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DOCTRINES FOR EXALTATION

THE 1989 SPERRY SYMPOSIUM ON
THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

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Deseret Book Company
Salt Lake City, Utah

227-228

The New and Everlasting Covenant

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I begin with a word about speaking. Realities are wholes. Human words can never capture wholes; thus, human descriptions always fall short of being true to the reality they attempt to describe. The best we human speakers can do with words is to paint broad brush strokes that indicate some basic relationships and hope that each recipient will gain inspiration from that painting, partial and incomplete though it be, and that each hearer will then search for the truth of the matter through the Holy Spirit.

I propose to paint for you a picture of the new and everlasting covenant. I do not suppose that I can or will say everything necessary to do justice to this topic, but I will attempt to express what I feel to be certain key concepts and ideas that are important. I ask you to compare these with your own picturings of the reality of things in the hope that we may each move one step closer to understanding those things which are eternally important. I therefore bear the following witness.

THE GODS

We begin with the concept of our God. We know of three beings who are our God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.¹ These three are individuals, yet they are also one, and furthermore, they invite every human being to become one with them.² The good news of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is that God is our Father and invites us to become as he is and to become one with him through his son Jesus Christ.³

Though there be gods and lords many, there is but one God,⁴ and that God is the priesthood-ordered community of all the righteous, exalted beings who exist.⁵ To be invited to join them by hearing the

gospel of Jesus Christ is to receive the greatest message in the universe; to be enabled to join them by receiving the new and everlasting covenant is to have the greatest opportunity in the universe; to be joined with them is the greatest gift in the universe, which gift is life eternal, sharing with them all the good they have and are.⁶

This good that they share is righteousness. Righteousness is that necessary order of social relationships in which beings of knowledge and power must bind themselves in order to live together in accomplishment and happiness for eternity. They bind themselves to each other with solemn covenants to become predictable, dependable, and united so that they can be trusted. They bind themselves to be honest, true, chaste, and benevolent so that they can do good for all other beings, which good they do by personal sacrifice to fulfill all righteousness.

The contrary of this good is evil. Evil is departing from God's order of righteousness by twisting and/or diminishing it. Evil enables one being in a social order to fulfill his own personal desires at the expense of others, thus to be a law unto himself.⁷

MAN

We, the children of God, as we are found in our natural and evil state upon the face of this earth, are called by the scriptures "natural man" or sometimes simply "man."⁸ The natural man is without God and Christ in the world and by default is carnal, sensual, and devilish.⁹ We are carnal insofar as we pay more attention to information that comes through our flesh than to that that comes directly to our spirit. We are sensual insofar as we delight more in the pleasures of the flesh and of the world than we delight in doing good. We are devilish insofar as we would rather yield to the temptations of Satan and be selfish than perform the sacrifices necessary to do good for others. Such a natural man tends to continue in his inertial path of choosing first good and then evil, as he pleases, until he is jarred out of his complacency by a divine witness. The witness is that to become righteous, he must repent of choosing evil and accept the godly order of choosing good. Those who accept that jarring are the honest in heart.¹⁰ Those who will not accept the jarring harden their hearts by that rejection, moving themselves further from righteousness.¹¹

The honest in heart who hear the restored gospel are taught that Father is Man of Holiness, who cannot look upon sin with the least

degree of allowance.¹² They are also taught that Father so loved his children of this world that he gave his Only Begotten Son as a sacrifice so that every human soul might be redeemed both from the effects of the fall of Adam and from the effects of his own sins and weaknesses. They are taught that because of the Fall, man's nature is to be evil continually¹³ and that only through striving to accept the merits and mercy of the Son of God can any human be rescued from being and doing evil.¹⁴

SALVATION

The rescue process is called salvation. To be saved is to be placed beyond the power of one's enemies.¹⁵ The great enemy of each human being is himself, for in our weakness and selfishness we are and do evil. We as individuals or as collective humanity cannot help ourselves or each other fully to overcome weakness or selfishness.¹⁶ That overcoming is possible only if we fully cooperate with Jesus Christ in fulfilling Father's plan of salvation. That cooperation enables each human being also to become a person of holiness, which is to be completely righteous, perfect in good, even as the Father is, even as the Son is.¹⁷

Such salvation comes only by covenant with God, never by accident or by natural or human process.¹⁸ Man must first understand and then desire the proffered transformation of his own eternal nature when it is proffered.¹⁹ Before it is too late,²⁰ man must cooperate with Christ to the fullest extent of his considerable human powers to do better,²¹ and he must then fully submit to the incomparable divine power of Jesus Christ to create for him and of him a new creature, remade in every aspect of being.²² Thus human beings may become good and gods.²³

There are two covenants whereby a human being may attain complete good and thus become an exalted being as God is. These two covenants were established by Father in the beginning for the salvation of his children. The first of Father's covenants is a covenant of justice; the second is called the new and everlasting covenant and is a covenant of mercy.

THE FIRST COVENANT

The first covenant, the covenant of justice, was discussed in the council of the gods held before this world was, as is recorded in the

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

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

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

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever." (Abraham 3:23-26; italics added.)

The conditions of the first covenant, the covenant of justice, were these:

1. Father would give his children instruction and commandments.
2. Any child who would believe Father and obey his every commandment, without exception, would in that obedience grow to attain and maintain all the good that Father is and does, which is exaltation.
3. Any child who disobeyed any single commandment of Father, would, without exception, immediately die spiritually, which spiritual death is to be cut off from Father's presence, no longer to be able to grow in his order of good.²⁴
4. For every transgression of a commandment of Father, the offender must suffer for that sin and make full restitution for that sin, this suffering and restitution being at least equal to the suffering and loss caused to the person(s) against whom the transgression was committed.²⁵

It is possible that the covenant of justice, or the first covenant, is the order of heaven spoken of in the Lord's prayer.²⁶ If so, it would have been the abrogation of that covenant by which the third of the hosts of heaven fell in the premortal war in heaven.²⁷ That speculation aside, it is quite plain that this covenant of justice was understood by Adam in the Garden of Eden, for he was determined to and intended to keep all of Father's commandments.

But Adam transgressed the first covenant, and by so doing he

immediately brought upon himself and upon all of his posterity the promised spiritual death.²⁸ In this condition, if there were no intervention, Adam and his posterity would have been lost and fallen forever.²⁹ Upon mortal death every soul would have passed fully into the power of Satan, to become angels to Satan forever.³⁰

The fall of Adam was necessary. It was necessary because every child of Father needs to be out of Father's presence, to have forgotten the premortal existence, thus to be thrust into a strange world where he would be forced to choose between good and evil according to the desires of his own heart.³¹ It is a proving of the heart of each person whereby each person may see for himself whether or not he will choose good over evil and thus be able to stand the opportunity of wielding Father's unlimited knowledge and power.³² But if the Fall was necessary, so was it necessary to have a means of reclaiming man from the Fall should any man desire to choose good and only good. Father in his goodness and omniscience had already provided before the Fall for a second covenant.³³

THE SECOND COVENANT

The second covenant is a covenant of mercy and is the new and everlasting covenant. It is new because it is the second covenant,³⁴ and it is everlasting because "Everlasting" is one of the names of him in whose name we must learn to do all things.³⁵ We make this covenant with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost, but we receive all of the blessings of this covenant through the Son, who is Everlasting. Through him and only through him may any fallen creature claim blessings that are everlasting.³⁶

The new and everlasting covenant has two basic parts. Part one is the covenant of baptism, being born of water and of the Spirit. The covenant of baptism is our pledge to seek after good and to eliminate all choosing and doing of evil in our lives, and it is also our receiving the power to keep that promise.³⁷ Part two of the new and everlasting covenant is the oath and covenant of the priesthood. The work of part two is to receive the power and authority of God and to become perfect in using that power and authority to minister to other beings to bring about their happiness.³⁸ The intent of both of these parts is to enable a human being to lay hold on every good and godly thing in both time and eternity.³⁹ They enable us to do all that we can do towards our own salvation and also to receive and rely upon the fulness of the grace

of God, that we might be fully transformed from the weak, natural creature that we were into one like unto God himself, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Please do not mistake; we here consider parts one and two of the covenant as separate only because it helps us to see the whole better by analysis. Analysis reveals distinctions, but these distinctions are artificial and illustrative only. The new and everlasting covenant is one living whole; the two parts intertwine and enable each other in every way, even as the intertwining of body and spirit make the living, acting, breathing human soul, indissoluble in function but separable in understanding.

The formal nature of part one of the new and everlasting covenant is initiated in the covenant of baptism and is progressively renewed and strengthened in partaking of the symbols of the flesh and blood of our Savior in the sacrament. Part two of the new and everlasting covenant is initiated by ordination and is enlarged by the ordinances of the temple.

BAPTISM

The light of Christ is given to every man who comes into the world, that he may know the good, as opposed to the many varieties of evil that are promoted by Satan in this world.⁴⁰ The essence of human living is to make many choices between good and evil each day.⁴¹

We choose so that we can demonstrate what we really desire. If we desire the good, we show that our nature is compatible with Father's and that we would enjoy doing the work of righteousness in time and eternity. If we desire evil, we show that we cannot be trusted with any great power, for we would tend to use it for our personal advantage rather than for the great work of righteousness in which all of the gods participate.⁴²

Every soul who comes to accountability is thus forced to wrestle with good and evil and to make choices. He who chooses good will discover that he also chooses evil, for all of us sin and go out of the way.⁴³ To every sinner there eventually comes a new light, the Holy Ghost. This new light bears witness of Jesus Christ and tells him that if he will put his trust in Christ, Christ will become his Savior and help him to stop choosing evil. Those who desire to stop choosing and doing evil find this message most enticing, so much so that they are willing to try the experiment to see if the promise is true.⁴⁴

Each soul is instructed that if he wishes to try the experiment, he must believe and trust in the Son of God and begin to eliminate each evil thing from his life. These steps are called faith and repentance. The promised consequence of taking these two steps is that the Holy Spirit, which guides and enables these two steps, will then come in even greater abundance and will reward the experimenter with increased understanding and power to have even more faith and to repent of more sins.⁴⁵ If the experimenter is pleased with that result, then a new proposal is made to the experimenter: Would you be willing to enter into a covenant with God that would enable you to have full faith in Jesus Christ, to strengthen your repentance by enabling you to have the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit? Those who accept this message are given the opportunity to enter into the new and everlasting covenant by being baptized.⁴⁶

The candidate for baptism must promise three things:⁴⁷

1. The recipient must be willing to take upon himself the name of Jesus Christ. Taking the name of the Savior begins in the waters of baptism whereby we accept Jesus Christ as our new spiritual father and are willing to be known as his children before all people at all times and in all places. But it is also an expression of the willingness to take upon us all of the names of Jesus Christ, even until we receive a fulness of what he is and has. This willingness then is the willingness to go on to receive the second part of the new and everlasting covenant, which is to receive the oath and covenant of the holy priesthood.⁴⁸

2. The covenanter additionally promises always to remember his new father, Jesus Christ. This promise seems to mean to think upon him, yearn for him, pray continually in his name, be anxious for the success of his great work of salvation among the children of men.⁴⁹

3. The recipient of the covenant of baptism must also affirm his willingness to abide and obey every instruction that his new father will give to him. Only in so doing can the covenanter come to avoid choosing and doing evil, for righteousness in this world is only of Christ, he being the sole fountain of this rare reality.⁵⁰

This requirement of total obedience of the second covenant⁵¹ is much like the requirement of total obedience of the first covenant; indeed, it is identical with it. There is a difference in that in the second covenant there is the possibility of salvation and exaltation, even if the promise of obedience is not entirely kept at first. That is to say, there is provision for salvation, even if one is weak and sins after taking the

covenant. But the covenant also provides that the covenanter cannot suppose that the provision for sinning will allow him an escape forever; the escape is strictly temporary, and while yet in mortality the person must learn firmly and determinedly to keep this promise to obey fully and faithfully every single instruction the Savior gives him, without error or omission, which means a complete cessation of sinning.⁵²

The immediate reward to the covenanter for making these three promises of the covenant of baptism is that hands are then laid upon the person's head, he is blessed with the right to the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit, and he is commanded to receive that companionship unto himself.⁵³ Only with the help received through that constant companionship can any individual keep the promises made in the waters of baptism. And only by the covenanter's keeping the promises he made will the Holy Spirit remain with him. If one willfully disobeys the promptings to do good which the Holy Spirit brings, one is no longer entitled to nor can stand the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit then mercifully departs.⁵⁴

Receiving the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit is the baptism of fire which normally follows the baptism of water and is the occasion for the person receiving a remission of the penalty due for the sins which he has previously committed but has now repented of.⁵⁵ The presence of the Holy Spirit then enables the person to go forth in the knowledge and power of God on the straight and narrow path of righteousness. As long as the person is obedient to the Savior's instructions as received through the Holy Spirit, he will retain that forgiveness of sins and will enjoy the continued blessed presence of that companionship. Willful disobedience, however, brings a loss of both.⁵⁶

By receiving the baptism of water and of fire, the covenanter has now entered upon the strait and narrow path that leads to the end, which is eternal life.⁵⁷ But he is by no means there yet.⁵⁸ What he has gained is a fighting opportunity to win the battle between good and evil in his life. If he will do all he can to keep the covenant of baptism, surely and firmly evil will be eliminated from his life, replaced in every particular by the righteousness of God. Thus the person triumphs over worldliness and evil in his own person. Until this triumph of good over evil is an accomplished fact in his life, little can be done with the second part of the new and everlasting covenant.⁵⁹

THE OATH AND COVENANT OF THE PRIESTHOOD

As the first part of the new and everlasting covenant focuses on the triumph of the covenanter in the battle to replace evil with good in all things, so the focus of the second part, the oath and covenant of the holy priesthood, focuses on the training of the individual to function for good in the power of the Holy Priesthood of the Son of God and to use that power correctly and advantageously in the callings of God to promote the eternal work of righteousness. The challenge of receiving the holy priesthood is this: Now that you have shown that you can overcome evil for yourself, let us see if you can go further, to wield the power of God, in righteousness, to help others to overcome evil.⁶⁰

There are three stages by which one takes upon himself the oath and covenant of the holy priesthood and receives the power and authority of the Son of God.⁶¹ The first stage is to receive the priesthood, which one does by receiving ordination, being set apart to a calling, and by functioning faithfully in that calling under the guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit. Those who thus function carry out the mind and the will of God. If they do this faithfully, they will be given progressively greater power and responsibility in their stewardships, but this does not necessarily mean church position.⁶² To receive the priesthood does mean that one fully accepts the priesthood authority of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that one will be subject to those who preside over him in that priesthood.

The second stage of receiving the oath and covenant of the holy priesthood is to receive one's personal endowment in the holy temple of God. First, the endowment consists of special blessings that are given to the person so that he can bear the power of God in this world without being destroyed by the abundant evil that will confront and oppose his labors to do the work of God in the power of God. Second, the endowment is a set of instructions and understandings that assist the person to understand mortality and his role therein. Third, the endowment involves covenants that the person makes, special promises to bear the burden of the work of the Lord in righteousness and purity. These promises are covenants of the oath and covenant of the priesthood.⁶³ The oath is action taken by God, who cannot lie nor sin in any way. Men, who can and do sin and lie, make covenants with God that they might escape sinning altogether and wield the power of God in righteousness, and they do this altogether for the glory of God, as part of their worship of him for his goodness, for his righteousness.⁶⁴

The third part of the oath and covenant of the holy priesthood is to receive the covenant of marriage in the temple. This is God's marriage, eternal marriage, the establishment of a new eternal kingdom in the pattern of godliness, to do the supreme work of godliness eternally. Blessings are bestowed, covenants are made, and power and authority to act in the priesthood roles of husband and wife, father and mother, are given.⁶⁵

To receive the oath and covenant of the Holy Priesthood of the Son of God is to affirm a desire to take one's place in the divine order of righteousness. To be received into that order is, as it were, to be brought into a harness.⁶⁶ The harness is a great eternal set of bindings that link husbands to wives, parents to children, men to God. To be worthy of the harness, one must pull one's assigned weight in one's assigned priesthood labors to further the eternal work of righteousness using the gifts and powers of God. One enters that place in the harness by free will, accepts the burden of the position by free will, and endures to the end by free will. The harness is not imposed upon anyone against his desires. Rather it is gained only by much pleading and repentance and is fulfilled only in sacrifice and obedience.⁶⁷ It is true that the outward forms of the priesthood are seemingly imposed upon some in their ignorance, unwillingness, or disobedience; but such an imposition is but a temporary thing of this world. Unless they repent, such persons have no power to bind or to act for God in this world, nor have they any claim on the power of God for the next world.⁶⁸

The net sum of the new and everlasting covenant is that it is the power by which a human being learns to love God with all of his heart, might, mind, and strength and to establish God's righteousness here on earth.⁶⁹ This is another way of saying that we are thereby enabled to love our Savior and our neighbor in exactly the same manner in which our Savior loves us.⁷⁰ The work of the Aaronic Priesthood is to set into the godly order of righteousness affairs that pertain to the subduing of the earth and civil governing. The work of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to promote the spiritual welfare of souls through missionary work, genealogy and temple work, and the perfecting of the Saints unto the establishment of Zion. The highest focus of the Melchizedek Priesthood is the perfecting of the bonds of love between a husband and wife that binds them to the Savior and their children to them in the drawing power of that perfect love which we can receive

only from our Savior and only as we abide the promises we make in the new and everlasting covenant.

THE ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

Hitherto we have concentrated almost solely on what human beings need to do to fulfill their opportunities and responsibilities in the new and everlasting covenant. I wish now to turn our attention to our Savior's role in this grand pattern of salvation for mankind. We have been discussing the necessary human 1 percent of the work of the covenant. Now we turn to the divine 99 percent, the grace of God whereby we are saved. We are and can be saved by that 99 percent only if and as we fully do our 1 percent.⁷¹ I turn now to the atonement of Jesus Christ.

When we examine the etymological roots of the word *atonement*, we find that in Old English there was a regular expression used to say that people became "at one." This was sometimes spelled as two words, sometimes as one. The concept was a bringing together, an arranging of agreement, a uniting of hitherto estranged parties. The process by which this uniting was achieved was in English appropriately denominated "at-one-ment." When a word was desired to express what our Savior accomplishes in our behalf, no better word could be found than the word "at-one-ment," which we have come to pronounce *atonement*. This English word is the translation of the Hebrew *kaphar*, which means, among other things, to cover, and the Greek word *katallag*, which means to change in an intensive way and also to reconcile. The Savior's atonement does cover our sins, and change our nature, and reconcile us to the Father.

My understanding is that our Savior's atonement is the general descriptive term that covers all of his labors to exalt mankind from the moment he said, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever,"⁷² to the great and last day when he will present his children spotless before Father for Father's acceptance unto exaltation.⁷³ As it is the task of men to learn to love God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength,⁷⁴ so we can see that it is the task of our Savior's atonement to enable men to love God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength. We will describe the atonement in these four aspects.

JUSTIFICATION

The process by which our Savior enables men to love God with all of their minds is termed in the scriptures "justification." Our Savior

helps us to become just, which is to say righteous, by teaching us the truth we need to understand about God, about righteousness, about ourselves, and about the nature of our mortal probation. That teaching is essentially accomplished through the teaching and preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This gospel was given to our father Adam and will be yet taught to every child of Adam. Jesus Christ is the truth,⁷⁵ and only in truth can man act correctly to be saved. Thus our Savior has worked since the beginning to make sure that every human person has access to enough truth to take advantage of the opportunity to be ennobled in righteousness, to be redeemed from the fall of Adam, and to be reunited with Father.⁷⁶

But truth of itself does not fulfill righteousness. The understanding of *what is* must be supplemented by correct principles that tell us what *ought to be* and by specific instructions about how to implement those correct principles within the framework of the true reality that has been revealed. Thus our Savior also reveals correct principles and specific directions as to how to act wisely for righteousness. These principles and directions are called in the scriptures "light," and together with truth, they constitute intelligence, or the glory of God. Enabling his children to have his light and truth as the basis of all of their understanding, choosing, and acting is the purpose of the Savior's process of justification of his children, thus to assist each of them to become just beings.⁷⁷ This mission of justification of his children the Savior does largely through his agent, the Holy Ghost.⁷⁸ The receiving of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost is the means by which our new father, Jesus Christ, teaches each of his children to walk in light and truth, giving each of us line upon line and precept upon precept until that great day when, through complete faith in him, each of his children is glorified in light and truth,⁷⁹ even as he, our Savior, has been so glorified by his Father.⁸⁰

In behalf of justification, the prophets have labored in each dispensation to explain to men the basic outlines of truth and righteousness and have hoped that men would rejoice in those outlines, desire to become more righteous, and enter into the new and everlasting covenant to receive a fulness of righteousness. In behalf of justification, the scriptures have been written that men might better understand the witness of past generations and see that God and righteousness are the same today, yesterday, and always. The scriptural epitome of what it means to be just, to have received the justification of Christ,

is given in the Sermon on the Mount. The Book of Mormon is the scripture that lays out justification both as a process and a product with greatest clarity.⁸¹ The scriptures testify that justification through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is indeed just and true.⁸²

PURIFICATION

As the new children of Christ bask in the light and truth of our Savior's power of justification, it gradually dawns on each of us that to pour light and truth into the human vessel is not enough. As a child of Christ attempts to love the light and truth that come to him by his new father's gift, each becomes aware of an alarming fact: having light and truth is no guarantee of being able to do what is right. Sometimes we know full well what our Savior would have us do, but we yet deliberately do that which is evil because we want to. If a person has indeed begun to love God and his neighbor, this revelation of the impurity of one's own heart is horrifying. It means that at any time one is able to and apt to kick over the traces of the priesthood harness and consort with the evil powers in this world to gain some short-term personal advantage. It is this realization that makes even the prophets to weep and to mourn because of their iniquities and weaknesses.⁸³

Providentially, the Savior has a cure for this malady of heart, this willingness to choose evil over good. The Savior's cure is denominated in the scriptures as "purification."⁸⁴ Being the Lord God Omnipotent, the creator of heaven and earth and all things that in them are, being fully invested with the power of Father, our Savior can reach into our bosom and give each of us a new heart, a pure heart. He tells us that he will not do that merely upon some incidental request but only after we have done literally all we can do to repent and conform to the standards of godliness with the powers and opportunities he has already given to us. If we have repented of every sin we can repent of, have made fourfold restitution as far as we are able,⁸⁵ and have been reconciled to our brother,⁸⁶ we may present ourselves at the altar with a broken heart and a contrite spirit⁸⁷ and plead in mighty prayer for this change of heart.⁸⁸ Then and only then will our Savior reach in and give us a new heart.

The new heart will be a pure heart, one that has no selfish desires, one that is willing to do the right thing. It will choose to do the will of God at all times and places, no matter what the opposition or the sacrifice involved. This new heart is made in the image of that of Jesus

Christ, that same heart that enabled our Savior to say, "Father, not my will, but thine be done," that same heart that enabled him to live a sinless life, that same heart for which he was chosen to be the Firstborn and to be the Only Begotten.

To be purified is to become literally a new creature in Christ, to die as to the old person that we were, literally to become of the heart and mind of our new father. The scriptures promise great rewards for those who qualify and take this step. The scriptural name for this new heart is "charity."⁸⁹ Charity is to have a heart that loves with the pure love of Christ. Without that charity, we are literally nothing. Thus is the heart of a person saved. Then becomes possible for the person to be redeemed from the Fall,⁹⁰ to see God,⁹¹ and not to need to be further protected from the tree of life by those helpful cherubim.⁹²

RESURRECTION

The strength of the mortal tabernacles of men was rendered temporary and relatively impotent by the fall of their mortal father, Adam. This fallen and mortal state of man's body is a blessing because, being temporary, it does not have to be endured forever. Pain, illness, hunger, aging, and other kinds of physical distress are able to serve their useful, temporary purpose in educating and strengthening the spiritual aspect of individuals while allowing an anticipated surcease.⁹³

Permanent physical death would not be an improvement. Were mortal death to be the end of being tabernacled in flesh, every human would be at a serious disadvantage, because only when one is clothed in flesh can there be a fulness of joy.⁹⁴ Because of the circumstances in which Adam fell, he became subject to Satan, and that subjection would have been complete and final had not the Savior a most important part to play relative to our physical tabernacles.

Our Savior is God for every living creature, for he created all of us physically and is charged with fostering our eternal welfare. All the while that he is offering truth and righteousness for our minds and hearts through the light of Christ and through the covenant processes of justification and purification, he is also entirely mindful of the physical circumstances of each being on earth. Not a sparrow nor a hair of our heads falls to earth unnoticed by him.⁹⁵

For his eternal purposes our Savior suffers to transpire much that we humans call evil. But he also prevents much evil from occurring and transmutes all of what evil he does allow into the possibility of

becoming a blessing. For that behind-the-scenes love for us he gets precious little credit. But he gives that love in spite of the unknowing and selfish complaining of his reluctant charges.

Persons of the world pay a good deal of attention to creature comforts. In fact, some spend most of their time in acquiring, comparing, and consuming the delights of the flesh. Worldly wisdom has it that a pleasure in hand is worth two hundred in the heavenly bush. Worldly wisdom also has it that the end justifies the means in acquiring said carnal delights, especially when taken at the expense of one's enemies.

But for his faithful covenant children, those who have hearkened to the spiritual call to truth and righteousness, the Savior recommends sacrifice and selective denial of the flesh.⁹⁶ Those of his children who are faithful to his recommendations then receive special physical blessings through the power of his holy priesthood and his Holy Spirit, so that illness, accident, genetic disorders, and death take no more than their exact allotted toll. As is appropriate in his wisdom, his faithful servants are renewed in the flesh,⁹⁷ so that their earthly mission cannot be shortened by natural processes. He intervenes when appropriate when their enemies would destroy them.⁹⁸ And when the time does come for the beneficial suffering of death, his faithful children are accompanied at each step by his Holy Spirit and foreknow his will in these matters. They know that they are not left alone.⁹⁹

When they do die as to the flesh, it is our Savior who welcomes them to the eternal worlds and assigns them to new labors in his order of priesthood.¹⁰⁰ He ministers salvation in the spirit world through them, even as he does on earth, that all former mortals might know of and partake of the gifts he has to give.¹⁰¹

When our Savior took upon himself the role of Messiah, descending below all things to become flesh and blood on this earth and in this fallen world, he brought with him a special advantage. Being born of and fully empowered by an immortal Father, he had the power to choose not to die and also the power to raise himself from the dead should he choose to die. Being born of a mortal mother, he inherited the power to die. Not needing to die, he voluntarily gave up his possibly unending mortal life and all he could have accomplished in that sojourn for a greater purpose.¹⁰² By dying voluntarily he performed the sacrifice of the Atonement, and by that sacrifice seized the keys of death and hell from Satan, who had gained them in the Fall, and thus prepared the way for the resurrection of all mankind.¹⁰³

Thus, after all, probation has been extended, after each human creature has chosen the law by which he desires to be governed,¹⁰⁴ after all things are set in order and there is no further need of the special change known as repentance, then our Savior extends the opportunity of resurrection to each human being through his priesthood order. Every soul will receive again a tabernacle of flesh and bone, nevermore to die.¹⁰⁵ His righteous children receive a tabernacle of his own order, a celestial body, having the same powers that he inherited from his Father in becoming the Only Begotten. Thus our Savior draws us into the same order of flesh and bone as that which he and Father enjoy. Thus in one more way we may become one with Father through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

SANCTIFICATION

Coming into this world already just and pure, our Savior was able to live in mortality without sinning. This astounding achievement was not automatic. He knew full well that he had the power to sin, and he could easily have stepped off the path in either direction at any time. But because he loved Father with all of his heart, might, mind, and strength, he refused to sin. In that love he also loved us, his neighbors, with that same pure love with which Father loves him. Thus our Savior was the perfect model of righteousness, truly our total exemplar.¹⁰⁶

By not sinning even once our Savior demonstrated that he was indeed the Son of God. Not only did he show us the way, the truth, and the life, but he also made it possible by his sinlessness to suffer for our sins, which is the fourth and final aspect of his atonement.

The need for the suffering of the Atonement came from the nature of human sin. Sin is transgression of the law of God.¹⁰⁷ The law of God is not arbitrary but is established upon eternal principles of righteousness. That righteousness, by way of justice, demands that when one being hurts another without cause and permission, that hurt must be matched by a similar suffering on the part of the perpetrator of the injury. Not only that, but restitution must be made so that the injured person is at least as well off after the injury as he was before the injury. Only as both of these conditions — suffering and restitution — are fully satisfied can any sinner stand blameless before Father and endure his presence.¹⁰⁸

Having given men the opportunity to sin after having created them, our Savior also provided that the individual might not be eternally

damned for having sinned if he were truly sorry.¹⁰⁹ The appropriate measure of sorrow is that the sinner confess the sin, forsake sinning completely by turning to do only the Savior's will,¹¹⁰ and make whatever partial restitution he can, which is repentance. Repentance indeed removes sinning, thus sparing the one-time sinner from further jeopardy, but repentance does not absolve the former sinner of the debt previously incurred. Only our Savior can make a sufficient suffering and restitution to render the sinner clean enough that that person could ever again live with Father.

So when an individual has done all he can to repent of sinning and to make restitution for his sins through partaking of the new and everlasting covenant, our Savior then assumes responsibility for the remainder of the obligation, saving men by his grace, but only after they have done all they can do.¹¹¹ The restitution he does through his role as Jehovah, the Father of heaven and earth, he who is able to reach into eternity and remove the everlasting eddies of the sins that men commit. He is able to stop the otherwise inexorable eternal consequences whereby evil is propagated through time and space by cause and effect. Thus he is able to leave each resurrected being in a condition in which he suffers no eternal consequence for any evil done to him in mortality by any other mortal.¹¹² Thus our Savior satisfies part of the demands of justice. It yet remained for him to suffer for the sins of all mankind, those sins past, present, and future to his mortal sojourn.

The occasion of the suffering of the Atonement was but one day of his life, the final day of his mortality. In Gethsemane and through the time on the cross, our Savior trod the winepress alone,¹¹³ suffering the debt of sin, suffering a total suffering equal to all of the sinning that ever had or ever would be done.¹¹⁴ Having paid the debt of sinning for the sins of all men, he can invite all of us to come to him and to learn of his ways and to partake of his forgiveness.¹¹⁵

Through his suffering our Savior made it possible for men not to need to suffer for their own sins, and thus he also made it possible for them to be acceptable again to Father. Our Savior offers to all men the cleansing of their might, that their power and priesthood in time and eternity might not need to be shortened because of blood and sin. He cleanses their garments, their power, that he then might make them perfect, complete, in all good things, even as Father is. Thus his divine restitution and suffering constitute a great work of atonement, enabling

men to be one with Father in might, thus enabling men to share all that Father and he have.¹¹⁶

CONCLUSIONS

Human beings are saved by the grace of Christ, but only after each does all he can do to perfect, purify, and ennoble himself. The saving grace of Christ is his new and everlasting covenant and his power of atonement, which are made possible by his righteousness and perfect faith in his Father.

Thus human beings may be saved only by binding themselves to Christ. It is as if our task were to stand straight and tall before Father, but because of the Fall, we are broken and twisted. The Savior is our straight and tall splint. If we bind ourselves to him, wrap strong covenants around us and him that progressively draw us up into his form and nature, then we can become righteous as he is and can be saved. But without him we are nothing.¹¹⁷

Thus "the righteous" spoken of in the scriptures are not human beings who are or can become righteous by themselves. The righteous are only those who have bound themselves to Jesus Christ by the promises of the new and everlasting covenant and who then keep those promises.¹¹⁸ Only in him and by him are they able to do any good thing. The righteous acts they do are not strictly their own acts; therefore they take no credit for them. Rather do they give the glory to God. They know that their righteous acts are acts of Christ, chosen by the pure heart given by Christ, understood by the just mind given by Christ, carried out by the new strength given by Christ, redounding to the blessing of others in the priesthood might of Christ. Thus in Christ the righteous move, and live, and have their being.¹¹⁹

If a human being endures to the end in the new and everlasting covenant, until he is literally transformed into the stature of Christ in heart, might, mind, and strength, then he may love God with all of his heart, might, mind, and strength. And if he then endures to the end of mortal life in that same condition, unfailingly enacting that same love, that new nature will become his eternal nature. He becomes one with God, part of God, also to work for the immortality and eternal life of man forever, as gods.¹²⁰

Thus the purpose of the new and everlasting covenant is to provide a means whereby every human being may come to be able to fulfill the first covenant, to do all things whatsoever their God commands

them. But the first covenant cannot be fulfilled by one who has sinned. Therefore it is only through living vicariously in Christ that any mortal fulfills the first covenant and thereby is enabled to become exalted. Thus Christ wrought eternal life for us in love by satisfying justice for us vicariously. He extends mercy to all who will learn to love until their love can satisfy the demands of Father's justice. The new and everlasting covenant is our detour whereby our Savior strengthens us until we can tread the narrow way of justice and mercy on our own.

Thus the new and everlasting covenant is a special case of the first covenant, that which enables sinners to yet claim the blessing of exaltation in eternity, even though they themselves, by themselves, do not merit such blessings and are at first unable to receive such blessings. Only in and through Christ may they inherit, through his worthiness.

Our Savior kept the first covenant and was exalted by it. Had he sinned, there could have been no one to at-one him with Father. Because of his faithfulness in the first covenant, the second, or new and everlasting, covenant was made possible, that all of us may share his blessings with him for all eternity.¹²¹

NOTES

1. D&C 20:28.
2. John 17:21.
3. D&C 20:59.
4. 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.
5. D&C 124:123; 76:50-60; Alma 13:1-16.
6. D&C 14:7.
7. D&C 88:21-35.
8. Mosiah 3:19.
9. Moses 5:13.
10. D&C 8:1-3.
11. Alma 10:6; 12:10, 35.
12. Moses 6:57; D&C 1:31.
13. Genesis 6:5; Ether 3:2; Moroni 7:8.
14. Moroni 6:4; D&C 3:20.
15. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), p. 305.
16. Acts 4:12.
17. 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27.

18. "Where there is no kingdom of God there is no salvation. What constitutes the kingdom of God? Where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God gives his oracles" to eventuate in the administration of the new and everlasting covenant. (Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 272.)

19. "A man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge." (Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 217.)

20. D&C 45:6.
21. 2 Nephi 25:23.
22. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15.
23. D&C 132:19-20.
24. Alma 42:14.
25. Alma 42:22-28.
26. 3 Nephi 13:10.
27. Moses 4:1-2; Revelation 12:7-11.
28. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
29. Alma 42:14.
30. 2 Nephi 9:7-9.
31. Psalm 37:4; Mosiah 11:2; Joseph Smith-History 1:15.
32. Psalm 24:3-5.
33. 1 Nephi 10:18.
34. Moses 6:56.
35. Genesis 17:7-8.
36. D&C 132:19.
37. Ephesians 4:11-13.
38. D&C 121:41-46.
39. Moroni 7:9.
40. John 1:9.
41. 2 Nephi 2:26; Alma 5:41.
42. D&C 121:34-40.
43. Romans 3:12; 2 Nephi 28:11.
44. Alma 32:28-32.
45. Alma 32:34.
46. Mosiah 18:8-10.
47. Moroni 4:3.
48. Dallin H. Oaks, "Taking Upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, May 1985, pp. 80-83.
49. Alma 34:17-27.
50. Ether 8:26; 12:28.
51. John 14:15.
52. Alma 22:16.
53. John 20:22; 2 Nephi 31:13; D&C 39:23; 76:52.
54. Alma 7:21.
55. 2 Nephi 31:17.
56. D&C 82:7.
57. 2 Nephi 31:18.

58. 2 Nephi 31:19–21.
59. D&C 121:36.
60. Mosiah 8:15–18.
61. D&C 68:2–4.
62. Matthew 25:14–30.
63. D&C 84:39.
64. D&C 82:19.
65. D&C 131:1–4.
66. Alma 13:6–9.
67. D&C 97:8.
68. D&C 121:34–37.
69. 3 Nephi 13:33.
70. John 13:34.
71. 2 Nephi 25:23; Mosiah 2:21.
72. Moses 4:2.
73. D&C 76:107.
74. D&C 59:5.
75. John 14:6.
76. 2 Nephi 2:3.
77. D&C 93:28.
78. Moses 6:60.
79. D&C 76:69.
80. D&C 93:11–14.
81. Alma 5.
82. D&C 20:30.
83. 2 Nephi 4:27; Isaiah 6:5.
84. Malachi 3:3; James 4:8; D&C 112:28.
85. D&C 98:44; Luke 19:8.
86. Matthew 5:23–24.
87. 2 Nephi 2:7.
88. Mormon 7:48; Mosiah 4:2.
89. Moroni 7:47.
90. Ether 3:13–14.
91. 3 Nephi 12:8.
92. Alma 12:21.
93. 2 Nephi 9:15.
94. D&C 93:33–34.
95. Luke 12:6–7.
96. Moroni 10:32.
97. D&C 84:33.
98. 2 Nephi 4:33.
99. John 14:18.
100. 2 Nephi 9:41.
101. D&C 138:30.
102. John 10:18.

103. 2 Nephi 9:10–12.
104. D&C 88:23–37.
105. Alma 11:41–44.
106. John 14:6.
107. 1 John 3:4.
108. D&C 4:2; D&C 84:24.
109. Mosiah 26:23.
110. D&C 58:43.
111. 2 Nephi 25:23.
112. Matthew 19:29.
113. Isaiah 63:3.
114. D&C 19:16–17.
115. 3 Nephi 27:13–22.
116. Alma 34:12–17.
117. John 15:1–5.
118. Alma 9:28.
119. Acts 17:28.
120. D&C 132:19–20.
121. D&C 88:107.