

The Ways and Means of Eternal Progression

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The Pearl of Great Price teaches that God is a progressive being, and that when man is made like God in the resurrection he also will be a progressive being in the realm of celestial glory. This is true in three respects: First, God is progressing in posterity. He is continually begetting spirit children, then giving them the further endowments and powers of life by which they can become like Him as a glorified and exalted being.¹ His sons and daughters who become exalted do the same in their respective generations, thus adding to God's ever expanding family in eternity.² As has been shown, God's central purpose--toward which all His work is directed ---is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man as the offspring of God.³

Second, God is increasing in His material domain--in worlds and spheres that are continually being organized to become part of His vast expanding kingdom. To Moses the Lord declared: "Worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose:... and as one earth shall pass away, and the (atmospheric) heavens thereof even so shall another come, and there is no end to my works, neither to my words."⁴

Third, God is progressing in glory. He is continually increasing in glory, and thereby He is ever ascending to higher realms of glory. The Lord revealed the sublime truth to Moses: "This is my work and my glory. [i.e., the way by which He acquires glory⁵] --to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."⁶ Joseph Smith explained: "God glorified Himself by saving all that His hands had made, whether beasts, fowls, fishes, or men; and *He will glorify Himself with them.*"⁷

To Moses the Lord further revealed that His glory is commensurate with His works: as God's works increase, His glory increases. "No man can behold all my works, " God declared, "*except he behold all my glory*; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth."⁸

To grasp the meaning of this statement it should be understood that God's purpose is not merely to organize beings and spheres, cleanse them from sin, and establish them in a resurrected state in eternity. In addition, the Lord glorifies all that He creates and redeems, and all this that he might continue to acquire glory in eternity. A mortal man transfigured by the Holy Spirit might conceivably, by means of the Spirit, behold all of God's material creations, if he did not behold the glory that is associated with the redeemed and glorified beings and spheres. But in this case he would not behold all of God's works. To do so he would have to behold, in addition, the glory that is associated with the many works of God. No mortal man, even in a transfigured state, can do this and afterwards remain in the flesh upon the earth. The concentration of glory that would have to center in him, with its influence upon his body, would be such that he could not afterward return to the mortal state and remain in mortality. Yet as God continues to create worlds and glorify them and their inhabitants, His works add to the glory that centers in Him. As His works increase, His glory also increases.

The same eternal and expanding destiny is open to man. Abraham reported the Lord as saying of the spirit children of God: "They who keep their second [i.e. mortal] estate *shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.*"⁹

There are two ways a person can acquire glory. One way is to obtain it from a previously glorified being by becoming an heir in his kingdom. In this way Jesus acquired the glory of the Father, and thereby man can acquire the glory of Christ.¹⁰ Since God is continually increasing in glory, those who become heirs in His kingdom not only receive His glory but continue to increase by virtue of their relationship with Him. The second way to acquire glory is by works -- by organizing, developing and, finally, glorifying life and thereby acquiring the benefits of life and glory that derive from the work of organization, or by assisting in a subordinate role a being who is engaged in this work. God is continually increasing in glory by His works, and man may also acquire glory by works through his present relationship to Christ and by his creative works in eternity as an exalted being.

For man, these great purposes are to be achieved through the divine plan of life that centers in Christ. To the brother of Jared the pre-earth Jesus declared: "In me shall all mankind have *light, and that eternally*, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters."¹¹ The word "light" in this statement is apparently a synonym for glory. To receive light through Christ eternally is to acquire glory through Him forever.

This is the essence of the "everlasting gospel." There are two divisions to the overall program of the gospel: the "preparatory gospel" and the everlasting gospel." The first is a temporary program and will finally have an end. When the work of preparation is fully completed and perfected man no longer needs the plan of repentance and remission of sins that constitutes the essential elements of the preparatory gospel,¹² that initial part of the gospel program can be terminated. The everlasting gospel, on the other hand, has no end, as its name implies. It is concerned with developing the Spirit or glory of God in man, initially through the agency of the Holy Ghost and, finally, directly through Christ as man comes to enjoy the blessings of the second Comforter and is glorified in Christ as He has been glorified in the Father. There is no end to this divine program, and those who attain a glorified relationship with Christ will become His sons and daughters in eternal life, and receive light or glory through Him eternally.

To see the plan of eternal progression clearly there are three basic things that man must in some measure understand: First, he must know something about the glory of God -- the divine nature of God. God's glory is not merely the honor, or respect and deference, which others give to Him. Instead, it is part of God's organized being as an exalted and glorified person. Essentially, God's glory is intelligence.¹³ As such, it is truth and light.¹⁴ It is a principle of life¹⁵ and of power.¹⁶ Glory, with all its inherent and related attributes and characteristics, centers in God to such a point of concentration that its brilliance eclipses the sun in its light at noon day. Being referred to at times as God's Holy Spirit, His glory emanates from His person and presence to fill the immensity of space, manifesting back to God a knowledge of all that is going on within His vast domain. It is "the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things."¹⁷

Second, man must understand the great celestial system of heirship, which exists in the presence of God. God's ultimate design is to make His children heirs in His kingdom—joint possessors under Christ of all His glory, power, and dominion, with the right to draw freely and equally upon all these things to operate and expand their individual stewardships within the Father's kingdom. To this end they must embrace and continually apply the covenant of consecration, along with all the other sacred covenants of the Holy priesthood.¹⁸ The consecration to God of those who become exalted and glorified increases the glory of God.

This is the basic idea: God organizes beings and spheres from that pure, fine substance that is called "spirit, " which possesses inherent elements of life or intelligence. He then adds the subsequent endowments of flesh and glory to His creations. Benefits in the form of life and power result from these organizations. The primal elements of life within spirit are thereby able to act on a higher scale of life and in ways that increase their intelligence and power. In these organizations God also develops divine forces of life, which He possesses in that which He organizes, to quicken and sustain life on higher planes of existence. Brigham Young thus explained: "Matter can be organized and *brought forth into intelligence, and to possess more intelligence, and to continue to increase in that intelligence.*"¹⁹

This does not mean that something is brought forth out of nothing, but that life, intelligence, and power are increased as a result of proper organization, and by the Lord extending life and intelligence to quicken and sustain that which He organizes.

Before God's children who have been organized and endowed with life can be exalted as heirs in the celestial kingdom, they must consecrate themselves to God, with all their gifts, talents, and possessions, in recognition of the fact that God has made them what they are and has given them the means to acquire that which they possess. Their act of consecration is in compliance with the requirements of eternal justice and reciprocation. Since intelligence and power are derived as the benefits of proper organization, the act of consecration of a being who becomes glorified centers in God all the benefits that result from His works of organization. In this way God's glory is increased.

In the Grand Council of the Gods that was held to plan the creation of the earth and prepare for life to be placed upon it, Jesus recognized and expressed these eternal principles. "Thy will be done," He proposed to the Father, "*and the glory be thine forever.*"²⁰

Joseph Smith spoke in greater detail on the same subject. Having referred to the goal of becoming heirs of God, he said:

What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before. What did Jesus do? Why, I do the things I saw my Father do when worlds came rolling into existence. My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my Father [i.e., Christ will consecrate it to His Father], so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, [i.e., progress in dominion] and it will exalt him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation [in glory], and I will take his place

and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of his children.²¹

The points of doctrine that the Prophet here expressed are vitally important. To become an heir is to inherit the same power, glory, and exaltation that God possesses. This requires the recipient to comply with the principle of consecration as Jesus did. When Christ has finished His work of creating, redeeming, and glorifying this earth and other creations that are placed in His power, He will present them to the Father in sacred consecration. In this way the Father will obtain kingdom upon kingdom, or progress in dominion. But this is not all. The benefits of life and intelligence and power that derive from Christ's works will also accrue to the Father. Christ's act of consecration will exalt the Father in glory. The Prophet concluded: "God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of his children."²² Here is expressed Joseph Smith's understanding of the Lord's declaration to Moses: "This is my work and my glory--to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."²³

Finally, to understand the great plan of eternal progression man must comprehend how the foregoing program operates within the divine patriarchal order in eternity. As indicated above, God is continually adding glory to himself by the salvation and exaltation of His children. The eternal family is the basis of God's progression. As the Father begets spirit children and gives them the added endowments of life by which they can become exalted beings of glory and power like Himself, He not only increases in posterity but in glory. Having stated that through the program of the divine patriarchal order Abraham received the promise that his posterity would continue "both in the world and out of the world... as innumerable as the stars" or the "sand upon the seashore," The Lord said to Joseph Smith: "This promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law [of eternal increase] is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself."²⁴

This is the great system through which God continually adds glory to Himself both directly through His immediate children and indirectly through the work of those who become heirs in the divine patriarchal order in the generations that follow the Father. The Lord made reference to the latter expression of this divine program as He spoke to Joseph Smith concerning men on this earth who receive wives under the law of eternal increase.

"They are given ... to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, " He explained, "and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; *for herein is the work of my Father continued*, that he may be glorified."²⁵

Endnotes

¹ D&C 132:30-31.

² *Ibid.*, 132 :63.

³ Moses 1:38-39.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:33.,38.

⁵ An earlier rendition of this passage, before Joseph Smith made the final grammatical changes that brought it to its present form, stated: "Behold, this is my work to my Flory,

to the immortality and eternal life of man." --- The Pearl of Great Price (Liverpool, 1851)., p. 10.

⁶ Moses 1:39.

⁷ DHC, V, p. 343. 8; italics added.

⁸ Moses 1:5; italics added.

⁹ Abraham 3:26; italics added.

¹⁰ See D&C 93:12-20, 28.

¹¹ Ether 3:14; italics added.

¹² See D&C 84:26-27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 93:36.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 93:28, 36.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 88:13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93:16-17.

¹⁷ D&C 88:13

¹⁸ See DHC, I, p. 364; V, p. 424.

¹⁹ See JD, VII, p. 3; italics added.

²⁰ Moses 4:2; italics added.

²¹ DHC, VI, p. 306.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Moses 1:39.

²⁴ D&C 132:30-31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 132:63; italics added.