

## THE MEANING OF ETERNITY

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As the Latter-day Saints trod westward from Nauvoo, Illinois seeking a place to settle in the vast regions of the West, Brigham Young and others carried with them a highly significant cosmic picture of life in the universe which the martyred Prophet Joseph Smith had opened to their view. One major aspect of this glorious vision has never before been discussed publicly, -- at least there is no record extant of such a discussion -- nor are its salient truths yet understood by leading minds who study the thought and history of the latter-day Seer. This cosmic scene pertains in one of the definitions which the Prophet Joseph gave to the word "Eternity."

The term "Eternity" is generally defined as infinite duration or existence, an endless or limitless time, in respect to the past and to the future. A revelation Joseph Smith expressed the fact that God "is in the bosom of eternity,"<sup>3</sup> and the Book of Mormon and various revelations to the Prophet Joseph apply the term Eternity to the limitless time after earth life. Nephite prophets reminded their people "of death, and the duration of eternity"<sup>4</sup> Earth life, Alma explained, is given to man "to prepare for eternity."<sup>5</sup> The Saints were therefore admonished to "let the solemnities of eternity" rest upon their minds,<sup>6</sup> and to seek "earnestly the riches eternity"<sup>7</sup> which God delights to give to the faithful.<sup>8</sup> To them he promised to disclose "the wonders of eternity";<sup>9</sup> and of the land of Zion, their appointed inheritance, the Lord promised: "Ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away."<sup>10</sup>

Several revelations use the term "time and eternity" to refer to the period of mortal life on earth, followed by the endless or limitless duration of existence thereafter. By the law of the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage righteous couples can be united in this sacred exalting relationship "for time and for all eternity."<sup>11</sup>

Still another term is, "*from all eternity to all eternity*," refers, first, to the endless period before earth life to a given point of time; then, to the endless period hereafter. The Prophet thus wrote: "Faith, . . . when understood, leads the mind back to the beginning, and carries it *forward* to the end; or in other words, *from eternity to eternity*."<sup>12</sup> With the same meaning; a heavenly messenger speaking to King Benjamin declared that "the Lord Omnipotent . . . was and is *from all eternity to all eternity*."<sup>13</sup> Referring to the infinite past and to the endless future, Mormon declared: "God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being;

but he is unchangeable from *all eternity to all eternity*."<sup>14</sup> And when Adam was baptized, being born of water and of the Spirit into the newness of gospel life which leads to eternal life, a voice spoke to him from heaven, saying: "Thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from *all eternity to all eternity*."<sup>15</sup>

A slightly different phrase, with a highly significant meaning is found in Joseph Smith's account of his vision of the three "principal" degrees of glory<sup>16</sup> in the resurrection. Speaking of God, he wrote: "From *eternity to eternity* he is the same, and his years never fail."<sup>17</sup> This phrase, the meaning of which is the focus of this volume, has reference to the Father's on-going work of begetting, redeeming, organizing, sanctifying and glorifying his children, with the worlds on which they reside, which work continues from *eternity to eternity* – from one great era involving a given group of begotten beings, or one eternal dispensation of organized beings and worlds on which they dwell – to another group in the limitless and boundless eternity.

Referring of his official account of this vision, the Prophet Joseph said: " I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them."<sup>18</sup> One feature which he could have explained in more detail -- which he did in private to a few close associates -- has to do with the expression, from eternity to eternity in the on-going work of God and his faithful children who become exalted in his presence. The Prophet once placed the written revelation on the three degrees of glory in poetic verse, where he rendered the statement about God found in the above paragraph as follows:

His throne is the heavens, his life time is all  
Of eternity now, and eternity then;  
His union is power, and none stays his hand, --  
The Alpha, Omega, for ever: Amen.<sup>19</sup>

The Prophet italicized the words now and then. in this statement to signify that he was giving special meaning to the term "Eternity." Two divine eras are indicated: 1) "eternity *now*," and 2) "eternity *then*,"<sup>20</sup> that is, the "Eternity" -- the system of beings and worlds -- that exists "now," and a future "Eternity" which will exist "then" -- after the work of originating, organizing, sanctifying and glorifying the present Eternity is finished.

Lorenzo Snow shed valuable light on this connotation of the word "Eternity," as a further meaning to the couplet which he formulated: "As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be."<sup>21</sup> Elder Snow recalled: "I remember once being in the office in Nauvoo where President Joseph Smith and

some other brethren got to talking about the length of an Eternity. One of the brethren [no doubt William W. Phelps] went to work and managed to get *the number of years that composed an Eternity....* President Smith said that was correct. The number of years was vast and can scarcely be counted. *Eternities have a beginning and an end. One eternity commences, and that has an end, and so on --- eternities upon eternities.*"<sup>21</sup>

There is therefore a beginning to the present Eternity in which Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Only Begotten Son of the Father; and there will be an end to the work required to complete the growth, development and glorification this Eternity and its inhabitants in preparation for their immortal glorified existence. Having-planned, ordained, originated, organized and populated one Eternity and endowed its inhabitants with his glory to the degree each person is worthy, the Father then commences another Eternity by begetting a Firstborn Son who becomes his Only Begotten and through whom he creates and redeems the spirit and physical worlds therein, with their inhabitants who learn to live by his laws of truth and love.<sup>23</sup> This the exalted Man of Holiness has done numerous times; and he will continue to do so, forever and ever, worlds upon worlds without end, or better stated, Eternity after Eternity without end.

While the Prophet Joseph no doubt knew of this vast cosmic design early in his ministry, evidence indicates that he found further information about it on the papyri from which he translated the Book of Abraham, and that it was this information that raised the subject to general interest among some of his close associates. William W. Phelps was intimately associated with the Prophet in the Translation of that portion of Abraham's record which the Prophet published.<sup>24</sup> In a letter written to William Smith, Joseph's brother, December 5, 1844, Elder Phelps spoke of the divine program of the Everlasting Gospel as extending "from *eternity to eternity*," then said: "When the house of Israel begin to come into the glorious mysteries the kingdom, and find that Jesus Christ, whose goings forth, as the prophets said, have been from of old, from eternity; and that *eternity, agreeably to the records found in the catacombs of Egypt [the records from which. Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham], has been going on in this system, (not this world) almost two thousand five hundred and fifty five millions of years [that is, 2, 555, 000, 000 years] : and to know at the same time, that deists, geologists and others are trying to prove that matter must have existed hundreds of thousands of years; -- it almost tempts the flesh to fly to God, or muster faith like Enoch to be translated and see and know as we are seen and known! "<sup>25</sup>*

Taken at face value, Elder Phelps statement implies that the birth of Christ as the first born of the Father's spirit children in this Eternity, who became the Only Begotten Son of the Father within it, occurred almost two billion, five

hundred and fifty five million years ago, which began the Eternity in which this earth and its inhabitants now occupy a significant place. And the fact that this is the redemptive earth of this Eternity<sup>26</sup> suggests that the end of this Eternity is drawing near. Christ will then finish his work as the Only Begotten Son of the Father, glorify all life (except those beings who become perdition), and consecrate this Eternity to the Father, with its inhabitants prepared in various degrees of glory for a new continuing order of existence in the infinite future. This is where eternal life and lives, in their full power and joy, begin for man.

To Joseph Smith this complete cosmic picture -- including the principles, covenants, ordinances and spiritual and temporal relationships embodied within it -- constitutes the fulness of gospel truth and program. "I have the whole plan of the kingdom before me," he stated, "and no other person has."<sup>27</sup> An associate who listened to his discourses on the gathering of all things together in Christ said of him: "He said he understood the fulness of the Gospel from beginning to end, and could teach it; and also the order of the priesthood in all its ramifications."<sup>28</sup> The Apostle Paul had, in vision, been "caught up to the third heaven,"<sup>29</sup> Joseph observed, "and I [have seen] more." Again, "If Paul could say, I knew a man who ascended to the third haven and saw things unlawful for man to utter, I [have seen] more." The latter-day Seer thus observed: "I could go back and trace every subject of interest concerning the relationship of man to God, if I had time."<sup>30</sup>

### THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN THIS ETERNITY

Revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith make repeated reference to the numerous creations of Jesus Christ of Nazareth -- to the worlds which he has created and which he redeems. "Worlds without number have I created," the Father declared; "and I also created them for mine own purpose; and *by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.*"<sup>31</sup> The Prophet wrote of Christ in his account of his vision of the three degrees of glory: "By him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and [by the power of his atonement and of the Everlasting Gospel] the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God."<sup>32</sup> In his poetic version of this statement, Joseph Smith wrote:

I heard a great voice, bearing record from heav'n,  
He's the Savior, and Only Begotten of God --  
*By him, of him, and through him*, the worlds were all made,  
Even all that career in the heavens so broad,  
Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,

*Are sav'd by the very same Savior as ours;  
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons.  
By the very same truths, and the very same pow'rs.*<sup>33</sup>

The Prophets account contains the further statement: "And this is the Gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of he heavens bore record unto us -- that he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; *that through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him*; who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him. Wherefore, he saves all except them."<sup>34</sup>

This statement makes the fact clear that there is an Eternal Dispensation of worlds and of beings which the Father committed to Jesus Christ -- "that which the Father ... put into his power and made by him."<sup>35</sup> And it affirms, further, that Jesus redeems and glorifies all that he has created as the Only Begotten of the Father. In his poetic version of this statement, Joseph Smith wrote of Christ:

The myst'ry of Godliness truly is great; --  
The past, and the present, and what is to be;  
And this is the Gospel -- glad tidings to all,  
Which the voice from the heavens bore record to me:  
That he came to the world in the middle of time,  
To lay down his life for his friends and his foes,  
And bear away sin as a mission of love;  
And sanctify earth for a blessed repose.  
'Tis decreed that *he'll save all the work of his hands*,  
And sanctify them by his own precious blood;  
And purify earth for the Sabbath of rest,  
By the agent of fire, as it was by the flood.  
*The Savior will save all his Father did give,*  
*Even all that he gave in the regions abroad,*  
Save the Sons of Perdition: They're lost; ever lost,  
And can never return to the presence of God.  
They are they, who must reign with the devils in hell,  
*In eternity now, and eternity then.*  
Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench'd; --  
And the punishment still, is eternal, Amen.<sup>36</sup>

Later in the year 1832 another revelation to Joseph Smith portrayed Christ's ministerial and redemptive work in a parable that made use of twelve worlds, or fields, to represent his ministry and redemptive activities within this

Eternity. Speaking of organized bodies -- the sun, planets, moon and stars -- or kingdoms in the universe, the Lord said: "I will liken these kingdoms unto a man having a field, and he sent forth his servants into the field to dig in the field. And he said unto the first: Go ye and labor in the field, and in the first hour I will come unto you, and ye shall behold the joy of my countenance. And he said unto the second: Go ye also into the field, and in the second hour I will visit you with the joy of my countenance. And also unto the third, saying: I will visit you; and unto the fourth, and so on unto the twelfth."

The revelation then explained: "And the lord of the field went unto the *first in the first hour*, and tarried with him all that hour, and he was made glad with the light of the countenance of his lord. *And then he withdrew from the first that he might visit the second also*, and the third, and the fourth, and so on unto the twelfth. And thus they all received the light of the countenance of their lord, every man in his hour, and in his time, and in his season -- *beginning at the first, and so on unto the last, and from the last unto the first, and from the first unto the last*; every man in his own order, until his hour was finished, even according as his lord had commanded him, *that his lord might be glorified in him, and he in his lord, that they might be glorified.*"

The Lord concluded: "Therefore, unto this parable I will liken all these kingdoms, and the inhabitants thereof -- every kingdom in its hour, and in its time, and in its season, even according to the decree which God has made"<sup>37</sup>

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The fact that all this was done that Jesus Christ might be Glorified, and that his servants might be glorified in Christ, Indicates that these, which he had created, were then in a fallen Temporal state and that Jesus visited their inhabitants for the Purpose of redeeming, sanctifying and glorifying them by their Obedience to his law.<sup>38</sup> Marion G. Romney therefore said of Christ: "Except for his . . . ministry accomplished on this earth, his service and relationship to other worlds and their inhabitants are the same as his service and relationship to this earth and its inhabits."<sup>39</sup>

Three specific actions by Christ are identified in this parable: the initial action which begins with the first earth and continues "unto the last"; the second action which then starts at the last earth and extends back "to the first"; and the third action which again extends from "the first unto the last."<sup>40</sup> And it is clear that these last actions constitute the winding up scenes by which this Eternity is finally prepared for its continued glorified existence in eternity. Without breaking the sentence, the Lord adds: "Every man in his own order, until his hour was finished, even according as his lord had commanded him, that his lord might be glorified in him, and he in his lord, *that they all might be glorified.*" All this must be

done, the parable concludes, "even according to the decree which God has made."<sup>41</sup>

Beginning with the, First of his creations in this Eternity, Chris ministers for a give period of time to the inhabitants of each world in its temporal state, to consummate the work of salvation to the extent possible at the given stage of development. In the authority of the Father, Jesus carried on these visitations as a glorious spirit personage. But when he came to the last of his creations, -- the redemptive earth he was born into the world of the virgin, Mary, and made his infinite atonement in order to "finish his preparations"<sup>42</sup> for the redemption of the inhabitants of the numerous worlds of this Eternity; and he will return to this earth in a Second Coming to complete the ministrations of the first of these three phases of activities for this earth and to begin the other two as they pertain to this Eternity.<sup>43</sup>

An explanation is necessary as a basis to understand to second action to be taken. Joseph Smith stated of the order of salvation on this earth, with its several dispensations: "God purposed in himself that *there should not be an eternal fulness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together into one*, and that all things whatsoever, that should be gathered together in one in those dispensations unto the same fulness and eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus."<sup>44</sup> From this statement it is clear that even such people as the Patriarch Enoch and the saints in his city were translated to a terrestrial state of glory, cannot receive a fulness of glory, power and eternal perfections until all gospel dispensations of this earth have been gathered together to make one dispensation of the fulness of times, or fulness of dispensations. Only then can the people who live, or have lived, on this earth receive and enjoy an eternal fulness of glory and power.

The Patriarch Enoch and his people, and the prophets, apostles and saints in all other dispensations, are therefore dependent on the order of the Holy Priesthood to be built in the last dispensation in which the greatest Zion of all must be built to a point of organization and spiritual power where all past dispensations can be gathered in one to complete the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times under the authority of the Prophet Joseph Smith. "I will meet Paul half way," Joseph declared, "I say to you, Paul you cannot perfect without us."<sup>45</sup> The Prophet explained: "We without them [the dead who are in need of baptism] cannot be made perfect, neither can they without us be made perfect. *Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the Gospel also*; for it is necessary in the ushering in of The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in *that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and*

*keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.*"<sup>46</sup> Having initiated this mighty work by the revelations of God he received, the Prophet stated: "All things are concurring to *bring about the completion of the fulness of the Gospel, a fulness of the dispensation of dispensations, even the fulness of times.*"<sup>47</sup>

The pattern and order of the priesthood that must eventually be established on this earth, with the gathering together of all dispensations into the last dispensation, to make a dispensation of the fulness of dispensations, is apparently an application of the greater pattern and order by which all the inhabited worlds in this Eternity will finally be gathered together in Christ to make The Eternal Dispensation of the Fulness of Times which Jesus will then present in its completed form to the Father. Having ministered successively to each world in this Eternity, and having made an infinite atonement on the last or redemptive earth for the salvation of the whole,<sup>48</sup> Christ must then gather all things in these worlds together into one eternal dispensation in order to create a fulness of glory and power for this Eternity, which all its inhabitants can share. The second action mentioned in the above parable will then be to extend the glory which Christ acquires by making the atonement and by building Zion on the redemptive earth back to all earlier earths, "from the last unto the first."<sup>49</sup>

A further explanation is necessary to understand the third action to be taken. By revelation to Joseph Smith the Lord said: "As the words have gone forth out of my mouth even so shall they be fulfilled, that *the first shall be last*, and that *the last shall be first* in all things whatsoever I have created by the word of my power, which is the 'power' of my Spirit."<sup>50</sup> This decree indicates, for example, that for this earth there must finally be an official act, action, and/or arrangement by which the last dispensation becomes first, and the presiding Prophet over the last dispensation becomes the presiding figure over all earlier dispensations, under Adam and Christ,<sup>51</sup> that are gathered into the last dispensation to make The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, or of The fulness of Dispensations. Speaking of actions which must be taken to prepare for Christ's millennial reign, the Prophet Joseph stated that therein "all things" will be sealed "unto the end of all things,"<sup>52</sup> which action will make the last first.

Since God's decree to this effect, as quoted above, concerns "all things" he has created,<sup>53</sup> it must apply to this Eternity. Beginning with the first of Christ's creations, each kingdom, or world, must finally be sealed to the last, as the third action spoken of in the above parable. Only then will the work of this Eternity be

completed, and the composite dispensation prepared so that Christ can consecrate it to the Father to take its place in his continuously growing and enlarging kingdom in eternity.

The twelve worlds in the revelation to the Prophet Joseph are merely a parabolic illustration of Christ's creative and redemptive works, and his work of sanctification and glory. The creations of Jesus of Nazareth are far more numerous. When the great Jehovah -- Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father -- spoke with Abraham "face to face, as one man talks with another," the ancient Patriarch reported: "He told me *of the works which his hands had made.*" To Abraham the great Jehovah then stated: "My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I *will show you all these.*" Said the Patriarch: "He put his hand upon mine eyes, and *I saw those things which his hands had made*, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and *I could not see the end thereof.*"<sup>54</sup> This was a vision of the great stellar system (with its many planets) of which the mighty sphere Kolob is the governing orb nearest, in the channel of power, to the throne of God; and the words of Jehovah that these are the works of his hands indicates that this is the Eternity which Jesus Christ of Nazareth created and for which he came to fulfill his atoning mission on this redemptive earth.

Moses may also have been shown the creations of Christ, and many things pertaining to them, beginning with a vision of this earth. "Moses, my son," said Christ speaking in the office and name of the Father, "thou art in the world, and now I show it unto thee." "Moses [then] looked," the account states, "and beheld the world upon which he was created; and Moses beheld the world and *the ends thereof* [that is, the spirit world associated with the earth], and *all the children of men which are, and which were created*; and the same he greatly marveled and wondered."<sup>55</sup>

When this vision was later renewed, the record states: "Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it, and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the Spirit of God. And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore."<sup>56</sup>

The scope of Moses's vision was then broadened. "He beheld many lands [that is, worlds]," the record states; "and *each land was called earth*, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof." The scope of this greater vision is made clear in the verses that follow this statement. Moses called upon God, saying, "Tell me, I pray thee, *why these things* are so, and by what thou madest them?" God then replied: "For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is

wisdom and it remains in me. And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth."<sup>57</sup>

The full record of this vision confirms that Moses was given a broader view of worlds than this earth. Mention is made, in the italicized statements above, of "these things," -- not merely this Earth -- and God states: "By the word of my power, *have I created them*"<sup>58</sup> This suggests that the broader vision may have included the other creations Christ, for God then spoke to Moses in the broader setting, stating: "And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten."<sup>59</sup>

Since this last statement refers to all the creations of the Father, it appears, as a matter of further interest, that in this last case the term "Only Begotten" applies not only to Jesus Christ of Nazareth and his numerous creations in this Eternity, but to the office of the Only Begotten in which the Firstborn of the Father has acted in each prior Eternity, and to all the creations of the Father.

Speaking to Moses of all his creations, God then explained: "And *the first man of all men [on each earth that is created and populated] have I called Adam, which is many.*"<sup>60</sup> This is the order of creation and of life which the Father follows in extension of his works.

Bringing the focus of his revelation back to this Eternity, God then said to Moses: "But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. [Note that he did not say that they had then been redeemed; they had merely been created, fallen, and passed away.] And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.... And as one earth [in its mortal state] shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words."<sup>61</sup>

We may note that the vision of the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos centered in this Eternity. "I suppose John saw beings there of a thousand forms," the Prophet Joseph commented, "that had been saved from ten thousand times ten thousand earths like this."<sup>62</sup>

As the Father progresses from Eternity to Eternity, he acts on the basis of the accumulated life that exists in all realms of organization, with the powers of life that center in himself as an exalted being. In speaking of the plant kingdom which was placed on our newly created earth, both Abraham and Moses report that a garden was "planted" in Eden.<sup>63</sup> Such action required God to bring seeds from a more ancient orb. "Whenever did a tree or anything spring into existence

without a progenitor?" the Prophet Joseph stated, then emphasized: "And everything comes in this way."<sup>64</sup>

Regarding the origin of human life on earth, one of the Prophet's associates reported that he taught that God, the Father is "the great head of human procreation" and that, as such, he is "really and truly the father of both our spirits and our [physical] bodies."<sup>65</sup> But while the Man of Holiness personally sired each spirit child whom he begot in the First Estate, descent from him in the physical body is through Adam. Luke, the gospel writer, traced the genealogy of Christ's foster father, Joseph, back to Seth, who was the son of Adam, who "was the son of God."<sup>65</sup> Modern revelation confirms this view, stating: "This is the genealogy of the sons of Adam, *who was the son of God*, with whom God, himself, conversed."<sup>67</sup> Brigham Young explained that by procreation the Father has power "to produce both spirit and body."<sup>68</sup> And Heber C. Kimball stated, more specifically, that the Father "brought forth spirits" in the First Estate, after which he "brought forth" the physical tabernacle. "I came through him," said President Kimball, "both spirit and body."<sup>69</sup>

These are among the powers of exalted beings, of whom the Prophet Joseph wrote by revelation: "Wherefore, *all things* are theirs, *whether life or death*, or things present, or things to come, all. are theirs,"<sup>70</sup> "all heights and depths."<sup>71</sup> Thus, creation, the placement of an Adam and Eve on each newly organized earth to be populated, the Fall of Adam from the original paradisiacal state, earth life in which the spirits who keep their First Estate are "added upon"<sup>72</sup> -- that is, given a physical body -- in a probationary state,<sup>73</sup> and the great plan of redemption, sanctification, and glorification in resurrected form through the mission of an Only Begotten Son is the eternal pattern for each inhabited world. Speaking in this context of his many creations, God then declared: "For behold, this is my work and my glory -- to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>74</sup>

The redemptive earth is the abode of the most faithful and intelligent, and the most corrupt, of all people in this Eternity. To the Patriarch Enoch the Lord said of the generation which would perish in the flood: "Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency; and unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; and the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them; and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them." Said God: "Man of Holiness is my name; Man of Counsel is my

name; and Endless and Eternal is my name, also. Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also, and among all the workmanship of mind hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren."<sup>75</sup>

Having cited this statement, Joseph Fielding Smith opined: "Perhaps this is the reason Jesus Christ was sent here instead of to some other world, for in some other world they would not have crucified him, and his presence was needed here because of the extreme wickedness of the inhabitants of this earth."<sup>76</sup>

There is also the eternal law of opposition in all things,<sup>77</sup> which requires: If a person, or a group of people, would perform the greatest work of salvation, they must successfully meet and overcome the greatest opposition.

In offering himself as a sacrifice to make "an infinite atonement," -- "not a sacrifice of man," but one that was "*infinite and eternal*"<sup>78</sup> -- Jesus Christ "*descended below all things*, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth."<sup>79</sup> As a resident of the redemptive earth, the Mighty Redeemer experienced such pain and agony which caused him to descend below all others in the Eternity which the Father committed into his hands. Brigham Young added: "I suppose that God never organized an earth and peopled it that was ever reduced to a lower state of darkness, sin and ignorance than this. I suppose this [earth in its present spiritual state] *is one of the lowest kingdoms that ever the Lord Almighty created, and on that account is capable of becoming exalted to be one of the highest kingdoms that has ever had an exaltation in all the eternities*. In proportion as it has been reduced so it will be exalted, with that portion of its inhabitants who in their humiliation have cleaved to righteousness and acknowledged God in all things. In proportion to our fall through sin, so shall we be exalted in the presence of our Father and God, through Jesus Christ and by living the righteousness of his Gospel."<sup>80</sup>

Of interest is a report by Addison Everett, an early convert, that he heard the Prophet Joseph Smith say "that the earth ... would be restored and ... again ... revolve in its original orbit next to Kolob, and would be second in size to it."<sup>81</sup>

A revelation to the Prophet speaks of man's redemption in the resurrection, in relation to the earth as his eternal abode. "Through the redemption which is made for you," the Lord explained, "is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead,... through him that quickens all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it. Therefore, it must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory; for after it has filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory,

even with the presence of God the Father; that bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it made and created, and for this intent are they sanctified. And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom. For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory. And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory."<sup>82</sup>

Speaking of the earth in the setting of the living universe, the Lord declared with emphasis: "And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abides the law of a celestial kingdom, for it fills the measure of its creation, and transgresses not the law -- wherefore, it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it. For notwithstanding they die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual body. They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body, even you shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened."<sup>83</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1-2</sup> [No footnotes for these numbers]

<sup>3</sup> D&C 88:13.

<sup>4</sup> Enos 1:23. See, also, Jacob 7:18.

<sup>5</sup> Alma 34:33.

<sup>6</sup> D&C 43:34.

<sup>7</sup> D&C 68:31.

<sup>8</sup> D&C 67:2.

<sup>9</sup> D&C 76:8.

<sup>10</sup> D&C 38:18-20.

<sup>11</sup> D&C 132:7, 18, 19. For other applications of this term, see D&C 39:22; 72:3; 109:24; 132:49.

<sup>12</sup> Lectures on Faith, No. 7 (italics added).

<sup>13</sup> Mosiah 3:5. See, also, Alma 13:7.

<sup>14</sup> Moroni 8:18.

<sup>15</sup> Moses 6:67. See, also, Moses 7:29, 31.

<sup>16</sup> TPJS, p. 305.

<sup>17</sup> D&C 76:4.

<sup>18</sup> HC. V. p. 402.

<sup>19</sup> TS. IV (Feb. 1, 1843). P. 82 (italics in the original).

<sup>20</sup> Idem.

<sup>21</sup> LeRoi C. Snow, "Devotion to a Divine Inspiration," Improvement Era, XXII (June 1919), No. S.

<sup>22</sup> Lorenzo Snow Papers. Historical Department of the Church. Box 3, folder 6. June 1. 1901. In the report of his reminiscence. President Snow was said to have given the length of an eternity as "somewhere in the neighborhood of 250,000 years." This is at variance with the statement of Elder Phelps written shortly after the death of Joseph Smith, and with President Snow's own statement that the number of years was vast and can scarcely be counted."

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Moses 1:32-3.

<sup>24</sup> For reference to additional materials to be published from the writings of Abraham, cf. TS, IV (Feb. 1, 1843), p. 95, and for further information coming from the papyri which the Prophet had in his possession but did not publish in the Book of Abraham, cf. TPJS, p. 190.

<sup>25</sup> TS, V (Jan. 1, 1845), p. 758 (italics added).

<sup>26</sup> Cf the discussions below.

<sup>27</sup> WJS, p. 129.

<sup>28</sup> WDJS, p. 215.

<sup>29</sup> 2 Cor. 12:2

<sup>30</sup> WJS, pp. 202, 207, 347.

<sup>31</sup> Moses 1:33 (italics added).

<sup>32</sup> D&C 76:24.

<sup>33</sup> TS (Feb. 1, 1843), IV, pp. 82-3 (italics added).

<sup>34</sup> D&C 76:40-4 (italics added).

<sup>35</sup> Idem.

<sup>36</sup> TS (Feb. 1, 1843), IV, p. 83 (italics added).

<sup>37</sup> D&C 88:51-61 (italic added).

<sup>38</sup> In the world of glory each faithful person who pays the price of devotion and development can come to the same standard of truth and happiness as the Prophet. Cf. TPJS, pp. 149, 237.

<sup>39</sup> Marion G. Romney, "Jesus Christ Lord of the Universe, " The Improvement Era, Nov., 1968, p.46.

<sup>40</sup> D&C 88:59.

<sup>41</sup> D&C 88:60-1 (italics added)

<sup>42</sup> D&C 19:19; John 19:30.

<sup>43</sup> Cf the discussion in the last chapter.

<sup>44</sup> HC, IV, p. 208; TPJS, p. 168 (italics added)

<sup>45</sup> TPJS, p. 356.

<sup>46</sup> D&C 128:18 (italics added)

<sup>47</sup> HC, IV, p. 492 (italics added).

<sup>48</sup> It is the last world that finally becomes the first, and that is the redemptive earth. Cf. the paragraph below.

<sup>49</sup> D&C 88:59. Cf. the discussion in the last Chapter.

<sup>50</sup> D&C 29:30.

<sup>51</sup> Speaking of the central place of Adam, the Ancient of Days, -- "the first and oldest of all, the great, grand progenitor" -- Joseph Smith said: "He is Michael, because he was *the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ has been revealed from heaven, and will continue to be revealed from henceforth.*" To this the Prophet added: "Adam holds *the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times*; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of the dispensations that are to be revealed." TPJS, pp. 167-8 (italics added). Cf. D&C 27:11; 107:53-6; 128:21. A revelation to Joseph Smith seems to imply that Abel holds the keys of the first gospel dispensation under Adam. Cf. D&C 84:16. If this is the case, that initial dispensation with Abel at its head could be incorporated into the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, leaving Adam and Christ in a position above the united system.

<sup>52</sup> D&C 77:12.

<sup>53</sup> D&C 29:30.

<sup>54</sup> Abr. 3:11-2 (italics added).

<sup>55</sup> Moses 1:7-8 (italics added).

<sup>56</sup> Moses 1:27-8.

<sup>57</sup> Moses 1:29-32.

<sup>58</sup> Idem (italic added).

<sup>59</sup> Moses 1:33.

<sup>60</sup> Moses 1:34.

<sup>61</sup> Moses 1:35, 38 (italics added).

<sup>62</sup> TPJS, p. 291.

<sup>63</sup> Abr. 5:8; Moses 3:8.

<sup>64</sup> HG, VI, P. 476-

<sup>65</sup> Benjamin F. Johnson, "An Interesting Letter, " written to George S. Gibbs, p. 17.

<sup>66</sup> Luke 3:38.

<sup>67</sup> Moses 6:22 (italics added). This statement does not deny the fact that in the earth's mortal state Christ is the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh.

<sup>68</sup> JD, XV, p. 137.

<sup>69</sup> JD, VI, p. 31.

<sup>70</sup> D&C 76:59 (italics added)

<sup>71</sup> D&C 123:19.

<sup>72</sup> Abra. 3:26.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. 1 Ne. 10:21; 15:31, 32; 2 Ne. 2:21, 30; 9:27; 33:9; Alma 12:24; 42:4, 10, 13; Hel. 13:38; Morm. 9:28.

<sup>74</sup> Moses 1:39.

<sup>75</sup> Moses 7:32-6 (italics added).

<sup>76</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Signs Of The Times* (Independence, Mo., 1943), p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. 2 Ne. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Alma 34:10, 14 (italics added).

<sup>79</sup> D&C 88:6 (italics added).

<sup>80</sup> JD, X, p. 175 (italics added).

<sup>81</sup> Diary of Charles L. Walker, 1855-1902, Oct. 18, 1880.

<sup>82</sup> D&C 88:14-24.

<sup>83</sup> D&C 88:25-8.