

Youth of a Noble Birthright

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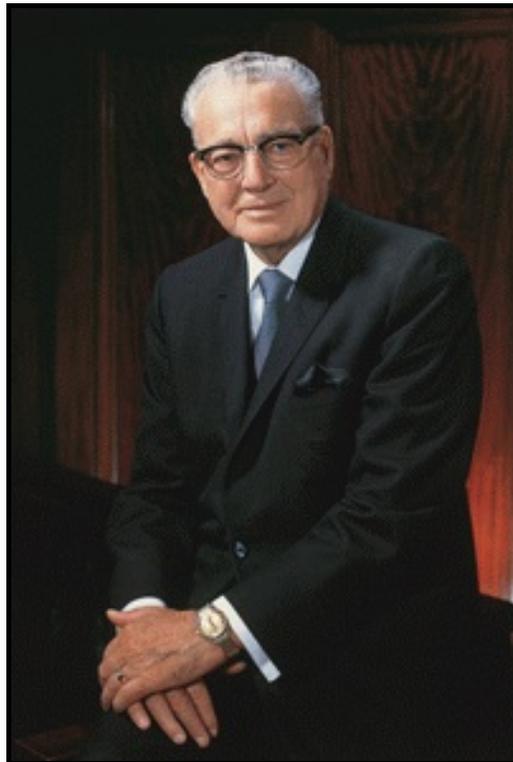
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We have heard much in the world community about so-called master races. The feeling of superiority in the minds of the leaders of these self-acclaimed superior groups [such as believed by Adolph Hitler and the Nazi's] who have campaigned for world domination has plunged the world into mighty and terrible world conflicts. The mystery of their fancied superiority has now been very largely exploded by the force of arms of the opposing nations they sought to conquer. The arrogance assumed by these master races, so called, has engendered the most bitter race prejudice in the world's history. . . There are still others who place apparently erroneous interpretations on the declaration to be found in the opening paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence to the effect that "All men are created equal." It is well that you as the youth of our land have from the fountain of unfailling truth, the Church of Jesus Christ, the truths of the scriptures concerning these important problems that involve the relationship of human beings to each other and to God, our Heavenly Father.

Father of All Spirits

How many races are there? Most scientists have divided humanity into five groups: The white, the black, the brown, the yellow and the red races. Others have grouped the brown, yellow and red races as "subgroups" of a single race. The scriptures have taught us that God, our Heavenly Father, is the "Father of the spirits of all men" and that when we pass from this life our spirits "whether they be good or evil, are taken home to God who gave (us) life." (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Alma 40:11) Thus, by the teachings of the scriptures, all mankind are made one great family. Furthermore, we are given to understand that all who live in mortality, if they would perfect their genealogical research, could trace their ancestry back to Adam and Eve, our first earthly parents in the Garden of



Eden, through Noah and his family, who were the only living persons on the earth after the flood. . . .

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning," (Acts 15:18) but only by his revelation to us, such as the following to Abraham, may we know of these things:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; and God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born." (Abraham 3:22-23)

No less a person than Peter who was so closely associated with the Master declared that Jesus also "was foreordained before the foundation of the world," (1 Peter 1:20) even as Jesus himself prayed, "O Father, glorify thou me with . . . the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5)

The word of the Lord came also to Jeremiah the prophet saying that before he was born the Lord "sanctified (him) and ordained (him) a prophet unto the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5) These and other similar

scriptures make it plain that man existed in a spiritual condition before coming here to this earth and that in that pre-existence he had his free agency or right to choose. How could some of those spirits as seen by Abraham have become noble and great except by faithfulness to God's cause? How came God to choose Abraham or Jeremiah before they were born? If we had the complete answer to these questions, we would no doubt learn that they and others stood up valiantly with Michael and his angels when "there was war in heaven. . . . and Satan and his angels were cast out" of heaven for rebellion. (Rev. 12:7-12)

Now I bring you another truth declared by a revelation to Moses as recorded in the scriptures.

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. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. (Deut. 32:7-9)

Here several truths are clearly suggested. In the first place, the extent of God's temporal creations was determined by the number of spirits to come into mortality; the earth was to be divided into nations according to the number of the children of Jacob, or Israel, before she became a nation and a chosen lineage was to come through Jacob's posterity. Logically then we also must conclude that the end of this earth will not come until all these spirits who were designated as worthy of mortal bodies shall have been born into this world. In the Apostle Paul's sermon to the Athenians, he declared also that God "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." (Acts 17:26) It was no doubt the prospect of coming into mortal bodies and thus being "added upon" that caused the stars of morning, or the spirit children of God, as we are told in the scriptures, to sing together and all the sons of God to shout for joy. (Job 38:4-7)

There is no truth more plainly taught in the Gospel than that our condition in the next world will depend upon the kind of lives we live here. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:28-29.) Is it not just as reasonable to suppose that the conditions in which we now live have been determined by the kind of lives we lived in the pre-existent world of spirits?

A Priceless Privilege

.... Between the extremes of the "noble and the great" spirits, whom God would make his rulers, and the disobedient and the rebellious, who were cast out with Satan, there were obviously many spirits with varying degrees of faithfulness. May we not assume from these teachings that the progress and development we made as spirits have brought privileges and blessings here according to our faithfulness in the spirit world? Now don't be too hasty in your conclusions as to what conditions in mortality constitute the greater privileges. That condition in life which gives the greatest experience and opportunity for development is the one to be most desired and any one so privileged is most favored of God. It has been said that "a smooth sea never made a

skillful mariner, neither do uninterrupted prosperity and success qualify for usefulness and happiness. The storms of adversity, like those of the ocean, rouse the faculties and excite the invention, prudence, skill and fortitude of the voyager. The mariners of ancient times, in bracing their minds to outward calamities, acquired a loftiness of purpose and a moral heroism worth a lifetime of softness and security."

All Are Equal

All are equal in that they are the spirit children of God, and also equal in their right to free agency, as well as in the fact that all are made innocent of previous wrongs committed as they enter this world through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has told us that "Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God." (Doc. and Cov. 93:38.) Who knows but that many of those with seeming inequalities in this life, if they do everything possible with their limited opportunities, may not receive greater blessings than some of those rewarded by having been born to a noble lineage and to superior



Harold B. Lee playing piano. Standing from left to right: Mark E. Peterson, Matthew Cowley, Spencer W. Kimball, and Ezra Taft Benson, all members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

social and spiritual opportunities who fail to live up to their great privileges! The history of the Lord's dealings with his children is filled with incidents that indicate that many of those who are the "elect according to the covenant," or that are of the "chosen" of God to be born through the chosen lineage of the House of Israel or the Lord's "portion" in the pre-existent world, will fail of their callings because of their sins. The descendants of Jacob or Israel, through his twelve sons, have been scattered far and wide among the nations as a punishment because of their transgressions, but in this instance the punishment of Israel has been a blessing to the nations who have thereby received the rights belonging to Israel. It was through the lineage of Judah, one of the sons of Jacob, that the Savior was born. Most of the prophets of every dispensation since the days of Israel have been of the chosen lineage of Jacob through his twelve sons, and we are led to believe by the prophets of our own day that the vast majority of those who have received the Gospel are of the tribe of Ephraim. ...

Foreordination

Now a further word about this matter of

foreordination. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the grand council of heaven before this world was" (Joseph Smith's *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 365). So likewise declared the Apostle Paul, "For whom he did foreknow . . . them he also called." (Romans 2:29-30) But do not misunderstand that such a calling and such foreordination pre-determine what you must do. A prophet on this western continent has spoken plainly on this subject,

Being called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil. (Alma 13:3)

This last passage makes the others preceding more understandable. God may have called and chosen men in the spirit world or in their first estate to do a certain work, but whether they will accept that calling here and magnify it by faithful service and good works while in mortality is a matter in which it is their right and privilege to exercise their free agency to choose good or evil.

But the Lord "requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days." (D&C 64:34) I fear there

are many among us who because of their faithfulness in the spirit world were "called" to do a great work here, but like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency in riotous living and are losing their birthright and the blessings that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling. Hence as the Lord has said, "there are many called but few are chosen," and then he gives us two reasons as to why his chosen and ordained fail of their blessings: First, because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and second, they aspire so much to the honors of men that they do not learn that "the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness." (D&C 121:34-36) All these have sinned "a very grievous sin, in that they are walking in darkness at noon-day." (D&C. 95:5-6)

You our youth of today are among the most illustrious spirits to be born into mortality in any age of the world. Yours is a noble heritage and a wonderful opportunity. May you join in the refrain of the rallying song of youth today:

Holding aloft our colors,
we march in the glorious dawn,
O youth of the noble birthright,
Carry on, Carry on, Carry on!"

and be guided to fulfill your highest destiny.



President Harold B. Lee and his wife, Joan