

THE TWO GREAT CONDESCENSIONS OF GOD

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Two major covenants and acts of condescension were necessary to establish the divine program of life on the earth, and provide the means whereby the wonderful gifts of salvation and exaltation could be extended to mankind. The first act of condescension was by God the Eternal Father. The second act of condescension was by His Only Begotten Son, Jesus, the Christ – the Anointed One. Both acts of condescension were indispensable to the “work and glory” of Heavenly Father and Christ in “bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39)

The doctrine of condescension is found throughout the scriptures and even LDS hymns. The hymn *Thine Will O Lord Be Done* states, “When in the wondrous realms above, Our Savior had been called upon, To save our world of sin by love, He said, ‘Thy will, O Lord, be done.’ The King of Kings left worlds of light, Became the meek and lowly One; In brightest day or darkest night, He said, ‘Thy will, O Lord, be done.’” And the hymn *I Stand All Amazed*, it states, “I marvel that he would descend from his throne divine To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine, That he should extend his great love unto such as I, Sufficient to own, to redeem, and to justify.”

The Nephite Prophet Jacob exclaimed: “Behold how great (are) the covenants of the Lord, and *how great his condescensions unto the children of men.*”¹ Jacob explained: “We search the prophets, and we have many revelations and the spirit of prophecy; and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becomes unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea. *Nevertheless, the Lord God*

¹ 2 Ne. 9:53; italics added.

shows us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power to do these things.”

Jacob, therefore, added: *“Behold, ... how unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God. For ..., by the power of his word man came upon the face of the earth, which ... was created by the power of his word.”*²

The First Great Act of Condescension

By a major act of condescension God, the Eternal Father, Himself, placed man on the newly created earth, of which action He said: “I, God, created man *in mine own image,*” then added: “in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.”³

In another statement, He said: “I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, *which was with me from the beginning, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’*”⁴

Here the words “us” and “our” refer primarily to God the Eternal Father, in whose image His Only Begotten Son, Jehovah, was created, as His Firstborn spirit son in our eternity, or the eternal system to which the people on this and many other worlds belong. After the begetting of Jehovah others were created in the image of the two divine Beings, male and female.

Then, in an act of condescension God the Eternal Father, Himself, introduced Adam and Eve to our world prior to introducing them into the Garden of Eden. Full of beautiful symbols to convey the sacredness of the meanings of some things, the scriptures state “a genealogy ... of the children of God (was kept in a) ... book of the *generations* of Adam (in which it is said): “In the day that God created man, *in the likeness of God made he him; in the image of his own body, male and female, created*

² Jacob 4:6-9; italics added.

³ Moses 2:27; italics added.

⁴ JST, Gen. 1:27; italics added.

he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam,⁵ in the day when they were created and became living souls in the land upon the footstool of God.”⁶

It follows that the creation of man from the “dust of the earth” was accomplished by procreation, for God instructed Adam to teach his children, “Ye were born into the world *by water, and blood, and the spirit*, which I have made, *and so became of dust a living soul.*”⁷ Also, the italicized word “generation,” above, means “the act or process of producing offspring; procreation.”⁸ And this was not only true of people placed on the mortal earth, but of those placed on other spheres in the universe.

Through Isaiah, Jehovah said: “I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I ... have stretched out the heavens, and *all their hosts have I commanded.*”⁹ Also, it was by planting seeds that the grass, trees, bushes, etc. were put on earth, for “the Lord God *planted a garden eastward in Eden.*”¹⁰

Therefore, in the creation of man and setting the stage for his earthly existence, the first great act of condescension was made by God the Eternal Father – the exalted Elohim.¹¹ In this He moved as it were from the Godhood realm of Eloheim,¹² where He lived in everlasting burnings as the Eternal Father of the spirits of men in the First Estate, to the Godhood realm of Michael, in the Garden of Eden. A significant insight is that the meaning of the name Michael is revealed by the question: “Who is like God?”¹³ The literal meaning of the name Michael is “Who is like God.” Thus, human life was placed on earth by a divine Being who acts, or performs, as God does in the divine program of eternal progression, whereby “he glorifies himself.”¹⁴

5 The name Adam “is a generic term applied to both Adam and Eve (Gen. 5:2).” *The New Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, under Adam. See, also, Moses 6:9.

6 Moses 6:8-9; italics added.

7 Moses 6:59; italics added.

8 *Webster’s New World Dictionary Of The American Language*, under “generation.”

9 JST Isa. 45:12; italics added.

10 Gen. 2:8; italics added].

11 See *The New Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, under Elohim.

12 Joseph Smith explained: “*Eloheim* is from the word *Eloi*, God, in the singular number; and by adding the word *heim*, it renders it Gods.” HC 6:475.

13 *The New Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, under Michael.

14 D&C 132:31, 63.

Joseph Smith asked: “What did Jesus do?” then said: “When I get my kingdom (the earth and its inhabitants endowed with glory¹⁵ after the millennium), I shall present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, 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.”¹⁶

Thus, God the Eternal Father, acting in the role of Michael, being divested of His past knowledge, was placed on the newly created world as Adam, the scriptural name “of the first man”¹⁷ on each populated earth,¹⁸ but who the Prophet Joseph often called “the Ancient of Days.”¹⁹

This may raise the question, if the name Adam means “the first man,” why did Joseph call him “the Ancient of Days,” except by viewing him in the context of the first great act of condescension? That Being who was God the Eternal Father, then made Michael and Adam, dwelt on earth in its initial state of paradisaical glory in the Garden of Eden, with His heavenly spouse, who, as indicated by the generic name Adam, means both Adam and Eve,²⁰ and made the condescension by which she was then called “Eve, *because (as it later proved) she was the mother of all living; for,*” said the Lord God, “thus have I ... called the first of all women.”²¹

Thus, the exalted Man of Holiness and His glorious wife both condescended to step down from their exalted position among the Eloheim – the Gods of Eternity – to a lower level of life, in order to initiate a work and finally rise at the end of the eternal program of life and salvation to a higher state of glory, or eternal life and lives than that which they previously enjoyed – this, again, being the program of eternal progression.

But before Adam and Eve were placed on earth, the Gods of Creation (see Abr. 3:24; 4:1), acting within this condescension of the Man of Holiness, said of Adam and

15 In respects to celestial, terrestrial and telestial beings.

16 HC 6:306.

17 *Ibid.*, under Adam.

18 See Moses 1:34.

19 See HC 3:35, 386; 4:207.

20 See Moses 6:9.

21 Moses 4:26; italics added.

Eve: “We will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and to have dominion over ... every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”²² Yet, while this was the divine purpose of the creation, Adam and Eve had no power to beget children in the paradisiacal state.²³

When Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, Christ, speaking by divine investiture of authority as God the Eternal Father,²⁴ said: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, *nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but remember that I forbid it*, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”²⁵ – first, spiritually; and, finally, physically. Adam and Eve were, therefore, free to institute the fall, though they did not know that there would be a plan of redemption.²⁶ Yet Joseph Smith said: “Everlasting covenant was made between three personages *before the organization of this earth*, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on earth; these personages, according to Abraham’s record, are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the witness or Testator.”²⁷

Two basic, though important, results followed the transgression of Eve and Adam. First, the glory of the paradisiacal state of the earth withdrew,²⁸ effecting the earth and all life upon it, which glory Jesus stated in a revelation “is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth;”²⁹ and in another revelation as “eternal life.”³⁰ This loss of

22 Abr. 4:28.

23 See 2 Ne. 2:22-23.

24 Under the title, “Jehovah Gives All Revelation,” President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In all of the scriptures, where God is mentioned and where he has appeared, it was Jehovah who talked with Abraham, with Noah, Enoch, Moses and all the prophets.... The Father has never dealt with man directly and personally since the fall, and he has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son.” Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines Of Salvation*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City, Bookcraft, 1954), p. 27.

25 Moses 3:17; italics added.

26 Adam had known, but he and Eve lost all prior knowledge when he became Michael, which was apparently also true of Eve.

27 Mss, CHL, in *Teachings Of The Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book Co., 1976), p. 190; italics added. This the Prophet Joseph learned in a portion of the Book of Abraham which he read but did not publish.

28 The scriptures speak of four types of glory: Celestial, Terrestrial, Telestial and paradisiacal. In the first three various degrees of glory are built into the respective orbs, but in the last a sphere is merely enveloped in glory.

29 D&C 93:36.

30 D&C 88:4.

glory, being a loss of the divine nature of God,³¹ was, therefore, a loss of the elements of eternal life.

In the fall of Adam and Eve from their paradisaical state, they, therefore, literally died in the sense spiritually by the loss of the divine elements of eternal life which they possessed.³² And the withdrawal of the elements of eternal life caused great pain and trauma of mind, body and soul. Second, based on God's time (one thousand years of man's time being one day to God);³³ He said of the forbidden fruit: "In *the day thou eatest thereof* thou shalt surely die,"³⁴ which, having first happened, spiritually, then occurred physically, when Adam was "nine hundred and thirty years"³⁵ of age, or within that day of God's time.

Yet while Adam then became a "natural man,"³⁶ he did not become carnal, sensual or devilish,³⁷ which fact requires an explanation. The scriptures reveal: "Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth. And from that time forth the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and tend flocks, and they also began to beget sons and daughters,"³⁸ making Adam and Eve grandparents.

The record then continues,³⁹ "And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, 'Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?' And Adam said unto him: 'I know not, save the Lord commanded me.'" Up to that time, Adam walked by faith being obedient to the command of the Lord to offer sacrifice.

The angel then said of the law of sacrifice: "This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore."

31 See John 17:5.

32 See *The Lectures On Faith*, 2:12, 18.

33 See 2 Pet. 3:8; Abr. 3:4.

34 Moses 3:17; italics added.

35 Moses 6:12.

36 see Mosiah 3:18-19.

37 See the discussion, below, of Seth, who "was a perfect man ... (in the) likeness of his father," Adam, the initial "perfect man."

38 Moses 6:2-3

39 Moses 5:6-8.

The account then adds: “In that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying, ‘I⁴⁰ am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.’ And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning the families of the earth, saying: ‘Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression⁴¹ my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have (the) joy (of redemption), and again in the flesh I shall see God.’ And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: ‘Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.’”

The account then states: “Adam and Eve ... made all things known unto their sons and their daughters. And Satan came among them, saying: ‘I am also a son of God;’ and he commanded them, saying: ‘Believe it not,’ and they loved Satan more than God. *And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish.*”⁴² So, carnality, etc. initially rested on disobedience to gospel truth, which required an opportunity to receive such truth. And while many of Adam’s children, grandchildren, etc., then took the downward path, Adam and Eve did not; nor did their son Seth, who was born when Adam was one hundred and thirty years old,⁴³ through whom the promises and blessings that were first given to Abel were continued.

Adam rejoiced, saying: “God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew.”⁴⁴ And when Seth was sixty-nine years of age, Adam ordained Him a presiding patriarch within the Holy Order of God. And the divine record states: Seth “received the promise of God by his father, that his posterity should be the chosen of the Lord.” Jehovah also promised “that they should be preserved unto the end of the earth, because he (Seth) was a perfect man, and his likeness was the express likeness of his father (Adam), insomuch that he seemed to be like unto his father in all things,

40 Christ; see 3 Ne. 1:14.

41 This breaking of the law was not a sin, but a transgression, for sin requires perverse thought and action.

42 Moses 6:6-14; italics added.

43 See Moses 6:10.

44 JST, Gen. 6:3.

and could be distinguished from him only by his age.”⁴⁵ So Adam did not become carnal, sensual, and devilish by nature, as previously noted. As an example, to his son, Seth, he was “a perfect man.”

The divine truths of the gospel as given to Adam were taught by the antediluvian patriarchs, especially Enoch, who stressed the divine plan of renewing life by which he built Zion in his day, which was shown to Joseph Smith as a pattern by which the Latter-day Saints were to build Zion in the last days. Says the ancient report: “As Enoch spake forth the words of God, the people trembled, and could not stand in his presence. And he said unto them: Because that Adam fell, we are; and by his fall came death; and we are made partakers of misery and woe. Behold Satan hath come among the children of men, and tempteth them to worship him; and men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God.

“But God hath made known unto our fathers that all men must repent. And he called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: ‘I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.’ And he also said unto him: ‘If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.’ ...

“And our father Adam spake unto the Lord, and said: ‘Why is it that men must repent and be baptized in water?’ And the Lord said unto Adam: ‘Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden.’ Hence came the saying abroad among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world.

“And the Lord spake unto Adam, saying, ... ‘Teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no

45 D&C 107:42-43.

unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time. Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying: 'That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory; *for by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified; therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.*' And now, behold, I say unto you: *'This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.'*"⁴⁶

Besides the above, in the Father's great condescension he also yielded himself to the rule and judgments of Jehovah, the great "I Am," in whom He, as the Eternal Father, had previously infused His glory – His divine nature, or the elements of eternal life.⁴⁷ Thus, in this relationships Adam subordinated himself to Himself – that is, to the dictates of His glory in His Only Begotten Son.⁴⁸ In speaking of the building of Zion Christ therefore said to church members in a revelation to Joseph Smith: "Behold, this is the preparation wherewith I prepare you, and the foundation, and the ensample which I give unto you, whereby you may accomplish the commandments which are given you; that through my providence, notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world; that you may come up unto the crown prepared for you, and be made rulers over many kingdoms, *saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Zion, who hath*

46 Moses 6:47-55, 57-62; italics added.

47 See D&C 88:4.

48 See John 17:20-21.

established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman; who hath appointed Michael your prince, and established his feet, and set him upon high, and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One, who is without beginning of days or end of life."⁴⁹

Shortly before Adam's physical death he was recognized and honored in the role of Michael, for doing what the Gods do in the divine program of eternal progression. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph, Jesus stated that "three years previous to the death of Adam he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were high priests (in the Holy Order of God), with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing." Said the Prophet Joseph: "This is why Adam blessed his posterity; he wanted to bring them into the presence of God"⁵⁰ from which he had fallen. The revelation continued: "And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel."⁵¹ When Adam then entered into the spirit world, he further condescended to act during the earth's mortal state as the mighty Archangel, Michael – the greatest of all the angels.

Yet at the end of the divine programs of condescensions all things will finally be returned to the Eternal Father and Mother with the added benefits that are derived from the full gospel program, when the Only Begotten consecrates His finished work to the Father, of which the Prophet Joseph said: "When Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work; *when he shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: 'I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.'* *Then shall he (Christ also) be crowned with the crown of his glory, to sit on the throne of his power to reign forever and ever.*"⁵²

The Apostle Paul noted: "Afterward comes the end, *when he (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father*; when he shall have put down all rule,

49 D&C 78:13-16; italics added.

50 *History Of The Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter-Day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, Deseret News, 1948), 3:388. Hereafter abbreviated as HC, followed by vol. & page no.

51 D&C 107:53-54.

52 D&C 76:106-08; italics added.

and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed. For he saith, When it is manifest that he hath put all things under his feet, and that all things are put under, *he is excepted of the Father who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him (the Father), then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*"⁵³

The Role of Mother Eve in the Fall

Eve had a divine right, by election, – by the action of electing, or the fact of being elected – to initiate the fall of the earth from its paradisiacal state to a temporal order of life. This she had because she, not Adam, would give birth to children on the fallen sphere; for, as Isaiah said of God and the earth: "He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited."⁵⁴

Since the earth was, therefore, predesigned and prepared to this end, so, too, Eve was divinely appointed to give birth to human life on the mortal sphere, without which the whole program would have been in vain. She was, therefore, like the earth, which was created to bring forth an array of mortal life in a fallen state. And as she, the first woman, was properly called "Mother Eve,"⁵⁵ so, too, the fallen sphere was properly called "Mother Earth."

The prevailing negative view of the fall must, therefore, be changed by some positive emphasis on the role Mother Eve was destined to play. Being cast out of the Garden of Eden into the fallen lone and dreary world, she and Adam opened the way to physical life for their prior spirit children so that in the earth's fallen state, being out of

53 JST 1 Cor. 15:24-28; italics added.

54 Isa. 45:18.

55 See Gen. 3:20.

the presence of God, their children might *be proved to see if they would “do all things whatsoever the Lord their God would command them”*⁵⁶

By Eve’s supreme womanly nature, desires and intent, she hoped to fulfil the initial design of God, to multiply her seed in the flesh so that the earth might finally be filled with human life. And realizing that she could have no children in the paradisiacal state, she permitted herself to be deceived by Satan as the only way she could fulfil her destiny. She, therefore, ate the forbidden fruit, by which act Adam was induced to partake; and being the Lord of the earth, he “fell that men might be.”⁵⁷ But when Satan realized why Eve had so acted, he promoted a demeaning view of her and of women in general, which he could best do by instilling into religious-minded people, to debase Eve and women, and to promote the ego of men in the fallen sphere.

Adam, being “the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also,”⁵⁸ was the major creature in the world’s initial populace⁵⁹ and by the fall he went “forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground”⁶⁰ – to plant seeds and thereby till the ground. But he also “knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters;”⁶¹ and in this sacred act of planting, Eve, as an indispensable partner in their “one flesh,” brought forth human life on the fallen sphere. And by continuing to mature in the nurturing program of Christ’s gospel, she and Adam would become not only one spirit but finally one glory over their eternal family who would have inseparably combined spirit and physical bodies in eternal life and lives within the Holy Order of the Gods of Eternity. All these are vital functions which, without Eve’s participation, could never be.

The Place of Abel in the Holy Order of God

56 Abr. 3:25; italics added. People are not sent to earth to be tested, which implies that there are things God does not know until His spirit children have passed through the mortal state, which is not true, for He knows the end from the beginning. (See 1 Ne. 9:6.)

57 2 Ne. 2:25.

58 Moses 3:7.

59 see Moses 3:7-9; Abr. 5:2-9.

60 Moses 4:29.

61 Moses 5:2.

Cain and Abel were not the first children of Adam and Eve. These two sons were born after the angel appeared and revealed the meaning of the law of sacrifice to Adam and Eve. At the angel's appearance, the scriptures record that many children had turned away from God. The record then states: "Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words. But ... Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?"⁶²

Of Eve, the divine record then states: "She again conceived and bare his brother Abel. And Abel hearkened unto the voice of the Lord. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And Cain loved Satan more than God. And Satan commanded him, saying: 'Make an offering unto the Lord.' And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect.

"Now Satan knew this, and it pleased him. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain: 'Why art thou wrath? Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted. And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and Satan desires to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments, I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee according to his desire. And thou shalt rule over him; for from this time forth thou shalt be the father of his lies; thou shalt be called Perdition; for thou wast also before the world. And it shall be said in time to come – that these abominations were had from Cain; for he rejected the greater counsel which was had from God; and this is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent.'

"And Cain was wrath, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother, who walked in holiness before the Lord. And Adam and his wife mourned before the Lord, because of Cain and his brethren.

⁶² Moses 5:16.

“And it came to pass that Cain took one of his brothers’ daughters to wife, and they loved Satan more than God. And Satan said unto Cain: ‘Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.’ And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret.

“And Cain said: ‘Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness.

“And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him. And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.

“And the Lord said unto Cain: ‘Where is Abel, thy brother?’

“And he said: ‘I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?’

“And the Lord said: ‘What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood cries unto me from the ground.’

““And now thou shalt be cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

“And Cain said unto the Lord: ‘Satan tempted me because of my brother’s flocks. And I was wroth also; for his offering thou didst accept and not mine; my punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the Lord, and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that he that findeth me will slay me, because of mine iniquities, for these things are not hid from the Lord.’

“And I the Lord said unto him: ‘Whosoever slayeth thee, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.’ And I the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him

should kill him. And Cain was shut out from the presence of the Lord, and with his wife and many of his brethren dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.”⁶³

It may be noted that Abel held the priesthood and had been given the keys of a dispensation of the gospel under his father, Adam. In speaking of the Holy Priesthood, the Lord, therefore, said of the source from which it came down from early times: “Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his (earlier) fathers, even till Noah; and from Noah till Enoch, through the lineage of their fathers; *and from Enoch to Abel*, who was slain by the conspiracy of his brother, who received the priesthood by the commandments of God, by the hand of his father Adam, who was the first man – which priesthood continueth in the church of God in all generations, and is without beginning of days or end of years.”⁶⁴

Evidence presented below suggests that it was foreknown in a Grand Council in the First Estate that Abel would be murdered by Cain; and Seth then made a covenant with Abel that he would be sealed to him, which was later done on earth, thereby providing Abel’s posterity to continue through Seth. Said Joseph Smith of Abel: “We read in Genesis 4:4, that Abel brought the firstlings of the flock and the fat thereof, and the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering. And, again, ‘By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead, *yet speaketh*.’⁶⁵ How doth he yet speak? *Why he magnified the Priesthood which was conferred upon him*, and died a righteous man, and therefore has become an angel of God by receiving his body from the dead, *holding still the keys of his dispensation*; and was sent down from heaven unto Paul to minister consoling words, and to commit unto him a knowledge of the mysteries of godliness.”⁶⁶

A church was established in the days of Adam and Abel, in which Abel held a dispensation of Holy Priesthood. In January 1834 Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency taught: “From time to time these glad tidings (of the gospel) were sounded in the ears of men in different ages of the world down to the time of Messiah’s

63 Moses 5:17-41.

64 D&C 84:14-17; italics added.

65 Hebrews 11:4.

66 TPJS, p. 169 (italics added), see also, Hebrews 11:4; 12:24.

coming. By faith in this atonement or plan of redemption, Abel offered to God a sacrifice that was accepted, which was the firstlings of the flock. Cain offered of the fruit of the ground, and was not accepted, because he could not do it in faith, he could have no faith, or could not exercise faith contrary to the plan of heaven. It must be shedding the blood of the Only Begotten to atone for man; for this was the plan of redemption, and without the shedding of blood was no remission; and as the sacrifice was instituted for a type, by which man was to discern the great Sacrifice which God had prepared; to offer a sacrifice contrary to that, no faith could be exercised, because redemption was not purchased in that way, nor the power of atonement instituted after that order; consequently Cain could have no faith; and whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.

“But Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God Himself testifying of his gifts. Certainly, the shedding of the blood of a beast could be beneficial to no man, except it was done in imitation, or as a type, or explanation of what was to be offered through the gift of God Himself; and this performance done with an eye looking forward in faith on the power of that great Sacrifice for a remission of sins.

“But however various may have been, and may be at the present time, the opinions of men respecting the conduct of Abel, and the knowledge which he had on the subject of atonement, it is evident in our minds, that he was instructed more fully in the plan than what the Bible speaks of, for how could he offer a sacrifice in faith, looking to God for a remission of his sins in the power of the great atonement, without having been previously instructed in that plan? And further, if he was accepted of God, what were the ordinances performed further than the offering of the firstlings of the flock?

“It is said by Paul in his letter to the Hebrew brethren that Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. To whom did God testify of the gifts of Abel, was it to Paul? We have very little on this important subject in the forepart of the Bible. But it is said that Abel himself obtained witness that he was righteous. Then certainly God spoke to him: indeed, it is said that God talked with him: and if He did, would He not, seeing that Abel was righteous, deliver to him the whole plan of the Gospel. And is not the Gospel the news of the redemption. How could Abel offer a sacrifice and look forward with faith on the Son of God for a remission of his sins, and

not understand the Gospel? The mere shedding of the blood of beasts or offering anything else in sacrifice, could not procure a remission of sins, except it were performed in faith of something to come; if it could, Cain's offering must have been as good as Abel's. And if Abel was taught of the coming of the Son of God, was he not taught also of His ordinances?"⁶⁷

The Second Great Act of Condescension

In the second major act of condescension Jesus came to mortality as the Christ – the Anointed One – the Lamb of God. Although the term is used frequently, Christ did not have a “mortal ministry,” but rather a ministry in mortality, which needs an explanation of two basic facts. First, when the Jews hatefully said to Him, “For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God,” speaking of Himself, Christ then declared: “Say ye *of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world*, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?”⁶⁸

Thus, in the biology of eternal progression, when the divine sperm of the Father penetrated the egg in Mary’s womb and Christ’s fetus was formed, Christ’ physical body in nascent form was sanctified – purged of all mortal elements so that when he was born in mortality he could be born above the powers of the fall and be a divine personage as he walked the earth.

Second, as Jehovah later descended from heaven to dwell in the babe in Mary’s womb, Lehi saw in vision of “one descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day”⁶⁹. Thereby Christ, as an infant to be born, was anointed with great glory, the effect of which the Prophet Joseph said in speaking of the glory of God: “All corruption is devoured by the fire.”⁷⁰ Christ, the Anointed One, could, therefore, later say: “The prince of this world (Satan) cometh, and

67 HC, 2:15-16.

68 John 10:33, 36; italics added.

69 1 Ne. 1:9.

70 HC, 6:366.

*hath nothing in me*⁷¹. In other words, there were no mortal elements in Christ as a result of the fall as with the rest of mankind.

But the question must also be asked, why, then, did Jesus say in speaking of His disciples about himself: “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth?”⁷² The answer is because, Christ being in mortality as a divine being still needed to breathe mortal air, eat mortal food, and drink mortal liquid, which He then had to be raised to the level of His divine nature by which action the mortal elements were sanctified. If not, he would have lost the divinity within.

The Apostle John thus wrote that while Christ was on earth He had glory in Himself, even eternal life.⁷³ And Joseph Smith at least twice stated that a person with a physical body, who possesses glory, thereby has the means to withhold the visible manifestations of it.⁷⁴

Yet Christ, as the Anointed One, the Messiah⁷⁵, humbly subordinated Himself to the mortal state and to the judgments of corrupt men in order to make an infinite and eternal atonement for the redemption of this and the other worlds He created, with the people on them being spirit children of God, the Eternal Father. Christ was not, therefore, mortal; nor was He merely a sinless man, though being sinlessness was a vital necessity to the atonement. Nephi, therefore, attested: “The God of our fathers who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him, yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, *yielded himself , according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel*”⁷⁶.

71 John 14:30; italics added.

72 John 17:19.

73 See 1 John 1:1-5 and its introduction in the JST.

74 HC 3:392; 6:51.

75 See John 1:41; 2:25; Acts 10:38.

76 1 Ne. 19:10; italics added.

King Benjamin also testified: *“He shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he has a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. For behold, and also his (sanctified and endowed) blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned. But wo, wo unto him who knoweth that he rebelleth against God! For salvation cometh to none such except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ”*⁷⁷.

Mormon, therefore, said of the Prophet Abinadi, who was slain for his testimony: *“Because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth – and now, because he said this, they did put him to death”*⁷⁸.

Mormon also recorded the actual testimony of Abinadi, who stated: *“Have they (that is, other prophets) not said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth? Yea, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted? Yea, even doth not Isaiah say: ‘Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; (as) a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was*

⁷⁷ Mosiah 3:8-12; italics added.

⁷⁸ Mosiah 7:27-28; italics added.

wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”⁷⁹

Thus equipped, Jesus, the Christ, came to earth, among other reasons, to do two vital things. First, to perform an atoning mission among men, and, second, to make an infinite and eternal atonement for the redemption of this and other worlds which He created.

Alma the Younger said of the Christ’s atoning mission among the people: “He will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, *that he may know according to the flesh* how to succor his people according to their infirmities. Now the Spirit knoweth all things (which gave Christ such knowledge before He came to earth); *nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance;* and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.”⁸⁰

Viewed in the context of all the above truths, Nephi was shown a glorious vision of Christ’s mission in mortality, which finally included His infinite and eternal atonement. Said Nephi: “I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white. And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: ‘Nephi, what beholdest thou?’

“And I said unto him: ‘A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.’

“And he said unto me: ‘*Knowest thou the condescension of God?*’

“And I said unto him: ‘I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.’

“And he said unto me: ‘Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.’

⁷⁹ Mosiah 13:34-35; 14:1-5; italics added.

⁸⁰ Alma 7:12-13; italics added.

“And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: ‘Look!’

“And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

“And the angel said unto me: ‘Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even *the Son of the Eternal Father!* Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father (Lehi) saw?’”⁸¹

Based on Nephi’s later report, “I ... beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God,”⁸² he then answered the angel: “‘Yea, it is the love of God (in Christ, manifest by Him), which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.’

“And he (the angel) spake unto me, saying: ‘Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.’

“And after he had said these words,” Nephi reported, “he said unto me: ‘Look!’

“And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him.

“And,” he added, “it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life (to Christ); *which waters are (also) a representation of the love of God* (manifest through Christ).

“And the angel (finally) said unto me again: ‘*Look and behold the condescension of God!*

“And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him. And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized of him; and after he was baptized, I beheld the heavens open, and the Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove. And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people, in power and great glory; and the multitudes were gathered together to hear him; *and I beheld that they cast him out from among them.*

81 1 Ne 11:13-21.

82 1 Ne, 11:25.

“And I also beheld twelve others following him. And it came to pass that they were carried away in the Spirit from before my face, and I saw them not.

“And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying: ‘Look!’

“And I looked, and I beheld the heavens open again, and I saw angels descending upon the children of men; and they did minister unto them.

“And he (the angel) spake unto me again, saying: ‘Look!’

“And I looked, and I beheld the Lamb of God going forth (*in His atoning mission*) among the children of men. And I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits; and the angel spake and showed all these things unto me. And they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God (who took upon himself “their infirmities, that his bowels might be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he might know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities;”⁸³ and the devils and the unclean spirits were cast out.

“And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying: ‘Look!’

“And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record.

“And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world;”⁸⁴

Having seen these vital scenes central to the program of life and salvation, Nephi then viewed his mortal life in the light of eternal truth, which caused him to exclaim, “O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions? And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul? Why am I angry because of mine enemy?”⁸⁵

83 Alma 7:12.

84 1 Ne. 11:22-33.

85 2 Ne. 4:26-27.

While such expressions may appear to be contradictions to the glorious experience which Nephi was given, they, instead, reveal the sensitivity of his soul, for it is not possible for mortal man to be totally sanctified; otherwise, he would not die. Thus Nephi was primarily expressing his sensitivity to the slightest deviations from the full path of the pure order of life, which expressions reveal his pain (which a natural man may seldom feel) for the slightest degree of sin and his genuine desire to be totally faithful to the high standard of Christ's glorious life.

It may thus be said that a true and insightful study of these two great programs of condescension can give each faithful person a much greater foundation of eternal life by which to meet his or her own mortal challenges and to turn to God with a deeper appreciation for these great examples of the pure love of the Father and the Son, who is "the father of heaven and of earth"⁸⁶ – of the Father's children on the many worlds which He, Jesus of Nazareth, created.⁸⁷ And it must be remembered that grace is not enabling power positioned at the end of the perfecting program of the gospel to complete the perfecting process. It is the giving of glory along the way.

In superb allegory Jesus therefore illustrated the vital relationship which existed between His Apostles and disciples and Himself, and between Himself and the Father, by portraying the figure of a vine-grower, a vine and its branches, stating: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit he (the Father) taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. *Abide in me, and I in you.* As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, *except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that *abideth in me, and I in him,* the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

"If a man *abide not in me*, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

"*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye

⁸⁶ 2 Ne. 25:12; Mosiah 3:8; 15:4

⁸⁷ See D&C 76:23-24; 40-44.

be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.”⁸⁸

Paul said of Christ: “Being formed in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ John 15:1-17.

⁸⁹ JST, Philip. 2:8.