

President Marion G. Romney

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

My beloved brothers, sisters, and friends, members and nonmembers, wherever you are: I have a very important message for you today, but what I say will be but words unless we enjoy the Spirit of the Lord. I therefore invite you to join with me in a prayer that the Lord will bless us all while I speak.

Offspring of God

The truth I desire to emphasize today is that we mortals are in very deed the literal offspring of God. If men understood, believed, and accepted this truth and lived by it, our sick and dying society would be reformed and redeemed, and men would have peace here and now and eternal joy in the hereafter.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accept this concept as a basic doctrine of their theology. The lives of those who have given it thought enough to realize its implications are controlled by it; it gives meaning and direction to all their thoughts and deeds. This is so because they know that it is the universal law of nature in the plant, animal, and human worlds for reproducing offspring to reach in final maturity the likeness of their parents.

They reason that the same law is in force with respect to the offspring of God. Their objective is, therefore, to someday be like their heavenly parents.

They not only so reason; they know they may so become because God has revealed the fact that it is his work and glory to bring to pass their eternal life (Moses 1:39), which is the life God lives.

Gospel taught anciently

Adam, the first man, knew that he was a son of God. He walked and

talked with him in the Garden of Eden before the fall. After the fall, "Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them. . . ." (Moses 5:4-5.)

Later, the Lord sent an angel who taught them the gospel plan, whereupon, "Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters." Then "Satan came among them, saying: . . . Believe it not; and they believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish." (Moses 5:12-13.)

From then until now, most men, like the first generation of Adam's posterity, have "believed it not," although God has repeatedly revealed it to all the prophets from Adam to Noah. He likewise revealed it to Abraham and thereafter to Moses "at a time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain.

"And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, . . .

"And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, . . .

". . . behold, thou art *my son*; . . .

"And I have a work for thee, *Moses, my son*; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; . . .

"And now, behold, this one thing I show unto thee, *Moses, my son*; for thou art in the world, and now I show it unto thee." (Moses 1:1-4, 6-7. Italics added.)

In this short scripture, the Lord

three times addressed Moses as "my son."

Paul, in his great speech on Mars' hill, speaking of God, said: "... in him we live, and move, and have our being; ... for we are ... his offspring." (Acts 17:28.)

Begotten sons and daughters

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery declared "that he lives!

"For we saw him, ... and we heard the voice bearing record ...

"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.)

"Begotten sons and daughters unto God." Can this be true in light of the fact that we all know that we are begotten sons and daughters of our earthly fathers? Yes, it is true because human souls are dual beings—spirits tabernacled in bodies of flesh and bone. The revelation says, "... the spirit and the body are the soul of man." (D&C 88:15.) God is the father of man's spirit, even as his earthly father is the father of his mortal body.

Nature of a spirit

The nature of a spirit is plainly revealed in the scriptures. A clear word picture of a spirit is recorded in the third chapter of Ether in the Book of Mormon, which gives an account of the appearance of Jesus Christ, as a spirit, some 2200 years before he was born to Mary in the flesh. The record says that Jesus stood before the brother of Jared in the form and likeness of a man and said:

"... Behold, I am Jesus Christ ...

"... Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

"Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh." (Eth. 3:14-16.)

Corroborating this truth, Jesus declared to Joseph Smith as late as 1833:

"... I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the First-born [meaning, of course, the firstborn spirit];

"Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit" (D&C 93:21, 23.)

Abraham's vision

We learn something more about our spirits in their premortal state from a record made by Abraham of a vision in which he was shown a multitude of spirits assembled in a great heavenly council. Consideration was there being given to the creation of this earth as a place upon which they, the spirits, could come and receive bodies of flesh and bone, thus becoming human souls. The plan provided that after a probationary period in mortality they should die—that is to say, their eternal spirit bodies and their corruptible mortal bodies would be separated. Later on, in resurrection, they would be reunited as immortal souls.

Abraham also learned that if during their sojourn on this earth they proved faithful, they would, as resurrected beings, be permitted to come back into the presence of their Heavenly Father—the Father of their spirits—and enjoy eternal progression. These are the words of Abraham:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; ...

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

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

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

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon [this refers to us; we kept our first estate and were added upon by receiving mortal bodies]; . . . and they who keep their second estate [that is, this life] shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever." (Abr. 3:22-26.)

Such is the revealed truth concerning man's lofty estate.

Alexander Pope's portrayal

By way of contrast, consider Alexander Pope's portrayal of the predicament into which man has fallen, as a result of his having rejected the revealed word of God as to his identity. Pope pictures him as being—

"Placed on this isthmus of a
middle state,
A being darkly wise and rudely
great:
With too much knowledge for the
Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the
Stoic's pride,
He hangs between, in doubt to act
or rest;

In doubt to deem himself a God
or Beast;
In doubt his mind or body to
prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but
to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such.
Whether he thinks too little or too
much;
Chaos of thought and passion,
all confused;
Still by himself abused or
disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to
fall;
Great Lord of all things, yet a prey
to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless
error hurl'd;
The glory, jest, and riddle of the
world! . . .

"Fix'd like a plant on his peculiar
spot,
To draw nutrition, propagate, and
rot. . . .

"On life's vast ocean diversely we
sail,
Reason the card, but Passion is the
gale. . . .

"And hence one Master-passion in
the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows
up the rest."

—"An Essay on Man,"
Epistle II

Block to spiritual growth

The theory that man is other than the offspring of God has been, and, so long as it is accepted and acted upon, will continue to be, a major factor in blocking man's spiritual growth and in corrupting his morals.

That it would be so was clearly predictable. In the mind of its devotee, any such theory as Pope's doubt as to whether "to deem himself a God or Beast" is resolved in favor of being a beast; and his doubt

as to whether to prefer "his mind or body," in favor of his body.

The concept that man is a beast relieves him of a sense of accountability and encourages him to adopt the fatalistic attitude of "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." He becomes, in truth, as Pope says:

"Fix'd like a plant on his peculiar spot,
To draw nutrition, propagate, and rot. . . ."

"On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but Passion is the gale

"And hence one Master-passion in the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest."

A child of God

The truth is, my beloved brethren and sisters, man is a child of God—a God in embryo. Every righteous soul responds with empathy to the children singing:

"I am a child of God,
And he has sent me here, . . .
If I but learn to do his will
I'll live with him once more.

"Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,
Help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do
To live with him some day."

—Naomi W. Randall

That man is a child of God is the most important knowledge available to mortals. Such knowledge is beyond the ken of the uninspired mind. Neither logic, science, philosophy, nor any other field of worldly learning has ever been, or ever will be, able to find it out. Those who limit their search to such learning techniques will continue to be as they have always been, "Ever learning, and never able to come to

the knowledge of the truth." (2 Tim. 3:7.)

The only means by which such knowledge can be had is divine revelation. Fortunately for us, as has already been shown, it has been so revealed repeatedly from Adam until today.

Difference in aspirations

The aspirations, desires, and motivations of one who accepts, believes, and by the power of the Holy Spirit obtains a witness to the truth that he is a begotten son or daughter unto God differs from the aspirations of him who believes otherwise, as the growing vine differs from the severed branch.

Knowing that he is a child of God, one does not doubt whether to "deem himself a God or Beast." He is not of "chaos . . . thought," driven by "passion" and "all confused." He is not "fix'd like a plant on his peculiar spot, to draw nutrition, propagate, and rot." He thinks of himself, as the scriptures teach, possessed of the innate ability, as are all other reproducing offspring, to reach in final maturity the status of his heavenly parents and have "glory added upon [his] head for ever and ever." (Abr. 3:26.) This is his goal.

Acceptance of God's laws

He accepts the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Word of Wisdom, and every other direction and commandment given of God to be statements of laws, the observance of which is indispensable to the attainment of his goal, to reach which he has dedicated his life.

He strives to respond to the Master's invitation:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28.)

And to his challenge:

"... be [ye] perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect." (3 Ne. 12:48.)

He knows that the wise and proper response is to heed the Lord's command to "beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life. For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God." (D&C 84:43-44.)

He believes implicitly the Lord's promise that "it shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am." (D&C 93:1.)

Faith of the prophets

He joins with Job in declaring, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job 19:25-26.)

He joins with Alma in his wish:

"O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

"Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all

the face of the earth." (Al. 29:1-2.)

And finally, with Nephi he resolves:

"I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them." (1 Ne. 3:7.)

I add my personal testimony that I know that I am a son of God, and that you, my beloved listeners, are individually a son or a daughter of God, and that this knowledge implemented in our lives will lift us back into his presence through the atoning sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus Christ; and in his name I leave you this witness, even so. Amen.

After President Romney's address and without announcement, the Tabernacle Choir sang "Thy Will Be Done."

President Harold B. Lee

We heard from President Marion G. Romney, second counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Thy Will Be Done."

Many on television and radio have just tuned in on this conference, and we wish to extend to them also our sincere greetings.

Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.