

Written for this Paper.

OBEDIENCE AND FREE AGENCY

Every truth is related to every other. The most glorious principles of the Gospel, therefore, ought to have an application to the simplest duties of life.

The disquieting times through which we are passing call for consideration in the light of all the intelligence the Lord has bestowed upon us, that we may give to each duty its proper weight and proportion. It is not, then, in such a case, out of order to take our present bearings from the highest point of vantage ground we can reach.

We commence with a quotation from the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"I am going to tell you how God came to be God. * * You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves. * * The mind or intelligence which man possesses is co-equal with God Himself. * * There never was a time when there were no spirits; for they are co-equal with our Father in heaven. * * God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all. * * The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God Himself, finding He was in the midst of spirits and glory, because He was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like Himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with Himself."

From the foregoing we learn, among other things, that there was a time when we did not know of the plan of salvation; that when this plan was presented to us we accepted of its provisions, and that we are now in the course of development under those provisions with a clearly defined object in view. The agreement with which we entered upon the execution of these purposes is set out in the Pearl of Great Price, where we also get a confirmation of the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord says:

"I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen."

Abraham continues:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; and God saw these souls that they were good, and He stood in the midst of them, and He said, These will I 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 was chosen before thou wast born."

The system had been laid before these spirits, they had received an outline of the course of development provided for, and had entered into an agreement on their part as indicated by the following language:

"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."

The agreement on our part, then, upon undertaking to advance in the scale of intelligence according to these laws which had been instituted, and by the observance of which God had become God, was obedience to whatever the Lord should command us. And this is true not only of the Latter-day Saints, but of all the sons and daughters of Adam; not that all shall be counted unworthy who do not obey the fullness of the Gospel, for all have not been given the light, but obedience to the light they have received, or will receive, is the criterion by which all will be judged. In the nature of the case this could not be otherwise. Obedience is the one premise upon which all our hopes for future happiness and exaltation depend.

Nor does the Lord fail to enlighten us as to His part of the contract. In addition to the promises implied in the words last quoted, the Lord says, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"All they who receive this Priesthood receiveth me, saith the Lord; for he that receiveth my servants receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; and he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him; and this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the Priesthood."

Here we have the undertaking of each of the contracting parties to the original agreement. On condition of obedience on our part to whatever He shall command us, the Lord is bound by a covenant, "which He cannot break," to give us a fullness of His glory.

There is, however, another important element of progress. In order to receive the benefits of obedience, the candidate must enjoy through all the course of his development, perfect liberty of action. The relation of free agency to the Gospel plan is set out in the following extract from the Pearl of Great Price:

"And I, the Lord God, spoke unto Moses, saying, That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me saying, Behold I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor. But, behold, my beloved Son, which was my beloved and chosen from the beginning, said unto me, Father, Thy will be done, and the glory be Thine forever. Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also that I should give unto him mine own power, by the power of mine Only Begotten; I caused

that he should be cast down, and he became Satan."

The agency of man must therefore be held inviolate, not, however, as something above every other consideration, but simply as an accompaniment of the highest possible development through obedience.

Now, it is a matter of common experience that, in riding on a railway train, one may fix the attention on any particular spot so steadily as to give the surrounding country the appearance of revolving around that point; and so by the continued study of any one principle of truth, one may come to look upon it as being of importance out of all proportion to related considerations. In choosing between the various duties of life, therefore, and especially between those duties in which the passions may be enlisted, it is to the interest of Latter-day Saints to decide upon the relative importance of each in the light of all the intelligence afforded them by a knowledge of the plan devised for our eternal exaltation.

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AS TO THE CHOIR.

SALT LAKE CITY,

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The trip of the Tabernacle choir to California is now a thing of the past, and will go down in history as one of the most pleasant and interesting periods in the lives of those who went along. No doubt the readers of the NEWS have heard from day to day of the progress of the choir and perhaps would like to know more of the details, hence I shall try to give a brief resume of the events of the journey. It is to be understood that the trip was in no sense intended to be one for money-making, but as an outing for pleasure.

The nucleus of the sum for the expenses of the trip was the five hundred dollars won at the Elstaddid by the mixed chorus. Added to this was the money raised by the concerts given, so that with the receipts from the concerts on the road the choir will come out about even.

The start was made from the R. G. W. depot on Monday morning at 8 o'clock, the morning being a rainy one and rather inauspicious if signs go for anything. The run to Ogden was made without event. Here we were joined by the contingent of Ogden friends and after a few minutes' stop were fairly on our way. The rain followed us fitfully all day, but being housed in the elegant Pullman coaches with which we were furnished we did not care for it. The handshakings and reunion of friends and the general good feeling that prevailed took up all our attention.

Monday night we made a great scramble for berths and were soon safely tucked away and some of us snoring as peacefully as if at home. But along towards morning the trouble began to brew and the roll of the train began to produce seasickness among some of the passengers. During all the next day this was more or less in evidence. The motion of the train and the change of altitude all had something to do with it, no doubt. As we got into the mountains the rain turned to snow and we seemed to be back into the midst of winter, but a few hours' ride