about our age. In super jets we can now fly through the stratosphere faster than sound. In atomic submarines we can live comfortably in the depths of the sea or travel under the polar ice cap. And we are even now flapping our wings for an adventure into space. But next to God himself, the thing that we know less about than anything else in the world is our own individual selves. That great masterpiece of creation which God fashioned in his own image still remains the mystery of the universe.

When someone asks us questions about science, invention, or history, we can answer them. But if we were asked to write out an analysis of ourselves and tell about our mind and soul qualities, we might not give a very good answer. We could not even explain why it is that we do as we do when we believe as we believe. Or when men are asked about the purpose of life or the origin and destiny of their own souls, they usually become confused and largely remain silent.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* expressed his philosophy by saying, "Life . . . is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." (*Macbeth*, Act V, scene 5.) That is, life didn't mean anything to *Macbeth*, and there are many in our day who share this opinion of life. *Hamlet* said, "How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world! . . . 'tis an unweeded garden, that grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature possess it merely." (*Hamlet*, Act I, scene 2.) And in this country last year, over 20,000 people followed this persuasion and destroyed their own lives.

The old Persian philosopher Omar Khayyám, who was among the wisest

men of his day, confessed his own inability to comprehend life by saying,

"I came like Water, and like Wind
I go?"

"Into this Universe, and Why not
knowing

Nor whence, like Water willy-nilly
flowing;

And out of it, as Wind along the
Waste,

I know not Whither, willy-nilly blow-
ing.

"Up from Earth's Centre through the
Seventh Gate

I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn
sate,

And many a Knot unravel'd by the
Road;

But not the Master-knot of Human
Fate.

"There was one Door to which I found
no Key;

There was the Veil through which I
might not see. . . ."

(From "The Rubáiyát,"
st. 28-29, 31-32,

tr. by Edward Fitzgerald.)

Three Stages of Existence

Someone has tried to help us understand life by comparing it to a three-act play. The scriptures tell of a long premortal existence, which was our first act. There is a little, short mortality, which is the second act; and then there is an eternal, everlasting third act. And someone has said that if you went into the theater after the first act had been finished and left before the third act began, you might not understand the play. Frequently life just doesn't make sense, when like *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* or Omar Khayyám we look at it in too limited perspective. How fortunate we are therefore to have God's point of view about life and to know his answers to the great questions. And it has been said that "the Big Three" among the questions of life are these—whence, why, and whither. Because of the particular re-

lationship existing between God and man, they can best be studied together.

Out of the golden age of Greece, we hear Socrates say, "Know thyself." And Jesus gave a companion instruction when he said, ". . . this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) To get a better appreciation for both God and ourselves, we might very profitably go back into the scriptures for a review of our own first act.

Mortality

The Bible says that God is the literal Father of our spirits, and Jesus Christ was his first-begotten Son. (See Heb. 1:6.) Like Jesus we have all seen God, as we lived with him during that long period of our first estate. Presumably we saw the foundations of this earth being laid and knew that we were going to have the great privilege of living upon it. We were informed at that time that during our second estate we would be added upon with these beautiful, wonderful bodies, without which we could not have a fullness of joy either here or hereafter. We were told that for a few years we would have this miraculous power of procreation, making it possible for us to have children and organize a family, which under the authority of the priesthood would be the basic unit throughout eternity. When given this good news the scripture tells us that ". . . all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:7.) And I am confident that if we now understood the importance of life as we understood it then, when we walked by sight, we would be willing to crawl on our hands and knees through life for this tremendous privilege which we presently enjoy. But we also knew then that during our second estate it would be necessary for us to learn to walk a little way by faith. It was important in our development that we see good and evil side by side. We needed to be tested and tried with the temptations of mortality and to develop a godly character by the exercise of our own free agency.

A Blessing

Henry Thoreau, an early American philosopher, once said that we should thank God every day of our lives for the privilege of having been born, and then he went on to speculate on the rather unique supposition of what it might have been like if we had not been born, and he pointed out some of the advantages that we would have missed as a consequence. But the scriptures tell us that one-third of all the spirit children of God never were born and never can be born because they joined the rebellion of Satan and their own evil caused them to fail in their first estate. And yet every spirit child of God hungers for a body. Some unembodied spirits who appeared to Jesus in his day preferred to have the bodies of swine rather than have no bodies at all. But because we successfully passed the requirements of our first estate, we earned the right to continue our progression into this life. From the beginning we have lived under the promise that if we passed the test of faithfulness during our years of mortality, we would graduate into a glorious, everlasting third estate. The third act is where the happy endings are; that is where the rewards are handed out. The third act is where, like the Redeemer himself, we may qualify for a glorious bodily resurrection and have all of the possibilities of eternal progression made available to us. To help us get ready we may prelive our own third act by studying the prophetic pages of the holy scriptures.

In His Image

I have a relative who practices this interesting forward-looking philosophy. When she reads a novel, she always reads the last chapter first. She wants to know before she starts where she is going to be when she gets through. That is also a pretty good idea for life.

Nothing is more clearly written in the scripture than the fact that the life of Christ did not begin at Bethlehem; neither did it end on Calvary. Jesus said, "I came forth from the Father,

and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." (John 16:28.) In his prayer in Gethsemane he said, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5.) Jesus was the first-begotten Son of God in the spirit and the only-begotten Son of God in the flesh. (See Heb. 1:6 and John 1:14.) But God is also our eternal Heavenly Father, and it is just as certain that our lives did not begin when we were born; neither will they end when we die. Like our Elder Brother, in the spirit we were also begotten in God's image. We were also endowed with a set of his attributes and made heirs to his glory. And the greatest idea that I know of in the world is God's promise that through our faithfulness we may become even as he is.

But these truths having to do with our own glorious destiny have always been difficult for some people to get into their souls. When Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30), the people took up stones to stone him for blasphemy. They gave their reason by saying, "... because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." (*Ibid.*, 10:33.) Jesus quoted to them the ancient Psalm in which God pointed out the destiny of his faithful children by saying, "I have said, Ye are gods." (Ps. 82:6.) Then trying to help them to understand, Jesus said, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?"

And said he, "If he [God] called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

"Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:34-36.)

"Partake of the Divine Nature"

We are still having some of this problem in our own day. In our disbelief we downgrade our divine possibilities. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of

man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. 2:9.) We can imagine some wonderful things, but we cannot even conceive of that magnificent experience that lies beyond the borders of this life. Certainly the greatest wonders of the future will not be in the improvement of our television or our airplanes; they will be primarily in ourselves. The greater the understanding of our own future, the more effectively we will be able to prepare for it. And why should we call God our Heavenly Father and at the same time fail to believe his promise that the offspring of God may someday become like the parent? The great message of the Church in our own day is that God the Eternal Father has reappeared upon this earth to reestablish among men a belief in the God of Genesis, the God of Mount Sinai, the God of Calvary, and the God of the latter days. The message has been renewed that the second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth is near at hand, and he has also reaffirmed the fact that those who are faithful will be exalted and permitted to rule with him throughout eternity. If we only believe, then all things are possible and we will be able to make the necessary preparation. If the god-like powers of man are so manifest even in his present fallen state, what may be the eternal potential of that great masterpiece which God created in his own image?

The Handiwork of God

The universe is God's handiwork, but man is his son. God placed the gold and silver in the earth, but he endowed his children with his own attributes and made them heirs to his potentialities. And according to his own immutable laws of heredity, the children may hope sometime to become like the parents. We should cling to our inheritance. There is everything in knowing our origin and possible destiny and in constantly reaffirming them in our lives. Someone once said to his friend, "Who do you think you are?" And he whispered quietly to himself, "I wish I knew."

Someday we will more clearly know who we are. We will understand the great scriptural teaching that God, angels, spirits, and men are all of the same species in different stages of righteousness and development. The scriptures point out that Jesus, the firstborn Son of God, was in ". . . the brightness of his [the Father's] glory, and the express image of his person, . . ." (Heb. 1:3.) But this same great truth also applies to us and will be manifest in our own future.

In singing of man's glory, the inspired Psalmist said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet;" (Ps. 8:3-6.) Another translation of this line says, "Thou madest him a little while inferior to the angels." (Heb. 2:7, marginal rendering of King James version.) Certainly God must have had a great destiny in mind for us when he promised to give us dominion over the works of his hands and to put all things under our feet. John the Revelator refers to man's divine possibilities by saying that God will make us kings and priests unto him for ever. (See Rev. 1:6.)

Progress in Mortality

Many years ago in speaking of the possibility of the eternal progression of God's children, B. H. Roberts said, "Think for a moment what progress a man makes within the narrow limits of this life. Regard him as he lies in the lap of his mother, a new-born babe! There are eyes, indeed, that may see, but cannot distinguish objects; ears that may hear, but cannot distinguish sounds; hands as perfectly fashioned as yours or mine, but helpless, withal; feet and limbs, but they are unable to bear the weight of his

body, much less walk. There lies a man in embryo, but helpless. And yet, within the span of three score years and ten, by the marvelous working of that wondrous power within, . . . what a change may be wrought! From the helpless babe may arise one like Demosthenes, or Cicero, or Pitt, or Burke, or Fox, or Webster, who shall compel listening senates to hear him, and by his master mind dominate their intelligence and their will, and compel them to think in channels that he shall mark out for them. Or from such a babe may come a Nebuchadnezzar, or an Alexander, or a Napoleon, who shall found empires and give direction to the course of history. From such a beginning may come a Lycurgus, a Solon, a Moses, or a Justinian, who shall give constitutions and laws to kingdoms, empires and republics, blessing happy millions unborn in their day, and direct the course of nations along paths of orderly peace and virtuous liberty. From the helpless babe may come a Michelangelo, who, from some crude mass of stone from the mountain side shall work out a heaven-born vision that shall hold the attention of men for generations, and make them wonder at the God-like powers of man that has created an all but living and breathing statue. Or a Mozart, a Beethoven, or a Handel, . . . may . . . call out from the silence those melodies and the richer harmonies that lift the soul out of its present narrow prison house and give it fellowship for a season with the Gods. Or from that . . . babe may arise a master mind who shall seize the helm of the ship of state, and give to a nation course and direction through troublesome times, and anchor it at last in a haven of peace, prosperity and liberty; crown it with honor, too, and give it a proud standing among the nations of the earth; while he, the savior of his country, is followed by the benedictions of his countrymen.

"And all this may be done by a man in [one short] life! Nay, it has been done, between the cradle and the grave. . . . Then what may not be done in eternity by one of these God-men? Remove from his path the inci-

dent of death; or, better yet, contemplate him as raised from the dead; and give to him in the full splendor of manhood's estate, immortality, endless existence, what may we not hope that he will accomplish? What limits can you venture to fix as marking the boundary of his development, of his progress? . . . Why should there be any limits thought of? Grant immortality to man and God for his guide, what is there in the way of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development that he may not aspire to? If within the short space of mortal life there are men who rise up out of infancy and become masters of the elements of fire and water and earth and air, so that they well-nigh rule them as Gods, what may it not be possible for them to do in a few hundreds or thousands of millions of years? . . . To what heights of power and glory may they not ascend?" (B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 1903, pp. 33-35.)

Certainly one of the greatest concepts of holy scripture is this great

truth wherein speaking of our potentiality God himself has proclaimed, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." (Ps. 82:6.)

May God bless our lives that through our understanding, our faith, and our good works we may reach the glorious destiny which he has ordained. For this I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "Onward, Ye Peoples," following which there will be a two minute organ interlude, and Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve will then be our concluding speaker.

Selection by the Choir, "Onward Ye Peoples," was followed by a two minute organ interlude.

ELDER MARK E. PETERSEN

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Latter-day Saints Believe

We Latter-day Saints believe in the Lord Jesus Christ wholeheartedly and without reservation.

He is the Savior of the world, the Redeemer of all mankind. He is the Son of Almighty God. He is divine.

All power was given to him in heaven and on earth. He is the Creator. He made this planet on which we live and all other heavenly bodies.

As the scriptures say, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:3.)

He became flesh and dwelt among mankind, some of whom beheld his glory, even the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. His mortal advent was accompanied by much sorrow and

suffering, but the greatest tragedy of his coming was that the people generally, and more particularly their leaders, did not—or would not—either recognize or accept him.

His Coming Was Expected

His coming was not unexpected.

Quite the contrary.

The people of that day were anxiously looking for their Messiah, whose advent was clearly foretold in the scriptures with which they were well familiar. Particularly were the scribes, the lawyers, the high priests, and the learned members of the Sanhedrin well informed. They knew what the prophets had said about the expected Savior, but these self-centered leaders were so steeped in their traditions that they would not admit what they must have known to be true.