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The Natural Man ... An Enemy to God?

Author(s): Alma P. Burton

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Abstract: King Benjamin stated that “the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been since the fall of Adam” (Mosiah 3:19). Brigham Young declared mankind God’s noblest work, but when Adam and Eve fell from the presence of God they were brought into an unnatural state, in contact with influences of an evil nature. The “natural man” spoken of by King Benjamin is equivalent to President Young’s “unnatural man.” Both refer to mankind that has been estranged from God.

The Natural Man . . . An

BY ALMA P. BURTON

ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF SEMINARIES AND
INSTITUTES OF RELIGION

● Many have said that man in his natural state is an enemy to God. Some have claimed that Adam and Eve brought sin and evil upon every child of God born to this earth. How and when does a man become an enemy to God? Or how and when do God's children become estranged from him?

One of the remarkable addresses dealing with this subject is recorded in the Book of Mormon and was given by King Benjamin to his people about 124 BC. In that address he stated that "the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam. . . ." (Mosiah 3:19.)

President Brigham Young declared in a discourse given June 15, 1862, that:

"The natural man is of God. We are the natural sons and daughters of our natural parents, and spiritually we are the natural children of the Father of light and natural heirs to his kingdom; and when we do an evil, we do it in opposition to the promptings of the Spirit of Truth that is within us.

"Man, the noblest work of God, was in his creation designed for an endless duration, for which the love of all good was incorporated in his nature. It was never designed that he should naturally do and love evil.

"When our first parents fell from their paradisaical state, they were brought in contact with influences and powers of evil that are unnatural and stand in opposition to an endless life. So far as mankind yield to these influences, they are so far removed from a natural to an unnatural state—from life to death." (*Journal of Discourses*, 9, 305.)

It is evident that King Benjamin and President Young used the words "natural man" with opposite meaning. The "natural man" as used by King Benjamin is the equivalent to the term "the unnatural man" in Brigham Young's statement. Both terms define the condition of a person who has become estranged from or an enemy to God. How does one become estranged from God or an enemy to God? Is such a state of being or condition due to man's

birth, or is it a condition or state that one acquires by disobedience to the commandments of God? Being estranged from or becoming an enemy to our Heavenly Father or to his Son Jesus Christ is a condition that all men would want to avoid.

The Lord said:

"For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

"And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit." (D&C 84:45-46.)

The Lord revealed further to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

"Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven;

"And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts." (*Ibid.*, 1:31-33.)

From these declarations of the Lord we learn that the Spirit of Jesus Christ gives light to every man who comes into the world, and further, that that same Spirit continues to enlighten every man who hearkens to his message and that every one who hearkens to the Spirit comes to God.

It is true that the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, but he always looks upon the individual as his child and continually sheds forth his Spirit to assist him whenever he needs assistance, whenever he is led astray or influenced by evil to sin. The Spirit of the Lord is constantly striving with the man to influence him to repent.

When man received his mortal body he became subject to the things of the world. This did not mean that many individuals could not live above the things of the world for the most part, but it meant that men in this life would be subject to the trials and tempta-

Enemy to God?

teaching

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tions of the world. The full purpose of the plan of salvation provides for the fact that a man may avail himself of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

This is why Christ came to earth to suffer, bleed, and die. Faith and repentance are basic principles of progression in the gospel, and these are based upon the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ.

King Benjamin explained in his message to his people that "the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; . . ." (Mosiah 3:18.) And the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that "little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten;

"Wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me;" (D&C 29:46-47.) According to these scriptures the infant is in full fellowship with God.

Mormon likewise declared the innocence of little children in his epistle to his son Moroni when he wrote:

"Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me.

"And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.

"Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children." (Moroni 8:8-10.)

And later, he wrote:

"Little children cannot repent; wherefore, it is awful wickedness to deny the pure mercies of God unto them, for they are all alive in him because of his mercy.

"And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption.

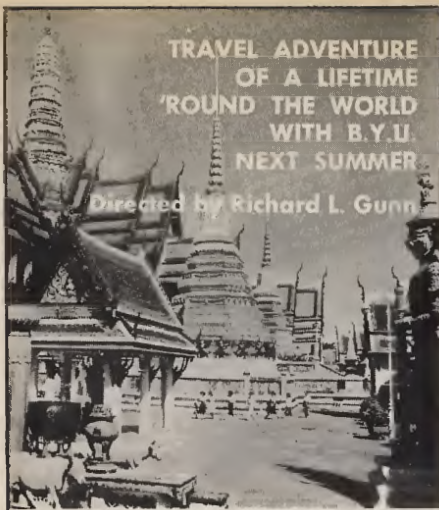
"Wo unto such, for they are in danger of death, hell, and an endless torment. I speak it boldly; God hath commanded me. Listen unto them and give heed, or they stand against you at the judgment-seat of Christ.

"For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing—

"But it is mockery before God, denying the mercies of Christ, and the power of his Holy Spirit, and putting trust in dead works." (*Ibid.*, 8:19-23.)

If the infant, as King Benjamin and Mormon explained, is not an enemy to God, and if, as Joseph Smith revealed, the devil cannot tempt little children until they become accountable, how and when does an individual become an enemy to God? How and when does an individual become estranged from God?

King Benjamin's statement reads: ". . . the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, *unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.*" (Mosiah 3:19. Italics added.) He also stated, ". . . men drink damnation to their own souls. . . ." (*Ibid.*, 3:18.) He did not say that men are enemies to God because of birth into mortality. Individuals have never become enemies to God because of birth into mortality nor because of Adam and Eve's transgression. However, some of Adam's posterity have become enemies to God because they will not hearken to the voice of the Lord. The Lord revealed (*Continued on page 1182*)



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Teaching

(Continued from page 1095)

to Moses and to Joseph Smith that God gave instructions to Adam and Eve, and they likewise instructed their children in the things of God. The account is recorded as follows:

"And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.

"And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

"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." (Moses 5:4-6.)

This is the supreme example of faith in God and illustrates Adam's love for God and his desire to keep his commandments. It does not indicate that Adam was an enemy to God.

"And then the angel spake, saying: 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." (*Ibid.*, 5:7-8.)

This is a significant statement. "Thou shalt repent and call upon God." How often? As often as necessary because without repentance the individual would lose the Spirit of the Lord. The Lord does not want his children to turn from him; and when they keep a contrite and repentant spirit, his Spirit continues with them. To continue:

"And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I 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.

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"And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, 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 joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.

"And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters." (*Ibid.*, 5:9-12.)

Then Moses recorded that Satan came among the posterity of Adam and Eve and proclaimed to them that he also was a son of God and persuaded some of them to disbelieve the things of God which Adam and Eve had taught them. It is recorded that because of this there were those who turned from believing the word of the Lord, "and they loved Satan more than God. And men *began from that time forth* to be carnal, sensual, and devilish." (*Ibid.*, 5:13. Italics added.) Note that the scripture states men *began* from that time to be carnal, sensual, and devilish. They were not that way because of birth into mortality. They were not that way because of what Adam and Eve had done in partaking of the forbidden fruit. Only those who loved evil and Satan, the author of evil, more than they loved God were referred to as carnal, sensual, and devilish. The scripture does not indicate that all of Adam's children became carnal, sensual, and devilish, but only those who rejected the Lord and loved unrighteousness and wickedness more than that which is good.

(To be concluded)

WRONG FINGER

Coming upon her husband busily sewing a button on his shirt, the wife watched for a moment, then remarked, "The thimble's on the wrong finger." "Yes I know," the husband answered. "It should be on yours."



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