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Purpose of God in the Earth Life of Man

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We are now prepared to consider the purpose of God in the “creation” of man and in a broader way than in the allusion to it in the twenty-first chapter, where it was briefly considered merely to show the wrong and the inadequate conceptions entertained upon the subject in the current theology of the churches. Also we are to consider such purpose in the light of that fuller knowledge of the subject, which has been made of it through the revelations of God which have come to men in the New Dispensation. It has already been pointed out that there is no clear-cut knowledge to be found on the purpose of God in creation in any of the revelations in the Old Testament or in the New. The question therefore is, what new light has been thrown upon said purpose in the supplemental revelations of the New Dispensation. Here we are most happy in finding both clear-cut and adequate word of God upon the subject. In the Mosaic fragment before referred to in these pages comprising the book of Moses, we have this as word of God to Israel’s great prophet.

God’s work and glory.

(a) Testimony of Moses. “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and ⟨the⟩ eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

To appreciate the full value of that brief statement, we will suppose that from some catacomb or pyramid, or temple of Egypt, an

On the contents page introducing this chapter, Roberts recommended, among others, an article entitled “Immortality of Man,” from the *Improvement Era* (April 1907). He appended the following explanation: “This article was really a report of a committee appointed by the First Presidency to answer a number of questions that had been submitted to them on the nature of man’s immortality. The committee was Elder Francis M. Lyman of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder B. H. Roberts of the First Council of the Seventy. The report was submitted to the First Presidency and a number of the Twelve. An editorial note in the *Era* above

imperishable parchment had been found, which undeniably was a lost fragment of the writings of Moses, and was the word of God to him, so that this could be regarded *by* Jew and Christian alike, as a veritable utterance of God. What value would Jew and Christian assign to it, especially in view of the fact that there is no such adequate utterance in any reputed revelation in the Old Testament or in the New, on the purpose of God with reference to the creation of man? Would it not be hailed as a pearl beyond price? A flash from the inner fact of things, driving back the mysteries and *the* blackness from the horizon of man's vision as to why he is here in this God's world? It is the purpose of God "to bring to pass the immortality and <the> eternal life of man"—as man, of course. As immortal man! Immortal as the Christ was and is after his resurrection from the dead, spirit and body indissolubly united; one "soul"; for in the light of our new knowledge, "the spirit and the body <is> [are] the soul of man. And the resurrection <of the body> [from the dead] is the redemption of the soul" (D&C 88:15-16). To this first completed "soul" (**The Christ**) had been given all power in heaven and in earth, and he began the radiation of that "all power," by giving commission to his apostles—his officially accredited witnesses for the whole truth of the gospel scheme of things, with an injunction that they were to teach all nations and administer ~~its~~ *the gospel* ordinances of salvation to them. *As with the Christ* so shall it be with men in varying degrees as to the glory and power of the immortal existence ~~as~~ we are assured will come ~~unto~~ to them.

But let us not outrun the development of our theme. Let us confine ourselves for the moment to this thought: "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."

(b) Testimony of the Book of Mormon. This utterance from the Mosaic fragment of revelation is not the only word, nor the completed word that has come to the world through the revelation of God in the New Dispensation. Another word is found, and an additional purpose given—to the one already above set forth—viz., in the American volume of scripture, the Book of Mormon, there one of the old prophets of the ancient American race is represented as saying: "All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might

referred to, makes the following statement: 'Elder Roberts submitted the following paper to the First Presidency and a number of the Twelve Apostles (seven were present) none of whom found anything objectionable in it or contrary to the revealed word of God, and therefore favored its publication.' Editors."

have joy” (2 Ne. 2:24–25). “Adam fell that men might be”; that is, that men might have existence as men; and the design in bringing about the existence of man through Adam’s fall is ultimately that he might have joy, exist in a sphere or realm of joy, a world and state of joy. A world where joy shall obtain and persist and go on and on! Not for dole and sorrow is God bringing man into an existence that is to be immortal—deathless. But for joy; ~~not happiness but~~ something greater than happiness—Joy! of which more later, when we shall contemplate it, and revel in it; ~~when we after we~~ get into the reader’s mind the fullness of this unfolding truth of the purpose of God in the creation of man.

(c) *Testimony of the Prophet of the New Dispensation.* We have brought into this consideration a word from Moses, God’s masterful, prince-like prophet, who knew his God “face to face.” We have brought a word from Lehi, the faithful prophet of another branch of the House of Israel, which dwelt in America—the Book of Mormon passage. We have yet another word, and a deeper reason given on the same theme, and this time direct from God to the Prophet of the New Dispensation. Let us hear him. Jesus, the Christ is speaking to the Prophet.

The larger view of man’s life.

I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn. . . . Ye *<the Prophet and the brethren with him when the revelation was given>* were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is spirit. . . . Man *<the race—all men>* was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God hath placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence *<i.e. no place where these conditions do not obtain>*. Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation. For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy. The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple. The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. (D&C 93:21, 23, 29–36)

[This is] a prose-poem, on a profoundly spiritual subject, the most exalted [which] man can contemplate: *the purpose of man’s earth life*. Had the Prophet of the New Dispensation left no other word to the world than that word, he would have been a prophet, a seer; one

who sees, and sees truly; and teaches God's truth, for that prose-poem is true. Let us contemplate it, let us give it exposition step by step as it unfolds to our thought.

Exposition of the larger view of man's life. First, Jesus who gives the revelation, is declared to be in the beginning with God, co-eternal with God; that part of him which matters most, intelligence; the intelligent entity; which was not created, and was not made; but which is eternal, as all intelligences are. The "Thing," the "Entity" which starts out on its career of progress, not each of the same quality or degree, but various; not all as the "Word," who is the Christ, was; but whether of low or of high degree, nevertheless equal in this one thing, their eternity;¹ and they are what they are in virtue of what their varied intelligence itself is. Not being of the same capacity, they will go forward swiftly, or slowly, or stand still, as they choose. Some **intelligences as spirits**[†] will rebel against the order of things in the universe as did Lucifer and his following, but they will not prevail against the order of the universe, that shall stand secure, because there will always be enough, and enough of sufficient power, to hold things in their course of progress, and to the attainment of the higher things, the best things. But these rebellious ones may if they so choose persist in their rebellion against the higher intelligences—even against God and the orderly universe; but they must endure the consequences. So much for the initial thought of the passage, and now the next step.

"I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn." Is not that "Firstborn" incompatible with the idea of the eternity of the Christ-Intelligence? Who from the beginning was with God, and was God? Why

¹In proof of this I quote what the Lord said to Abraham:

The Lord said unto me. . . . If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above. . . . Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that a planet or a star may exist above it. . . . As, also, if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are *gnolaum*, or eternal. (Abr. 3:15-18)

[†]The committee of the Quorum of the Twelve commented:

Intelligence and Spirit as used in this chapter are confusing terms. The thought may be gathered that "Intelligence"—that eternal entity which was not created, may, and some times does, rebel against truth and God. We do not so understand it. Those who rebelled in the world of spirits were *begotten* spirits, who, if they had remained faithful, were prepared

“Firstborn”? It can be no other than this: That mighty, self-existent, Intelligence, which was the “Word,” and was in the beginning with God, the Father, was begotten a spirit; and in the order of our earth, and the **spirit** intelligences connected and associated with it, was the “firstborn” of the spirits ~~of that sub-division of the universe~~—the “firstborn” of many brethren;² and ~~he~~ **the Christ** illustrates what takes place with all intelligent entities of the divine human species. Intelligences are begotten spirits, and these spirits **no doubt** are more definite personalities, **and of** greater tangibility, and possessed of higher powers than many suppose them to be. It is written in Hebrews that God had revealed himself to men through the Son, “who was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person . . . by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:2-3).^a This making of worlds, was previous to the earth life of the Christ, and hence was a work accomplished when he was a spirit **personage**, in which spirit life he was the “Firstborn.”

to come into this mortal world. The revelation which speaks of intelligence says: “Man was in the beginning with God.” (When was this beginning?) Then this thought follows: “Intelligence, or the *light of truth*, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.” Again we are taught that “light and truth”—intelligence—“forsaketh that evil one.” This being true, and treating intelligence as an entity, then that entity cannot rebel against light and truth, for it would rebel against itself.

Handwritten notes by Roberts, found on his copy of the committee’s report in response to these points, read: **Miss.apprehension here what is Intel? That which perceives truth Intel. within a Sp[irit] or Intel & Sp. in body the Sp. I Int. Clarify. Of no substance or importance this objection.** The handwritten changes made on the typescript by Roberts appear to address this problem. Reporting to President Clawson on October 10, 1929, George Albert Smith explained: “In the opinion of the committee the intention is that these intelligences after they become *spirits* may rebel, as Lucifer did. Can this be clarified to say this? We do not have any revelation stating that intelligences have power to rebel.”

²Rom. 8:29 where Jesus the Son of God is referred to as “the firstborn among many brethren.” Again in Col. 1:15 it is written, speaking of the Christ, “who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.” In Heb. 1:6 “And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.”

^aRoberts inserted a sheet of paper into his copy of the Bible commenting on Hebrews 1 and listing the attributes of Jesus found there. “The creations shall wax old and pass away [but] Jesus shall remain.” Roberts refers to 1 Tim. 3:16; John 1:1-14; Col. 1:12, 19; 2:9; and the title page of the Book of Mormon as proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ and notes that “Jesus the Christ fulfills all these conditions and we may not doubt the Deity of Jesus.” In the margin to verse 8, Roberts notes that God the Father addresses Jesus as God; he points to Numbers 12:6-8 as “a fine collection of instances of the divers manners of rev[elation]”; and he quotes from the King Follett Discourse, giving “Joseph Smith’s view of God. 1844.”

Moriancumer's vision of the Christ in his spirit body.

Fortunately too, we have a very great message on this point from a revelation in the Book of Mormon, where the preexistent Spirit of the Christ appeared to an ancient prophet among the Jaredite people. This prophet was Moriancumer, ***the brother of Jared***. He besought the Lord, according to the Book of Mormon account of the vision, to make luminous certain stones which were to give light to the barges in which the people of Moriancumer were to cross the seas from the “Old World” to the “New.” And as the hand of ~~God~~ ***the Spirit-Christ*** was outstretched to touch the stones, the vision of Moriancumer was ***so*** quickened that he beheld the finger of the Lord, and fell down before Him stricken in fear, and said: “I knew not that *the Lord had flesh and blood . . .* *<for the finger>* was as the finger of a man, *like* unto flesh and blood. . . . And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that *I shall take upon me flesh and blood.* *<Not that he was then flesh and blood.>*” (cf. Ether 3:6–9; italics added). And then was given to this prophet a full view of the Lord, as later ***such a view*** was given unto Moses and other ~~members~~ ***leaders*** of the House of Israel.³ And the Lord said:

Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh. (Ether 3:16; [italics added])

Not in flesh and blood, then, did Moriancumer behold the Lord, but in the body of the Lord’s spirit, or the ~~spiritual~~ ***spirit body***; the spirit body begotten of the Father, inhabited by the intelligent entity, the “Word” that was with God in the beginning, and from all eternity, and “that was God,” and “that was ***<finally>*** made flesh,” and “dwelt among men.”[†]

Now to resume our comment in the more direct line: “Ye were also in the beginning with the Father,” continued the Christ, speaking to the Prophet Joseph Smith and the brethren who were with him—***when the revelation was received***—“Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit” (D&C 93:23). And, of course, as the spirit nature of the Christ was, so too was their nature: intelligences, begotten spirits, and capable of immense activities and great achievements.

³See vision of Moses, Aaron & ~~70~~ ***Seventy*** of the Elders, Ex. 34:9–11.

[†]On this point, the committee of the Quorum of the Twelve commented: “The use of the expression ‘Spirit-body of Christ,’ and ‘The Word,’ is not made clear to us, and we are left to wonder if these terms apply to the ‘Intelligence’ or to the begotten spirit of Jesus Christ.” On this, Roberts wrote the following note: ***Id. Clarify***. The changes Roberts made on the typescript appear to be in response to this comment.

The essential qualities of intelligences. Connected with this eternal existence of intelligences is the agency, or moral freedom of them; which carries with it the condemnation of man when disobedient to righteous laws. “Because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them,” as intelligences, “and they receive not the light. And every man whose spirit ~~(i.e., intelligence)~~ receiveth not the light is under condemnation. For man is spirit” (intelligence within a spirit body) (D&C 93:31–33); and this “spirit,” is native to the “light of truth”; that is, it has natural affinity for that light of truth. Even as flame leaps towards flame and blends with it, so truth proclaimed and striking the hearing spirit of man, finds entrance there, and understanding; unless ~~man~~ **he** by perverseness holds back the will to believe, and with that holding back comes condemnation because he receives not the light which comes to his understanding—**his** intelligence.

The completed thought on the purpose of God in man’s earth life. Again: “For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, ~~(inseparately)~~ [inseparably] connected, receive a fullness of joy” (D&C 93:33).

Here our circle completes itself. Moses told us, that the purpose of God was to bring to pass the immortality and the eternal life of man; the Nephite prophet told us that Adam fell that man might be, or exist as man; and that men are that they might have joy. And now, in this prose-poem of our Prophet of the New Dispensation, comes out this same truth under new form—“Man is spirit,” ***he has the native power to cognize truth***; “the elements are eternal, and spirit and element inseparably connected receive a fullness of joy, and when separated man cannot receive a fullness of joy.” And that is what God is working at through this earth life ~~for~~ ***of*** man. Man shall come to that immortality of which Moses speaks, shall come to that inseparable connection between elements and spirit—which shall be wrought ultimately through the resurrection from the dead, of which the Christ is the type, ***and the power***. And through that indissoluble union of spirit and element **thus wrought** an immortal man shall be brought into being, with full equipment for that advancement over God’s great highway of progress universewide, and long, and deep, and high; and running through all the ages that know no limitations. This the purpose of God in the earth life of man—man’s eternal progress, and in that, and growing out of it, man’s everlasting joy.

And this “joy”—what is it? What is meant by this—“Man is that he might have joy?” Have we here the reappearance of the old Epicurean doctrine, “Pleasure is the supreme good, and chief end of life?” No, verily! Nor any form of ancient or modern Hedonism⁴ whatsoever. For mark, in the first place, the different words “joy” and “pleasure.” They are not synonymous. The first does not necessarily arise from the second. Joy may arise from quite another source than “pleasure” even from pain, when the endurance of pain is to eventuate in the achievement of some good: such as the travail of a mother in bringing forth her offspring; the weariness and pain and danger of toil by a father, to secure comforts for loved ones. Moreover, whatever apologists may say, it is very clear that the “pleasure” of the Epicurean philosophy, hailed as “the supreme good and chief end of life,” was to arise from agreeable sensations, or whatever gratified the senses, and hence was, in the last analysis of it—in its roots and branches—in its theory and in its practice—“sensualism.” It was to result in physical ease and comfort, and mental inactivity—other than a conscious, self-complacence—being regarded as “the supreme good and chief end of life.” We judge this to be the net result of this philosophy since these are the very conditions in which Epicureans describe even the gods to exist; and surely men could not hope for more “pleasure,” or greater “happiness” than that possessed by their gods. Cicero even charges that the sensualism of Epicurus was so gross that he represents him as blaming his brother, Timocrates, “‘because that brother would not allow that everything which had any reference to a happy life was to be measured by the belly’; nor has he,” continues Cicero, “said this once only, but often.”⁵

⁴Hedonism:

the doctrine of certain Greek philosophers . . . ; in ethics, gross self-interest. Hedonism is the form of eudemonism that regards pleasure (including avoidance of pain) as the only conceivable object in life, and teaches that as between the lower pleasures of sense and the higher enjoyments of reason, or satisfied self-respect, there is no difference except in the degree, duration, and hedonic value of the experience, there being, in strictness, no such thing as ethical or moral value. (*Standard Dictionary*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1895.)

⁵In Cicero’s description of the Epicurean conception of the gods, he says:

That which is truly happy cannot be burdened with any labor itself, nor can it impose any labor on another, nor can it be influenced by resentment or favor, because things which are liable to such failings must be weak and frail. . . . Their life [i.e., of the gods] is most happy and the most abounding with all kinds of blessings which can be conceived. They do

This is not the “joy,” it is needless to say, contemplated in our text. Nor is the “joy” there contemplated the “joy” of mere innocence—mere innocence! Which, say what you will of it, is but a negative sort of virtue: a virtue that is colorless, never quite sure of itself, always more or less uncertain, because untried. Such a virtue—if mere absence of vice may be called virtue—would be unproductive of that “joy,” the attainment of which is set forth in the context of the Book of Mormon passage above quoted, as the purpose of man’s existence. It is written, “They ⟨Adam and Eve⟩ would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin” (2 Ne. 2:23). From which it appears that the “joy” contemplated herein is to arise from something more than mere innocence, which is impliedly unproductive of “joy.” The “joy” contemplated herein is to arise out of a man’s knowledge of evil, of sin; through knowing misery, sorrow, pain, and suffering; through seeing good and evil locked in awful conflict; through a consciousness of having chosen in that conflict the better part, the good (which will include the true and the beautiful); and not only in having chosen it, but in having wedded it by eternal compact; made it his by right of conquest over evil. It is the “joy” that will arise from a consciousness of having “fought the good fight,” of having “kept the faith.” It will arise from a consciousness of moral, spiritual, and physical strength; of strength gained in conflict. The strength that comes from experience; from having sounded the depths of the soul; from experiencing all the emotions of which mind is susceptible; from testing all the qualities and strength of the intellect. A “joy” that will come to man from a contemplation of the universe, and a consciousness that he is an heir to all that is, a joint heir with Jesus Christ and God the Father; from knowing that he is an essential part of all that is. It is a “joy” that will be born of the consciousness of existence itself, that will revel in existence, in thoughts of realization of existence’s limitless possibilities. A “joy” born of the consciousness of the power of eternal increase. A “joy” arising from association with the intelligences of innumerable heavens, the gods of all eternities. A “joy” born of a consciousness of being, intelligence, of faith, knowledge, light, truth, mercy, *justice*, love, glory, dominion, wisdom, power; all feelings, affections, emotions, passions; all heights and all depths.

nothing. They are embarrassed with no business; nor do they perform any work. They rejoice in the possession of their own wisdom and virtue. They are satisfied that they shall ever enjoy the fulness of eternal pleasure. . . . Nothing can be happy that is not at ease. (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, “Nature of the Gods,” 266–68)

“Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Ne. 2:25); and that “joy” is based upon and contemplates all that is here set down.

The truth in respect to man. Here, then, stands the truth so far as it may be gathered from God’s revelations and the nature of things ***respecting man***: There is in man an eternal, uncreated, self-existing entity, call it “intelligence,” “mind,” “spirit,” “soul”—**for these terms are often used interchangeably in the scriptures—but call it what you will, so long as you recognize it, and regard its nature as in the main, intelligent and as eternal.**† There came a time when in the progress of things (which is only another way of saying in “the nature of things”), an earth career, or earth existence, because of the things it has to teach, was necessary to the enlargement, to the advancement of the “intelligences”; hence an earth is prepared; and One, ~~as we have seen~~, sufficiently advanced and able, by the nature of him, ~~and~~ to bring to pass the necessary event, **and** the spirit in which he proposed to work, **found satisfactory**—is chosen to act as Redeemer to the race.

As to the second part of the great truth—“men are that they might have joy”—viewed in the light of the “intelligence” ~~or “spirit”~~ in man being an eternal, uncreated, self-existing entity, **and** remembering what ~~I have~~ **has** already **been** said as to the nature of this “joy,” which it is the purpose of earth existence to secure; remembering also from what this joy is to arise—from the highest possible development—the highest conceivable enlargement of physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual powers—**remembering all this**, what other conceivable purpose for existence in earth life could there be for eternal intelligences than this attainment of “joy” arising from progress? Man’s existence for the “manifestation ~~alone~~ of God’s glory,” as taught by the creeds of men, is not equal to it. That view represents man as but a thing created, and God as selfish and vain of glory. True, the Book of Mormon idea of the purpose of man’s existence—that he might have joy—is accompanied by a manifestation of God’s glory; for with the progress of intelligences there must be an ever-widening manifestation of the glory of God. It is written that “the glory of God is intelligence”; and it must follow, as the day follows night, that with the enlargement, with the progress of intelligences, there must ever be a constantly increasing splendor in the manifestation of the glory of God. But in our doctrine, the manifestation of that glory **is may be said to be**

†The committee of the Quorum of Twelve remarked: “The use of ‘Mind, spirit, and soul’ appears confusing to us.” Roberts appears to have modified his text in response to the committee’s concern.

incidental. The primary purpose is not in that manifestation but *in* the “joy” arising from the progress of intelligences. And yet that fact adds to the glory of God, since it represents God as seeking the enlargement and “joy” of kindred intelligences to himself though more lowly, rather than the mere selfish manifestation of his own personal glory. “This is my work and my glory,” saith the Lord, “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39); and therein is God’s “joy.” A “joy” that comes from the progress of others. Not the immortality of the “spirit” of man, mark you, for that immortality is already existent; but to bring to pass the immortality of the spirit and body in a united status, and which together constitutes “man,” the “soul,” the completed man; for “the spirit and the body are the soul of man”; and “the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul” (D&C 88:15–16)—the whole man. And the noble purpose of all this is that man might have joy; that joy which, in the last analysis of things, should be even as God’s joy, and God’s glory, namely, the bringing to pass the progress, enlargement and joy of others.

Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: Smith, “King Follett Discourse”; Roberts, “History of the ‘Mormon’ Church”; Roberts, “Immortality of Man”; Roberts, *Seventy’s Course in Theology* 2:1–27 and 4:1–23; 2 Ne. 2:1–30; D&C 93; Moses, esp. ch. 1; Abraham, esp. ch. 3. On the contrast between Roberts’s ideas concerning the purpose of life and those of traditional Jewish and Christian thinkers, see pages 608–10 below.