Election of Grace

Israel Foreknown

Joseph Fielding Smith

SOME SPIRITS GREATER THAN OTHERS. The spirits of men had their free agency, some were greater than others, and from among them the Father called and foreordained his prophets and rulers. Jeremiah and Abraham were two of them. . . The spirits of men were not equal. They may have had an equal start, and we know they were all innocent in the beginning; but the right of free agency which was given to them enabled some to outstrip others, and thus, through the eons of immortal existence, to become more intelligent, more faithful, for they were free to act for themselves, to think for themselves, to receive the truth or rebel against it.

CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FOREKNOWN. The Lord declared through Moses the following:

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: . . . When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

A similar passage to this occurs in Acts where Paul declares to the Athenians that the Lord “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times, before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.

These passages clearly indicate that the numbers of the children of Israel were known and the bounds of their habitation fixed, in the days of old when the Lord divided to the nations their inheritance. We conclude, therefore, that there must have been a division of the spirits of men in the spiritual world, and those who were appointed to be the children of Israel were separated and prepared for a special inheritance. (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:59)

Harold B. Lee

Now then, to make a summary of what I have just read, may I ask each of you again the question, “Who are you?” You are all the sons and daughters of God. Your spirits were created and lived as organized intelligences before the world was. You have been blessed to have a physical body because of your obedience to certain commandments in that premortal state. You are now born into a family to which you have come, into the nations through which you have come, as a reward for the kind of lives you lived before you came here and at a time in the world’s history, as the Apostle Paul taught the men of Athens and as the Lord revealed to Moses, determined by the faithfulness of each of those who lived before this world was created.

Hear now the significant words of that powerful sermon to “The Unknown God” preached by the apostle Paul, to those who were ignorantly worshipping images of stone and brass and wood, and I quote:

“...That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.” (Acts 17:24, 26–27.)

Here then again we have the Lord making a further enlightening declaration to Moses as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy:

“When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” (Deut. 32:8)

Now, mind you, this was said to the children of Israel before they had arrived in the “Promised Land,” which was to be the land of their inheritance.

Then note this next verse: “For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” (Deut. 32:9)

It would seem very clear, then, that those born to the lineage of Jacob, who was later to be called Israel, and his posterity, who were known as the children of Israel, were born into the most illustrious lineage of any of those who came upon the earth as mortal beings.

All these rewards were seemingly promised, or foreordained, before the world was. Surely these matters must have been determined by the kind of lives we had lived in that premortal spirit world. Some may question these assumptions, but at the same time they will accept without any question the belief that each one of us will be judged when we leave this earth according to his or her deeds during our lives here in mortality. Isn’t it just as reasonable to believe that what we have received here in this earth [life] was given to each of us according to the merits of our conduct before we came here? (From
Melvin J. Ballard

There was a group of tested, tried and proven souls before they were born into the world, and the Lord provided a lineage for them. That lineage is the House of Israel, the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their posterity. Through this lineage were to come the true and tried souls that had demonstrated their righteousness in the spirit world before they came here. We came through that lineage. Our particular branch is the House of Joseph through his son Ephraim. That is the group from whence shall come the majority of the candidates for celestial glory. (Three Degrees of Glory, p. 20)

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D&C 84:99

The Lord hath brought again Zion;
The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel, According to the election of grace, Which was brought to pass by the faith And covenant of their fathers.

See “Election” in LDS Bible Dictionary

Bruce R. McConkie

- Israel is an eternal people. Members of that chosen race first gained their inheritance with the faithful in the pre-mortal life. Israel was a distinct people in pre-existence. Many of the valiant and noble spirits in that first estate were chosen, elected, and foreordained to be born into the family of Jacob, so as to be natural heirs of all of the blessings of the gospel. (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 2:284)
- As part of the new song the saints will sing when they "see eye to eye" and the millennial era has been ushered in will be these words, "The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel, According to the election of grace, Which was brought to pass by the faith And covenant of their fathers." (D. & C. 84:98-102; Rom. 11:1-5.) This election of grace is a very fundamental, logical, and important part of God's dealings with men through the ages. To bring to pass the salvation of the greatest possible number of his spirit children the Lord, in general, sends the most righteous and worthy spirits to earth through the lineage of Abraham and Jacob. This course is a manifestation of his grace or in other words his love, mercy, and condescension toward his children.

As part of this election, Abraham and others of the noble and great spirits were chosen before they were born for the particular missions assigned them in this life. (Abra. 3:22-24; Rom. 9.)

As with every basic doctrine of the gospel, the Lord's system of election based on pre-existent faithfulness has been changed and perverted by an apostate Christendom. So absurd have been the false conclusions reached in this field that millions of sincere though deceived persons have devoutly believed that in accordance with the divine will men were pre-destined to receive salvation or damnation which no act on their part could change. (Teachings, p. 189.)

Actually, if the full blessings of salvation are to follow, the doctrine of election must operate twice. First, righteous spirits are elected or chosen to come to mortality as heirs of special blessings. Then, they must be called and elected again in this life, an occurrence which takes place when they join the true Church. (D. & C. 53:1.) Finally, in order to reap eternal salvation, they must press forward in obedient devotion to the truth until they make their "calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1), that is, are "sealed up unto eternal life." (D. & C. 131:5.) [Mormon Doctrine, p.216]

George Q. Cannon

Hence, as it is a great advantage to be born in the covenant, it is but reasonable to suppose that noble spirits will seek the opportunity to come into families where they will have all the blessings and promises which pertain to the covenant. The Latter-day Saints will undoubtedly become a great people, for God has made promises to them, and this will be one of the means by which their greatness will be developed. (Gospel Truth, 2:87)